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# NEWS MAGAZINE





# Ramsbottom Heritage Society

## News Magazine No 58

### Spring/Summer 2020

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#### Front Cover

Ramsbottom Market Place April 2020 - Photograph by Ian Smith

The objects of the society shall be:-

- a) To advance education of the public by creating an awareness of 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 artefacts. To retain, catalogue and/or copy them where possible, and to operate an information centre.
- c) To seek to protect the heritage of Ramsbottom

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

At the time of writing, we are in lockdown due to the COVID-19 virus. This has caused the cancellation of all of the public and committee meetings until further notice, but definitely all public meetings up to August 2020. We hope to return in September with the scheduled programme. Hopefully some of the cancelled talks can be rescheduled for next year. Whilst on this subject, Kate Howarth, who has been the Programme Secretary for the last 2 years, is standing down, so we need another committee member to take on this role, or a member not currently on the committee. If you are interested in this role, which involves sourcing speakers, and arranging the details of the talk with them, please contact any member of the committee. The Annual General Meeting was scheduled for May 20<sup>th</sup>, and this has now been postponed until either August or September, possibly before the September talk.

I am using the time to convert all the News Magazines into a digital readable format. I converted the first 25 magazines 10 years ago, but advances in computer technology means that they can be more accurately converted from an image into text. By the time you read this, hopefully the first 50 magazines will all be available on the website. I have also decided to recreate the first 25 magazines into individual A5 pages, so that they are more readable online. I will also separate the research articles in each magazine into individual documents, so they can also be accessed more easily, as they provide a valuable resource of the history of Ramsbottom. If anyone else has used the time for research, we would be interested in publishing it in either a future magazine, or on the website.

The committee hope that everyone is keeping well during this difficult time, and hopefully we will come back from this experience as a stronger community and Heritage Society

John Leyland

## **LATEST NEWS**

### **STUBBINS REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY 2019**

As we approached Remembrance Day 2019 it was suggested that the Society should contact Melba Swintex, the new owners of Stubbins Vale Mill, Ramsbottom, to express our hopes that the time-honoured tradition of holding a memorial service at the mill's memorial would continue. Shortly before we spoke to Melba Swintex we discovered that other interested parties had beaten us to it. They had been reassured that there was no problem with the Remembrance Sunday ceremony being held by the memorial. A company manager told the Society that they did not wish to interfere with anything that had been planned but, unfortunately, the factory and offices would be closed on the day. However, they were keen to play a part in the ceremony so had arranged for a wreath to be made for the Stubbins Vale memorial.

It transpired that Ramsbottom British Legion had already arranged to hold a small remembrance ceremony at the memorial at 12.30pm on Sunday 10th November. The ceremony included an opportunity for those present to lay a



**Photo by Ian Chapman**

wreath so Karen Kay, a Heritage Society committee member, placed Melba Swintex's wreath on their behalf.

Stubbins Vale memorial plaques are set into a wall to the side of the building's front entrance by a paved area. The wall also has a dedication plaque. Full details about the men whose names are on the two plaques are online along with close up photographs of the memorials.

### **“Interpreting Ramsbottom Station: Past and Present”**

The Heritage Society provided and installed at its own expense, an information board in The Castle, Market Place, some years ago. On 8th June 2019 the Society's second information board was received by Ramsbottom Station staff, Alex Walker the station manager, Chandra Law and Liam Barnes. It was a gift from Ramsbottom Heritage Society to the ELR and their Ramsbottom staff to say



thank you for allowing us to sell seven editions of the *Ramsbottom War News* on the station and the trains from 2010 to 2017. The group who compiled the War News - Brenda Richards, Anne Mortimer, Ingrid Gouldsbrough, Ros Kendall and Brenda Newth are pleased that so many from our Society got involved in selling the paper, dressed up as mill workers or similar. It was a great experience for all, and we sold well over 1,000 each year at £1 a copy.

Our thanks also go to Andrew Todd for all the effort he put into producing the board for us. It has been installed in the waiting room, giving the station's visitors the opportunity to enjoy looking through all the information, which is illustrated with a large number of images. The board shows the railway as it was in the past and also the working of the station's heritage features still in operation, with photographs which Andrew sourced from his own collection and the collections of Eric Bentley, Andy Coward, Peter Duncan, the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway Society, Malcolm Orrett and Ramsbottom Heritage Society. It also includes an historical chronology with the railway's key dates from when it first opened in 1946 to 1991, when the present ELR heritage line was extended to Rawtenstall.

