Huddersfield Local History Society

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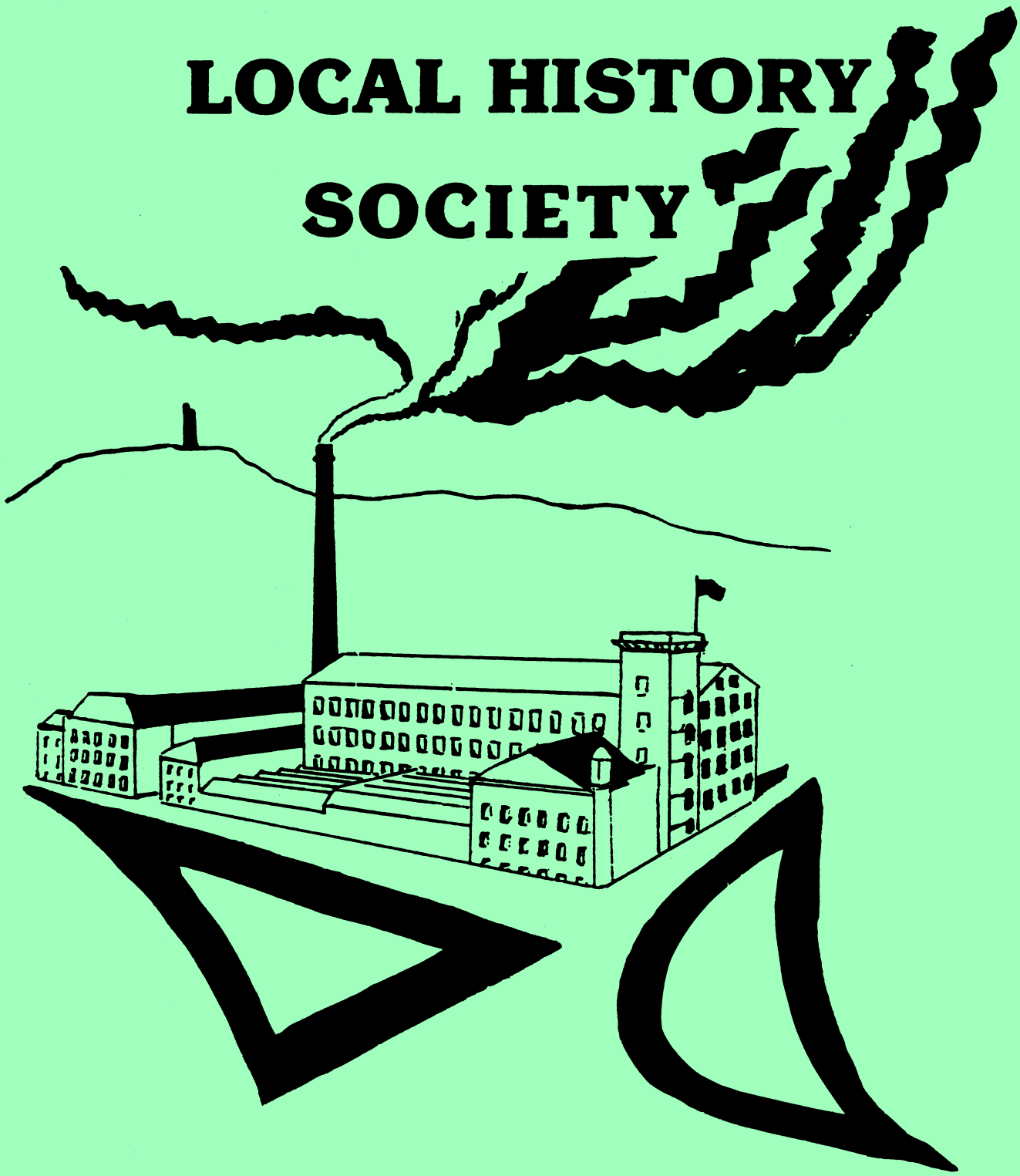
Huddersfield

LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY



JOURNAL

No. 7 WINTER 1995/96

AN IMAGE OF BIRKBY

This seasonally picturesque scene recalls a time before conservation became an important part of public life. Birkby's Old Clough House was demolished just over a century ago, in January 1899, to provide new housing; two new streets, Poplar Road and Clough Road; and a widening of the existing Halifax Old Road. Carrying a datestone for 1697, but believed to date from the mid - 16th, this attractive house had stood empty since 1894 and was cleared away with only a few remnants in Norman Park to remember it by.

According to George Gelder's article published in the Huddersfield Weekly Examiner (22nd April 1899), shortly after demolition, the earliest recorded resident at "Clough House" was William Brook in 1609, and its final owners were Joseph Armitage and J.H. Hanson. As the picture shows it occupied a particularly sylvan scene and was described affectionately by the historian C.W. Tomlinson.

"I think one of the prettiest walks in the immediate neighbourhood of Huddersfield is the one by what we know as the Halifax Old Road – one of the most striking objects on the road is Clough House, a charming old building with 4 gables looking upon an old fashioned garden with grass terraces, full of solemn Yew trees and sweet smelling flowers".

The snow, however, was not typical of the House's final years. December 1898 was "phenomenally mild", in a year described as the warmest for two decades, and January 1899 began in similar vein. This scene was, perhaps, more like the Christmas of 1895, when the "wretched - raw, boisterous, squally weather" of Christmas Eve transformed overnight into the "bright, frosty atmosphere, the smooth black ice, the sow powdered ground" that had The Examiner eulogising "the Christmas of the imagination, the Christmas of Dickens and the Christmas Card".

(An illustrated history of the Old Clough House by P. Ahier is available in the Local Studies Library).

AS YOU WERE SAYING . . .

Not everyone has that proverbial novel in them, or even a full-length for this **Journal.** But most people do have memories, or items of interest that are well worth publishing and the **Journal** would like to record some of these in future issues. They could comprise just a few paragraphs, an object, such as the Victorian postcard above, a short article or even the sort of sayings that reflect changing social conditions and attitudes and could be collected into a small feature. As an example of the latter, the saying "better the man had never been born, who cut his nails on a Sabbath morn" reflects a view of Sundays that is barely recognisable in these days of 7 day trading. Perhaps there are others?

