

Huddersfield Local History Society

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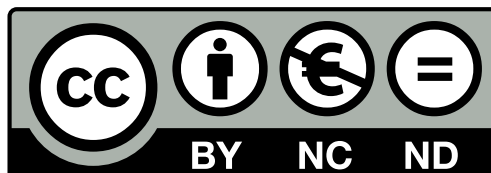
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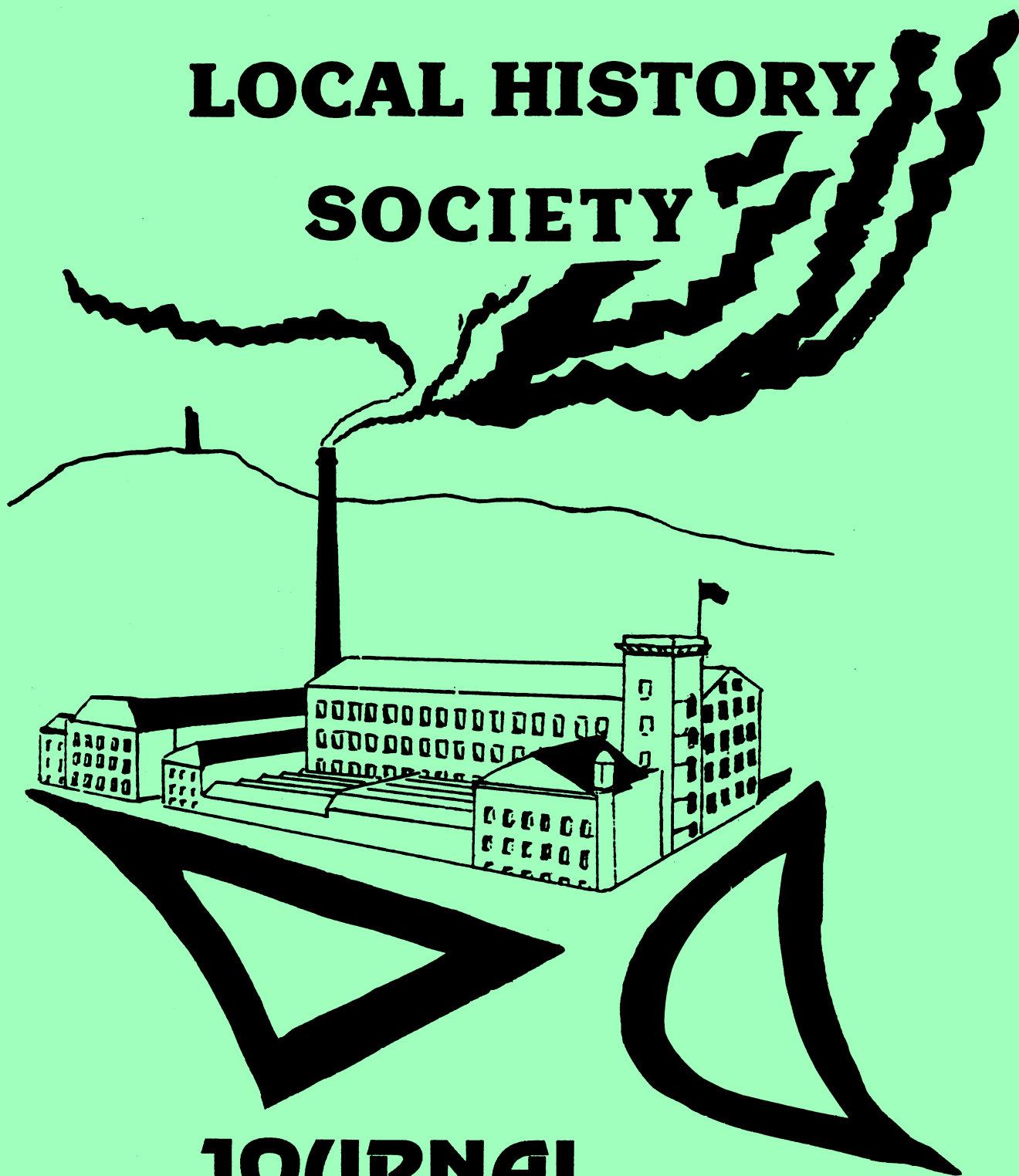
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Huddersfield

LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



JOURNAL

No. 4 AUTUMN 1992

CLIFFORD STEPHENSON : AN APPRECIATION

By Dr. Eagles

At the beginning of February Clifford Stephenson died at the age of 89. He was the most senior and most distinguished member of our society, and an important local historian in his own right. Just two days before he died I had the pleasure of sitting with him for a couple of hours. By then he knew that his time was limited, but this hardly impinged on our conversation; our talk was of local history. I was asking him about notable Huddersfield medical men at the turn of the century. He told me that, as a very young boy, he remembered seeing Lockwood Road covered in straw, to muffle the sounds of wheels as they passed Albert House, Lockwood, where Dr. McGregor lay dying. Clifford went on "I've always been an anecdotal historian, I like telling a good tale".

And he did indeed tell a very good tale, both verbally and in print. One recalls his account of the purchase of the Ramsden estate, 'The town that bought itself', and his short history of Ben Shaws, produced for the centenary of the firm with which he and his father had been associated for so long. Most recently there appeared in our own journal extracts from Clifford's memoirs. Some of us have had the opportunity of reading these in their entirety, and thoroughly enjoying their wide range extending from infancy in pioneering Canada, through the early days of radio retailing and the early days of motoring, to 19 years of service on Huddersfield Borough Council. This came to an end in 1974, with the advent of Kirklees. In those last days of Huddersfield Corporation, Clifford was one of the triumvirate of party leaders who tried to arrange the affairs of the Borough with a maximum of goodwill and a minimum of sectarian rancour.

There are a number of Stephenson memorials in Huddersfield, the fruition of various projects with which he was closely associated; the restoration of the tower on Castle Hill, the preservation of the station and the planning of the Market Hall and Town Centre. But, especially in the later years of his council work, much of what he did was unseen and unappreciated and he was the chairman of a number of these committees. At the peak of national activity Clifford was a member of twenty separate committees, so that the name of Stephenson was widely known throughout the country. Just before the dissolution of Huddersfield Borough his splendid service was acknowledged when he was made a Freeman of Huddersfield, the very last in a long line of eminent men. Another honour which came to him more recently was when he was made a Fellow of the Polytechnic, of which he had been a Governor for a number of years. It is pleasant to remember that, in the last year of his life, he was able to take part in the Anniversary Celebrations at the Polytechnic. He gave one of a series of lectures arranged to celebrate the Polytechnic's 150 years; it was delivered with undiminished flair and humour, and was greatly enjoyed by his hearers.

