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NEWS MAGAZINE

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FRONT COVER - Dundee Lane, Ramsbottom, drawn by Andrew Todd

RAMSBOTTOM MISCELLANEA

Ramsbottom Reminiscences II - our second collection of local memories will be published in the summer. Half as big again as *Ramsbottom Reminiscences I*, the price will be £3.95. Copies should be on sale in the Heritage Centre in mid-late July. Out of town purchasers should order from our membership secretary (see details on the enclosed leaflet). *Ramsbottom Reminiscences I*, incidentally, has sold around 600 copies since it was published in December 1992, and we are about to go into a third print run.

Going for immortality? - for a town of our size, we are acquiring quite an extensive collection of published reminiscences: in the 13 issues of this newsletter, and in the two volumes of *Ramsbottom Reminiscences*, the memories of nearly 40 people will have gone into print. The Society is always delighted to receive such items, whatever their length. The topics tend to be educational, occupational, and a few personal family histories, though a good number describe daily life in houses which have been demolished over the last half century. Advice is available to help with drafting. Do please think hard about putting pen to paper - an article published in our newsletter

may never have lived in the town. And - without wishing to sound morbid - publication means that several hundred copies of your work will exist, whereas a sole manuscript or typescript, found by an executor after your decease, may be put on one side and soon lost. Wouldn't we all like to have been given a copy of our granddad's or grandma's reminiscences?
AAT

Thank you to Unaform - we appreciate very much the co-operation and help we receive from this company. They welcome us to use their laser photocopier which is (a great blessing) and help with displays, visits and information. The Quality Assurance Manager has recently informed us that the top two storeys of the three storey part of Unaform building will be demolished, as unsafe, in the next two years. The Reception area will be at the front of the building facing south, built with stone taken from the demolished part. Unaform wish to preserve the stained glass 'heraldic' window and mount it in the Reception area and have asked us to suggest someone who could research its history, which we did.

Brenda Decent

MEMORIES OF DUNDEE LANE AND SUMMERSEAT IN THE '20s AND '30s

Cliff GASKELL, an ex-engine driver, born in 1922 at 24, Dundee Lane, now lives in Elgin, Scotland. 'A driver from Cormar Carpets comes to deliver in Elgin every Tuesday,' he writes, 'and I get news from him about the Irwell Valley.' A copy of Around Ramsbottom stimulated memories. 'I wish I had a penny for every time I had a drink of water from the stone water fountain in the marketplace,' he adds. The following article is a compendium of the several letters Cliff has written to me over the last few months. Related to the Ramsbottom WESTWELLS, he recalls childhood in Ramsbottom and Summerseat before World War II. [Editor].

I remember Dundee Lane was a happy area. Billy SNOWDON was my pal - we enjoyed Tag Wood walks through the wood and Holcombe churchyard to Holcombe Hill collecting raspberries for Grannie to make jam with. The terrace house we lived in was solid stone with flag roof not slate - large cellar, small kitchen, the sink unit of course in those days was the flag stone type with one cold tap, but we had a geyser hot water cistern. A huge coal fired wash boiler in the corner of the kitchen served several purposes, and dumpling boiling too. There was a double back yard - we had a small garden rabbit, and the tumbler system toilet - quite hygienic they were, and changed to the present day flush system about 1930. The house was dry due to the large cellar which housed the coal. I believe they look exactly the same outside today as they were in 1920. Ours had a storm porch built onto it. I was a latch key boy, coming home to light the coal fire and look after brothers and sisters until my parents got home from work. My Uncle Billy lived next door and his wife's sister next to him.

I enjoyed Peel Brow School - good pals, captain of class and school football team for a time, good discipline from the teachers. I took six of the best on the backside for dumb insolence one day. There were good teachers like Miss GOFFEY, Miss

HARRISON and Dinky BOOTH the music teacher - a bit of a Les DAWSON who could play as good on a piano out of key as in it - only five feet tall but hands as hard as nails when they landed.

I am still trying to find anyone who like me can remember the World War I tank which was on a concrete parapet outside the Council works yard near the tram shed, Stubbins [Lane]. Maybe it was taken away for scrap in World War 1. I believe at one time it was the World War I memorial. When we went to the tech from school for woodwork we always took a climb on it. Arthur BARLOW, Cliff OTTERWELL, Dick LANG (one of the LANG brothers from Summerseat, a good centre half). Another good football player was Cliff PETCH, who had a few brothers. Happy days - the only time we had problems was when preparing our bonfires. We had real big ones and each area raided each others, to steal the wood. We slept in ours to avoid the wood being stolen.

My grandfather, Sam WESTWELL, was one of the firemen on the photograph of Ramsbottom's horse drawn fire engine, in Ken BEETSON's *Ramsbottom (vol 2, 1978)*. His son Tommy WESTWELL was also at one time in the Ramsbottom Brigade. He had a plumber's shop in Silver Street and sold sink units, baths, windows and chrome taps, solder, blow lamps - all requirements for plumbing. He later moved to a shop on Bolton Road near Dundee Lane. (My sister Dorothy, who now lives in Tottington, was in Malta in 1994, and met a hotel owner who was one of Uncle Tom's best friends!)