But first, to start the series off, we offer two recollections of childhood and an enlightening example of Holme Valley enterprise.

REMINISCENCES

by Mary Ellis

Perhaps it is that I was born in Spaines Road, not in the road but in a house and the back garden went up to the fence of the Huddersfield Cricket and Football Ground, and I think that was why I have always been interested in Cricket. While we lived there as a family I got scarlet fever and in those days the only form of isolation was that I was put in a bedroom by myself and a cotton sheet was hung over the door and it was dipped in disinfectant. I could look out of the window and see my friend Joyce being taken to a cricket match. When I was well again my Father took me to a match - probably a County match as Yorkshire played at Fartown in those days. I used to go round in the early evening and watch the teams practice. I kept the scores of County matches in a little book, a penny notebook and a penny pencil bought at Emily Hartley's shop in Birkby.

When I went away to School I tried to get into the Cricket team and bowled the School Captain with one of my googlies, a shock for her, but that term I caught my thumb in a window which dropped on it, so no more cricket that term.

After I left school, along with a friend I joined the Huddersfield Ladies and played on Paddock cricket ground and various other local grounds, but only for one season, as Rosamund and I got caught up in the Girl Guides and there wasn't time for both hobbies. But I met a Yorkshire County Lady member and I was hooked, A County Member and able to go to County matches and Test Matches at Park Avenue, Headingley, Fartown, Sheffield, this was one foot in heaven.

I was actually at the Test Match at Headingley when Bill Bowes bowled Don Bradman for 304....We cheered and cheered and stood on the seats in our excitement. The great Bradman bowled by our Bill Bowes from Yorkshire.

So having been a Yorkshire County member for over 50 years and enjoyed Cricket, especially in Scarborough at the Festival I still go to matches and enjoy the local League matches, sitting in the shade by the river in Holmfirth and watching the local team, a very pleasant way to spend a summer afternoon. Perhaps on my coffin will be "R.S.P." rain stopped play, and then I may be in green field watching Woolley, Hirst, Rhodes, Wilfred Sutcliffe Hobbs, Wyatt, Leyland, Hutton.

Who knows....

EVERYONE HAD TO HAVE A BOTTLE

by Betty Eagles

Until we retired 10 years ago, all my life had been spent in a medical household. Bryan and I practised in the Holme Valley from 1950 to 1985. But my own childhood was spent in New Mill, where my father was a general practitioner, and on the staff of the Holme Valley Hospital. When our own children were small they used constantly to be irritated by our slavery to the telephone; we used to have to make provision with someone else if we went out, and in the garden we were repeatedly deafened by a very loud outside bell, summoning us back to the house. This was not the case when I was a child. Only a few people had telephones; our surgery phone had the number Holmfirth 54! In those days a great many messages were brought to the house personally by relatives, day and night. I slept in the front of the house and I was frequently wakened by footsteps on the gravel : then I would hear my father shouting through the bedroom window. He would then get up, have a cup of tea, and set off for the visit, taking the relative who had brought the message along with him. Most callers came on foot, some on bicycles, and on two memorable occasions by tractor.

I often went with my father to the main surgery, a detached house in station road Holmfirth, and sat in the office watching the secretary/dispenser making up medicines. There was a pile of lovely white squares of paper on the desk, and I used to be given one of these to draw on. When a bottle of medicine had been prepared, it was wrapped in white paper, folded at both ends and sealed with sealing wax. There was a tiny gas flame burning for this purpose ; it was rather like a sacred flame in the temple of Aesculapius!

On reflection very few of these medicines in the 30s had any useful purpose, except to give the patient a feeling of confidence. There were the tonics, containing rhubarb and gentian and a little (very little) strychnine : then there was the thick, treacly, almost black cough medicine. An ounce and a half of this was poured from a huge winchester into a ten ounce bottle, then water to the neck; it was a very popular remedy for cough, and reasonably effective. Then there were the white medicines of various sorts, to combat indigestion, to relieve constipation or check diarrhoea. There was a patient in the practice, a famous lady, who each week had a bottle containing Epsom salt, and a kaolin mixture; her bowels were kept in a state of dynamic balance.
A great many patients set great store by their bottle of medicine. One day my father was returning from his surgery, and called in to see his old friend, Mr. Noble, the watchmaker in New Mill. It was not a professional call.....just telling the tale. The doctor had with him a bottle of medicine for his own use, for a minor stomach upset; it had his own name on it. By chance he left this medicine on the counter of Noble's shop. He called the next day to pick it up. But Mr.Noble had drunk it : "I thowt if it were good enough for thee, Ah ought not to miss the chance."
There were of course tablets as well, though not nearly as many as there are today. They were dispensed in round cardboard boxes, with separate cardboard lids. We used to have aspirins in three separate colours, red, yellow and white. There were a number of patients who said they had great benefit from the coloured ones, while the white ones were no help at all.
Wounds and grazes were painted with iodine, merthiolate or triple dye.....brown, red or blue. Besides acting as an antiseptic, they certainly drew attention to the patient's disability. Liniments were popular, and the pungent smell of wintergreen often pervaded the surgery. Ointments came in great earthenware jars, and were scooped out into cardboard containers, like the ones used for pills. We still have three of these great jars on the windowsill of our kitchen. For the past 30 years they have been used for holding cooking implements.
Many of my childhood memories concern the Holme Valley Hospital. I remember cutting my finger and being taken to the hospital. Because I was the doctor's daughter it was not considered proper for me to be treated in the casualty room. So I was stitched in matron's sitting room, with her dog wagging its tail all around. Another memory is of my father using the X-ray machine. Normally there was a technician in the daytime, but this was late evening, and an injured wrist needed urgent attention. Father had managed an X-ray machine in India at the end of the great war. He went ahead, and fused all the lights in the whole hospital. Nothing daunted he went off and returned with an electrician. The supply was restored AND he obtained a good picture of the wrist.
All my life I have been used to social commitments and family celebrations being interrupted by medical emergencies. In the Autumn of 1947 a great celebration was planned in New Mill, an important family meal for my parents' silver wedding and my engagement to Bryan. In the afternoon Bryan and I, then senior medical students, went to the hospital with my father to see an urgent appendix operation. Hardly had we got there when the news came through of a terrible accident in the centre of Holmfirth. It was October 25th 1947. A bus had careered down Dunford Road and crashed into Kaye's shop. 9 people were killed and 23 seriously injured. The appendix operation was cancelled; to this day the lady in question retains her appendix. Mr. Kennedy, the surgeon who was due to operate, local doctors from the whole valley, and two very raw medical students were all occupied for the next 7 hours, with patients lying all over the floor of the casualty department, the physiotherapy room and the operating theatre. Nowadays there would have been a score of paramedics in attendance; some patients would have gone to Huddersfield and a number further afield. In the event a neurosurgeon from Leeds was called in later in the evening ; he was expecting to see one or two cases of head injury, but was asked for his advice on 8 cases, all with severe concussion and brain damage,
About ten o'clock my father, Bryan and I crept back to New Mill, very tired indeed. My mother had tried to delay the celebration meal. Rationing was still in force, and she had scrimped and saved to make the meal a memorable one. But three of the principal diners had to be continually aroused from falling asleep over their food!