It is fascinating to discover how Ramsbottom used to be the most important intermediate station in the Bury – Bacup - Accrington area, once so much larger and so busy with goods traffic and passenger trains that the gates were closed to the road up to 180 times a day, and very surprising to learn that the nearby sidings had a capacity of over six hundred wagons.

### **The Joseph Strang lamppost project**

This project was completed just after New Year 2020, when an information board provided by the Society was installed next to the lamppost by a Morrisons team. Since the store only took delivery of the board just before Christmas 2019, it was a lovely surprise to see it had been installed so quickly.

The project was very much a group effort and the Society is very grateful to all those who contributed. It was inspired by a Heritage Society member's success in gaining the necessary support for the original 1920s lamppost, which was



scheduled for removal, to be relocated to an appropriate site. As we reported in RHS News Magazine No 55 (Autumn/Winter 2018), due to the efforts of Bury MBC, Morrisons Supermarket PLC and the Society, the 1920s lamppost was renovated and installed by Morrisons car park, on the site of Joseph Strang's foundry where it was made.

The A1 size information board features the lamppost's story and also information about Joseph Strang's business and other 19th century Ramsbottom engineering works,

sourced mainly from collections at Bury Archives (including the Ramsbottom Heritage Society Collection). Researchers included Susan Smith (joint leader of Ramsbottom Library's family history sessions) and individual RHS members Brenda Richards and Barbara Park who also helped with the final selection of the content. John Leyland was involved with the drafting of a design which he then worked up into the final layout.

### **The restoration of the Grant Arms**

Extensive repair work on most of the building, except for the oldest portion at the back, was completed by November 2019 by Rosebridge, who are now the occupiers. The Grant Arms has been given a new lease of life as their offices, standing over Market Place as a visual reminder of the town's heritage. The planning application for this iconic Grade 2 listed building has ensured a sympathetically renovated exterior (with its clock now in working order).

On 8th November Rosebridge held an open evening at the Grants which was attended by Jake Berry MP. The company was set up as an independent financial business in Bolton in 2006 by Phillip Rose. He first started in financial advice on



Bridge Street, Ramsbottom, and is now Rosebridge's Group IFA CEO. The business also has offices in Skipton, Chester and Leeds.

## **Roadway resurfacing in Ramsbottom Conservation Area**

On 19<sup>th</sup> February, work was about to start on resurfacing streets within the town's conservation areas: Eliza Street, Carr Street and a section of Tanners Street. John Ireland, on behalf of the Society, requested that yellow line road markings relaid upon completion of the resurfacing work be done according to conservation area guidelines, which specify that double lines be only 50mm wide and primrose in colour. This style of yellow line can be seen in Holcombe and in Bury town centre. We believe that Ramsbottom's new road markings could be laid to follow the conservation area guidelines at no extra cost.

The 2011 Bury Council's *Ramsbottom Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan* (which can be viewed online) notes that highway surfaces and details are all important to the area's character. In particular, the document pointed out that there had been some obtrusive and inappropriate yellow line marking in Ramsbottom, which had not followed the required narrow primrose coloured detail. This has even affected most parts of the conservation area in Ramsbottom town centre over a sustained period.

(Our collection of photographs from 2007 show lines 3" / 75mm wide and vivid yellow that can probably be seen from outer space!)



Market Place



Bolton Street



Bridge Street



Tanners



Carr Street



Smithy Street

**RAMSBOTTOM CONSERVATION AREA:  
Less obtrusive yellow lines should have been  
used for the management of traffic.**

## **Annual Photographic Competition 2019**

The competition has been running for 33 years, and this year 9 entrants entered a total of 590 photographs in 4 categories, The judge was Steve Gill who would have presented the awards on the evening, but the meeting had to cancelled. Steve, who is a retired professional photographer, was looking for photographs that were instantly recognisable as having been taken around Ramsbottom in 2019. There are now over 4,700 photographs on the Ramsbottom Heritage website taken since 1987, searchable by filename or description, and they are an invaluable record of the many changes in the town. The winners are each category were

### **Events and Daily Life**

There were 168 photographs in this category, which is for events during the year, as well as pictures of everyday life in the town. The winner was John Leyland for a photograph of the signs on Bridge Street



**HPC- 19EV-118 - Signs by the Railway - John Leyland**

Highly commended certificates in Events and Daily Life were awarded to Ian Summers (HPC-19EV-101) for a photograph of Edenfield & District Horticultural Show, and also to Alan Seymour ( HPC-19EV-142) for a Chocolate Cafe Christmas window display.