Granny WESTWELL also had a little grocers shop on the corner of Silver Street, and sold everything - sweets, ice cream, flour - a general store, good position too as the cotton mill was opposite, so pies and sandwiches were sold to the workers. Just before the War I believe she got permission to have a trolley service in the mill, selling milk, tea, coffee and all kind of eats. Another of my uncles, Sam WESTWELL, lived there too, with Aunt Janie. He worked at Stubbins Paper Mill, whilst Uncle Harry WESTWELL was at Ramsbottom Paper Mill, and Uncle Bill was on the railway.

We moved to Summerseat in 1932, where we lived in Hall Street, near Benny KAY's farm and butchers shop. Summerseat in those days was great. Like Jack WHITFORD, I remember having my hair cut by Harry FOSTER [see News Magazine No11, Summer 1995, pp7-8 - Editor]. Harry had only one hand - I believe he lost the other in a mill accident. My father and I were members of the Summerseat Silver Band when Bert ROTHWELL was bandmaster. I attended the Wesleyan Church Day School, and also pumped the organ at the Methodist Church. I was a paper boy for Andrew MOONEY who had a lock-up shop on Railway Street. I believe he became a councillor at Ramsbottom along with a relative of mine, Mr John LORD, who married my Aunt Lizzie WESTWELL.

I also remember a disaster at the Brookbottom railway bridge, around 1935. There had been a huge storm and the Irwell flooded everywhere. It swept away the railway bridge and the timber bridge to the Print and Dye Works. On it at the time had been a steam Sentinel lorry delivering chemicals from the Nuttall Lane factory [ie Ocean Chemicals - Editor]. The timber structure had been weakened by the high river and the lorry's rear end had collapsed through it. I can say that the Irwell must have been

rushing down at about 20 mph - it was very fast. Joshua HOYLE's mill sheds were under water. Naturally us boys were enjoying it! It took a week to get the steam Sentinel lorry out, and workers had a difficult job getting across to the Print Works. But the sensation was the railway bridge - it was replaced by a steel and stone structure.

It was at this Print Works that I started my first job, on a lap machine, at 14 years of age. As the cloth came off the calender I had to see it lapped - that is kind of stacking in set foot lengths ready for the stretcher machine for correct width - a simple job really but you all started at the bottom in those days.

Whilst in Summerseat I had good pals in the LANG brothers, Dick, Harry and Frank. Father Joe was an insurance agent, a comedian after a few beers which was often. Dick FERGUSON and sister Jenny whose dad was the postman and had a travelling library - horsedrawn. He was a good sport. In those days the postman wore a hat we called 'back to front' - it was the same either end. We enjoyed ourselves in summer days swimming in the Olive's Lodge, the mill pond. In winter we tobogganed down the Hole in the Hill part of Benny KAY's grazing farmland. We'd go with candles in a jam jar which we'd place either side of our toboggan run, and play until wet through or called home. We seemed to have more sun and snow in those days. We also helped Benny the farmer/butcher hay making in his meadows - home made lemonade, corn beef sandwiches and six pence a day - we were rich! I enjoyed myself cleaning the horses' tackle in the saddle room. He had two baby chestnuts, one mare, one brown stallion, real lovely and tame. Jack his son was a bit of a brute to them but young Benny - a friend - was OK.

About 1936, I was taking the evening papers on my round, and had just left Wood Road Farm, cutting across what we termed 'over the tops', a hill between Wood Road and Upper Summerseat cottages. Looking down towards my home in Hall Street was a meadow and Conservative Club - the meadow seemed to be weaving in and out. Just at that time, the daughter of HARRISONS' Farm came riding tip to me on her horse shouting that her Dad says I had to get on the horse and go back to the farmhouse. There, he told me that the meadow I thought was weaving in the breeze was full of rats on the move and that they devour all they crawl over. I was in open space on top of the hill the rats ran over. I have no idea how fast rats move but maybe farmer HARRISON saved my life. The following day on my morning paper round I do remember the fields which were full of cabbages and vegetables were bare - only the roots left. Does anyone else remember the rats moving in Summerseat?

One of the best friends to us boys of Summerseat in that era was the Village Bobby, Bobby BIRCH. Many a belt on the backside I've had off him! One day, my mother fell into labour with my sister. Nurse LAMB was the midwife - she lived about a mile away, up the hill near the Wesleyan Church. My mother told me to go for the nurse - so off I went. But down the street my mates were playing football on the spare ground behind S ANDIFORD's saw mills. So I went to play and the next thing I knew was Bobby BIRCH shouting for me to go to him. He had his cycle with him. He asked me what message I had to give the nurse, so I told him. He then asked me why I hadn't delivered the message, so I told him I wanted to play football. Well, he called all my

mates over to him, put them in a ring around him and me, bent me over his knee and with his stick gave me a belting I never forgot. I could not sit down for a week. Then he told my mates whenever a mum or dad send us on a message that message comes before anything else. We never forgot, we dared not complain - he was the judge and executioner too. But we needed only one practical lesson forever remembered - it should take place today!

Our part of Lancashire suffered more grief with the various regiments - not many men came back from World War I to a heroes' county. The youth of today do not realise that villages like Summerseat were left with old men and widows.