One of the causes to which Clifford devoted a great deal of time and energy was the restoration of the Parish Church. It was a source of great amusement to him that the Anglicans had had to recruit a life-long Methodist to help with their fund-raising. For he was a Methodist through and through, a firm supporter of Methodism in general, and Park Road Methodist Church in particular. He was a good Methodist, but not a narrow-sectarian one. He hated cant, bigotry and humbug. He was a liberal Christian with a broad faith and a large heart.

I had the honour of speaking at his funeral, and to do this I stood behind a splendid lectern which Clifford had made with his own hands. A unique feature of this was a special hook, which the craftsman put there for a lady preacher to hang her handbag; surely the inimitable Stephenson touch. In a neighbouring room were a series of photographs of Park Road Church before its alteration, beautifully framed and displayed by Clifford Stephenson. He listed among his hobbies - 'using tools of any kind', and he was remarkably skilful with his hands, and very fond of devising gadgets. His home abounds with echoes of his many-sided personality; his famous collection of maps, and a rich harvest of local history material, books, pamphlets and photographs. All of this was beautifully catalogued and arranged, the most valuable books in his own special binding. As I write I look round at the chaos which overwhelms all my own bits and pieces, and reflect on the meticulous order in which Clifford kept all his things. A model to us all.

But I should be failing in my duty if I recorded merely the public achievements of Clifford Stephenson, and failed to record his warm, sympathetic, highly individual personality. Above all he was full of fun. Many of us recall his interventions during discussion at our meetings; on the one hand they might bring an over confident, pompous speaker down to size. Or, in the kindest possible way, they would encourage a diffident lecturer to develop his ideas further. One of the really great things about Clifford was the way in which he preserved, into advanced old age, child-like qualities of wonder and enthusiasm. Most of us, as we get older, get more

sophisticated, more cynical, sceptical of new things, a bit bored.
As Wordsworth says:

*Shades of the prison house begin to close
Upon the growing boy.*

This never happened to Clifford; he preserved his sense of wonder to the last. Show him a new map, or a new bit of local history, or try him with a new idea, and his eyes lit up with enthusiasm. At the age of 89 he preserved endearing qualities which must have characterised the lad who roamed round Crosland Moor in the days before the first world war.

Many of us have lost a much-loved friend. We extend our sympathy to Elizabeth; we hope to see her regularly at our future meetings, both in her own right and also to refresh our memories of a most distinguished member of our society, and a fine citizen of Huddersfield; Clifford Stephenson.



A STEPHENSON ANTHOLOGY

When her husband died, Mrs. Stephenson was faced with an enormous task in dealing with his various collections. There was his priceless collection of maps, his library, his local history memorabilia and a workshop crammed with tools. One drawer, which held many maps, yielded a box-file labelled TALKS. This contained only a fraction of the letters and papers which Clifford delivered over the years. There are many gaps; none of his lectures to our own society are included. Nevertheless I was anxious to read them all, and try to produce from them a sort of anthology, as a tribute to his memory. To this Elisabeth readily agreed.

Many of the talks in the file were given to that venerable Huddersfield institution, the Union Discussion Society, (hereinafter referred to as the U.D.S.) of which Clifford was a member for half his life. They are the easiest to deal with, because they were usually written out in full. The rest, a miscellaneous group, often exist only in the form of notes or headings. It must also be remembered that the U.D.S. papers were designed to be read in support of a particular position; one such for example was: "That Life is Largely A Matter of Chance". Because of this the argument may be occasionally a little one-sided; it was intended to be balanced by discussion from the floor. But the U.D.S. is a Discussion Society, not a debating society. Its members do not make debating points, but rely on reasoned argument. In 1969, when he was President of the U.D.S., Clifford said this at the annual dinner:

*"Discussion shows a nice distinction from debate, it suggests civilised and mature appraisal,
and willingness to consider another point of view".*

Only a few days before he died Clifford and I were sitting together, not discussing his illness, but talking about local history. Suddenly he said "Of course, I've always been an anecdotal historian". This seems to me an accurate assessment of his gifts, for he loved a good story, and few folk could tell a tale better than he. Listen to him describing the foundation of the Ramsden family fortunes:

"I am on safer historical ground when I introduce a young man from Greetland. He was 18 years old in 1531 when he came a-courting to Huddersfield, or more precisely to Longley, where, I suspect, with at least one eye for the main chance, he wooed and married a local heiress, with for him the happy result that he became a leading local landowner He was of course William Ramsden, the first Ramsden in our district."

One of Clifford's favourite stories was the tale of how Huddersfield Corporation came to purchase the Ramsden Estate. This was of course published as a booklet under the title: "The Town That Bought Itself". Here he is telling the essence of the story to the U.D.S., as an illustration of the proposition that life is largely a matter of chance:

"..... I will return to my main theme via Wilfred Dawson. Dawson, you will recall, was the principal instigator and negotiator for the purchase of the Ramsden estate, first by Sam Copley, and through him by Huddersfield Corporation. Wilfred, a local stockbroker, financier and alderman, used to recount that it was only by the merest chance that the transaction took off. The circumstances as he described were that, when hotel accommodation in London during the First World War was difficult, he rented a flat for use on his many visits to the capital. On one occasion he had to go to London unexpectedly, when the flat was on loan to a friend, and not therefore available to himself. He was bemoaning this to a small group amongst which was a stranger. The stranger offered Wilfred a spare bed in his own flat, which of course he accepted. When, in later conversation it transpired that Wilfred came from Huddersfield, his new friend said, "Do you know anyone likely to be interested in buying a large estate there?" This chance meeting thus set in train the

events which culminated in Huddersfield owning the Ramsden estate, but this did not happen until another million to one chance had come off in the person of Sam Copley.