### **Town and Country**

127 photographs of landscapes and general views

The Winner is Ian Williams for his entry of Holcombe Hill taken at sunset in July from Summerseat.

Only one Highly Commended certificate was awarded, as there is a limit of two awards per entrant. This was awarded to John Leyland for a picture of a snowman in Nuttall Park ( HPC-19TC-107)



**HPC-19TC-119 - Holcombe Hill Sunset – Ian Williams**

## Themes

Up to 5 photographs on a theme

There were 22 Themes entered - a total of 101 photographs, with the 1940's weekend and the Tour of Britain cycle race being popular topics

The winner was Alan Seymour for 4 pictures of the Black Pudding lobbing championship. There was one Highly Commended certificate for Joyce Sellers's five photos of a wedding photoshoot for a magazine, based around St Paul's and the railway station (HPC-19TH-201 to HPC19TH-205)



**HPC-19TH-111 to HPC-19TH-114 - Black Pudding Lobbing - Alan Seymour**

## **Buildings**

This category attracted 194 entries, with some entrants concentrating on a theme, such as the shops on Bridge Street, and the date stones around town. These photographs will be useful in future years to identify the shops and cafes which seem to be constantly changing

The winner was Ian Chapman for his photograph of Irwell Brewery on Square Street. This photograph was also selected as the overall winner of the competition and Ian was awarded the Dickensian Trophy to keep for a year

Highly Commended certificates were awarded to Keith Burroughs for his entry HPC-19BU-164 of Mannings bakery, and also to Ian Chapman for his entry HPC-19BU-128 of the redevelopment of the Grant Arms by Rosebridge.

### **Dickensian Trophy Winner**



**HPC-19BU-068 -- View of Irwell Brewery from Bolton Street- Ian Chapman**

## **SIGNS OF THE TIMES ~**

### **THE FACTORY BOTTOM TRAGEDY 1864**

Abraham Hitchings, a maker-up at a local cotton mill, lived with Eliza, his wife of fifteen years, at Factory Bottom, Ramsbottom. They had two children, a thirteen year old daughter and a son who was four. Eliza's widowed sister, Hannah Bagley had also lived with them for the previous eight months. Abraham and Eliza had sometimes argued, but nobody had known him to have behaved violently towards her.

On Saturday, May 14th 1864, Abraham went to work and returned home at dinner time. He ate his meal and at three-thirty, left the house without saying where he was going or when he would return. That evening, Eliza and Hannah decided to go shopping and were home by ten. Abraham was inside but had locked the door, preventing them from gaining entry and he did not respond to their repeated knocking. He had done this once before, several months earlier and as they did on that occasion, the sisters called on their next door neighbours, Richard and Harriet Haddock, who agreed they could stay the night with them.

It was four o'clock, on the Sunday morning that Abraham knocked on the door of his neighbours, who invited him in. He immediately rushed towards Eliza, who was asleep in a chair in front of the fireplace and grabbing her violently by the hair, dragged her out into the street. He was in a rage and fearing for her sister's well-being, Hannah followed them outside and when he threw Eliza to the ground, she flung herself on top of her in an attempt to protect her.

Several neighbours, together with Hannah and Harriet witnessed what happened over the next few minutes, but later they could not agree on what had actually occurred. Some thought he was drunk, but others did not. Some believed he struck Eliza once, others that he did so twice. It was also unclear as to whether he slapped her with an open hand or punched her with a clenched fist. However, all were agreed that when she died a few minutes later, Abraham was genuinely distraught.

The inquest into Eliza's death opened on the following Wednesday at the Grant Arms and evidence was heard over two days, before coroner Mr Dearden. Those who had witnessed the incident appeared and details were given of a post-mortem,

performed by Ramsbottom surgeon James Smith, who was assisted by Dr. John Carruthers of Bolton.

There were no visible external injuries but on removing her scalp, they found six ounces of blood at the base of her brain and they advised the coroner that this effusion of blood was undoubtedly the result of violence. Mr Dearden summarised the evidence and outlined the differences between murder and manslaughter before the jury retired. They were absent for three hours and returned with a verdict of guilty to manslaughter.