In 1938 we moved to Bury. My father had been promoted to Engineer at WORSLEY's Cotton Mill which had a 4-00am start. War clouds were in the air and Civil Defence had fire watching training for personnel at factories. I joined the Army mainly to get a musical career and to gain a Kneller Hall School of Music place but the War stopped that. I was a Band boy in the Lancashire Fusiliers, then transferred to the Royal Artillery, and finally to a Scottish Regiment, the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, 2nd Battalion, which served in the 4th Indian Division in Africa, Italy, Greece, Austria.

I was discharged in 1948 and joined British Railways as a cleaner at Bury, and fireman and driver at Rochdale. I then transferred to Willesden, just outside Euston.

Whilst at Bury there were express services to Bacup, Accrington and to Yorkshire marshalling yards with goods. There was of course a big marshalling area at Ramsbottom, stretching from the station to Stubbins, and the largest on the line. Several industrial producers like the paper mill had their own sidings. We manned the Ramsbottom coal yard pilot engine often.

Recently, we had a visit to Rammy and my brother Harry and I had a photograph taken outside our old house. The lady who is there now let us have a look around to see the different mod cons today. She was the same lady who took the house the day we moved out in 1932! [A copy of this photograph is in the Society's collection- Editor.] It is really wonderful to read all of the historic items on the Rammy area. Many newcomers will not remember the places. Bands in the parks, Sunday cricket games, the motor cycle and side car grass trail races on the side of Holcombe Hill, the TA recruiting parades, the Drill Hall dances, great Saturday evenings, the Lancer Balls - the red tunics of the bands and the girls. We had practically one a week at the Drill Hall in Bury and about one a month at the Rammy Drill Hall - really lovely dances and friendly fun.

Cliff Gaskell, 46, Morrision Road, Bishopmill, Elgin, Scotland IV30 2EA

MELVIN CRAWSHAW: 'THE CHEMIST ON THE CORNER': ADDENDUM

A portion of this article was omitted from the last edition of our newsmagazine owing to a computing error. The complete section is reproduced here. I must apologise to the author, Mrs Edith ROBINSON- [Editor].

Apart from the medical side of the business, Mr CRAWSHAW had many sidelines - to quote a few: baking powder and pepper (both of which made us sneeze when we

were weighing them out!), bicarbonate of soda, honey, dried cloves, ginger and rhubarb (root and powder), starch, borax, etc. All were either weighed and sold by the ounce or multiples. We also sold butter, treacle and herbal toffees manufactured by Mr CRAWSHAW's cousin, Mr Jack CRAWSHAW at his works in Ramsbottom.

We also sold malt and hops for home brewing of beer and had a licence to sell wines but only between 11am and 3pm and after 5pm. I can only remember the most popular one which was Sandeman's Port Wine - one star and three star. Dog biscuits and poultry foods were stocked in bulk and had to be weighed out. We also made French polish.

Mrs CRAWSHAW was the daughter of Mr James KAY who owned the Jas KAY and Son *Britannia* soap works in Kenyon Street, Ramsbottom, so their soaps were sold in the shop - mainly 1 lb bars of carbollic for cleaning; 1 lb bars of White Windsor for personal use and 31b bars of soap for washing clothes and general cleaning. The factory is still in production, one of the few old ones left [up to 1951, the business had remained in the KAY family for three generations from its foundation in 1884 - Editor] but has now I believe a much wider range of soaps including a variety of toilet soaps, some made from vegetable oils.

To revert to the chemist's shop, in addition to everything I have mentioned we sold all the usual toiletries, perfumes, etc. A few of the names I remember were Yardley's (noted for their Lavender products), 4711 Eau de Cologne, Houbigante, Quelques Fleurs, Potter & Moore, Californian Poppy, du Barry, Coty and Pond's Cold Cream and Vanishing Cream. I can't remember there being many toiletries for men apart from Brylcreem, shaving brushes, shaving soaps and creams, tooth paste and brushes and Gillette Safety Razors. We sold box cameras and films and the chemicals required for developing and printing.

With a few exceptions most homes had no electricity and many of those which had gas had it only to light the living room. There was a demand for candles to light the other rooms and for tapers to light the gas, so these were sold as well - the candles in 31b bundles and the tapers in 4oz bundles.

Public transport was very limited at this time and people found it difficult to reach the shops. As he had such a wide variety of goods for sale, Mr CRAWSHAW bought a motor van which his cousin Mr Billy CRAWSHAW drove and delivered weekly orders to Helmshore, Holcombe, Summerseat and any outlying places making requests. The advent of the privately owned car and electricity in the home changed all this.

Edith Robinson, Bolton Road West, Holcombe Brook

DALE STREET STUBBINS: THE CELEBRATIONS MYSTERY

The photographs of the 1937 Dale Street Coronation street party on page 108 of Around Ramsbottom have attracted more interest to date than any other in the whole book! First, the publisher selected one of them for the book's cover. Secondly, shortly after publication, a visitor to the Centre claimed that they knew the whereabouts of the concertina - but insisted on being mysterious and secretive about where it is now!