POWER TO THE PEOPLE: HOLME AND ELECTRICITY

The following account is based on an article in the Holmfirth Express of 24th Feb 1934, discovered by Mr K. Hollingworth.

Just over sixty years ago, a remarkable example of civic enterprise came to an end when the electricity undertaking of Holme UDC was absorbed by Holmfirth Council. There had been several noteworthy features of this venture, not least the size of the Authority involved and the remarkable spirit of public participation that made it all possible. For Holme was one of the smallest Urban District Councils in the Country, with nearly 4,000 acres of moorland, a handful of people (389 in the village in 1911) and rather a lot of sheep. As the new century dawned, oil lamps were still the chief source of lighting, but by 1914 plans to install electricity were being laid, and various options were considered. Gas plants were inspected, but in the end, water power "which in normal times nature bountifully supplies" was accepted as the best source of power generation.

The old Rake Mill, in a rocky valley with suitably gushing stream and a history of industrial use, was chosen as the site of the power station and financial capital was raised by a specially formed limited company. Its £800 capital was allotted, on the democratic principle, in £1 shares, and no one was allowed more than £15 worth of shares. The electrical wiring was contracted to Messrs. J.W. & R. Graham of Faraday Works, Huddersfield in March 1915, but people power, in its most literal sense, still had a part to play. Forty or fifty shareholders, "volunteers, not pressed men, not even paid men" set about demolishing the remains of the old mill, strengthened the mill dam and repaired the goit. Then they went out into the village thoroughfares and erected wooden lighting standards. It was, as the Express enthused "a whole-hearted endeavour beyond praise", but not beyond reward, for this self-help approach reduced the cost of the scheme by £100.

The machinery still had to be purchased of course and was "the best and most modern" but quality had to be tempered with caution, and "economy was studied by the elimination of elaborate, yet unnecessary details and trimmings". A control station was set up close to the Council Offices, with a switchboard, batteries with a storage capacity of two to three days supply and a 9 h.p. paraffin engine to power a dynamo when the water supply proved insufficient.

Charges, not surprisingly, proved to be a contentious issue, with fears that payments for units used would seem too open-ended and discourage people from taking part. So a fixed system was agreed, with 30/- per house, per annum for three lights of twenty five candle power each. Extra lights could be added for an additional 4/- each.

With that agreed the opening ceremony could take place, which it duly did on the fine, but "extremely cold" 13th November 1915. Most of the village turned up to see the official opening performed by the oldest shareholder, and mother of the Council Chairman, Mrs Mary Howard. Eighty-eight year old Mrs Howard, known locally as Mary o't' Mount, opened the door with a gold key presented by Mrs Hurst Green. Once inside, amid cheering spectators, she set the mechanism going "by turning a wheel here and a pulley there" and christened the turbine itself with her own name. Some five hundred lights were now connected and a happy company assembled at the Fleece Inn to be congratulated on their enterprise. One hundred shareholders had raised the £800 between them, and planned to extend the lights from the existing fifty-six house to seventy.

In 1919, Mr Charles Tinker, who had been Chairman of both the Electric Light Company and the Urban District Council, offered to purchase all the shares and present the Company to the Council. Not that a change of ownership would affect the guiding principle of economy; when the battery maintenance contract came up for renewal, it was decided to dispense with them altogether and rely on an emergency supply from Holmfirth. Self-help was also still the preferred option when major works were required. When larger diameter pipes were needed, the Council borrowed the money interest-free from its citizens and utilised unemployed villages to lay the pipes during the slump-hit years of the early 1920s.

But even such robust traditions couldn't compete with the needs of a more demanding society. As more houses were connected, and customers required heating and power in addition to electric lights, the council decided to merge with the Holmfirth undertaking in January 1934, and Mary o't' Mount finally ceased her faithful labours.

SAVING THE TEXTILE HERITAGE

In the Journal's last issue, we printed an article by Lesley Kipling on the difficulties of preserving redundant textile mills and the role of PITH, a newly formed conservation group, in this process. Mr. J.B. Brierley now writes to present an alternative point of view.

I have pondered for some time about the "Saving the Textile Heritage" article in the Journal no. 6. I should have done something about it sooner, was it really printed as long ago as winter 1994/5? May I put the contrary view.

The article, unsigned and with no address tor contacting PITH, complains that there are "only" 22 mills listed in the Huddersfield Borough compared with the hundreds which once existed. If any useless building is to be preserved artificially then it is right that such protection should be very sparingly given. The word useless will no doubt cause a few hackles to be raised, but if nobody can find a use for a building which will enable it to be kept in good condition then it is all too easy to say that somebody else must pay. The Titanic is an example of a real millstone around the owners' necks and it cannot help them to stay in business.

The listing of one mill of a particular type anywhere in Yorkshire sounds about right to me and I do not believe that this is a restricted view. The only satisfactory way to preserve buildings is to use them, as the article mentions, and this means that the brightest and most able of our young people should be encouraged to work in them. Sadly, the do-gooding activities of societies like PITH simply confirm the general view that the textile industry belongs wholly to the past and is now only worth consideration as part of the new industry of tourism. I would therefore suggest that PITH is taking a very restricted view by trying to preserve redundant remains in aspic, and actually inflicts serious damage on the remaining industry.

Until recently I ran a textile business myself and know well that the general opinion of outsiders is more or less that the mills are filled with old women in clogs and shawls bent over their spinning wheels. The reality is quite different but it is very difficult to get the message across, especially when PITH gets the headlines.