Because Municipal Corporation powers did not include dealing in land, Huddersfield could not negotiate the purchase without a special act of Parliament giving them the power. It was by no means certain that this would be granted. It was therefore necessary to find someone with sufficient financial resources (in today's money upwards of £30,000,000) to purchase the estate, and who was also so public-spirited towards Huddersfield that he would pass on his purchase to the town, if a local Act went through Parliament. Such a man, against all likelihood, was known to Wilfred in the person of Sam Copley. He had returned to England with a very big fortune made in Australia. He was willing and able to act as middleman in a three-way transaction. Sam contracted to buy the Ramsden estate; Huddersfield obtained the necessary parliamentary powers, and Sam passed over the final purchase to Huddersfield Corporation. All this was set in train by the chance that Wilfred Dawson had not a bed in his flat in London."

Clifford was a very effective painter of pictures in words. Here unfortunately only in note form, is his account of the playground of his youth, Beaumont Park:

"Part of Dungeon Wood became in 1883 Beaumont Park the playground of my boyhood days ;... 199 steps outside it a truly remarkable example of landscape architecture built on a wooded escarpment only 20 acres in extent three quarters of a mile path where confining secret paths dramatic rocks wonderfully contrived viewpoints cave and rustic arbours wonderful courting country shy walk for modest girls you must go and explore it"

Similarly in an account of Ben Shaw's, with which firm both he and his father were associated for almost a century, and whose history he recounted in a booklet produced for the firm's centenary, Clifford drew a compelling picture of life in Huddersfield in 1871. This is again from notes of a lecture given to the University Women in 1979:

"Imagine Huddersfield in 1871 a Friday night clogs clattering on the flagged causeway dim gas lights shawl shrouded little women weary aching feet after ten hours in the loomgate..... clutching empty dinner basket in which lay twelve shillings, a week's hard earned pay. Cloth capped little men, many bow-legged, streamed into the taprooms of the Woolpack, the Commercial, the Bull and Mouth, the West Riding, the Swan with Two Necks and a dozen other inns and taverns. Ale one and a half old pence a pint ... wages 20 shillings. From Market Place, Foxton's horse drawn bus to Moldgreen, Coney's to Lockwood and Fartown occasionally a horse-drawn carriage over manure strewn setts ... top-hatted millmaster villa in Edgerton. Into this scene in April 1871, a striking bearded figure trundling a flat-bottomed barrow enter Ben Shaw making his first delivery of non-alcoholic beverages to Thornton's Temperance Hotel, 21 New Street now Marks and Spencers"

Repeatedly, whatever the subject under discussion, Clifford drew upon his own experience. In 1977 he delivered a very erudite paper to the U.D.S. on the subject of wages and prices over the last 700 years; this was a subject which had occupied his lecture hours for a long time.

"My interest in this subject, which basically is an examination of the relationship between prices and wages, began twenty years ago and has two superficially unrelated sources ;... the collection of old maps being one, and my service on a number of committees concerned with negotiation on wages and salaries the other. Map collecting brought to light quite dramatic increases in the prices of printed maps since the first atlases were produced.

But a subject which might have become rather too erudite, was enlivened by his own experience and that of his family.

"Quoted only because the facts are well known to me, I mention the case of my father who, admittedly a very bright boy, when fourteen was paid 10/- per week in a clerical job in a business where adults, in what we now call a semi-skilled job earned 19/- to 23/-. I have obtained an up-to-date figure for a job as nearly equivalent as possible to the one my father did it would be £25 for a new beginner at fifteen. The ratio between the boy starter and the adult is, to my surprise, very similar to what it was 85 years ago, but when the comparative purchasing power of the 10/- and the £25 is examined, a very different picture emerges. For example the tram fare from Lockwood to Birkby in 1892 was 2d.; today it is 45 old pence. At first sight this is a staggering increase, but 5 days travel on the tram would cost 1/6th of the weekly wage. If his mother bought butter out of his wage, one pound at 9d, accounted for 5 hours of his earnings; today a pound of butter would cost just one hour's pay of the 1977 boy"

On another occasion he recalled village life, and especially chapel life, in the Crosland Moor of his childhood:

"Village life in Crosland Moor revolved round four institutions Chapel, Club, Pub and Co-op. There was

little link between chapel and pub except Fred who nipped out to the Foresters during the sermon: he was an enthusiastic chorister with a dry throat. There were two chapels and unchristian rivalry between the two. The 'United' always had the biggest collection at the Anniversary service it had a whip-round in the vestry which ensured this. The ultimate sin was a romance between a girl and a boy, one from each chapel"

Of course his Methodist faith and his habit of chapel going continued throughout his long life. In 1978 he had this to say about it to the U.D.S.:

"Years later, and still the old shoe of the familiar chapel ritual is comfortable to wear. I would not claim superiority for it; merely that I am used to its form of service, its folks and its associations"

Clifford's 20 year experience of local government was almost unrivalled in its scope, for he sat on many committees in London, and rubbed shoulders with fellow councillors from all over England. He had enormous civic pride, pride in local government in general and in the achievements of Huddersfield Borough in particular. This comes out most clearly in a paper to the U.D.S. on the subject of Town Planning. Here he speaks of local government in general:

"It is probable that good water and drainage have done more to improve the health of urban communities and people than all other developments of science put together."

And on the same occasion he had this to say of the Town and Country planning Act of 1944:

"It is remarkable, and greatly to the credit of our law-makers that, at the height of the war, in 1942/3, when our very survival was at risk, time and thought were given to the future well-being of the country; and at the same period two plans were produced for an improved Huddersfield Town Centre"

In 1968 Harold Wilson, then Prime Minister, was made a Freeman of Huddersfield. Alderman Stephenson was one of those who spoke on that occasion. In his speech he was anxious to make clear to the great man what an honour it was for him to be a Freeman of such a Borough:

"Quite properly the major emphasis of our laureate speech has been on the life and qualities of the recipient of the honour we are about to bestow, but I believe it will not be thought inappropriate to say a few words about the source of the honour, Huddersfield itself, so that Mr. Wilson may be reassured, if reassurance is necessary, that his name is to be linked with a worthy town"

There followed a brief account of the achievements of Huddersfield in the fields of housing, public health, transport and education, during which Clifford quoted, as he often did the words of Engels 'Huddersfield is the handsomest by far of all the factory towns of Yorkshire and Lancashire'. The speaker then concluded:

"And so, Mr. Mayor, it is with confidence in the result that I support the motion of which the effect will be to make the Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson, Prime Minister of Great Britain a Freeman of 'no mean city' Huddersfield".

In March 1988, despite his advanced age, Clifford seemed at the height of his powers when he delivered to the U.D.S. a paper in support of the motion 'that we should revere our forbears'.

