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NEWS MAGAZINE

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RAMSBOTTOM HERITAGE SOCIETY

THE HERITAGE CENTRE

CARR STREET, RAMSBOTTOM, BURY BLO 9AE

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.

1998 PROGRAMME

- April 15th **Eleventh Birthday Meeting**
Mr Brian Unsworth - *A N* - A fully illustrated slide show of Nature and its beauty
- May 20th **Annual General Meeting**
Mr George Clarke - *T H B B* . Mr Clarke tells this
- June 17th Mrs Jan Barnes - *The Bridge Family of Hawkshaw*
- July 15th Mrs Jan Barnes conducts a walk around Hawkshaw - *venue to be arranged*
- Aug 19th Mr Mike Creswell - *Smells, Smoke and Smallpox - The Sanitary Condition of Bolton*
- Sept 16th Mr Dave Edwards - *T C W S* - illustrated
- Mr Ron Standring - *Humorous Talk*
- Nov 18th Mr Jesse Riley - *The 20th Foot Regiment of the Lancashire Fusiliers*
- illustrated
To be arranged
- Dec 9th

1999 PROGRAMME

- Jan 20th Mrs K Mulholland - *A C I* - based on the book about the Pendle Witches
Miss S Weymont - *M M* - illustrated
- Feb 17th Photographic Competition
- Mar 17th
- April 21st Birthday Meeting - Mr T E Ashworth - *Celebration of the ELR* - film of the first opening
- May 19th AGM

All indoor meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month
in the Civic Hall, Market Place, Ramsbottom, 7.30 for 7.45pm

CONTENTS

Page	
1	Ramsbottom Miscellanea
3	Society Sketches: Andrew Todd The Committee
4	Peel Brow in the 20s: some Boyhood Memories Herbert Collier
7	Robert Thorpe: Turnbull and Stockdale s last Block Cutter Andrew Todd
9	How the Hanson Family came to Ramsbottom Frederick A Hanson
10	Memories of the Old Police Station Leslie R Norris
11	Ridgeways: a Chronicle of our Ownership of a Cottage in the Ridge, 1944 Marjorie Nuttall
15	Summerseat Kayaks of the 40s: more harmless Children s Games from the Good Old Days Andrew Todd

FRONT COVER - Middle Ridge, Redisher, drawn by Marjorie Nuttall

RAMSBOTTOM MISCELLANEA

Over the last few weeks, a large number of Society members have died. Some we knew better than others, but our heartfelt sympathies go out to all who feel their loss.

Hilda BARRETT died on 12¹ October, of one of the Society s staunchest supporters. She was a regular weekend helper at the Heritage Centre where her wealth of local knowledge was put to good use by many visitors. On Tuesday afternoons she spent many hours sorting and filing archive material and helping with the displays. Her greatest contribution was probably her talent for identifying and dating photographs, with no information as to when or where they were taken. Even the most obscure photograph was usually explained after Hilda had inspected it with her special magnifying glass and discussed possibilities with husband Tom all the angles from which it could have been taken and the features, often long gone, which would date it. She had a fund of reminiscences going back to her childhood in the 1930s which she was always happy to share, especially with the children who came to the Centre on school visits. Just read her account of such a visit in the Winter/Spring 1992 edition of this magazine.

Hilda started work at the Chatterton Weaving Company in 1938. (Readers may remember the article she wrote for the Summer 1993 edition of this magazine about her first day as a mill girl.) After much persuasion she had started to write down reminiscences about her childhood at Sheephey Farm, and later at Stubbins. Sadly she never managed to complete the article but, with help from her sisters, Marion and Freda, we hope eventually to be able to publish at least some of her recollections.

Hilda will be remembered at the Heritage Centre for the valuable work she did there and for the help she gave to so many people by passing on her experiences of life and work in Ramsbottom over a period from the Thirties and the Second World War to the present. She will also be missed for her independent spirit, her good nature

Hilda's brother, **Harry POOLE**, a longstanding member, and a well known attender at meetings, died in hospital on 17th November last, aged 78. He spent most of his working life in farming, and served as secretary of the Edenfield Horticultural Society in earlier days. The POOLE family were brought up in Stubbins where Harold always lived. He was eldest, with three sisters: Hilda, who had died just five weeks before, Marion and Freda. Our sympathy goes to all the family.

December at **T. C.**, Stubbins, after a long illness. He was born in Cheshire. After his marriage to Joan, a Ramsbottom resident, in the 1940s he moved to Bury New Road, Ramsbottom, where he spent the greater part of his working life and retirement.

He had a passion for photography. From 1950 until his retirement he was chief photographer at the **B. T.** and there set up the photo engraving department, a great step forward for a local newspaper. He always worked freelance from his home, and was an associate of the Royal Photographic Society (ARPS), member of the Bolton Camera Club and Bury Camera Club. Many photographic awards were won by Roy; his articles were published in leading photographic journals.

At Christmas 1997 he donated over 70 of his photographs to the Heritage Society; one of our most valued records. Selections of them are displayed at the Centre.

Roy was also an accomplished athlete, representing England and Great Britain in steeplechasing and cross country. Only illness prevented him in the last few years from daily walks and jogging. He advised us on 'good walks'.

In the mid-1990s the workers in the Archive Group were joined by Roy and Joan every Tuesday afternoon to help sort and file photographs and documents given to us. His quiet humour and teasing certainly helped us to enjoy the job and not take it all too seriously. We remember him as a friend to co-workers and to our Society.

Brenda Decent

Maggie OATES (formerly POMPHRET) - 1998 opened very sadly for the Society, our only Honorary Member, Mrs Maggie OATES dying in her sleep at Hazlehurst Nursing Home, aged 83.

