

Local historian and collector of memorabilia, John Bean of New Mill, purchased at auction in September 2013 a box of secondhand history books all connected with the Huddersfield area. Amongst this collection was a handwritten notebook almost 200 pages long. It was written by a George Sykes between 1916 and 1919. Its title is "Reminiscences" and it covers George Sykes' s life in Holmfirth from 1841 until 1872. It has been transcribed and edited by David Cockman of the Holmfirth Local History Group.

Introduction

George Sykes was born at Lane End, Wooldale in 1838. By the 1851 census the Sykes family had moved to Cliff when George was 13 years old. George was still living with his parents at Cliff at the time of the 1861 census, although his father, John, now describes himself as a "farmer with 6 acres" rather than as a weaver, as in the earlier two censuses. At some time after 1872 George married and moved to the Colne Valley, first to Linthwaite, then Golcar, and the 1911 census finds him living at 23 Lindley Street, Longwood. George died in December 1922 at the age of 84 and is buried in the Methodist churchyard next to Linthwaite Methodist church.

George started to write his Reminiscences in 1916 and signed them off on June 17th 1919, at which time he would have been 81 years old. He makes no reference to World War One, and indeed says next to nothing about his married life in the Colne Valley after 1872.

It is clear from George's writing that he was an intelligent, thoughtful and perhaps rather introspective child, concerned early on with the big questions of Life and its purpose. And early on he found answers in the Sunday schools and sermons of the local Methodist preachers. We know from his obituary (Appendix A) that Wesleyan Methodism was central to his life as an adult and for over fifty years he was a lay preacher and leading figure in the Methodist church in both the Colne and Holme Valleys. In his narrative he describes personalities in Holmfirth either as "good churchmen" (or not!) and effective preachers as "good platform men." I suspect that George himself was a "good platform man.")

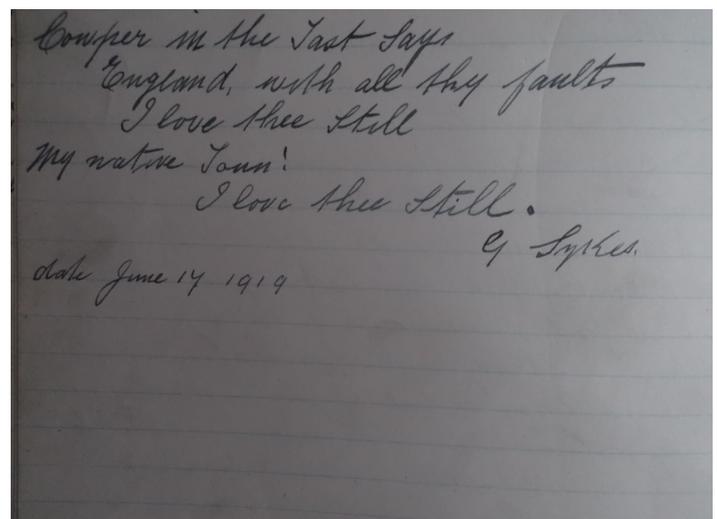
In his "Reminiscences" George several times makes angry reference to the fact that his elementary education was cut short by his father who made him leave school at the age of nine to work with him in Butterworth's Upperbridge mill. This was, of course, not such an uncommon fate for children in the Holme Valley in the middle of the 19th century. The census returns for this period show many children, even under the age of nine, employed in the mills and mines of the valley. For many families their wages was an important contribution to the family income. But one senses that the rest of George's life was very much bound up with filling the gaps in his education, a life time of self-improvement through the Mechanics Institution in Holmfirth and reading as widely as possible. In his writing he demonstrates a wide vocabulary and familiarity with the works of Shakespeare, the poet Cowper and authors like Sir Walter Scott and Addison. From his obituary we also know that he was interested in history and poetry and that he gave a talk to local groups called "An Evening with Burns"

The thirty years of George's early life in Holmfirth cover several momentous events for the community which he refers to in some detail, for example, the great and catastrophic flood of February 4/5th 1852, when he was about 14 years old, the arrival of the railway in 1850 and the development of Methodism and the tensions that this caused with various factions of the church. He deals with local politics and the regular fights between the "Blues" (Conservatives) and the "Yellows" (Liberals). He also voices some considerable scorn for the "Radicals". (George was a loyal supporter of the Liberals all his life.) He talks, too, about music making in the valley and names many of the singers and musicians involved during that 30 year period. He also describes several citizens whom he describes as "characters", i.e their behaviour, in George's eyes, did not subscribe to the accepted norms of the day.