"It is a fortunate coincidence that I give this paper in the year of promotion of 'Pride in Huddersfield', a feeling I have long had, for reasons I shall present. It is a corollary of that theme that we should revere our forebears, whose work and achievements give reason and just cause for pride"

He went on to give a summary of Huddersfield history and the men who made it. He spoke in some detail of the foundation of the chemical and electrical industries:

"..... an essential element in the manufacture of cloth, from time immemorial, was the urine used for scouring woven cloth, locally known as 'weeting'. Outside every cottage door there was a weeting tub, where the family contribution of this valuable commodity was stored, pending collection at a penny a bucket. Though not then generally known the active principle of this product of nature was ammonia.

One local man, an incomer from Bradford with an enquiring mind, realised this and in 1830 at a site on Leeds Road (now Graham's the builders' merchants) started distilling ammonia, which soon took the place of urine in cloth manufacture. This man, Read Holliday, had probably the most far-reaching influence on the future prosperity of Huddersfield of any individual. The business he founded expanded in scope to develop the discovery by Perkins (another Englishman) of the first aniline dye, his famous Perkin's purple. There followed a whole range of dye stuffs and other chemicals.

The business that Read Holliday founded expanded in the late 1800s and diversified into electrical work. They manufactured electric motors and installed electric lighting. The building next to where we are, the old Huddersfield Public Library, used to have a brass plate, which I remember as a boy: it said, 'Electrical Installation by Read

Holliday". Though they discontinued electrical work their influence continued when their electrical foreman, Thomas Broadbent and his associate, Ernest Brook, started on their own making electric motors. They soon separated to found the famous firms T.W. Broadbents and Brook Motors"

Clifford went on to tell how Read Holliday's firm became the core of I.C.I. He then spoke of Joseph Hopkinson of Lockwood, his indicator and his text book which became the bible of everyone in the steam engine world. This reminded him of other textbooks, and a much less well-known Huddersfield forebear:

"Speaking of textbooks is a reminder of another local but little known author of them, and in a most unlikely field for a man based in an industrial area. His name is perpetuated in two Dalton street names, Pontey Drive and Pontey Mount. William Pontey's name appeared as a seedsman in Kirkgate in the 1818 local directories. He wrote two books: 'The Forest Planter' and 'The Forest pruner', which became authoritative works on tree management nationally. They ran into several editions, and William became arboreal advisor to the Duke of Bedford no less'.

Then there came a review of the local historians in which he pointed out that, with the exception of D.F.E. Sykes, they were all incomers. He then turned his attention to public health.

"In King Street, on the right hand side stands a building, once a house and now a shop, fronting Hammond's yard. To this house in 1806 came William Wilkes, a surgeon, from Easingwold, who, in 1814 was instrumental in establishing the Huddersfield and Upper Agbrigg Dispensary in the Pack Horse Yard. Ostensibly this was to commemorate the end of the Napoleonic Wars, but more likely to deal with the diseases the soldiers brought back with them. Huddersfield was ten years ahead of Leeds in establishing a public dispensary. Realising the need for a proper hospital, William campaigned for one, with the result that the Huddersfield Infirmary was opened with 40 beds and Wilkes as its first medical officer.

Incidentally the King Street property remained in the ownership of Wilkes' descendants until a few years ago"

Clifford went on to speak with pride of Huddersfield achievements in the area of public health: the compulsory notification of infectious disease and efforts to reduce infant mortality. He then went back a little to talk of social questions such as Richard Oastler and the employment of children. This brought him to a consideration of Oastler's fellow-worker, Joshua Hobson:

"Though Hobson was an ardent liberal radical and Oastler to quote the Leeds Mercury, was 'the hottest Tory in Yorkshire', Hobson threw all his journalistic skill into Oastler's long crusade for improved factory conditions. Like Oastler he was committed to prison; in his case this was for his activity in establishing a Free Press paper, 'The Voice of the West Riding', on which stamp duty was not paid. His involvement was total a skilled carpenter, he made the wooden printing press and he wrote the copy which he printed in the paper....."

One might guess that Clifford Stephenson would find in Hobson a kindred spirit for Clifford too was a man of many parts joiner, engineer and writer. But there was more to say about Joshua Hobson:

"At this time the drainage of a town with an explosive population was a notorious scandal; nothing more so than the seepage from the parish church graveyard, where, in an area of 4300 square yards, no fewer than 38000 burials had taken place, nine burials in every square yard. Hobson who in business nearby had first hand knowledge of the nuisance, spearheaded a campaign to remedy the scandalous situation. Edgerton Cemetery was the result: Hobson cut the first sod.

He turned his attention to the scandal of common lodging houses, of which there were over fifty in Huddersfield housing 600 inmates in appalling conditions of filth and overcrowding. Hobson canvassed a movement to take advantage of Shaftsbury's Common Lodging House Act of 1851, which gave local authorities the power to finance and operate lodging houses out of public funds. In 1854 the model lodging house on chapel Hill opened with 180 beds at 4d and 6d per night. This was the very first kind in the country"

This was Clifford's final assessment of Hobson's career:

"..... a thorn in the flesh of the local establishment, involved in much persona in acrimony with members of it, nevertheless Hobson probably did more than any other individual to improve

conditions in Huddersfield during his lifetime".

As always in Clifford's writing, this paper is enriched with personal reminiscence and homely touches, like this account of a long forgotten textile manufacturer:

"..... the Jacquard loom was first used locally by Richard Gill, who in 1826 set up a small mill in Arkenley Lane, Almondbury. Though through taking to the bottle he soon went bankrupt, his enterprise deserves recording. Incidentally our garden is part of Gill's tenter field"

Many other local heroes receive a mention in this splendid paper of Clifford's Frederick Schwann, John Nowell, George Jarman, John Morton the founder of Vancouver, Pritchett the first M.O.H., and Sir Harold Himsworth a medical celebrity of more recent date. All the local historians are discussed, nor are the cricketers and the athletes forgotten. The whole paper is a fine achievement springing directly from Clifford's pride in his native place and his encyclopaedic knowledge of its past.

No Stephenson anthology would be complete without an example of his humour which was apt to break in on all occasions, even solemn ones. In these manuscripts many of the jokes are in note form, and cannot easily be interpreted. But here is part of a speech which he made on the occasion of the opening of the first part of the Civic Centre in 1965:

"I welcome your participation in this, the formal opening of the first of three phases of our Civic Centre, the first fruits of our long cherished aspirations. I find that there were concrete proposals, resolutions passed, a site acquired below the Town Hall and plans drawn for a similar development more than thirty years ago in 1933 When I saw these plans I wondered to what extent that development, if it had been built, would have now been too small, so I checked back on the 1933 officer establishment. I found that the total staff of the four departments now housed in this building was then 109.