This was by a majority of thirteen to three and the dissenting jury members afterwards confirmed they believed that Abraham had done nothing untoward and should not have been accused of any crime. There was obviously much support for him and reports in the *Bury Times* suggested there was a widespread feeling in the district, that he had been provoked into acting as he did by Eliza's behaviour. 'Provocation' was often used in their defence by men accused of killing their wives, but this did not necessarily refer to violent behaviour. More often, it was said to have been because their victims were considered to have behaved inappropriately, such as by drinking heavily, or to have shown themselves to be poor wives and mothers.

Abraham was also committed to the Manchester Assizes by the town's magistrates, which the law then required and his trial took place on Friday July 29th. He claimed to have spent the Saturday walking, had not been drinking and insisted he loved Eliza, whose death was a terrible accident. Nevertheless, the jury

convicted him of manslaughter and he was sentenced to four months imprisonment, which he served at the New Bailey Gaol in Salford.

Martin Baggoley

References include the *Bury Times* 21<sup>st</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> May and 6<sup>th</sup> August 1864



## **MEMORIES OF THE BUTCHERY TRADE IN RAMSBOTTOM**

There were over a dozen butchers in Ramsbottom between the wars and advertisement phrases such as “home killed meat only” or “all our own killing” indicate that much slaughtering, especially of pigs, went on in the town. It seems that squeals from one slaughterhouse off Square Street could be heard on Bolton Street. Cottrill’s pork butchers shop (established 1866) was at 40-42 Bridge Street but the slaughtering was done at a discreet distance on Kay Brow.

*Ernest Hutchinson was born in Ramsbottom in 1918 and started school at five years old at St Paul’s school in Crow Lane opposite St Paul’s Church. At thirteen years old he moved to Bury Technical School in Broad Street and when he was fifteen he went on to Stand Grammar School at Whitefield before starting work on 1st April 1937. In the following extract from his memoirs he recalls, in detail, his experiences helping some of the butchers, which he did when he was under ten years old. (Editor)*

Every Tuesday, cattle and sheep arrived in railway wagons in a little siding in what was then the Square Works, (now the TNT Transport Depot) at the south end of Railway Street. The area where the animals were offloaded from the railway wagons was fenced off by vertical long baulks of timber built like a palisade with a gate outlet down a ramp to Railway Street. As the area within the fence was raised to the height of the floor of the railway wagons, part of the side of each wagon was lowered to bridge the small gap between the wagon and the platform so that it was safe for the cattle to get out. Sometimes the cattle came out ok, but many times it was a case of prodding with sticks and the butchers’ curses that forced them out. Other times, one or two came out with a mad rush, scattering the butchers who were trying to sort out their marked beasts. (They were usually marked with an ear tag with the butcher’s name.)

During this unloading, we lads sat on top of the stout timbers of the palisade shouting ourselves hoarse. The butchers worked as a team to sort out one butcher’s cattle and sheep in a huddle by the gate, then his dog and boy helpers herded them to his slaughter house, where he had his holding sheds or field

enclosures. All the animals were sorted in this way. Then the yelling, cursing, mooing, baying and barking of the dogs died away and the cattle yard was quiet again. There was, however, a sea of muck and urine to be cleaned up by someone detailed for that pleasant task.

We lads loved these Tuesday nights, they were like a Wild West show to us and the more chaotic it was, the more we enjoyed it. If you managed to prove yourself a good herder, there was a 2d or 3d to be earned when the cattle were safely in the butcher's holding pen. I usually herded for Thompson, Barcroft and Whitaker who had a joint slaughter house at Barwood Lea, owned by Barcroft. It was situated near the bottom of the Church Field on the ground between there and Kay Brow, which is now a small housing site. Sometimes I would herd for Procter; his slaughter house was at Kibboth Crew (near the old tallow works that is now The Old Mill Restaurant). It was a long haul from the cattle yard and not much fun on a dark winter's night if an animal shot off up Carr instead of along Springwood Street. A chase up Carr past the Rising Sun pub would take the wind out of anyone. Mr Procter did his own killing with just one helper, a kind chap who used to take me in his pony and trap when he was delivering meat to customers on Saturdays.