I value our textile heritage extremely highly having worked in it all my life which is why I encouraged my own children to go into the business, happily with some success. This should improve the odds of the survival of two substantial stone mills, one of which is listed.

THE DAWN OF MEDICAL SCIENCE IN HUDDERSFIELD

by Dr. Eagles

In 1964, when I had the honour to be its secretary, Huddersfield Medical Society celebrated its 150th anniversary. To be absolutely honest, the organisation which was founded in 1814 was in fact the Huddersfield Medical Library, which existed throughout the 19th century, buying medical books and lending them to members. The Library was incorporated into the Medical Society, when it was reborn, or reconstituted, in 1880. The present society has two other precursors. The minutes still exist of a group of surgeons, meeting first at the old Dispensary in Pack Horse Yard, and then at the Infirmary. These surgeons held meetings at which they discussed their cases ; they also agreed what their fees should be for various items of service. From 1852 onwards there also existed the Huddersfield Medico-Ethical Society, which was entirely concerned with matters of professional conduct and organisation, and not at all with medical science.

In 1880 the Huddersfield Medical Society was refounded in its present form. Subscribers to the Medical Library automatically became members, and a new constitution was agreed. This was one of the initial rules:

Not more than 20 minutes shall be allowed for the reading of a paper ; 15 minutes shall be allowed for minor communications, and not more than 10 minutes for any speech.

I am not sure how rigidly this rule has been applied over the years. The moving spirit in the rebirth of the Medical Society was Dr. Cameron, the second Medical Officer of Health for Huddersfield, a most distinguished man, who went on to become the M.O.H. for Leeds. Associated with Dr.Cameron in

the enterprise was Dr. Scougall, a local practitioner who died very prematurely.

The refounding of the Medical Society and its early years coincided with the birth of medical science in the civilised world as a whole. The last 30 years of the 19th century saw the development of the new science of bacteriology, and the recognition that infectious disease was caused by micro-organisms. Prior to that medical men had spoken vaguely of " miasmata" and " noxious vapours." The French chemist, Louis Pasteur, was the first to discover bacteria as the cause of fermentation, and this work was rapidly developed by the German, Robert Koch, and a host of early bacteriologists. Of course having discovered the cause of infection, it was not any easier to treat ; it was to be another 60 years before antibiotics came on the scene.

However there was one area where the new Knowledge had immediate application. This was the sphere of surgery. We often think that the break through in surgery came with the discovery of anaesthetics (Ether 1846, Chloroform 1847). Of course anaesthesia made an operation much more comfortable for the patient, but surgery was still extremely risky.

Sir James Simpson, the pioneer of chloroform, said that a patient on the operating table "faced danger equal to that of the battlefield." The battlefield was the battlefield of infection :scrupulous cleanliness was not yet a feature of the operating theatre, and life-threatening infection occurred in a great many cases. In 1896 John Irving, a surgeon at Huddersfield Infirmary looked back on his experiences 23 years earlier when he started work as a house surgeon at the Infirmary : he presented his memories in a paper to the Medical Society. This was how an operation was conducted at Huddersfield in 1873:

The surgeons wore woollen gowns, which were very seldom washed, and the house surgeon put on his oldest coat for operations, and, to put it mildly, scrupulous care was not taken with the hands. Instruments were handed to the operators straight from the cupboard, and lotion for the hands was never thought of.

As a result the hospital wards were pervaded by infection, and the poulticing of infected wounds was a constant chore, as John Irving again recalled:

Linseed meal has almost disappeared from the hospital, but 20 years ago, there was seldom a day on which a steaming linseed meal poultice was not to be seen in almost every ward.

The man who conquered infection in the operating theatre and pioneered the antiseptic regime, was Joseph Lister, who worked in Glasgow in the 1860s. In 867 he published his first results, 11 cases of compound fracture, that is fractures complicated by an open wound. Only one patient died and only one limb needed to be amputated. Prior to Lister's work very many patients with these fractures died as a result of overwhelming infection, and amputation was nearly always necessary. Lister, apart from his emphasis on strict cleanliness in the operating theatre, made much use of carbolic acid ; it was even employed as a spray in the theatre during operations.

The principles advocated by Lister were soon adopted in Huddersfield, and the last quarter of the 19th century was a period of great expansion in surgery at Huddersfield Infirmary. John Irving reported to the Medical Society in 1896 :

I have made a chart, by which you will see that the number of operations has increased by leaps and bounds.....in 1874 there were only 55 operations, whilst in the report twenty-one years later the numbers have increased to 400, almost eight times as many.....At the bottom of the chart I have indicated by a red line the number of deaths each year, and you will readily observe the gratifying fact, that the increase in the number of operations is not followed by an increased number of deaths; the opposite rather holds good.

Thus the Huddersfield surgeons seized the opportunities afforded by the antiseptic regime of Joseph Lister. Looking through the records the wind of change, the atmosphere of excitement and discovery, seems to escape from the dusty confines of the old minute book. The expansion of surgery started fairly quietly in the 1880s, but almost every meeting in the last decade of the century exhibits operations new to Huddersfield, or surgical procedures performed in a new way. In November 1888, the Society heard of the removal of 66 stones from the gall-bladder of a patient; unfortunately the patient died, but Dr. Scougall still urged his colleagues "when in doubt, OPERATE." The Huddersfield surgeons certainly took this advice: the Society minutes report a plethora of operations on all the human organs in all sorts of diseases. Dr. Clarke reported a case where he had removed part of the stomach; he thought this operation had only been performed three times before in the world. On another occasion a surgeon removed almost all the large bowel from one of his patients, and in 1897 Mr. McGregor carried out a gall-bladder operation in a man aged 80! But he had to add that the "patient sank

later from exhaustion." All too often these surgeons had to record that the operation was successful, but the patient died. But we need to remember that a great many of the patients would have died equally certainly if no attempt had been made to save them by surgery. In 1898 Mr. J.A. Brooke J.P., one of the guest speakers at the Society's Annual Dinner told his audience that he had spent much time in the remote parts of Scotland, where one of the natives had said to him: "We have no doctors here; we mostly die natural deaths."