Maggie was a very strong character, always ready to right an injustice, respected by all who knew her, whether working as a weaver in a local mill, as a porter at

Ramsbottom station, or as the first woman councillor on the Ramsbottom Urban District Council, where she was later to become the first and only woman to be given the honour of Leader. She retired in 1974. However, she remained involved with many local organisations, and was a JP and school governor, always ready to serve the community she loved.

It was this impressive record which led the Heritage Society in August 1991 to grant her honorary membership, on which occasion she brought three generations of her family to the Heritage Centre.

Maggie was a 'one-off', loved and esteemed by all - there will never be another like her in the town. How we miss her, what memories we shall keep in our hearts

Dorothy Moss

Edith ROBINSON (1907-97) who died in October, was born in Padigham, but lived most of her life in the Edenfield and Holcombe Brook areas. Until almost the end of her life she remained alert and her recollections of life in Ramsbottom over such a

lengthy period were perhaps her most valuable contribution to the work of the Society. She wrote articles for this magazine (like **J. M. L.**, in the Summer 1991 edition, about transport in the early years of this century; and **M. CRAWSHAW. C. C.**, Winter 1995/6-Summer 1996) and was interviewed by Ian SUMMERS about her early years in Edenfield, for our Oral History project. She donated many items to our collection.

Edith's recollections provided a valuable source of information much used by those of us involved with the collection, displays, the magazine or the compilation of **A. R.**. In later years she became virtually housebound, unable to go out without assistance, but she still maintained a network of friends and acquaintances, many of similar age to herself, most of whom she kept in contact with either by telephone or through the day care centre at Ramsbottom Cricket Club. When unable to answer one of our questions she would phone around until eventually she found someone who could supply the elusive piece of information.

At her funeral service in Holcombe Brook Methodist Church (which she had attended for many years) the Minister aptly described her as 'a character'. Like many of her generations she was fiercely independent yet always ready to offer help to anyone else. She will be greatly missed by the Heritage Society.

Barbara Park

Heritage Centre Reopening - this will take place on Easter Saturday, 11th April 1998. **Lillian CULLEN** will be displaying her spinning skills on Sunday 12th.

SOCIETY SKETCHES -ANDREW TODD

Eleven years ago, at the Society's inaugural meeting, local historian Andrew TODD accepted the position of Chairman. Born in Droylsden near Manchester, he came to Ramsbottom in 1977. He is married to Irene ALLEN (now running a successful printing and stationery business on Square Street) and they have four children, Isabella, Christopher, Hannah and Eleanor, all currently at St Paul's School.

Andrew taught history in Bolton schools from 1974 and is currently Assistant Principal at North Bolton Sixth Form College, teaching politics.

Author of several books on family and local history, he gives local history talks to clubs and groups and for light relief has trained as a signaller for the East Lancashire Railway, where he can occasionally be seen operating Ramsbottom's level crossing!

Although obviously a very busy man, Andrew has capably steered the Society through its early years. He initiated (and recently revived) the Oral History Taping Group which records the memories of our older citizens, and he has encouraged members to research local history and to write short articles for the Society News Magazine which he founded in 1990. In 1995 he organised a writing competition and the entries formed the first volume of **R. R.**, to be followed

by a second volume in 1997. In 1995, with the help of Brenda DECENT and Barbara PARK, he edited the Society's first book of photographs, all from the collection held at the Heritage Centre in Carr Street. These three books, our 'best sellers', have found their way round the world and into many people's Christmas stockings.

We have been most fortunate in our first Chairman. He feels now he has so many family and job commitments that it is time he stepped down. Thankfully he has agreed to remain as Editor of this News Magazine, to continue to co-ordinate the Oral History Taping Team, and of course he will always be available to give us his invaluable advice.

The Committee thanks him most sincerely for all he has done for the Society, his will be a hard act to follow.

At the AGM in May we must look for another dedicated worker to continue the Society's aim of recording the past and present history of Ramsbottom for future generations and historians.

The Committee

PEEL BROW IN THE '20S: SOME BOYHOOD RECOLLECTIONS

We moved from Garnett Street to 93, Peel Brow, near the turn off into Box Street, in the 1920s. Our neighbours were a retired couple and a widow. We had bought the house and paid ground rent to a collector who lived in the end house of the row, who passed the rents for the row on to the landlord - GRANT LAWSON, I believe. The top row of Peel Brow had a more open aspect in those days, but it was a long climb up from the town! Our part of Peel Brow was definitely part of Ramsbottom, but Shuttleworth was a separate community. There were local food shops, and some shopping was done on Bridge Street, Bolton Street, and in Bury, with an occasional trip to Bolton or Rawtenstall. Ned GREENHALGH came round daily with his greengrocery cart. He lived across the road and stabled his horse at the back of the lower end of the fifth row of houses on the north side of Peel Brow. The two fifth rows (north and south side) were demolished to make room for the M66.

I soon found myself in the Infant Class of Peel Brow Council School where I seem to recall doing some craft work and struggling with a pair of scissors. The school was demolished not long after the new road was built but a few memories still remain, such as the hymn and prayer of morning assembly with the Headmaster, Mr CHESHIRE, presiding; and the chanting and oral testing of multiplication tables in Standard 1 (a method of teaching which obviously worked as they have been fixed in my mind ever since, proving very useful). We went to school in clogs and come to think of it must have made a bit of a clatter as we moved about the building, but I think discipline and behaviour were good. Each classroom had formal rows of desks rising towards the back of the room, each desk with an ink well which sometimes had blotting paper stuffed into it.