At holiday times and after school on Wednesday afternoons I would go to Thompson's slaughter house or Barcroft's. Mr Barcroft only had one helper, and killed only for his own shop. (Wednesday was the day when they did the week's killing as their shop closed in the afternoon.) For the princely sum of 6d my tasks included squeezing out the contents of yards of intestines, which would be used for sausage skins, cut fat off cows' hard stomach, hold sheep's legs on the cracker and make sure all the blood ran into the blood bucket to be used for black puddings. To earn my money I also had to scrub the wooden cutting bench and help swill the floor with a hose pipe and help to put fresh straw in the cattle pen after it had been mucked out. The butcher pushed a knife in their throats as they lay on the cratch and put his finger in the hole, I think to break the spinal cord. The blood together with the cow's blood was used to make black puddings.

The Cattle were "pole axed" in those days, a rope was put round the cow's neck and passed through a stout iron ring. The cow's head was then pulled down and held still and the axe man, using an axe with about ½ an inch hollow pipe, shaped as in the diagram [author's sketch]. This was driven into the cow's forehead which felled it unconscious on the floor. Then a cane was inserted in the axe hole and sliced round to make sure it was totally put out and then its throat was cut and it was drained of blood. Then it was hauled up by its hind legs to hang from a girder in the roof to be skinned, gutted and sawn in two, washed ready for the sanitary inspector to inspect it, and the liver and kidney and to give his approval that all was well and that the cow was healthy. When the cow was down I was called in to stand on its side and, aided by a rope hanging down from the roof, by pressing down with my feet make my weight help to pump the blood out of it. On one occasion a large bull was being slaughtered and the butchers were having difficulty getting the bull's head up in the right position for pole axing so I was sent out in the yard for safety. They told me they would shout for me then the bull was axed and down and could then go in to do the pumping. I waited and then they called me, but as I got just outside the door they dropped buckets and shouted, "Look out the bull's up". I fled down the yard, leapt up onto a ledge in the high outside wall near the high solid gate and jumped the wall. Unfortunately Mr



Barcroft had some sheep herded in front of the gate waiting to be let in when the bull was down and I landed in the middle of them. They scattered and Mr Barcroft called the dogs to get them back and then started to thump me with his stick and the other butchers, who had come out of the slaughter house, were all lined up looking over the wall and cheering him on. I was never allowed to forget that incident, they said they had never seen anyone move so fast and make the jump to the ledge and over the wall.

Ernest Hutchinson 2005

### **THE FLAG ON HOLCOMBE TOWER 1957**

In the 1950s, when I was in the Lancashire Fusiliers a few lads and I did something that got us into the national papers regarding the then closed Peel Tower. In April 1957 I asked for and received a transfer from St George's Barracks in Gosport to the Parachute Regiment but was told that first of all I would have to do infantry training and would therefore have to choose a regiment to do it with. After a lot of thought the Lancashire Fusiliers came to mind - although I had never wanted to join them but twelve weeks would be fine. On

arriving at Bury Barracks I was told by our CO that I would be transferred to the 1st Bn Lancashire Fusiliers in Cyprus - where the EOKA terrorists were causing havoc.

As part of the training we had to spend a week at the shooting range in Hawkshaw - a very welcome break from the discipline at Bury Barracks. During the day we did our shooting on various weapons and in the evening we were free to do what we wanted. This was during May 1957.

Some of my pals knew that I was from the area and used me as their guide to explore. Sometimes I would lead them over Redisher and on to Holcombe Village where we would take over the piano and have a sing song at the Shoulder of Mutton and later on walk back the same way in the dark to our bunks. They were very intrigued about the Tower and asked a lot about it. I told them about Peel but that the Tower had been locked for a number of years because of the disrepair.

Two days later a pal approached me and said that they had a flag which could be put on top of the Tower. I reminded him of the risks but that didn't bother him. Another lad, who was our cook, had made a large jute flag and painted the regiment's infantry number on it - XX, i.e. the 20th of Foot, in red paint.

The same evening we walked to the Tower from the shooting range. There were four of us - the cook, Rocky from Manchester, Gilly from Cumberland and yours truly. The Tower was, of course, locked and there could have been a notice there saying that it was dangerous. We had a look around and found that a boarded-up window was very easy to gain access to the building. So in we climbed. The stairs to the top were in a bad state and we had to be careful. There were gaps and we feared that they might collapse. But being Lancashire Fusiliers we continued to the very top.

It was quite windy up there. There was a broken flag pole on one side of the "battlements" and we could affix the flag on it. The question was. who was going to stand on the wall and do it as the wind was a problem. After a discussion one of us volunteered to do it while we others held on to his legs so he wouldn't blow over. The flag was fixed on the flag pole and we beat a quick retreat before people started to notice it. We kept very quiet about it as we didn't know what our CO would do about it.