Of course the new awakening of medical science was not just a Huddersfield phenomenon; it was going on all over the civilised world. It is amazing to see how quickly discoveries from other countries were acknowledged and acted upon in Huddersfield. Diphtheria antitoxin was in use locally only 6 years after its discovery; and just 3 years after Rontgen described X-rays, the Society was discussing "Rontgen Rays and Medical Work." Over and over again one receives the impression that Huddersfield practitioners are part of a medical internet. In 1898 Dr. Robinson reported treating wounds with sterilised bone fragments; he had this suggestion from a surgical colleague working in Argentina!

Repeatedly in the Society minutes, the reader is brought face to face with the problem of tuberculosis. Already, by the end of the century it was recognised that tuberculous infection had two sources: passage from one human being to another, and infection in cattle passed on in milk. "Bovine : infection was in many ways the worst form since it save rise to infection all over the body, not just in the lungs, and it was also the commoner infection in children. In 1898 and in 1900 papers were read which showed that Huddersfield Medical Society were fully aware of the hazard of infected cattle. The tuberculin test was already in use. Dr. Annis, the M.O.H., reported that there were already in the Huddersfield area, some herds which were free of tuberculosis. Both he and a previous speaker two years earlier strongly advised that milk should be heat-treated before it was drunk. An apparatus for the pasteurisation of milk became available nationally in 1898. While on the subject of milk it is interesting to note that the artificial feeding of babies was becoming common in late Victorian Huddersfield. Speaking at the Annual Dinner in 1899 Dr. McGregor said :

> ".....it was no longer fashionable and good form for a mother to suckle her young, and the consequence was that their children were being nursed and reared on objectionable patent foods.

Not all the papers read to the Society comprised new contributions to medical science. Samuel Knaggs, the doyen of the society, presented his reminiscences after more than 40 years of medical practice in Huddersfield. Dr. Kaye, the M.O.H., gave a history of the water closet. One of the members whom I would have liked to have met and heard was Dr. Draper. He read two papers on Hypnotism, in which he put forward the view that, by suggestion and hypnosis the bowels might be made to work. In 1897 Dr. Draper was President of the Society : for his presidential address he chose the subject, "The Injurious Effects of Corsets." In thanking the speaker Dr. Robinson "thanked Dr. Draper for his interesting paper, but thought the subject too delicate for him to say much about it."

Not all local practitioners became members of the Medical Society. In 1897 consternation was caused because one of the house surgeons at the Infirmary was a lady ; she was not permitted to attend the meetings. It was not uncommon for medical men who applied to be elected, to be turned down. The secretary said in public at the Annual Dinner of 1898:

> They did not however admit all who desired to join their ranks, being somewhat particular.

No reasons were given in the minutes wen a candidate was turned down, but it is likely that most of the unsuccessful applicants were those practitioners who were popularly called ' sixpenny doctors.' These men undercut their colleagues very drastically in the matter of fees. Patients queued at their surgeries and were charged an inclusive fee for a consultation and a bottle of medicine ; sometimes this fee was as low as sixpence, which contrasted very markedly with the guinea, or more, which their brethren might charge for a home visit. The more prestigious doctors usually visited their patients in their own homes, and gave a prescription to be dispensed elsewhere.

The problem of the sixpenny doctors came to a head in 1895, when a certain Dr. Milligan began practice in the town; not only did he severely undercut his professional colleagues, but he also advertised his dispensary to the public. There was an outcry in the Society, and a concerted demand that something must be done about the sixpenny doctors. Not everyone was in favour of drastic action. Mr. Knaggs advised kindness, and urged that the errant practitioners be gently persuaded to mend their ways. But a sterner view prevailed; Dr. Clarke emphasized

that "the wish of the society was to purge the profession of evils." Eventually the society passed a resolution which had the effect of sending the sixpenny doctors to Coventry:

The members of the Huddersfield Medical Society decline to have any professional relations with the sixpenny doctors, or with any member of the profession who meets them in consultation. The society tried to go even further by circulating the names of the offending practitioners to colleagues in neighbouring towns. Fortunately they took legal advice before doing this, from a very distinguished barrister in London. He advised them strongly against any such action, saying that they would lay themselves open to charges of libel and conspiracy.

Apart from scientific and professional matters, the medical society has always given its members an opportunity of social contact with their colleagues. In 1887 the secretary was instructed to see the matron at the Infirmary and arrange for tea and toast at the end of each meeting. Two years earlier there had been an informal dinner which is described in the minutes:

After this stop in the proceedings the members present with a few visitors adjourned to the dining room, where 18 men found 19 courses open to them, and spent the time agreeably until 11 o'clock, discussing the good things provided, drinking various toasts and singing songs, the prevailing impression with those present, to judge from the frequency of the refrain, being that somebody was a jolly good fellow and that the fact was undeniable.

Three years later, in 1888, there occurred the first formal Annual Dinner of the Society. Toasts were drunk to the following:

The Queen, the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Army, Navy and Reserve Forces, the Society, the Church and Ministers of all Denominations, other professions, the Town and Trade of Huddersfield, Universities, Schools and Hospitals, Visitors, the President, Past and Previous Office-bearers of the Society, and the LADIES.

Needless to say there were no ladies present. Lady doctors were admitted to the Society early in the next century, but they were not welcomed to the Annual Dinner until the early 1950s, and then after considerable altercation!

Apart from the speeches necessitated by these various toasts there was other entertainment:

Intervals between the toasts were enlivened by songs kindly provided by Messrs. Welsh, Hall, Williams, Dawson and Scougal.

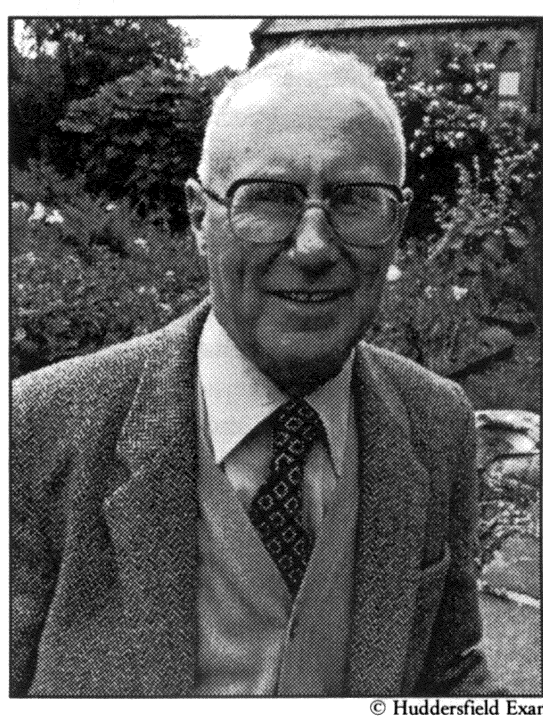
Forty years ago my wife and I attended a Medical Society Dinner at which a solo was sung, by a very senior member of the society, at the end of the proceedings. So far as I am aware there have been no songs since. Some customs are more honoured in the breach than the observance.