After a brief sojourn in Standard 2, I was moved on for some reason to 3. The cane was in use in those days and I had a taste of it in Standard 4 when, for blotting my

Exercise Book or similar misdemeanour, I was called to the front of the class to receive a painful thwack on the hand. There was an exciting incident one day the following year when one of the teachers, demonstrating a scientific experiment, set fire to his hair from the Bunsen burner (fire soon extinguished). There was plenty of activity in the playground with the boys playing football and marbles and the girls skipping and other games, whilst top and whip was popular with both boys and girls. In a quiet corner there would be exchanges of cigarette cards, the idea being

Just by the school, next to the top end of the sixth row of houses on the north side of Peel Brow, was WILSON the clogger's hut. You went there when clog irons were wearing thin and needed renewing. To await your turn you sat on a bench and watched the clogger working over his last, making and mending. Having paid your few pence and feeling slightly taller it was good fun to go running and scuffing the pavement till the sparks flew. [There is a 1915 photograph of Robert WILSON, clogger, outside his Peel Brow hut on page 11 of Ken BEETSON's *Ramsbottom*, Volume 2 (1978) - Editor.]

Horse drawn vehicles were quite common on the roads and streets, the grocery cart and the milk-float appearing daily. The milk was direct from the farm at the top of Bury New Road and carried in a large churn from which the farmer would ladle it into a measure and deliver it to the jug on the doorstep. The two wheeled float had steps at the rear and when you went for a ride occasionally it was a bit like riding in a chariot. The cart horses seemed to be usually placid and willing workers, but unfortunately on one sad day a heavy horse collapsed and died just at the side of the road, to the dismay of people living in the vicinity. Of course the coal cart came round regularly and the Council cart for the purposes of emptying the ash pits in the back yards before the advent of metal dust bins. Then there were the street criers.

The Rag 'n' Bone man would appear round the backs periodically with his unmistakable cry of 'Ragbone'. He had a small cart pulled by a rather dejected looking donkey and if you gave him some he would present you with a rubbing stone, which as used for adding a decorative effect to door steps and window sills. I understood that the rags were used in paper making but the bones were quite a mystery. There was also the man who came round with a large basket on his head or shoulder crying 'Oatcakes, Milk Cakes, Crumpets', and very nice they were too. On Saturday evening the newspaper seller would be shouting 'last sports' with the latest sports results.

Mothers of young children normally stayed at home in those days and there was certainly plenty of work without the advantage of electricity and labour saving devices, so that washing for instance would be done with a posser and tub, and a carpet would be draped over a clothes line and beaten. So washing, ironing, baking, mending, cleaning and shopping filled in most of the week. In the earlier days our house was lit by gas downstairs and upstairs it was candlelight. I remember the excitement when we were wired up for electricity and there was actually a switch over the bed. The street lights were lit by gas too, and the lamplighter would come round daily to each one.

My friends and I had a variety of games which we played around the streets, one such pastime being hoops. You had a large iron hoop two feet or more in diameter, and a guider which was an iron rod with a hook at one end. The idea was to keep the hoop rolling, controlling it with the guider and running along with it (or after it); this needed some skill and could be quite interesting on streets or varying gradients. There was a conveniently situated sweet shop on the corner where we could spend ha'pennies and pennies for such delights as strips of liquorice, sherbet fountains, dolly mixtures, aniseed balls, Pontefract cakes etc.

More adventurous play took us to Grants Tower and Nuttall Woods but quite often beyond the allotment area) to play cricket or football, or to fly kites. The 'top Rec'

had the school on one side and reached up to the houses on Whalley Road; on the other side of a hedgerow was the bottom Rec (now a housing estate), extending up to what is now the edge of the M66. The top Rec had swings, and a bandstand - the M66 must have cut through about half of it, obliterating the part where people would sit on the grass and enjoy the Sunday afternoon concerts sometimes held there. The bottom Rec was more level and better for cricket and football pitches. It had a gate at the end of Fern Street. In June each year the grass was mown and we enjoyed jumping and rolling in the hay. I don't recall suffering from hay fever but we had the traditional remedies of Fennings Fever Cure, Scott's Emulsion, Syrup of Figs, Virol etc. There being no National Health Service, calling a Doctor or going to see him meant receiving a bill for his services.

My brother and I were brought up to attend regularly the Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School (latterly Christ Church) and once a year in May it was the Anniversary or Sermons which involved rehearsals for weeks prior to the big day for the junior choir and full-voiced singing by the congregation to make a memorable occasion. It was customary to have some new clothes for the Sermons and Whitsun, thereafter for Sunday best and last year's demoted to everyday wear. With Whitsun came the Whit Walks. Most of them were held on Whit Friday morning although the Roman Catholic Church walked on the Sunday. As each of the several churches had its own procession with varied routes, and assemblies on the Market Place, prior organisation and manoeuvring through the streets was necessary. The brass bands had to endeavour not to conflict with one another and if it was windy the banner carriers could be in trouble having to exercise their strength to keep on course. Stops were made at a few homes and the hospital where hymns were sung for the benefit of the sick and infirm. In the afternoon it was customary to have sports and games in a field hired for the day, followed by a picnic tea; whilst the band that had been leading the

morning procession relaxed and played a selection of light music. As regards music at home we had a piano with brass candle holders attached to the front and a wind-up gramophone with a metal horn (plastic not invented). The days of singing around the piano were passing but my mother would often play and sing and we always had a family sing-song at Christmas. Our collection of gramophone records included some of the small sixpenny ones which could be bought at Woolworth's, where incidentally everything was sixpence or less. If the music began to slow down during play a few more turns on the handle were required, and the needle needed changing fairly frequently.