Two days afterwards some of the fusiliers were talking about the flag and wondering who was responsible. One lad, called Frank, said that he alone had done it! (He later jumped troopship while we were in Algiers.) The story of our flag on Peel Tower appeared in two or three national newspapers, which we certainly hadn't expected, and I do remember seeing a photo on the front page of the *Daily Express*. (*The Bury Times* had a report about the escapade on 25th May 1957. Apparently, a farmer had seen soldiers near the Tower the night before the flag appeared. Unfortunately there was no photograph. – Editor) The papers had contacted our CO and he, to our surprise, said that he was very proud of what his fusiliers had done. It showed good spirit.

It was quite an adventure, maybe better than the time living rough in the mountains of Cyprus. Gilly has now died, Rocky maybe lives in Rochdale (his brother was shot to death in Cyprus) and the cook stayed on at the Barracks.

Malcolm C. McDonald 2020

*Along with his story of the flag incident, Mr McDonald sends his thanks to the Society for their response to his family history enquiry. He also asks us to pass on his thanks to Holcombe Church for providing copies of transcriptions from some of the gravestones. Mr McDonald now lives in Sweden but is originally from Tottington. Accompanied by his wife, he visited Holcombe during Summer 2019 to take a look in the graveyard. Ancestors from his mother's side of the family were mainly from Ramsbottom. Most of them were from the Berry (Bury) family and were buried at Holcombe. They were cotton operatives and he tells us some of them also owned a few of the town's pubs: The Hare and Hounds at Holcombe Brook (my great grandparents and my grandfather), The Major, The Shoulder of Mutton and The Royal and also the Spread Eagle at Edgeworth. The majority of the Berrys were members of the Swedenborgian Church (New Jerusalem Church) and Thomas Bury was a leading figure there. The oldest of Mr McDonald's ancestors' burials at Holcombe are those of Thomas Berry (Bury) 1779-1861 and his wife Alice (Duckworth).*

## **THE SALE OF SPRINGWOOD MILL, RAMSBOTTOM 1952**

### **'The 'Cheeryble' Mill Comes under the Hammer'**

*Bury Times* June 21st 1952

Leaning on the carding engine, and grouping in the narrow alleys between machines, millowners, buyers and machinery dealers from a wide area signalled and called their bids, as the equipment of the Springwood Mill, Ramsbottom, was auctioned on Thursday. It was the first mill to be sold-up since the trade slump began.

They paid more than £4,000 for 252 lots which formed the condenser spinning plant in one of the oldest mills in the area-built by the Grant Brothers, originals of Dickens' famous Cheeryble brothers, more than 100 years ago.

Although the machinery they bought was fairly modern in design, the old mill building was just as it was in the days of the mid-nineteenth century, when it was the focal point of a flourishing little community. To reach the second storey low-beamed carding room, where auctioneer George Singleton stood for more than three and a half hours on his little rostrum, more than a hundred men in the cotton trade climbed the narrow stone spiral stair case, brushing peeling whitewash from the uneven stone walls.

Where once the millworkers converged each day on the four-storeyed grey stone mill, cars lined the narrow approach lane and nosed into the cobbled mill yard.

Men in trilbies and belted raincoats hooked their umbrellas on to protruding shafts and machine handles, consulting their catalogues, and the sale began. With more than thirty years' experience of such sales, Mr. George Singleton first offered the 252 lots as a mill unit, with option on the lease of the building. A man called "£2,000". After a pause came a second offer- £3,000- and there was no advance. The figure was too low, said Mr. Singleton, and withdrew the sale to offer the equipment piecemeal. It was a friendly sale with slight, grey-haired George Singleton calling occasionally "Where's Wilf? This is in his line," or, "Come on Tom, you're still in, aren't you?"

Most of the thirty five to forty operatives who were employed at the feeders, scutchers, frames and carding engines, have now found other jobs. Among them is Harold Edmondson, of Callender Street, twenty years a stripper and grinder at the mill. But on Thursday he finished work at 2pm and went into the mill for the end of the sale. Cloth cap and working clothes on, he said, "I have had to go into a local paper mill, and now we are on short time there - but at least it is a job." Seventy this summer - and still not thinking of retiring- Joel Entwistle, who was

a piecer at the mill, has found himself a lighter job at another mill, just down the road. Joel first worked as a lad of ten or twelve at Springwood, then, after forty five years at another cotton mill, returned to the old mill seven years ago, walking each day down the steep hill from his home in Tanners Lane, which overlooked miles of moorland around Ramsbottom.