Today there are 365 people employed by these same departments in this building. I have projected this rate of expansion, three and a half times in 33 years, to the year 2065 and find that, if it should continue at the same rate, then these four departments will be employing 13,750 officers, and it appears that about 50 years later, the whole of the working population of Huddersfield will be employed in local government. This will leave only elderly housewives eligible to serve on the council"

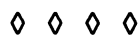
Just as typical of Clifford Stephenson as his humour was his hatred of arrogance and pomposity, his ability to laugh at himself and cut himself down to size. This is his account, to the U.D.S., of the start of his career in local government:

"In 1955 chance gave another major, unexpected twist to my life. Two strangers called to ask if I would be interested in standing as a candidate in the next municipal elections. I still do not know how I came to be invited. I had no political record or affiliation, no public image. But I later heard that five preferred prospective candidates had turned down the invitation ... I was the scraping from the bottom of the barrel"

In a similar vein three years ago he replied at the U.D.S. Dinner to the toast of the Past-Presidents:

"There is unfortunately an occupational hazard in the office of President. By convention the office is respected, obeyed and deferred to without question. The danger is of confusion between the importance of the office of President and the lesser importance of the office-holder as a person, leading to an exalted self opinion."

Seldom did Clifford think of himself more highly than he ought to do. And this despite a life of great achievement, a tremendous store of learning about Huddersfield and history in general, a lively and exciting mind which retained its sharpness right to the end of his long life, and a personality of great generosity and charm. He left his mark on all who knew him. We revere his memory for what he did, and for what he was.



THROUGH VICTORIAN EYES : MEMORIES OF NINETEENTH CENTURY HUDDERSFIELD

Eighty years ago, a special supplement of the Examiner featured interviews with several venerable Huddersfield residents whose personal recollections spanned most of the preceding century. In these two extracts, submitted by Edward Law, Messrs. J.W. Robson and William Roebuck describe the town as they knew it at the beginning of Victoria's reign.

Mr. J.W. ROBSON'S RECOLLECTIONS *From the supplement to the Huddersfield Examiner 9.9.1911*

An 'Examiner' representative interviewed Mr. J.W. Robson who for many years had been closely connected with the public life of Huddersfield, as to some interesting historical reminiscences of old Huddersfield which that gentleman can recall. Mr. Robson is nearly 80 years of age, but he related in vivid terms details of his early experiences in Huddersfield and district.

• THE OLD COACHING DAYS •

Mr. Robson said:

Along with my father, the late Mr. Isaac Robson, and family I came to Huddersfield from Liverpool in March 1838. We reached Manchester by railway but at that time Manchester was the nearest place to Huddersfield at which there was a railway. We therefore had to come along to Huddersfield by coach. There was a service of coaches which ran from Leeds to Manchester three times per day, and of course the coaches ran through Huddersfield. The principal coaching inns were the Pack Horse, the White Swan and the Rose and Crown., which was at the corner of Rosemary Lane, where the open space is at present. There was no regular communication with Bradford except the coaches which ran on the market days; Tuesdays and Thursdays. The winter of 1837-8 was a very severe one, my father sent his furniture by canal from Liverpool, but we did not get it for many weeks as the canal was frozen over. Had it not been for the kindness of our friends in Huddersfield we should have been very awkwardly situated.

What can you say about other means of communication, Mr. Robson? asked our representative.

Of course there was no penny post. The Post Office, I think, was not far from what is now the shop of Mr. Pearce, jeweller, in New Street. Mr. William Moore was the postmaster. There was an old cutler that we knew, named John Lees. He came to Huddersfield in 1807, and at that time the post office was in Old Post Office Yard in Kirkgate. The old lady who kept the post office sent over to Wakefield three times a week to ascertain if there were any letters for Huddersfield There were of course, no postage stamps; the amount of the postage was paid in cash and marked on the letter. One delivery a day was quite sufficient.

• THE OLD MARKET PLACE •

Can you say anything about the general appearance of the town in the 'forties or fifties'?

I lived at the corner of King Street and what was then the old Market Place. It was bounded by what are now Victoria Lane and Shambles Lane. Stalls were erected on the ground that is now occupied by the Market Hall, and the fair was sometimes held there. The old vicarage stood in what is now Venn Street and seventy years before this it was occupied by the Rev. Henry Venn, a friend of John Wesley, and Huddersfield's most famous vicar. The vicarage was surrounded by an old fashioned garden. When the street called at first South Lord Street, was formed, I suggested to Colonel Beadon that it might appropriately be re-named Venn Street in memory of the well-known vicar, and he adopted my suggestion. Beyond the St. Paul's churchyard were open fields, and what is now Ramsden Street was called "Back Green". The upper part of the town, beyond the present New Street, was fairly well occupied by buildings. At the top side of the Parish Church yard was situated the Swan Yard, which was given over to joiner's shops and stables. But there was a road through it which led to a nice footpath along to Birkby and Bay Hall, which ran parallel with what is now St. John's Road. The Pack Horse Yard looks much the same today as it did long ago.

• AN 1841 INCIDENT •

Can you say anything about the local Plug Riots?

There was a good deal of plug rioting in Huddersfield. A lot of half-starved Lancashire people came over here and pulled the plugs out of the boilers. I could not see what they expected to get by it. There was some commotion in the town and the magistrates sent for the military from Leeds. A troop of Lancers came over and I remember seeing them charge down King Street, which was much steeper than it is now, at full gallop. One could have expected seeing the street strewn with dead and dying. Not at all. The people simply vanished right and left into the yards and passages, and so far as I saw and heard, no one was hurt. That was in August 1842 I think.

• TROUT IN THE COLNE! •

When I was a boy the water of the Colne was clear enough for sticklebacks to live in. We used to catch them at the dam stakes in King's Mill Lane. The later ex-alderman Stocks used to speak of catching a 4lb trout there when he was a boy.