OBITUARY

In 1995 the society was saddened by the death of two of its most loyal and hard-working members: Tom Wainwright and Gillian Robinson. Stanley Sheeard and Dr. Eagles remember them.

Tom was a founder member of this Society, which he served both as a committee member, and for several years as Chairman, until his retirement only two years ago. He was well known to members for his attendance at meetings where his personal knowledge allowed him to contribute to many of the lectures.

A man of many interests, he was also a member of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society, where his contribution will also be missed, and the Methodist Historical Society. This was a particular outlet for his Knowledge, as he wrote many papers and booklets about local chapels and churches and his knowledge of the Methodist movement was sought by many throughout



the country.
Seven years ago he formed the Skelmanthorpe Local History Study Group and continued as its chairman until his death. This Group sadly misses his input of knowledge into the history of the families, industries, organisations and individuals that had contributed to the growth of the local area.
Tom spent his working life as a master joiner and undertaker, taking over the family business, while still a young man, on the death of his father. As a joiner, his work took him into all kinds of buildings: factories, farms and houses, all with histories to be discovered. Whether as an apprentice repairing hand looms or as a joiner altering old buildings to accommodate modern machinery, he saw it at first hand. As an undertaker he knew and understood the families that required his services.
Tom was brought up a Methodist, progressing from scholar to class teacher, superintendent, trustee and local preacher. He was an active representative on many committees of the Local Circuit, and the Temperance Friendly Society, which he also served throughout his life. As with Methodism, he chose to make a study of the subject and wrote an interesting paper about all the local Friendly Societies.
Always in demand as a speaker to all kinds of organisations, from schools to Womens Institutes, Tom also served as a Liberal councillor for Skelmanthorpe on the Denby Dale UDC, though he never liked to converse on political matters.
Tom never refused anyone his knowledge of history, be it children studying for A or O levels, University students, or people writing letters from abroad, enquiring about their ancestors - and many developed into life-long friendships.
When Tom passed away, I lost a colleague and a great friend. His knowledge always astounded me, because, as we travelled around, either locally or further afield, by coach, train or car, before passing something of interest, be it church, chapel or mound of earth, he would draw my attention to it, often when travelling by car we would make a detour to see something connected with railways or canals. Railways were another interest and he knew the British system from its early days, through the pre-war companies and the closures of the Beeching era to what he described as the "apology of a system" that we have now.
This Knowledge was gained from reading and collecting books. I don't ever remember popping in to see Tom and not finding him reading a book, he collected three or four books from the local library every week.
Tom was always welcome in all libraries, be it for research or for reading, because the staff working there knew that when he left, his little chat would leave them a wiser person. I know myself that through his company I am so. Tom was always supported by his wife, Honor, although the only interest they shared was the chapel.
I hope that I have given you some insight into a personal friend.
S.S.

Last year our society suffered a sad loss by the death of Gillian Robinson, one of our most dedicated and enthusiastic members, and a long-standing committee member. Gillian was or course the wife of our treasurer, Howard, and the sister of Jennifer Stead, whose guidance and expertise we greatly value. Our October study day in 1995, which was acknowledged to be such a success, featured Jennifer as one of the speakers. It is not so well known that this day was in fact the brain child of Gillian; she played a great part in the planning, even in her last illness. It is very sad that she did not survive to enjoy the result.
Gillian was an invaluable committee member. She combined a down-to-earth, practical approach with a delightful sense of humour, which enlightened many a dull meeting.
In recent years Gillian and Howard made a meticulous study of the Sedgwick family, of which Howard is a lineal descendant. Among several other rural settings, the family were once based at Snailsden, Dunford Bridge, which I remember as one of the most exhausting visits I ever had to make, more that 40 years ago, on foot, in deep snow. The Robinsons' research was published in Old West Riding. But most of us remember the exhilarating presentation of it which Gill gave at one of our meetings. It was authoritative and very enjoyable; above all it was pervaded by Gillian's love of the countryside and the open air, which was so much a feature of her life.
In recent years we have held a number of meetings at Newsome South Methodist Church; the work of this church was the epicentre of Gillian's whole life. Whenever I go into Newsome South I am conscious of her personality all around, especially when I look at the stained glass window which commemorates Abraham Lockwood....."little Abe, the Bishop of Berry Brow." He was Gillian's great-grandfather. She was a worthy successor to him.
J.B.E.