#### FOR OLD TIMES' SAKE

Early in the day, when the auction was just getting under way, fifty six year old Harold Foster of Nuttall Lane, looked in, accompanied by his brown mongrel, Bruce. More than thirty years ago he was employed at the mill and wanted to see what happened "just for old times' sake".

When thirty four years old clerk Harry Hitchon strolled into the mill in his lunch hour, he provided a link with the history of the old building. At the end of last century his grandfather, Joshua Hitchon bought the mill and lived at the house in the mill yard. Harry's father was killed during the 1914-18 war but three sons of Joshua Hitchon - Ernest, Herbert and Fred - carried on the family business. Some years ago oldest brother Ernest Hitchon, collapsed and died on the mill steps, and in 1946 Herbert and Fred sold out to Springfield Manufacturers (Ramsbottom) Ltd., who have now gone into voluntary liquidation, bringing about the present sale of equipment. Said Harry Hitchon, " I used to play with my cousins in the mill when I was a boy, but it must be nearly twenty four years since I last came into the building. I thought I would have a last look round before the rooms were emptied".

#### THE LAST EMPLOYEE

When finally, the bidders departed forty seven year old Frank Shepherd, of Leachfield Place, Halliwell, Bolton. locked the doors. A mule overlooker and one of the first men employed when the Springfield Manufacturers took over in 1947, he had remained at the mill to look after everything until the sale.

Commented auctioneer George Singleton, "Prices were good and despite the trade position there was no reluctance to buy machines which could be installed in other mills."

Within the next few weeks the machines will be dismantled and taken to all parts of Lancashire, but the history of the Grant brothers' mill will not end. The building is part of the Grant-Lawson Estate, and may be sold or leased to new occupants.

**THE TEMPLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY 1941**

A transcription of a letter dated 15<sup>th</sup> November 1941, acknowledging work done by the company:

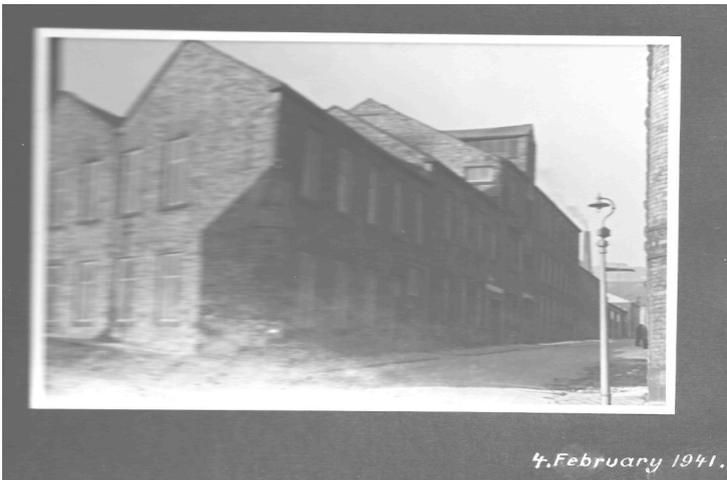
**Dear Sirs,**

**Mr Riber has today shown me a reel of 47 gauge Resistance wire which I understand is almost the first length of this size that you have covered with silk.**

**Taking into account the short time your works have been open and that none of your operatives had previous experience in this work, the speed with which your people have learnt the necessary technique is very creditable to them and they must be feeling very happy to think that they can take a share in this delicate work. This size and class of wire is used in instruments and radio location work, as well as tanks equipment, all of which are national requirements of the highest priority.**

**Yrs faithfully**

**?? Suanders**



Background information

In Regent Street, Ramsbottom was F D Sims wireworks which had been established by Kurt Engels in 1936. When war broke out it became an essential industry. During the war, some of the company's work producing covered wire was for the Admiralty and was done, under the supervision of Mrs Engels, by the Temple Manufacturing Company. Kurt Engels had started this company and it occupied the top floor at Cobden Mill down Kay Brow. (The premises was owned by William Eccles whose weaving mill on the ground floor was supplying towels for hospital and army use.) New working regulations meant workers could not leave without either joining the forces or obtaining permission at a tribunal.