One day my older cousin introduced me to the technological wonder of the Crystal Set. I remember putting the headphones on and hearing a band playing somewhat faintly. It wasn't long before radios, referred to as wireless sets, began to arrive in the shops. But people tended to go out for entertainment. There were long queues outside the cinemas especially on Saturday evenings, there was ballroom dancing at the Liberal Club and also the pubs seemed quite busy. The main streets were alive with people, Saturday afternoon at the pictures was a treat for the children, and both cinemas would be full of excited youngsters eager to see the latest film and freed from parental control for an hour or two. In the silent film days the sound effects were provided partly by a piano and partly by the children. The *E* had a balcony and for those sitting on the front row there was the added diversion of dropping toffee wrappers on the ones sitting below in the stalls.

On Saturday mornings I sometimes visited my auntie and uncle in Spring Street, on the other side of the town, usually doing some shopping for her and thereby earning a penny or two. Behind *T* *M*, quite near to where she lived was a smithy and I liked to go and watch the farrier at work with the horses, removing worn shoes, fixing new ones, trimming the hooves and so on. My uncle was with the Ramsbottom Co-op Society and would be working with horse and motor transport.

Of course more motor vehicles were appearing on the scene although very few people had cars. However my uncle was the proud owner of one of the early models; I don't know what make it was but I don't think it went very fast. It was garaged at the top of the street - but it would have been quite safe to leave it on the street, theft, burglary and vandalism being very rare in those days. People often left their doors unlocked.

The Co-op had a charabanc with an open top which took people to the seaside, an adjustable cover being drawn over if there was rain. It was an event if an aeroplane passed over the town. People would hurry to their doors when they heard the engine, gazing skywards, pointing and asking one another if they had seen it.

At the back of Peel Brow was a large area given over to garden allotments and hen pens and quite a few people, including my father, kept some poultry. He would go out to see to them in a morning before setting out to walk to work at TURNBULL and STOCKDALE, Stubbins. So we enjoyed fresh eggs and occasionally there would be a fresh chicken for the table, also once in a while there was the excitement of a batch of newly hatched chicks to nurture. In the early morning my sleep was usually disturbed by a chorus of crowing cocks, and then later by a clatter of clogs as workers wended their ways to the mills, the mill chimneys and many house chimneys puffing out smoke over the town at the beginning of a new day.

Herbert Collier, 61, Caughall Road, Upton Heath, Chester CH2 1LP

We were sorry to learn from Edna COLLIER, Herbert's wife, that he had died unexpectedly on 22nd November Herbert had visited the Centre, and made several valuable donations, including photographs of Bolton Street.

We extend our sympathies to his family and friends - Editor

ROBERT THORPE: TURNBULL AND STOCKDALE'S LAST BLOCK CUTTER

This distinction belonged to Robert THORPE of Holcombe Brook, writes his daughter Mrs Jenny WHITTAKER of Bangor Road, Caernarfon, Gwynedd. She sent us the photograph of her father at work, reproduced here, together with a 1958 newspaper article. Unfortunately she does not know the exact date or title, though the *B* *T* must be favourite.

Family followed the Factory

Block-cutting is a dying craft, says 66 year old Robert Thorpe and he ought to know, for he has just retired after spending 53 years with a Ramsbottom



Mr. Thorpe, who lives in Bolton Road West, Holcombe Brook, believes that there is nothing to beat the hand printed material which he has helped to produce. "Now the fabric designs are getting more and more complicated and the mills print a greater amount of material from one

single design," he said. Mr. Thorpe's work entailed a great deal of skill, and it was only after a seven years' apprenticeship that he became a block-cutter with Turnbull and Stockdale Ltd. at the Rosebank Mill, Stub bins.

The Thorpe family has a strong association with Turnbull and Stockdale, Mr. Thorpe's

Father worked there more than 20 years.

Brother retired last December after 54 years' service with the firm.

Nephew is still working there with 20 years' service to his credit.

The total service amounts to around 150 years.

Mr. Thorpe's first job was as a tier boy at the age of 12. Then, the mill was at Stacksteads. But when the firm moved to Stubbins in 1906 the Thorpe family moved, too.

Now Mr. Thorpe will spend his time in the allotment near his home, but he keeps two of his blocks, cut artistically out of wood and raised copper, on show in the living room.

They are typical of his work of 20 or more years ago.

Material for curtains and furniture, hand printed with blocks made by Mr. Thorpe, can be found all over the world. As a farewell celebration, his workmates held a cocktail party in the printing room at the mill.

The tierer, mentioned in the article, was usually a young boy or woman who worked with a block printer, providing an even layer of colour from which the block was recharged after each printing application. Mrs WHITTAKER adds some detail about this company family: Robert's father was William THORPE, whilst his brother was John THORPE, latterly warehouse manager, retiring in 1957. Robert's nephew, Jack, was John's son and worked in TURNBULL and STOCKDALE's office in Cuba Mill as Export Clerk. He died in 1961 at the age of 39.

Andrew Todd, 183, Bolton Street, Ramsbottom, Bury BLO 9JD

HOW THE HANSON FAMILY CAME TO RAMSBOTTOM

F A HANSON , C
F 1920 1930 . H ,
1919 - E

Fred HANSON, my grandfather, was born 1865. According to family tradition, he was one of the HANSONs of the Halifax area who owned a lot of property, buses and trams. Due to a family disagreement he left the area and went to live at Rochdale Road, Bacup, working as an odd job man and carter, with a horse and cart, This would be about 1896. He married Esther YATES about 1888, and their son Thomas Ashworth HANSON was born in 1892. Around 1895 they moved to Ramsbottom and settled in 18a, Dundee Lane which in that period was a high quality area.