• THE POPULARITY OF FANCY VESTINGS •

In the days when fancy waistcoatings were in great demand - probably in the 'forties of 'fifties - the late Mr. Joseph Senior and the late Mr. John Beaumont, afterwards of Ravensknowle, were in partnership at what is still known as Senior's Mill, at the bottom of Long Lane, Dalton. They achieved a great reputation as fancy vesting manufacturers, and it was no uncommon sight to witness cabs containing London buyers racing down from Huddersfield in order to get to Senior's Mill first and secure the pick of the goods.

• BOXES ON WHEELS •

The Lancashire and Yorkshire railway from Leeds to Manchester was commenced, I believe in 1845. The London and North Western railway was commenced in August 1846. If we wanted to travel by rail we had to go by 'bus, which ran from the Pack Horse to cooper Bridge station. The accommodation was very primitive. The third class carriages were what were called 'stand-ups', in which the passengers had to stand up during the whole of the journey. The carriages were simply boxes on wheels, with no covers and no seats.

• A LOCAL INVENTION •

Questioned as to any outstanding facts connected with local industry, Mr. Robson said that it might not be generally known that the process of 'drawing' lead pipes was invented by a Huddersfield gentleman, Mr. John Hanson, who was a partner in the firm that is now known as Hanson, Dale & Co. in Colne Road. At one time the trunks of trees were bored out and used as conveyor pipes. Then lead was rolled up and the joint soldered, but Mr. Hanson invented a process whereby the pipes were drawn out, and the difficulties arising from leaking joints were very much lessened.

• HUDDERSFIELD IN 1838 •

My father Isaac Robson, had been in business as a tea dealer in Liverpool some years, but in 1838 came the chance of purchasing the stock and goodwill of a good business, that of John Dougill, carried on at the corner of King Street and Victoria Lane. Our family came by coach from Manchester at the end of February, or the beginning of March in one of the bitterest winters of the century. The frost lasted far in to March as we found to our great inconvenience. There being no railway nearer than Manchester, our furniture came from thence by canal, and was fast frozen in for a month somewhere in the Standedge region. As we had nothing but the baggage we were able to bring by coach from Manchester, we were in a sorry plight but were helped over the difficulty by kind friends lending the needful furniture.

The mails were carried by the regular service of coaches - about three per day - between Manchester and Leeds. The coaching houses were the Whit Swan and Packhorse, still standing in Kirkgate, and the old Rose and Crown, now no more, at the corner of Rosemary Lane and Kirkgate. There was so little cross country communication that the only public conveyances to Bradford were the Market coaches on Tuesdays and Thursdays, against the forty-six of which passengers have the choice today.

When the Lancashire and Yorkshire main line was opened in 1842(?) passengers were conveyed to the nearest station, cooper Bridge, by frequent omnibuses from the White Swan. The third class accommodation was entirely primitive, being merely a box on wheels, without roof or seats, and therefore known as 'stand-ups'. From 1838 to 1842 we lived in the shop house in King Street, from which we looked down on the New Market, and now covered by the Market Hall. At the far end of this open square were three lines of low buildings occupied as butcher's shops and abattoirs and known as 'the shambles'. In front of these stood the town stocks where the drunk and disorderly were laid by the heels to reflect on their evil ways. I well remember seeing them occasionally. The prison (Towser) was not far away, just at the back of the Shambles, across the Pig Market. It has only lately

been remodelled for the use of the weights and measures department of the Corporation services. In those early days three policemen were considered sufficient to keep the town in order. Duke, Dawson and Dawson (my error?) were their names. Duke was murdered one day by a violent prisoner within the prison, and I well remember the sensation so tragic an event caused. The Guildhall which still stands between Ramsden Street Chapel and the Bull and Mouth Inn, was then used as the Magistrate's court.

Very little business was transacted in either Market Place except on Tuesdays and Saturday nights. There was on fruit stall always there, kept by one Mary Starkey, a little woman with a round, ruddy wrinkled face like a ripe apple. Next to her a fish stall was sometimes to be found, when there was any fish to sell. In that case the bellman went round with the message - "Just arrived

In this town,
And in the New Market
It is set down,
A quantity of fine fresh fish."
etc. etc.

OLD HUDDERSFIELD

A CHAT WITH A RESIDENT WHO HAS REACHED HIS NINETIETH YEAR

From the supplement to the Huddersfield Examiner 9.9.1911

Many of the older generation of the readers of the 'Huddersfield Examiner' are acquainted with Mr. William Roebuck, and his figure, frequently seen in a small phaeton drawn by a pony, is familiar to Huddersfield residents generally. His contemporaries will learn with pleasure that, though in his ninetieth year he is hale and hearty, and, with the exception of a little deafness, possesses all his faculties in a degree quite remarkable. With the exception of a single day he is two years older than Mr. Joseph Woodhead, the founder of the 'Examiner', as he was born on the 9th of May 1822. Mr. Roebuck was born in Upperhead Row, and has spent the whole of his life in Huddersfield. As a businessman he was very successful, and was able to retire at a comparatively early age. He was a butcher and cattle dealer, and his place of business was a small shop (opposite the house in which he was born), now occupied by a hairdresser. He is the last surviving member of his generation of the family.

An 'Examiner' representative recently had an interesting chat with Mr. Roebuck at his residence, No. 12 South Street. Comfortably ensconced in an armchair, he was reading a morning paper when the journalist was shown into the room, and a copy of last Saturday's 'Examiner' was near to hand.

"Oh yes I take the 'Examiner'" said Mr. Roebuck, in response to a question when the usual greetings were over, "and I always have done." This notwithstanding that his political convictions run counter to those for which the paper stands. Unfortunately, however, he was unable to recall any particular circumstances connected with the commencement of the paper.

"I dare say you can tell me great deal about old Huddersfield," remarked the interviewer, and Mr. Roebuck cheerily responded "Aye lad, I can that." Memories of the past evidently crowded themselves into his mind, for he chuckled and laughed, and it was some minutes before the conversation could be resumed. It was apparent that he had "the shining grace of humour," and a fine appreciation of it, which, no doubt, accounts to some extent for his longevity.

The interviewer was fortunate in striking first a personal note, for this led Mr. Roebuck to at once mention one or two facts of interest. The first of these was that his father, whose Christian name was George, a native of Thurlstone, who migrated to Huddersfield when a young man, kept what was known in those days as a 'tommy shop', viz., an establishment in which butcher's meat and groceries were sold. This he did in addition to working as a cropper at Messrs. Fisher's mill at Longroyd Bridge. Well, among the customers at the shop were Messrs. Michael, Thomas and William Wilson, who were largely responsible for the construction of the first reservoir in this district - one of the two at Longwood now owned by the Huddersfield Corporation. Mr. Roebuck remembers watching the construction of the reservoir, and he also recalls the fact that one of the Wilsons kept a public-house which is still in existence in the Beast Market.