More recently, John SIMPSON has sent a photocopy of the article in the Ramsbottom Observer about the street's Silver Jubilee celebrations (edition of Friday 17th May 1935), the photograph (captioned Central Studio, Ramsbottom) from which is reproduced here. John poses the question as to whether our photographs might be of this 1935 party rather than that of 1937. I doubt this - note the paper hats in 1935, nowhere to be seen in our 1937 view.

John has also unearthed very detailed Ramsbottom Observer reports of the 1937 Coronation festivities in the Ramsbottom area, in the editions of 14th and 21st May.

The following week, the newspaper commented on the fact that Dale Street had again charged visitors to its street party for the same good cause (there was, of course, no NHS at the time). It is pretty clear that Dale Street had set a street party trend in the

'30s - was it repeated in 1945, 1953, 1977 or 1995? [Editor].

Ramsbottom Observer, Friday 17th May 1935:-



'The inhabitants of Dale-street, Stubbins had a little jubilee festivity of their own one night last week. Herewith is a picture of the event.

'Friends and neighbours were invited to view the decorations and the proceeds of a collection were used to defray the expenses of providing a treat for all the children

the meal and other edibles, as the picture indicates, were served to the children in the street at tables which had been kindly loaned by Mr. J.H. COLLINGE, of Stubbins, who also loaned a number of forms to provide the seating accommodation.

After the meal the children were entertained for the remainder of the evening with gramophone selections, and community singing and dancing were also enjoyed. Mr. J. RADCLIFFE and Mesdames WEBSTER and SPROATS made themselves responsible for much of the entertainment, which greatly amused the youngsters.

Among those who were to the forefront in the serving of the tea and the cutting-up were Messrs. FRENCH and WOOD.

Nearly seventy children were provided with a tea, and a balance of one guinea from the fund collected for the treat has been given to the Ramsbottom Cottage Hospital.'

Ramsbottom Observer, Friday 28th May 1937:-

'A happy little gesture on the part of residents of Dale Street, Stubbins, has resulted in the new children's ward and extensions fund of the Ramsbottom Cottage Hospital benefiting by £2 3s 6d. The Coronations decorations in that street - as was the case two years ago at the Silver Jubilee celebrations of the late George V - have again been viewed and admired by many non-residents of that locality, and someone hit on the idea of taking up a little collection from visitors, on behalf of the Cottage Hospital, with the result stated. The amount, I understand, was handed over to the hospital treasurer a week ago by Mr. W.S. CAIN on behalf of the Dale Street people.'

THE SUMMERSEAT AVIATION MYSTERY SOLVED

Relating to Jack WHITFORD's story of the buzzing by an aeroplane of Joshua HOYLE's mill in Summerseat during World War II - according to my brothers and sisters the aircraft was a Hurricane fighter and the pilot a Summerseat boy Harry LAW, son of an insurance agent who lived in Hall Street. He had got his wings and was stationed we believe in the Blackburn area at the aircraft factory, or Squire's Gate Blackpool. He was we believe buzzing his pals like the PETCH brothers who lived near the mill. It is said that he flew so low as to go under the high tension electric wires over the sewage farm. The local bobby got his squadron number and reported it. Harry was carpeted.

Talking of Summerseat and aviation - during World War I a German Zeppelin was flying towards Rammy. He was following the railway during the night but lost it at Brookbottom Tunnel, turned towards Holcombe, dropped a bomb at Holcombe Brook and was shot down around the Manchester area.

Cliff Gaskell, 46, Morrison Road, Bishopmill, Elgin, Scotland IV30 2EA
I wonder whether this latter story refers to the raid of 25th September 1916 chronicled in Kenneth BEETSON's Ramsbottom (vol 2, 1978)? - (Editor).

RAMSBOTTOM TELEPHONE EXCHANGE

As an apprentice for British Telecom, or the GPO as it was called in the late 1960s, I was lucky enough to have a major hand in the construction of what was then the new automatic telephone exchange (ATE) in Factory Street at the bottom of Crow Lane.

I say lucky, as being Ramsbottom born and bred, my headquarters were initially based at Rochdale and up until that time had involved quite strenuous travelling conditions.

My day began by catching the 5-30am bus from the top of Peel Brow into Bury, another from Bury to Rochdale centre, and a third from there to Spotland Bridge. My starting time was 8am but I invariably arrived at least 10 minutes late, much to the annoyance of my supervisor. Eventually, after several patient months of this he took me to one side and asked me earnestly whether I could make just that little bit extra effort and get out of bed a few minutes earlier in a morning. When I explained to him that I already got up around 4-30am and caught the first bus of the day as it was, plus the fact that I never got home until turned 8pm every evening, his jaw almost dropped through the floor! The very next day my headquarters were changed to Bolton.

This involved my having to walk a good mile across the valley to the bus stop in all weathers, morning and night, but the single 10 mile bus journey to within a few hundred yards of my place of work was relative luxury. Shortly afterwards, for the period of six months, I was allocated to the construction of the new exchange in Ramsbottom, within walking distance of my home - luxury indeed! Ironically, lying

outside a radius of three miles from my headquarters, this also entitled me to claim a dinner allowance of 6d a day. A princely sum, as my total wage in those days cost him more than my wage in bus fares and dinner money every week simply to send me out to work. To me, the drop in hours alone from around 80 to around 40 per week was more than ample compensation. At one point, when the local cleaner retired, I was even allowed, after much bowing and scraping, to take her place for a couple of months, as a part time job at weekends. For the first time in my working life I was actually in pocket!