Being devout Baptists they joined the church, becoming gradually deacon and deaconess. They had their own pew seat for which they paid 7s 6d per annum, to help cover chapel expenses. The Minister's salary in 1924 was £80 per annum, the upkeep was mostly voluntary and costless, the Church was a Tower of Strength, Faith and Hope, and a way of life, ie the Minister's reference was required for jobs, plus attendance at Church - there would be very few in work in the 1990s if this was still so! Esther and Fred attended Chapel and Sunday School, Sundays and Guilds in the week, being very devout. The church guilds were meetings of the deacons, deaconesses, lay preachers, sidesmen, the choir leader, the Sunday School teachers and Minister. Esther's sister Hannah didn't go to Chapel, as far as I knew, of course this was the 1920s when I started attending. And yet Hannah had a family bible!

Grandfather Fred was a very tolerant, and easy going man. He'd do anything for you, or any one in need. Esther was the opposite. Very stern and strict, we children never spoke until spoken to. She would not brook opposition, thus the fall out at Halifax around 1890. It would be interesting to know what the disagreement was about to cause loss of inheritance.

Grandfather had a small warehouse in Dundee Lane, a shed about 30 feet by 15. He was a self-employed rope splicer and dealer in cotton waste, tab ends (ie ends of cloth), hemp (string) and sisal (straw string), from which he made a fair living, working alone. I used to help him out from the age of 12 (1930) until his death in 1936, mostly bundling half towels which sold for 6d each on Bury Market. I also

sorted string, wrote the odd letter to Redisher Works and to merchants who bought the hemp and sisal. His main income was from mending broken manila hemp rope pulleys, which were used to drive looms and for horse harnesses. Rope splicing was a craft in itself, and Grandfather was sent for by mills and workshops immediately a rope broke, and was paid 7s 6d an hour in the 1920s. Redisher Works used to send a pony and trap to 18a, Dundee Lane for him, and return him home afterwards!

Thomas Ashworth HANSON, my father, attended Chapel regularly up to the 1914 war. He was in the choir. He went to Holcombe Day School, leaving at 12 years old, when he was sent to John WOODS' Foundry as an apprentice engineer. This cost £ 100 and took a full seven years. He started at 5.30am, his first job was to take two three gallon cans to the pub, which opened at 6am, get them filled with beer at 1 s a can, and have it in the Works by 6.15am. He went again at 10am and again at 2pm, six days a week. Hence he eventually got a taste for ale. His parents were strictly

teetotal, life would be difficult. In 1911 he became a fully fledged engineer, working mostly as an outfitter.

Soon after the outbreak of war, he joined the Lancashire Fusiliers at Bury Barracks. Whilst on leave in London - probably just 48 hours, so too far to come home to Ramsbottom - he met my mother, Alice Maud MORTON. He spent his leaves courting her, and they married at Camberwell in 1916, where I was born in 1918. With the end of the war and 'Land Fit for Heroes' promised in 1914, 15, 16, 17 and 18, forgotten, no jobs, no dole. Only a means test ie if there were four of you and you had five chairs you sold one and your next hope was food cheques. On demob in 1919 there'd be too many looking for work in London, so they came hopefully back to Ramsbottom where my grandparents were established.

Granddad had got us a house to rent at 2s 11d per week. One living room, very small kitchen, no back door, one large bedroom with one window and a large beam running the full length of the room, one foot square. Four double beds and a cot were packed into this room with three jerries got at 6d each on the market. Outside the window were Uncle Jim's hen pens covering half an acre with about 200 hens and a dozen cocks with crowed at 3.00am in summer and with every conquest, usually 200 crows.

The houses had no water, same being carried from a well 100 yards away. 20 houses were served by this well, and buckets were a must. Mondays it took 20 buckets to fill the tub before going to school, after taking the papers. Toilets were round by the coal shed 30 yards away, three houses to a toilet. Queued sometimes and Brooky took a library book. Earth toilets, flush not invented. Midden cart came once a month with waders and spades. We took to the hills for the day!

Fred A Hanson, 50, Central Avenue, Birkdale, Southport PR8 3EQ

T, *7, C F*, Ramsbottom Reminiscences,
Volume 2, **pages 22-5. Fred has written extensively of his time in Ramsbottom, and we will publish more of his interesting recollections in the future - Editor**

MEMORIES OF THE OLD POLICE STATION

As a small child, I lived at the Police Station next to the level crossing, now part of The Wharf. We came to Ramsbottom when my father took charge of the local police force in December 1931.

I don't know whether the police station had been purpose built, but it resembled two stone built Victorian houses. We lived in one half and my father's co-sergeant lived in the other half. The front room of our house was the actual police station office and facing our living room door was 'the cell'.

The cobbled area now part of The Wharf was our back-yard. It was an 'open back' for the two houses and the lavatories were in the back yard. A picture of the front of the property is on sale at the Heritage Centre in Can Street.

Next door to us were the ruins of the old toll bar on the Peel Brow side.

On the railway side there was a small building with large weighing scales inside. The railway was very busy and, although the trains thundered past our living room window, we ourselves never noticed the noise.

I recall being told that on New Years Day 1932 my father and some of the men had to disarm a lunatic who had escaped from Prestwich Asylum and was standing at the top of Bridge Street waving a carving knife. My only recollection of a prisoner in the cells is of a drunk kept in the cells overnight who devoured a complete loaf of bread and jam, provided by my mother, before he was released sober.