SOCIETY EVENTS

DISCOVERING BIRSTALL

One of the pleasures of local history is discovering nuggets of interest among the commonplaces of everyday life - a task that is notably easier in some places than others. A picturesque village with venerable church, 'period' cottages and evocative place names, offers more obvious potential than the sort of anonymous suburban sprawl where little seems to pre-date the Industrial Revolution. Our area includes both kinds of location, but it was to an example of the latter that this years June excursion made its way.
"The present road from Dewsbury to Bradford runs through Birstall. For 2 or 3 miles the traveller passes through a continuous succession of woollen mills and factories and rows of dreary buildings. It is an illustration of the depressing results of the modern industrial system. Every trace of beauty has vanished".
A rather harsh view perhaps, but one that is still as recognisable today as when the Rev. H.C. Craddock compiled his *History of the ancient parish of Birstall, Yorkshire* in 1933, making this very much the sort of area where Dr. Redmonds particular talent for teasing out the evidence of pre-Victorian society is seen to good effect.
Recent histories have emphasised the Victorian history of the area, particularly of the village itself, but historically Birstall was far more than this. Never a township, and only latterly a distinct village, Birstall was a particularly large parish containing many of the places that comprise modern north Kirklees. Tong, Wyke, Liversedge, Cleckheaton, Drighlington, Gomersal, Heckmondwike, Birkenshaw, Hunsworth, Liversedge - all united by a somewhat isolated parish church.
St. Peters rather typifies the parish a whole, originating in the Middle Ages, largely rebuilt in the C19th containing a small selection of carefully preserved historical treasures. Round the corner in Kirkgate, but not visited this time, is another hidden gem, the C19th magistrates court contained in the upper floor of the Black Bull Inn.
The ecclesiastical presence stretches further afield to the White Chapel at Cleckheaton, built c.1820 on the site of an earlier building and St. James parish church at Tong. Formerly a chapel of Birstall, the medieval church was entirely rebuilt in 1727 in the classical style by Sir George Tempest, whose family home stands nearby. Just visible from the main road, Tong Hall is remarkable for this area in its brick construction, a feature shared with the unusual little cottage by the Church, which combines both brick and stone.
Tong Hall, and of course Red House may stand out like the proverbial sore thumbs in a sea of stone, but they are not the only interesting houses in the area. In fact, the C16th and C17th were particularly generous in their domestic endowments. Oakwell Hall is too large and important for such a brief tour, but many other fine houses were noted.
The long, gabled front of Pollard Hall, "an exceedingly fine house" according to Pevsner was glimpsed briefly over its garden wall. Lumb Hall in Darlington with its distinctive rose window, Peel House in Gomersal, Liversedge Hall and the multi-gabled Haigh Hall are all worthy of further attention, yet form just a sample of the score or so Yeoman houses and farms that could be found in the district.
Of the people who lived here, evidence is intangible. The larger houses had their landed families: Batt at Oakwell, Neville at Liversedge, Tempest at Tong, lesser families made their mark: Barraclough, Holdsworth, Kershaw, Naylor, Walker. And there were the outstanding individuals: Joseph Priestley, John Nelson the Methodist pioneer, Dr. Richardson of Bierley Hall, John Curwen inventor of tonic solfa, and, of course, the Brontes at Hightown.
Two particular islands of interest are the Moravian settlement, whose notice board still advertises its monthly "love feasts", and the village of East Bierley. This is just the sort of place that you don't expect to find in such an urban area, and a brief stop allowed time to walk around and admire the triangular green with its pond. The village appears in the East Bierley and Hunsworth Enclosure Maps of 1599, where its green, though clearly marked, had a more functional role as the site of the 'colepits' and was bounded on the north by the "marshe of East Bierley".
A few decades after this map was completed, the Civil War came to this peaceful area, when the Earl of Newcastle's Royalist Army defeated the Parliamentary force of Lord Fairfax at Adwalton Moor on 30th June 1648. This is now as unlikely a battle site as it is possible to imagine and Adwalton is one of those places where the historical imagination is stretched to the limit. But this applies to so much of the Birstall parish area. Just cruising home along the A62 it is hard to imagine the barrier that the bleak trackless wastes of Mirfield and Hartshead Moors once formed between the Spen and Colne Valleys, but on the evidence of this brief tour, the effort is worth while.

SAVOURING THE PAST: A CULINARY STUDY DAY.

God bless us all, an mak' us able
Ta eit all t' stuff what's on this table!
Few subjects exert such an absorbing interest as food; whether as basic necessity, as part of religious ritual or even just a fascinating hobby, it escapes no ones's attention. And when the historical ingredient is added, even those who would run a mile from a cookery book and couldn't tell a posset from a pottage take a second look. Here is a touch of the exotic and, perhaps, even an "eye of Newt, toe of frog" style of cookery to be revealed.
In reality it is never quite like that of course, for, as our first

speaker emphasised, early culinary practices were usually moulded by strictly utilitarian considerations. It was through the influences of climate, fuel, agricultural practices and geography that local diets were ended and these were described in some detail as Dr. Brears introduced the Yorkshire cuisine of the 17th century.

Although this was a coal producing area, peat was a particularly important fuel and had a significant effect on cooking methods. Basically it meant no ovens or roasting for many people. Pots, packed with carefully timed 'packages' of ingredients were boiled over peat fires. Oatcakes were baked on bake stones and bread came out of igloo-like ovens. Preparing food was such an important activity that many popular expressions had a culinary origin. Thus bread from the gritty base of the oven was to be avoided if possible, the upper crust went only to the "better sort". Ginger bread, literally spiced ginger bread, could also be a problem to poorer people. Made for special occasions, especially hiring fairs, the moulded shapes were wrapped in gilt foil to make them more attractive, but when the gilt was removed from the gingerbread, anticipation could literally turn to sawdust in the mouth. Unattractive fare was also offered to those involved in hunting. While whole joints of venison were baked into giant pasties for transporting as far as London, the lower orders had to be content with pies containing the deers innards - the umbles.

Less exotic meat, for those who could afford it, came south into Yorkshire on thousands of black, shaggy, Highland hooves, down the drove roads from Scotland. Small birds could be trapped in large numbers for food, but fish had to be imported from the coast. York was a centre of this trade, with fish coming in through Fishergate Bar and oysters being sold on the riverside at King's Staithe. Large find of oyster shells at Pennine farmhouses testify to the importance of this particular trade.

As winter approached, local weavers and others attended the November fairs to stock up with winter supplies, and even large households were pleased to receive at least some of their rents in edible kind. Simply obtaining enough food was the ultimate achievement for most people, but as time moved on, the wealthy and leisured classes began to look for somewhere special to eat their elegant meals.

Communal dining, like communal living in general, went out of fashion from the C16th and a new kind of building began to appear on large estates, the banqueting house. Best known from the palatial example in Whitehall where Charles I's life had ended, banqueting houses, though mostly of more modest style, were surprisingly common. In the second talk of the day, Jennifer Stead, took us through the hidden world of these little known structures. The word banquet conjures up visions of lavish, elaborate feasts, but these buildings originated in a medieval dining custom, known as the little banquet. Served as an extended sweet course at the end of a formal meal, the little banquet was often held in a private room away from the busy hall, and it was only a matter of time before special purpose-built rooms were created. Not all were elaborate structures, for this was the period when the countryside was becoming an adjunct to gracious living, and small roof top banqueting rooms adorned the roofs of many fine new houses, Longleat, for example, had four such rooms with a view, while Worksop and Hardwick also had notable examples. Skipton Castle boasted a remarkable grotto example - the shell room in its gatehouse, and Weston Hall, near Otley, still possesses the country's finest example, built into an angle of the garden wall. In Kildwich and Sheffield they became part of the streetscape and Temple Newsome had a late example overlooking the bowling greens.