The job itself was relatively easy, and the early days brought some quite interesting memories. It was rather exciting, for instance when a large vehicle drove past the front gate of the exchange. Unknown to us at the time, a stream ran underneath the road at that point. At first a low rumble would be heard which gradually increased in volume until, within a few seconds, what we assumed to be a mini-tidal wave would strike our foundations, rocking the entire building. At one time a bottle was shaken from a table, littering the floor with broken glass. As more and more heavy metalwork was moved into the premises, however, this effect gradually subsided. It did have it's bad side for others, though. In those days a pet shop lay just across the road from our front gate. After a period of heavy rain we turned up one day to find the place all boarded up. Apparently the underground waters had risen so high that all the animals in the shop basement had drowned. In contrast, one particularly funny incident occurred within our own premises. Underground cables entering the exchange first met up in a cable chamber buried

under the yard. This was always liable to flooding in bad weather. Our own knowledge of it arose when we fitted a pump to empty it and the water level had barely gone down by the end of the day. We found out later that we had actually emptied the lodge from 100 yards further up Factory Street, behind the site of the old telephone exchange building. [The old exchange, now occupied by JW FULLER (Imports) Ltd Holmefield Depot, stands between the Linda GILMARTIN Nursery on Factory Street, and the Council's Recycling Centre. A new house and garden are now on the site of the lodge. About 30 feet long, this may have been a remnant of the Ramsbottom Mill's water power arrangements - Editor.] We now knew the extent of the problem, but a visiting underground gang did not. We had managed to drop the level in the

manhole enough to uncover the top cables and the gang foreman, surprisingly eager to lead his men into the fray, had donned his rubber waders and proceeded to leap into the hole. Being a main cable chamber, however, this wasn't the usual three to four feet deep, as he and his gang found out when all that was left of him was his cloth cap floating on the surface amid a torrent of bubbles. This one went down eight feet. You could still hear the laughter a week later.

Being a brand new exchange, at first there was only myself and a supervisor in the place. It was our job to oversee the contractors bringing in and erecting the equipment each day. Once this was fitted I was given the more unpleasant task of making sure that all of it worked correctly. No computers and electronics in those days. These were Strowger exchanges or 'clockwork' as we ourselves called them - awash with shelves of clanking relays and noisy rotary selectors to keep us awake all day. I say unpleasant task as I well remember that I was the one elected to do all the work, while my 'technical officer' stood idly by sucking his teeth and driving me up the wall with the noise. Eventually, as the work load built up, more staff were brought in to help, but it remained below this particular individual's dignity to help us out with any manual work. I recollect one day in particular when myself and a relative newcomer, a crusty ex-sailor, were reasonably happily plodding our way through wiring a distribution frame requiring tens of thousands of soldered connections, when the presence of this 'tooth-sucker' finally took its toll. Throwing down his tools, the ex-sailor, being an ex-sailor and no doubt in command of curses and oaths unknown to mortal man, let rip. For what seemed an eternity he loosed off swear word after swear word and not once did he repeat himself. The air turned blue and even the paint was in danger of peeling from the walls. As a young lad I was really impressed! The supervisor on the other hand turned a deathly pale. It was shortly after that he took to using up his sick leave on a regular basis.

My turn eventually came when I was allowed in on Saturday overtime to test equipment racks installed earlier in the week by the contractors. A simple test checking electrical continuity between thousands of gold plated contacts on one rack with the corresponding ones on its neighbours. Being new equipment though, there were many teething problems caused by bits of packing paper jammed between contacts, varnish splashes on the contacts breaking the circuits and general gremlins in the works. I spent an exasperating day on one such rack, finding and clearing over 50 of these faults. My technical officer wasn't too pleased on Monday as he'd

when the place finally erupted. I was working on another piece of equipment when this self same supervisor came up to me and said, 'Do you know that rack you spent all day on on Saturday? Well I've just done it again myself and it only took me an hour. If you can't do better than that then you're not coming in on overtime again.' The fact that all the faults had already been cleared by myself did not impress him, but the lesson I had learned from my mentor, the ex-sailor did, as I explained to him what precisely he could do with the rack, his test equipment, and for good measure, his hot soldering iron. Within the hour an Assistant Executive Engineer had driven out from Bolton to see me and the very next day I was moved back there, where I was to remain for the next 25 years. My main regret at the time was that the new building opened shortly afterwards with the usual blaze of pomp and ceremony and I wasn't around to see it. Being a technical officer myself for the last 15 years I lost count of the number of transfer applications I submitted to get back there, all without success. I still get that sickly feeling in my stomach when I think of those days in winter when I awoke at 4-30am on a cold winter's day, to see six inches of snow on the windowsill and a blizzard blowing. So it was not without a touch of nostalgia in 1995 that I strolled past this 'new' building which is now in the process of having its innards tom out. Piles of old 'clockwork' selectors lie rotting nearby like the bones of some old dinosaur.