Around 1935/6, the Lancashire Constabulary purchased St Paul's Vicarage in Crow Lane (now the site of Peel Chapel) and this became the new Police Station. It had two purpose built cells at the back of the building.
Leslie R Norris, 1, Vernon Road, Greenmount, Bury

RIDGWAYS: A CHRONICLE OF OUR OWNERSHIP OF A COTTAGE ON THE RIDGE, 1944

Edgar Alfred NUTTALL had died at Christmas 1935, leaving a widow, Marjorie with two infant daughters, Christine and Barbara. Early in the War, Marjorie moved her small family from their house at 14, Mayfield Roaa, Holcombe Brook, to Aislaby, 512, Bolton Road West, the home of her husband's parents, Alfred and Mary NUTTALL. Between October 1944 and February 1945, Marjorie kept an account of her family's associations with Middle Ridge, a cottage above Redisher 'Our father's parents gave us a home during the war partly to escape having evacuees billeted upon them', writes Christine, 'but it was a generous and loving arrangement.' One summer evening, around Whitsuntide in 1944, Marjorie and her elder sister Dolly BROOME were out walking along the Ridge, that stretch of high ground between the slopes of Holcombe Hill and the raised area of Simon's. They found an empty cottage, Middle Ridge, long derelict and damp, with broken windows and gaping doorways. And so began an association with this delightful spot which lasted nearly 10 years, during which they resorted to the house for weekends and holidays. Christine and Barbara typed and annotated their mother's delightful record of these years in 1996, and have given us permission to use extracts. The account evokes an era of country life of half a century ago, on the doorstep of an industrial town. There are also echoes of rural life from much earlier periods - life in a stone dwelling without the 20th Century necessities, and timelessly reliant therefore on the candle, the spout and the wood fall.

Marjorie NUTTALL's account has, as yet, not been published, but if anyone wants to register an interest in a copy should publication take place, they need to write to Barbara (address below). The body of the text is as written by Marjorie NUTTALL in 1945; explanatory annotations by her daughters I have bracketed as Notes; my own additions I have put in editorial square brackets - Editor.

The Ridge is farmed by John Heap of Higher Redisher - and hard farming it must be - for it has steep rough roads which become quagmires after rain, and every field is sloping. We called at his farm on our way home and rang the bell at the little window which looks out onto the farmyard. Mrs. Heap, who hails from the Cumberland border, was alone, reading before a bright fire.

(Note: All the ridge farms were painted bright red, it was the 'colour' of the landlord and his way of showing which belonged to him. I had long been attracted to these red barn doors which stood out plainly as you walked to 'Catkin Corner', a favourite walk of our very young days.)

[Mr. Heap] only rented the land and had nothing to do with the letting of the dwelling places. Our best plan would be to meet the manager of the Owner's mill . . . who lives round the bend in the lane. His house, a sturdy stone building, faces South and well suits the bleak moorland country behind.

'Too many repairs needed,' he said, 'and we simply haven't the labour to spare.'

'Oh, we only want it for a pic-nic place and it wouldn't need to be in good repair for that,' said I, blissfully unmindful of possible leaking roofs, and deliberately forgetting those gaping windows.

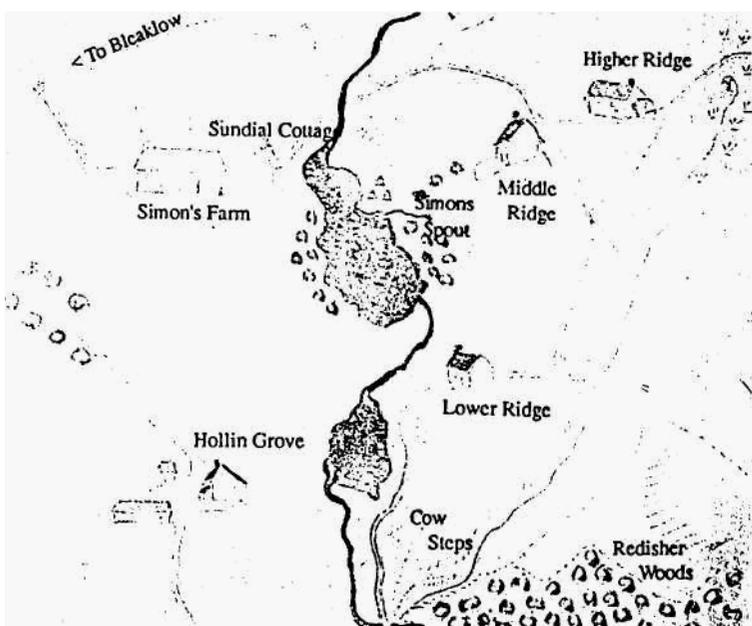
He agreed to talk it over with the Owner

(Note: The manager was a chap we called 'Old Scopy' (Mr. Schofield). He used to shout and chase us when we trespassed in Redisher Woods, kept private by the dye works which lay in the valley bottom and gathered water in the lodges from the Red Brook. The Owner was the Ainsworth family, mill owners (of the aforementioned dyeworks) and land owners in the Holcombe area.)

[The family took the cottage for an initial six months at four shillings a week, and took their first proper look on Whit Monday, 1944.]

On opening the door we found ourselves in a small flagged porch and met a very stale and musty smell. The inner door was as tricky as the outer one, but a few moments saw us inside, breathing still more mustiness and surveying with concern all the rubbish to be moved.