By the eighteenth century, the original purpose had been long lost, but banqueting houses were still being built. Studley Royal, Riveaulx and Whitley Beaumont all possessed late examples of these obsolescent, but fascinating little memorials to gracious living.

The occupants of banqueting houses had enjoyed many exotic dishes, sometimes eaten off boards of marchpane or out of goblets and plates of sugar, but most foods came in pewter or pottery receptacles and it was to this more earthy topic that the final talk of the day was devoted.

On the face of it, C17th pottery isn't necessarily the most exciting of topics, but then John Hudson is no ordinary potter and his talk turned the afternoon session into something completely different. Formerly a teacher, Mr. Hudson has worked as a professional potter and lecturer since 1973, utilising the rich clays of his native Mirfield to produce a wide range of traditional pottery.

The products were spread out in glorious profusion: possett pots, honey pots, owl jugs, asparagus dishes, three-handled cups, a copy of the massive Wakefield Salt - many of them made to order for historic houses and museums across the country and even sold as far away as Japan. Inspiration comes particularly from the work of Buslem's C17th potter, Thomas Toft and Mr. Hudson has made himself into an authority on many of the C17th craftsmen. But there is nothing dryly academic about this expert, whose larger than life personality bubbled through the hard facts in a cascade of accents, anecdotes and gestures that had his audience, almost literally, rolling in the aisles. Not was pottery the only talent on display, there was food to go with it. A traditional sauce was cooked to accompany of giggert of lamb that had been prepared earlier and kept warm with a heated brick, served with fresh soft oatcake and washed down with a hot possett of egg yolks, sherry, sugar and grated nutmeg, this made a delicious conclusion to a memorable day.

And then there was the Hudson humour, as earthy as his raw material, but virtually impossible to convey in cold print. Take for instance the tale of the bull, the heifer and the old Yorkshire farmer. Heard it? No? Oh well, you really had to be there.

1. *A West Riding 'Grace before meal' quoted in P.C.D. Brears Gentlewoman's Kitchen: great food in Yorkshire 1650-1750.*

BOOKSHELF

No single title dominated local publishing this year, but there was, nevertheless, an interesting selection of publications illustrating the variety of local life. Sport has been much to the fore of late, with the opening of the McAlpine Stadium and the centenary of the Rugby League, and both events have inspired interesting commemorative brochures. The McAlpine is undoubtedly a magnificent stadium, but its less glamorous predecessor was no mere collection of bricks and mortar, at least to many of Huddersfield Town's supporters. *Leeds Road: home of my dreams*, (£8.99) compiled by Ian H.C. Thomas, the club's historian, illustrates the closeness of stadium and fans from the opening game in 1908 to the final day, 30th April 1994. The Football Club had come into being after meetings at the Albert Hotel, just 13 years after a meeting at another town centre hostelry had brought the Rugby League into existence. This event is marked by Huddersfield RLFC's own *Centenary Brochure*, which provides a lot of information about the former Fartown ground.

The Christmas Messiah is virtually synonymous with the Huddersfield Choral, but Handel's great work also has a special significance for another choir, the Huddersfield Methodist. Formed in 1946 as an informal assembly to perform on a BBC "Sunday half hour", the Methodist choirs launched their first fund-raiser at a performance of the Messiah where the singers paid 1/- each to perform! Subsequent events are chronicled in the *Golden Jubilee Commemorative Brochure* (£5 from the choir).

Unlike football and choral music, hunting has always been a deeply contentious activity, even to some of its own supporters. Back in 1702 the hunting Vicar of Slaithwaite, the Rev. Robert Meeke, confided to his diary after a hare hunt "this is a sport that many delight in, and are at great pains to follow, much has been said against it by learned and pious men, but I think the abuse only ought to be confirmed". But hunting remains, as it always has been, an integral part of rural life, and the large rural area centred on the Colne Valley is no exception. The story of hare hunting is well told in *Scarlet and green; an illustrated history of three centuries and more of hunting in the Colne Valley*, by Simon Shaw and Ken Green (£12). This is a well researched and illustrated book that covers the trail from the present day Colne Valley Beagles to the hunting days recorded in the Slaithwaite Court Rolls of the 1540's.

A more sedate progression around the Colne Valley is offered by Gordon and Enid Hinter's *Discovering Old Huddersfield, Part 2*. The formula is as before, with maps and line drawings illustrating two circular walks commencing in the town centre and encircling the Valley.

Personal reminiscence is an important part of local history that is very well covered these days. Mildred Coldwell follows up her account of Spen Valley life (published as *The Gate Hangs High*) with subsequent childhood memories of Berry Brow in the 1920's. Very much a village in those days, Berry Brow offered a very different life to the child from industrial Heckmondwike and is remembered with much affection in *Beyond the Gate* (£2.99). The doyenne of pre-war nostalgia, however, is still undoubtedly Hazel Wheeler, whose latest evocation of "local life through ordinary lives" is published as *Sing a Song of Sixpence* (Alan Sutton, £8.99). The formula is as before, a series of potted biographies plus nostalgia-stirring topic chapters such as "life down the mill yard", Saturday - the best night of the week".

If life was poor, but happy, for many of Mrs. Wheeler's subjects, it was anything but for many working class families in the late C19th *Working class housing in Huddersfield* by Becky Bryson (Yorkshire Magazine Vol.1 No.3 Nov/Dec 1995) considers the problems inflicted by a rapidly rising population on an inadequate housing stock. Huddersfield had a particular lack of cheap housing and suffered a high proportion of cellar dwellings, reaching as much as 355 in 1899.

Yorkshire History is one of two new local history periodicals that contain items about this area, and can be obtained on subscription from 11 Littlewood, Cragg Vale, Mythamroyd. A slimmer, but free publication is distributed by the West Yorkshire Archaeological Society. *Archaeology in West Yorkshire* has recently featured Castle Hill, Pennine farmsteads and Dewsbury Minster.

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