Much of the wire that Sims processed was cotton or silk covered. This entailed introducing the silk or cotton strand on to the wire which was wound as it was being covered, without leaving even tiny gaps in the covering. A new strand had to be put on without a knot. The copper wire gauges went from 1 – 49 and women were employed winding the finer wires, some of which were as fine as a human hair. A large reel of wire was put in place at the bottom of the winding machine and the strand was brought up the winding machine, in a similar way to the threading of a sewing machine, to the smaller reel on to which the wire was being wound.

Sims supplied manufacturers such as English Electric. The finished wire was used in all kinds of electric motor and for almost everything that moved, including motor cars and railway engines.

References:

Jennie Johns (2006) RHS News Magazine number 30

Denis and Nancy Frearson (2006) RHS News Magazine number 35

Fred Entwistle: *Ramsbottom Reminiscences* Ramsbottom Heritage Society (December 1992)

## LOCAL RESEARCH

The Heritage Society cannot offer a research service. The following could be approached:

**Bury Archives and Local Studies, Moss Street, Bury, BL9 0DG** email contact:

**archives@bury.gov.uk** or tel: **0161 253 6782**

**IMPORTANT: To avoid disappointment you are advised to check before your visit. An appointment is now essential if you wish to view any items that are stored in the archive.**

### OPENING HOURS.

Monday : Closed                      Tuesday-Friday – 10am-1pm and 1.30-4.30pm

Saturdays – 10.00am-1.00pm (please telephone to confirm)

**Collections held** include records relating to local authorities, public bodies, schools, churches, businesses, trade unions, political parties, sports clubs, social organisations, family papers, deeds, maps and plans and indexes to local parish registers including Ramsbottom. Catalogues are online at <http://archives.bury.gov.uk> as 'Bury Archives Catalogue'. The enquiry service offers 15 minutes staff time free. For longer enquiries there is a charge. The Ramsbottom Heritage Society's Collection, including photographs, is on permanent loan to Bury Archives. **The local studies section** has publications on local history, historical printed works of local interest such as trade directories, older OS maps for the whole of Bury MBC (including Ramsbottom), microfilmed copies of local newspapers, thematic collections of news cuttings worth pursuing for local biographies, census returns and parish registers (microfilm). Indexes for local church registers, including Ramsbottom are also held. A direct link to Bury Libraries catalogue (which lists local history items held in all the borough's libraries) is at <http://library.bury.gov.uk> – follow 'Libraries and Archives' and then 'Search the library catalogue'. Free access to the Ancestry database is available in all Bury Council's libraries. Please phone for details of other family history advice services. **The Wordpress Blog** (<https://buryculture.wordpress.com/>) offers lots of news, information, events and articles on all aspects of our service.

**Lancashire Family History and Heraldry Society** Bury branch meetings date: 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month, 7.30pm at The Kay Room, Church House, The Wylde, Bury BL0 0LA (behind St Mary's Church). Branch contact via email at [bury@lfhhs.org.uk](mailto:bury@lfhhs.org.uk) . Visit [www.lfhhs.org.uk](http://www.lfhhs.org.uk) for details about branch resources and events.

**Ramsbottom Library and Adult Learning Centre, Carr Street BL0 9AE** tel 0161 253 5352 (IT - tel 0161 253 5354) email: [Ramsbottom.lib@bury.gov.uk](mailto:Ramsbottom.lib@bury.gov.uk)

### **LIBRARY OPENING HOURS:**

Sunday and Monday	Closed	Thursday	12.30pm – 7pm
Tuesday	10am – 4.30pm	Friday	10am – 4.30pm
Wednesday	10am – 4.30pm	Saturday	9.30am – 1pm

The library boasts an IT suite, with a visually impaired and disabled friendly workstation, back copies of the Ramsbottom Observer 1890-1950 on film and a microfiche reader. Much of the Ramsbottom local collection of the late Rev R R Carmyllie, local census returns and several filing drawers of local newscuttings and booklets and Hume Elliot's history are also available. Family history help sessions are held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month 12.30pm to 4.30pm.

# 2020 Exhibition

At the Heritage Gallery, Ramsbottom Library

## Ramsbottom Pubs

“the Odious and Loathsome Sin of Drunkenness”

Normal library opening times and  
also on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month  
at 12:00pm-3:00pm  
via the upper outside entrance.

The exhibition focuses on pubs that existed in 1890 and what they look like now.

There are panels of the history of four local pubs that still exist, Edenfield Brewery and the story of the Marsdens who were arrested over 30 times for drunkenness. The exhibition also has many examples of pub memorabilia.