Cousin J (Note: Jean Nuttall) who was having her day's holiday, elected to start with Bistles [ie Barbara] in the bedrooms. One of the bedrooms is a good square room



Marjorie Nuttall's map of the Ridge

with a sash window looking over the [Rifle] Range towards Edgeworth. In the distance can be seen Turton Heights with the dark head of Winter Hill behind. This room has a good fireplace and the walls, when cleared of their limp trailing paper, proved to be quite a clean blue colour. The boards of the floor were wide and solid and most of them well-fitted together.

The smaller room is more like a glorified landing than a bedroom but is much preferred by the children because of its quaintness. The short staircase leads right into it and it has a steep sloping ceiling and a tiny mullioned window which faces East and rises only about five feet from the lane. This small room has some how become our 'guest room' and as we use the wide window sill as a dressing table, we always warn the guest not to leave any valuable there, as a tall man could easily put his hand in the window and take them! The tall man has now become almost a cottage legend.

We were trying out a few ideas of how to block the broken windows with bits of wood and brattice cloth (Note: Strong tarred cloth) when who should arrive but the Mill Manager and his Joiner, who was off work with a broken arm.

They seemed surprised to find the place needing so few repairs, and owing, no doubt, to seeing our weak feminine efforts at joinering, they at once measured up the windows and agreed to put in new panes.

Whit-Friday ... many people were out on the Ridge having pic-nics ... we put on the kettle and got out the 'great cloam' cups. (Note: The term first heard when we had tea at Entwistle Station when walking to the 'Craggy Valley' (Earnshaw) and the lady of the house apologised for only having 'cloam cups'. They were large and clumsy and we used this word for any cups or mugs that were a bit rough .)

The kettle was singing the first verse, as our friend the Post Mistress in Edgeworth says, when a party of pic-nickers knocked at the door to ask if we would brew their tea for them! So began our slight trade; we have brewed for many parties since then.

(Note: The reason folk asked for tea was that 'POTS OF TEA' was painted in white on the little red wooden cabin at the end of the barn (the old privy).)

It was about this time that we started to use the water from Simon's Spout in preference to the water from the spout over the Ridge. Mrs. Heap explained that Simon's water was spring water and therefore pure, but from the other spout came only collected surface water from the Ranges. The difference in colour is very easily seen; the spring water is crystal clear while the other is always faintly brown ... at its clearest.

In the hot weather when our fruit drinks were popular, it was probably the icy coldness of the spring water that made them so.

Haytime this year came late in July owing to a very wet June. There were several fields on the Ridge under hay and it was delightful to hear the hum of the mowing machines and to have such lots of company on the Ridge, for Mr. Heap had helpers both old and young and they were a jolly crowd.

Some of the fields were tricky to cut owing to the awkward slopes and it took a strong and skilful man to negotiate some of the bumps and to keep the blades cutting through the grass in straight swathes.

During the hay-time we used to go into the fields to lend an inexperienced hand with a rake. We would work with Mrs. Heap who skilfully raked down the field and

up again with untiring speed, telling us, as she did so, about her home farm which lies on the borders of England and Scotland, in fact right on the top part of Hadrian's Wall. Occasionally as we raked we uncovered tiny field mice or unlucky little shrews which had met their fate under the blade of the mower.

The men did the loading and carting and when the last load was ready Mr. Heap would call 'Bed-time' and rakes would be hung away in the barn and helpers would make their way home in straggling procession led by Fanny and Nightie (Nightingale) with the hay waggon, one horse pulling and one pulling back, so steep was the gradient.

Then followed quiet suppers in the garden washed down by cool draughts of cordial, the preparations for the morning's early breakfast and finally, in a stillness one could almost feel, locking up and wriggling into flea-bags for a sweet dreamless sleep.

If the haymaking went on 'til very late we went to bed before they left the Ridge and then we would hear, as we lay awake, preparations for going; the first waggon waiting for the second to turn the awkward bend, we would see George sitting astride the third horse lent from Redisher Farm, and when both waggons were firmly roped, we would hear them rattle past the little back window with harness all a-jingle and the sound of men's voices urging or quietening the horses.

Young Duc's [Christine's] birthday falls at the end of July and was this year on a Sunday. She invited her Godmother to stay. (Note: Dora Congdon, friend and former colleague of Marjorie Nuttall at Broughton High School, Manchester.) Poor Godmother missed her train through a late bus. So Young Duc went to the town (Bury) to meet her. As it was Sunday there was no transport so they had to walk back four miles to the cottage ... Sundays can be quiet on the Ridge; when nature is left to herself, there seems to be no sound at all, and if the weather is not very good there are no passers-by. We feel almost on top of the world, miles away from anybody and the stillness wraps round us like a pleasant-protective covering. But there are Sundays when the peace of the Ridge is shattered tremendously by the shriek of bugles and the whizz of bullets and the smack of Sten guns firing. These are the days when the Range is used to the full and simply bristles with cars and the road leading up to it is thick with 'buses, for the Home Guard is out in full strength on its week-end manoeuvres.

The Guide Cottage (Higher Ridge) was occupied, the local scouts were camping below us at Simon's and all the Ridge seemed bustling and busy in the hot sunshine.

Party after party of thirsty holidaymakers called at the cottage for tea or fruit drinks. There were two people who used to live at Cinder Hill about twenty five years ago; there was the party from Manchester containing two old Baptist friends Mr and Mrs

Lord; there was the family of twelve who tipped me a shilling and a small boy who had three consecutive fruit drinks. At one time there were over twenty people dotted about wielding our teapots and cups and jugs and we were kept congenially employed in drawing water, stoking the fire to keep two kettles always on the boil.