Like most of his generation Mr. Roebuck had little education in his early days. Now that educational advantages abound on every hand, it seems almost incredible that eighty years ago practically the only schools for infants were kept by old women who received a penny per week per head for little else than making the children sit on forms and repressing their mischievous instincts. To one of these 'schools' little William Roebuck was sent, and he afterwards went for a short time to a school in Northgate kept by a Mr. Binns. Mr. Roebuck's companion at the school was the late Mr. William Radcliffe who was well known to the older generation of Huddersfield

people. Another school which the town boasted about that time was in Spring Street, but it was demolished many years ago.

All the churches of the town have been built in Mr. Roebuck's time. He remembers the second Parish Church, which was erected in 15 . It was of course insignificant compared with the present building (put up in 1836), but it occupied the same site and the burial ground was the only one in Huddersfield. The Vicar - Mr. Roebuck can recall the ministration of the Rev. James Charles Franks - resided in one of several houses which adjoined what is now the Fleece Inn in Kirkgate. The place was known as 'Vicar's Croft'. Among other residents in the locality was the father of the late Dr. T. Kilner Clarke, who before beginning to practice there was house surgeon at the Infirmary. Mr. Roebuck also remembers the building of all the present chapels in Huddersfield. He has a vivid recollection of the old High Street Chapel and states that adjoining it was a public-house.

Although he was then only nine years of age Mr. Roebuck remembers the opening of the Infirmary in 1831. All the scholars of the town assembled opposite the building and sang hymns, and he was one of the number. The occasion was one for general rejoicing, and his father roasted a sheep in High Street in honour of it.

The great progress of the simple (staple?) industry - the manufacture of woollen cloth, chiefly plain and fancy - has been witnessed by Mr. Roebuck. "Sixty years ago," he said, "Holmfirth was a more important place than Huddersfield for the manufacture of cloth. A little finishing was done here, but cloth was not manufactured to any great extent. It has virtually all sprung up within the last sixty years. The late Mr. George Crosland was one of the first manufacturers to commence business in Huddersfield, and he did well out of it. I have heard it said, though I cannot vouch for the truth of it, that Mr. Crosland, before beginning to make cloth, was a dry waller, and he would build a dry wall seven feet long and four feet six inches high for 3s. 6d."

Speaking of the time when there were no railway facilities in Huddersfield, Mr. Roebuck said "My brother used to attend Rotherham market, and he rode on horseback to Cooper Bridge in order to catch the train from Liverpool to Rotherham. I used to walk, or run, to Cooper Bridge, and ride the horse back again. Every Tuesday morning carts brought cloth from Holmfirth and other outside places to the Cloth Hall, and many horses were stabled at the White Hart Hotel. At half past twelve a bell was rung at the Cloth Hall - the belfry is still there - to summon business men and shopkeepers to the White Hart for dinner. I have seen as many as 250 people dine at the White Hart on a Tuesday."

As will be seen from the prints reproduced in this issue, Huddersfield was a comparatively insignificant and poorly built place sixty of seventy years ago. The main street, Mr. Roebuck stated, was Manchester Street which contained houses and shops. There were also some buildings in Upperhead Row and Swallow Street, but beyond these the space above Manchester Street now one of the most congested parts of the Borough - was open and was known as 'Sheep Close', as the fields were used for the grazing of sheep. Below Manchester Street practically the only thoroughfare of importance was King Street, which had shops on the left hand side going down but none on the other.

The George Hotel, kept by Mr. Wigney was situated in what is now the roadway between the 'Bazaar' in Westgate and Messrs. Jackson and Fitton's shop at the top of Kirkgate. A thirty acre field stretched from the 'George' over all the space behind it, including that now occupied by the railway station and extending some distance up New North Road. The first building to be erected in the field was the Catholic Chapel in New North Road. The way to Birkby was through the George Hotel Yard and along footpaths in the field named and others adjoining. Only one building faced the Queen Hotel, and that was also a public house, kept by a bachelor named Johnny Saveall who had a reputation for selling beer for anything that was 'hard and round', and regularly bad washers and other things were palmed off on to him. From Upperhead Row to the bottom of Macauley Street there were gardens and a large duck pond.

Water was procured from Spa Wells, the situation of which is still marked in John William Street, near the railway viaduct. Cattle were grazed on what is now Greenhead Park, and there was a footpath through the fields leading to Holy Trinity Church.

"Law and order" were maintained by constables or 'watchmen', who were provided with shelters at various points. The first of these 'guardians of the peace' to do duty in Huddersfield was 'Jim' Hirst, and the next 'Bill' Townend. The latter was, to use Mr. Roebuck's phrase, a 'rum un!' It was the custom for these worthies to shout out each half-hour after midnight the time and state of the weather.

Mr. Roebuck showed great patience during the lengthy chat which was necessary to clear up the various points which arose from time to time, and our representative withdrew leaving him to his paper and his ruminations with much gratitude to him for the trouble to which he put himself to oblige his interviewer, the firm he represented, and the readers of the 'Examiner'.

A SAUNTER ROUND SLAITHWAITE

By G. and H. Robinson

On Monday evening 29th June a good number of local History Society members met in the car park at Slaithwaite to follow Miss Mary Freeman's 'Saunter Round the Centre of Slaithwaite'. The weather was kind to us, it was a fine warm evening and Mr. John Beaumont had been kind enough to agree to lead the party in the absence of the Misses Freeman. The saunter began in front of the Manor House which was built by Arthur Kaye of Woodsome about 1570 in order to retire there when he married for the second time in his old age. Needless to say his son did not approve of this second marriage. The Manor House is now the Dartmouth Estate office, having passed into that family through marriage in the 1700's. Some of the party took advantage of the invitation of the present tenant to go inside the building. The tenants of the Dartmouth land in Slaithwaite and Lingards still pay their rent here twice in the same room where the Manor Courts were held up to 1881. The "Shoulder of Mutton" and other public houses were pointed out where the Earl of Dartmouth gave rent dinners up to 1914. We returned to the car park where the river used to run and it was here that the ducking stool was sited for scolds and disorderly women and here too early baptists were baptised. The river was re-routed in the 1790's when the canal was built and some of us walked over the little hump-backed canal bridge called Tom Brig after an innkeeper who said to use it when smuggling with barges. We then passed the old school built 1842, the market place, Slaithwaite Bridge and up to Lingards which belonged to Kirkstall Abbey in the Middle Ages. It was bought by Arthur Kaye at the Dissolution of the Monasteries to enable him to control both sides of the river water for his mills in the valley. Varley Road was pointed out which was built by Lord Dartmouth to link Chain Road to Meltham, the Grammar School (now houses), the Winston Cinema formerly a dye-house, the Star Hotel, the Baptist and Methodist Chapels built outside Slaithwaite Boundary because Lord Dartmouth would not allow non-conformity on his land, Mechanics Institute, and the ground where the doctor's surgery now stands on Manchester Road which formerly held stalls, shows, bands and even a circus.