No doubt some faceless piece of electronics the size of a suitcase will replace the lot of them. As well, such is progress!

Joe Crompton, 10, Beechwood Aye, Ramsbottom BLO OBH

THE HOLCOMBE HEY SOCIETY OF UNITED ARTISANS, ESTABLISHED 1830

One day in the Autumn of 1994, Mr Harold HUTCHINSON of Springside Road, Walmersely, came into the Centre with a beautifully polished wooden chest - 28 inches wide, 18 deep and 16 high with a brass plaque on the front announcing its owners:-

The Holcombe Hey Society of United Artisans, est. June 12th 1830

The chest, of which the Society now has a photograph in its collection, has three locks with separate keys, and trays inside for papers. It had been handed down to the owner via his grandfather Edward HUTCHINSON who lived at Quarry Bank - a large house in Holcombe village which he had built for himself. It was found therein a neglected state at the turn of the 20th Century or thereabouts.

The HUTCHINSONS were a well known family in Holcombe Hey. Harold discovered in the 1795 *Survey of the Township of Tottington* that one Thomas HUTCHINSON occupied a cottage at Holcombe Head, and James a cottage at Boardmans; William farmed land in Hawkshaw valued at £14, Robert farmed Higher Ash (£ 1510s), whilst another Thomas farmed Old Hoyles (£15). We do not know how this group were

related. As the discarded box was found at Edward HUTCHINSON's house, it seems likely that Harold's ancestors were in the 1830 group which started this Society, but to date we have no proof of this.

Harold also had a copy of the revised *Rules and Orders of the Holcombe Hey Society* of 1871. These tell us that it began with 20 members and met at *Peel's Arms Inn*, Boardmans, Hawkshaw. It was Jan BARNES of today's *Peel's Arms*, Boardmans, now converted into very well designed and welcoming cottages who gave this to Harold, in response to an appeal for information about the chest through local newspapers.

We decided to try to find out more about it all, especially because Harold has done so much research himself.

Holcombe Hey lies in the valley between Edgeworth and Holcombe Hill. There were many opportunities for workers there - quarrying at Quarlton, some coal mining, mills at Redisher and smaller trades.

The 1871 Revised Rules include the Preamble to the original Rules of 1830, now lost: it is a heart-warming read:

Considering this life is liable to serious accidents, by which many families are reduced from flourishing to necessitous circumstances, that it is praiseworthy to alleviate, as much as possible, such visitations of Providence, by relieving those who by any unavoidable accident, or sickness, stand in need, and by decently burying the dead: and it is not possible for an individual in our station of life, to perform these brotherly actions, we have mutually agreed to institute a society, that by our prudent rules and stated meetings, we may soften the cares and promote the advantage and happiness of each other. We have also mutually agreed that every member shall be governed by the Rules contained in this book.

This 1830 declaration of the Holcombe Hey Society's aims makes it clear that it was a friendly, sick or box club. In *The Making of the English Working Class*, EP THOMPSON describes the systematic penetration of these benefit societies in the late 18th Century. Their aims are reflected in the above Preamble of the Holcombe Hey Society's rules.

The 1871 or Revised Rules, a copy of which we have in the Society's collection, required an increase in subscriptions ... 'an absolute necessity in consequence chiefly of the high price of staple articles of food and also because the wages paid for many kinds of work are now considerably higher'.

There were 19 Rules: the main ones concerned the safe keeping of funds, the orderly conduct of meetings and the determination of disputed cases, but there were many others aimed at a democratic and efficient organisation.

After advice from a member historian I wrote to the Lancashire Record Office at

Preston and to Kevin MULLEY, Bury Archives; to the Public Record Office at Kew and to the Charity Commission - no record of the society has been found. I perused the Reports of Friendly Societies in the Parliamentary Papers at Manchester Reference Library. Although Lancashire did have the largest number of societies in 1877, 1749 societies in all, there was no mention of Holcombe Hey. Most recorded societies were in industrial areas; working men were able to afford the fees, were more in need of support because of sickness caused by their bad working conditions, and knew each other. Most of these conditions did not apply so pertinently to agricultural workers.

So no national or county official record has been made of the Holcombe Hey Society of United Artisans. It is a fact that many small societies did not register and made no returns: this seems to have been the fate of the Holcombe Hey Society.

As the battered box was found around 1900, it seems likely that the society had collapsed like many others at this time. Members were getting older and the small societies could not afford the burden of sick benefit in old age to their old members. As the Diary of Richard BARLOW, Ramsbottom postman, records, old age pensions were first issued at Ramsbottom post office in January 1909. The societies wanted to maintain their independence from the government and fought hard to keep going. Let us celebrate that in 1830 our local people, in need, protected themselves and families from their social deprivation and set up clubs; this indicated a self discipline of a truly impressive order.