During the Summer, the ancient lock on the outer door broke and we were lucky enough to find a young joiner in the village who replaced it for us while we were and in, so we no longer have to barricade the door at night with a heavy log away on holiday. The new lock has the advantage of locking both from the outside

With the shortening of the days we had to use candle-light more and more and have gradually accumulated eight candlesticks which live at the cottage permanently. Friends have been most kind in lending them to us and one or two are gifts outright, including the massive one from Janet's mother which came in the cottage's Christmas present! With the light from eight candles we knit and play games quite easily and they have the added blessing of contributing quite a considerable amount of warmth. We are told that Ralph Rooney (Note: Local worthy from Hawkshaw, who among many other exploits walked from Land's End to John O Groats uses candles in his house for that very reason.) We find the sixteen inch candles very much more useful than the usual 12 inch. They burn for a whole evening more, without any attention and standing so tall in their sticks they look so much more dignified!

Autumn has proved a delightful time at Middle Ridge. With the cooler days the cottage inside has seemed drier. In Summer time there is a lot of condensation on the cold stone flags and walls inside, but this disappeared in Autumn and so we were able to keep the place more habitable. The early sunsets too have been so colourful and as we face due West, we get all the glory of the last fading light when we sit at tea, with a fire (which in Autumn has to be a fire), blazing in the grate and simply eating up supplies of wood.

Marjorie Nuttall

Post Script, 1996 After that first eventful year, we settled into a pattern of weekends spent there, either just ourselves or with friends; and in the Summer holidays, longer times when the weather was good. Having said that, I have memories of struggling up the cowsteps in driving snow or rain, carrying everything on our backs, including a few pieces of coal sometimes, to eke out the wood. Water and wood ruled our lives at Middle Ridge, both had to be fetched daily to keep life going; none of us could bear to pass a dead branch if we saw one lying by the path.

The selling of pots of tea became a regular event on Bank Holidays and helped finance our retreat into the hills; and as children we loved it all. My friends and I roamed the immediate surroundings of the cottage all day long and we knew every tree, stream, bog and even blade of grass!

After about five years, my mother was not so keen to stay there, the need had gone to some extent, as we were now living in our own house, no longer with grandparents, and we children were old enough to stay on our own. Sometimes we made excursions to the pictures in Ramsbottom and thought nothing of the long trek back in the dark after leaving the bus at Holcombe Brook. Other times we sat round the fire watching it die and hoping someone else would venture into the cold dark of the wood room to get some more logs, often having frightened ourselves by telling or reading ghost stories.

Barbara Rigg, *Sykeside*, Broughton in Furness, Cumbria LA20 6ER

Editor's Post Script, 8th March 1998 Never having been able to resist locations with strong associations, I walked up today from Park Road to Redisher Farm and the Ridge with my youngest daughter. We encountered Lower Ridge in late afternoon - a bramble covered pile of stones, the vernacular flag fencing the best preserved part of the whole site. As we followed the ridge track northwards, with only a few grazing sheep for company, it was the windbreak of trees, so carefully sketched by

Marjorie NUTTALL half a century ago, which impacted first. They are just as reproduced in her booklet, and on the front cover of this magazine. But Middle Ridge is a ruin, just three or four feet of walling in place, the rest of the masonry having fallen in. Doorjambes and window sills are still visible, as is the raised patio of flags on which the family picnicked on those summer evenings in the 1940s and 1950s. 50 yards away, Higher Ridge has fared no better, both properties now within MoD fencing, one of the reasons perhaps why they are uninhabited. The main handicap to all three Ridge farms, however, is their lack of vehicle access. So, I mused aloud on Middle Ridge's watershed stonework, and its succession of long dead inhabitants, until four year old Eleanor brought me back to the end of the 20th Century with a start. 'Can we stop talking about this house now?' she said. I know it's sad, but let's stop talking about it!

And so, as the light of a bright Spring day petered away, we left this old ruin to its own ghosts, to its memories of Young Due and Bistles, and to memories of those magic childhood summers half a lifetime ago.

SUMMERSEAT KAYAKS OF THE '40S: MORE HARMLESS CHILDREN'S GAMES FROM THE GOOD OLD DAYS

I think I am becoming a target for those who wish to relive their childhood.

On Sunday 8th February, I was photographing the newly deroofed 'Castle' in Market Place. A gentleman with cap and grey sideburns was sharing my curiosity, and gave it a once over.

'Looks a bit bleak now, doesn't it?' he said, by way of commenting on what we were both looking at.

'There will be a plaque on the back wall, with the town's history, I volunteered, in compensation.

Hmm, that won't last long. Pause. 'Mr CONNOR who built this - he was a fine chap.

And my informant became lost in the past as he recounted how Mr CONNOR, a man who was 'just there when anything needed doing', had culverted the channel in the Irwell under the bridge by Brooksbottoms Mill. The channel, which took water to

the Island dyeworks, ran at the edge of the river, for perhaps $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile. The water in it would run very fast in a flood, and inevitably attracted the attentions of the local boys. They would sail down it at great and dangerous speeds. 'Mr CONNOR - he was always Mr CONNOR - covered it with concrete and puddled it. A fine job. This perhaps in the '30s.

There was about two or three feet of water in it, my informant continued, by now quite animated. 'We still used to sail old tin baths down it. There'd be about a foot's headroom - we had to duck right down! And he imitated some Hiawatha in an Indian war canoe.

As a boy of the '50s, I am beginning to think that my generation was one of the last more I think that *Running Wild* and *Captain Coconut* had to be!

Andrew Todd, 183, Bolton Street, Ramsbottom, Bury BLO 9JD