From Manchester Road we progressed to Kitchen Fold, a very old part of Slaithwaite which was the main way out of the village to Linthwaite and then Huddersfield or Meltham. We looked at the Globe Worsted Company and the sites where the Spinning Company mills were and also the site of the 'Spaw'. On reaching here we had to call a halt to our 'saunter' as the narrow boat 'Moonraker' had opened its door especially for the group to partake of refreshments. We ended a thoroughly enjoyable and informative evening replenishing the inner man! Our thanks must go to Mr and Mr J. Beaumont and the proprietor of the Moonraker.

MURALS FROM VENICE : A COVER STORY

No book, least of all the new History of Huddersfield, should be judged by its cover alone. But in this particular case, the cover illustration is worth a chapter of its own. Back in 1967, when the Murrayfield development was transforming the town centre, the decision was made to decorate the new Ramsden House with a mural, and it fell to the late Clifford Stephenson, as Chairman of the Estates Committee, to find a suitable subject.

The Buxton roadblock posed the first problems. Meeting our request for murals, designs were produced for a mosaic mural at each end of the block; one in Princess Street facing the Co-op. The other at the end facing Ramsden Street, was an abstract design which I did not like. The ball was thrown back into my court when I was asked for my suggestion, which was a mural portraying the story of the local industry; cloth making. I was further put on the spot when asked to find someone to illustrate the story.

At the back of my mind I had a picture of sketches of early cloth making processes which might be the answer, but where had I seen them? At last I tracked them down to the book written by Phyllis Bentley and published in 1947 by Colne Valley Manufacturers, with the title "Colne Valley Cloth": (republished in 1974 as the "Pennine Weavers") and eventually I traced the drawings to Harold Blackburn, a well-known local amateur artist and authority on the history of cloth making. Harold, introduced to the architect, was commissioned by him to design a suitable mural - the one now on view in Ramsden Street above the Halifax Building Society is the result.

Murrayfield to their credit, spared no expense on the mural which they arranged to be made by famous Venetian mosaic craftsmen. To ensure that Blackburn's design was faithfully carried out he was sent to Venice to supervise the making - all expenses paid - for three weeks which he described as the best of his life.

The mosaic mural was made up in small squares which fitted together to complete the picture when fixed to the

wall. Two Italians - on a 'professor' in mosaic design and manufacture, came to Huddersfield to erect the mural. The individual one inch square tiles which build up the mural were made in the centuries old way, in which the colour is protected and preserved by a vitrified surface, and should last for hundreds of years. When I occasionally see a father pointing out the mural to his child and using it to illustrate the history of cloth making, I feel that the design has found justification.

The mural traces the history of cloth making from its primitive beginnings; the woman combing wool on hand cards for the spinster to spin on her distaff, which is superseded by the more productive spinning wheel. The handloom weaver whose wool 'pieces' were taken on his donkey to the market near the Parish Church, where, on a tombstone, they were displayed for sale. There stands the cropper holding his shears, plotting the destruction he hated new machines with the Luddite holding 'Enoch' the hammer used to break them. The woman turning the wheel is operating a 'Jenny' which spun a dozen or more threads at once, a great leap forward in speeding production. The man with a pole is dying cloth in a simple dye-pot and finally the woman with her needle is 'mending' the finished cloth - the one hand process that has defied mechanisation.

Harold's original coloured drawing for the mural hangs on my wall as a treasured possession.

BOOKSHELF

Past and present members of the Society feature prominently on the title pages of this year's publications. The most recent addition to the series on West Yorkshire Buildings to be published by the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, is by Colin Giles and Ian H. Goodall and concerns that most prominent of local buildings - the mill. *Yorkshire Textile Mills: The Buildings of the Yorkshire Textile Industry 1770-1930* (16.95) devotes 274 pages and over 300 illustrations to a through study of these buildings and the industry that produced them.

In fact, the industry is at least as important as the mills - with substantial chapters devoted to background history, the development of the textile mill complex and the impact of such developments on the landscape. Around 150 buildings, roughly ten per cent of the sites visited, are treated in detail, with some particularly fine "interpretative" drawings to assist the non-specialist reader. Less helpful perhaps, is a gazetteer that sacrifices accessibility to historical authenticity by arranging locations by township rather than present day place names. But, that apart, from the sylvan view of Armitage Bridge on the cover to the history of Meltham Mills in the final chapter, the Huddersfield area lacks for little in its coverage.

An even weightier contribution to local scholarship will be the long-awaited general history of the town commissioned to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the present Huddersfield Library. *Huddersfield : A Most Agreeable Town* edited by Hilary Haigh will be reviewed in a later issue, but a glance at the list of twenty six contributors reveals some of the best known names in local research. Together, it is claimed, they will "throw new light on the history of Huddersfield and its people" as it developed from a "miserable village" to that "handsome town" of the title.

More modestly, the Workers History Publications of Honley, have launched the first two pamphlets in a series "intended to help increase awareness of the history of working people in the Huddersfield area". *Colliers and Harriers : working conditions in coalmines of the Huddersfield area c.1800-1870* and *Honley Socialist Club : popular socialism in a Yorkshire Textile village c.1891-1927* are both written by Alan Brooke and cost £1.25 each.

Chosen as the new venue for the Society's Christmas Dinner, Banney Royd has been the subject of some intensive research recently. The Banney Royd Study Group published their study of Edgar Wood's notable Edwardian House in a Kirklees publication *Banney Royd : An Agreeable House* A detailed, if slender publication (28pp £3.95), this charts the developments from commissioning in 1900 to present day service in the Kirklees Education Department.

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