Brenda M Decent, Carr Bank Drive, Ramsbottom

JAMES DEWHURST: AN OBITUARY

Although he joined Ramsbottom Heritage Society only recently, James had very long-rooted local links, and will be sadly missed. He died on 2nd Jan 1996, aged 71, having lived in the former Edenfield Liberal Club and Edenfield Cottage on Market Street before finally moving to Helmshore. He is survived by his wife Margaret and sons Tom and Michael and their families. The funeral service on 9th January was conducted by Rev D CLOWES at his church, Edenfield Methodist. His late sister, Eleanor GRAHAM, held her Mayoral Service there also. Educated at Edenfield C

of E Primary, Bury Grammar and Rydal School in the Lakes, he served during the War in the Naval Patrol Service. His career was firmly textile based with Alexander BARLOW's, Bridge Mills in Edenfield, and later with OWEN & HOLGATE, Manchester. He was for 25 years (to 1994) Chairman of Edenfield & District Community Association, and this gave birth to Edenfield Local History Society in 1983 - he was founder Chairman and only President. All who heard him will remember his resonant voice, tempered by his hearty vein of humour when he shared his "tacklers" tales. He lived life to the full with conviction in all he did, and his passing leaves a gap impossible to fill.

MARY JANE ('CISSIE') LOMAX, MILLINER OF BRIDGE STREET

Readers may remember the Edwardian postcard correspondence between Susan BOOTH of 37, Bolton Street and Cissie STEPHENSON of 161, Stubbins Lane, featured in our Around Ramsbottom (pages 53 and 61). Barry ROTHWELL wrote to me in March, pointing out that Cissie STEPHENSON was his great aunt, and that her surname sported a 'ph' rather than the 'v' that her friend had written. He provided a brief family history. [Editor]

Thomas STEPHENSON and his wife Maria TURNER lived at the *Rising Sun* beerhouse at the top of Carr Street. Mary Jane "Cissie" was one of their six children. She married Charlie LOMAX - a joiner I believe - and had a milliner's shop in Bridge Street (near, and on the same side as, the *Railway Hotel*). They lived at 24, Crow Lane. In later life she came to live with my parents until her advancing years made necessary a move to Croich Hey, Hawkshaw. It was there she died, aged 92, early in 1976, I think. The family was:

Thomas STEPHENSON (born 10th Oct 1853) married 1st Jan 1873 at Brunswick Chapel, Bury, Maria TURNER (born 22nd June 1851).

Their children were:

- 1 William (Bill) (25th April 1873 - ?) Emigrated to USA
- 2 Richard (Dick) (21st June 1874 - 14th Aug 1902). (My grandfather told me that Dick died from heart trouble contracted during service in the Boer War.)
- 3 Tom (16th Oct 1880 - 1960s)
- 4 Mary Jane (Cissie) (17th Dec 1883 - 1976)
- 5 May (23rd May 1888 - 12th May 1889)
- 6 Joseph (26th Jan 1890 - 28th Oct 1890)

Barry Rothwell, 11, Dalesford, Haslingden, Rossendale BB4 6QH

According to KELLY's 1924 Lancashire Directory, Mary LOMAX (Mrs) was a milliner at 12, Bridge Street. This is now Bloomsbury florists. Does anyone remember Cissie or her shop? [Editor].

WARTIME REMINISCENCES 1939-45

Excerpts from this article were published by the Lancashire Federation of Women's Institute's' Wartime Memories: Members of our Federation Remember 1939-1945 (1995). [Editor].

I was nine years old when war was declared - I very well remember Sunday 3rd September 1939 because it was the only time I ever saw my Father cry. 'All that killing - again!' or words to that effect. I spent the first two years of the War at St Paul's C of E School in Ramsbottom. The town organised 'War Weapons Weeks' culminating with a ceremony on the Market Place, where council officials and on-leave service personnel perched on a make-

shift stage. My cousin Archie ATKINSON, a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy, was once there - and oh - I felt so proud of him. There was an indicator-of-sorts, showing how much had been raised, it cost 15s (75p) for a Savings Certificate - a lot of money in those days.

We lived in a terraced house in Crow Lane, Ramsbottom, its tiny garden surrounded by railings - these were taken away for the War Effort. I had visions of them being made into aeroplanes or tanks!

St Paul's had some evacuee children from Manchester - their teacher came too - Miss MURRAY - and she taught us in a classroom on the stage - I remember she had very short hair.

I graduated to Haslingden Grammar School (a four mile journey by train and bus) where we had to wear school uniform. The worst items were horrible tan coloured shorts for PE, and itchy navy woollen bathing suits. We were used to hand-me-downs. My cousin had a lovely navy blue pilot cloth coat - handed down first to my sister and then to me. Clothing of course was rationed and clothing coupons were very precious. Can you imagine how upset I was when I went to school in a warm, hand-me-down royal blue jumper which the Headmistress forbade me to wear because it wasn't navy blue? I can still remember how ashamed I felt.

School meals, served in a wooden hut across the yard, must have been OK because we went for seconds! We always seemed to have cheese pie (mashed potatoes with stringy cheese, browned under the grill - delicious) after our swimming lesson.

A tuck shop across the road (out of bounds really) sold lemonade. One day I was drinking some whilst queuing up for dinner - along came same Headmistress and she made me pour it down the drain - all my spending money gone in an instant. But I learnt my lesson - I didn't buy any again! Cookery classes meant taking precious rationed ingredients.

On our way home we used to buy a 1/2d carrot at a shop near the station, scraping it with another coin (we never had any sweet coupons with us). At the station and on the train we used to swap homework - especially in the mornings.

The school organised knitting sessions for the forces - I did some sea-boot stockings and I can still feel the harshness of the wool and the smell of oil. Very occasionally we couldn't get to school because the train was stuck in the snow. But in spite of food rations, clothing and sweet coupons, our schooldays were fun, even if we had to remember to take our gas masks.

A cousin of mine died in a railway accident during the War. With her we had watched the bombing of Manchester from Holcombe Hill - the sky was lit up from the many fires. She lived in London and was visiting friends, when the engine driver, exhausted after working long hours, fell asleep and the train crashed. Her Father first read about the accident in the evening paper.

Another friend married a GI and he gave us sweets, and cigarettes for Dad. Very occasionally we received a food parcel from relatives in Canada.

During these years my Mother was left a legacy of £100 - she bought Dad a new suit, and my sister and me a new coat (I can't remember her buying herself anything). My

coat came from Lewis's in Manchester, a camel hair coat with padded shoulders and a tie belt. I felt like Princess Margaret (same age). Off I went to show it to our next door neighbour, and was in such a hurry, I burst my nose on the vestibule door - blood all down the front of my day-old coat!

In Ramsbottom we had a sweet shop called TOPPINGS, and if you took 1 lb of sugar you could buy boiled sweets without coupons.

We ate lots and lots of bread and jam. To eke out rations Mother used to make jam - plum, blackberry, rhubarb and sometimes carrot. We ate whale meat, but only once - it had a beef-like texture but tasted fishy. A tin of fruit was a great luxury. We found a recipe for Mintoes, using soya flour and mint essence - I ate so many I made myself sick and it was years before I could face Mintoes again! We used reconstituted eggs, scrambled and in cooking - Spam, corned beef and tripe.

What a treat it was going to the cinema - taking us to the magical world of exciting stories, romance, music and dancing. Fourpence ha'penny (4i/2d) was the price of a child's ticket. Of course we had to go in the black-out. Gosh, the streets were dark. On Saturdays we listened to *In Town Tonight* at 8pm, and *Saturday Night Theatre* at 9-30pm. *ITMA (It's That Man Again)* with Tommy HANDLEY and Mrs Mopp's *Can I do you now sir?* was our weekday listening.

I joined the Guides, and we had a New Year's Day Concert at our church when everyone did a bit of something - well not quite everyone. Saturday nights there were dances in our school hall, but I was too young to go, so I watched them through my parents' bedroom window.

Holidays at Home were a feature when the local council organised events in the local park. Other holidays were spent visiting relations and friends. I can remember sleeping under a metal table air raid shelter when visiting friends in Urmston - you soon learnt not to jump up quickly - or, my word, you got a headache!

Two things particularly haunt me from those turbulent times - one, the horror of the Concentration Camps, which we saw on newsreels at the cinema, and the advent of the V2 rockets - fortunately we didn't get many, but I do recall that when the engines stopped I shook in terror.

Towards the end of the War, one of our teachers took us Youth Hostelling - we had such fun on those weekends, and we still have an annual re-union, after more than 50 years.

The King and Queen toured Britain. She wore her traditional pastel shades whilst he was in uniform - looking very sunburnt to a schoolgirl's eyes. And so came VE Day and then VJ Day, and at last we were a nation at peace again, but as my father had said in 1939 - at what cost?

Doris A Hibbert, 57, Callender Street, Ramsbottom

Please remember that the June meeting was our last in the Community Education Centre, and that from now on we are back in our old meeting venue of the Civic **Hall**.

RAMSBOTTOM HERITAGE SOCIETY *THE HERITAGE CENTRE*

CARR STREET, RAMSBOTTOM, BURY BLO 9AE
Membership Enquiries please ring (01706) 828705.
Other enquiries (01706) 82 1603

The objects of the Society shall be:-

- a) To advance education of the public, by creating an awareness and interest in the study of the history and heritage of Ramsbottom. (As defined by the boundaries of the pre-1974 Ramsbottom Urban District Council.)
- b) To locate relevant documents, records and artifacts. To retain, catalogue and/or copy them where possible, and to operate as an information centre.
- c) To seek to protect the heritage of Ramsbottom.

1996 PROGRAMME

July 17

Mr I Summers - *A Walk around Edenfrelld* (Meeting point to be arranged)

A Visit to Turton Tower (Meeting point to be arranged)

Aug 21
Sept 18

Mr K Craven - *The Victorian Painter and the Poet's Wife* (illustrated)

Oct 16

Miss M Curry - *Water Mills and Water Wheels* - a look at water power in Britain from Roman **times to the Industrial Revolution** (illustrated)

Nov 20

Mr T Sprason - *The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers over Three Centuries of History* (illustrated, with slides, film, badges, medals and ribbons)

Dec 11

Mr D Moss - *Quiz Night and Christmas Celebration*

All indoor meetings are once again held on the third Wednesday of the **month in the** Civic Hall,

Market Place, Ramsbottom, 7-30 for 7-45pm.