In following these memoirs readers will find Michael Day's "Wool and Worsit" a valuable reference book, especially where George deals with the various mill owners and their mills. Michael's book adds a great deal of valuable information to flesh out George's story.

Considering that George was in his early 80s when he penned these memories they demonstrate his considerable powers of recall, both for names and events that happened over 60 years previously. But as his obituary makes clear, he retained his physical and intellectual vigour until a few days before his death in his 85th year. I think George would be delighted that his thoughts have survived and are of interest to readers and local historians over a century later.

In transcribing his hand-written text I have corrected George's minor spelling mistakes but have tried to leave his syntax very much as written, even where his meaning is not always clear, since the style reflects the man.



Reminiscences

My earliest recollections are vague and indistinct. Something like the sun breaking through the morning mist. It was the beginning of consciousness to the things about me. Many of these things are of trivial importance, but they made an impression upon my youthful mind. One thing I would mention is that my oldest brother took me with him on his back after the hounds. This may be one reason why I always liked hunting, I began early. Another thing I have in my recollection is of riots in Town Gate. It was during the election of 1841 when Morpeth and Milton Dennison and Wortley contested the constituency of the West Riding of Yorkshire. A neighbour of ours named Henry Seddon kept a variety shop at Lane End selling fruit and sweets. He was also a barber and umbrella maker and mender. He being in the midst of the riot was so frightened that he ran home and just put up the shutters and closed his shop and kept himself within until the riot was over.

Next thing I can remember is going to school. There were not many schools in the district at that time. I refer to the one at Cliff. This was the National School just begun, and there was one at Upperbridge taught by Mr Wiley, also the Academy kept by Mr. John Burton. There was also one in Underbank at the bottom of Wortley Hill what was then called Gully Hole taught by a very old man of the name of Joseph Holmes. This man as a teacher turned out some very good scholars. Mr Holmes's scholars were to be found in the Sunday schools of the district distinguished by their ability as good readers. I remember being taken to the school by my brother who attended there. I only went for a short time to this school and once for a short time to Cliff school which was then taught by a man of the name of Edward Hoyle. I was afterwards sent to a Dame school at Hey Gap kept in a small cottage house by Mrs Hallas. I went to this school until a new one was built by the Wesleyans and opened near the chapel. The school is still in existence at the present time (1916), although it has been considerably altered.

The first master of the school was a Mr William Sugden. He did not continue there long. He afterwards became principal at the Westminster training institution. Mr Sugden was succeeded by Mr Hunter, but only for short time. Then came Mr James Kerr who greatly endeared himself to the scholars and who afterwards greatly distinguished himself as a doctor of medicine. After Mr Kerr came in Mr Pashley

as the teacher, who remained only for a short time. Mr Pashley was succeeded by Mr Henry Brooks, a West Country man and a fine cultured young man, one who worked the school up into a finished state. Mr Brooks remained in the district a good number of years, producing excellent scholars. He introduced new modes of conveying knowledge to the youthful mind and to the children he made the acquisition of knowledge easy and pleasant. He gave great prominence to singing. He taught them the rudiments of music and in many ways he endeared himself to the children generally. The new practice of having pupil teachers began in his day and a good many of his pupils have taken good positions as schoolmasters in various parts of the country. After many years of successful work he left the district and opened a boarding school at Darlington where he spent the remainder of his days.

I am sorry to say that I had to leave school very soon after Mr Brooks came to be the schoolmaster. My elementary education ceased when I was about nine years of age. My father was more intent of making something out of his children than of giving them a good education. I had to go to work. In my school days I learnt to read and to write but very little about arithmetic, the loss I have felt all my life since. If we could only make the eyes of the young to see as the eyes of the old and embrace the golden opportunities. What sorrows and what regrets would be avoided. Like many another I did not like to go to school when I had the opportunity, and when I began to work I began to wish myself back at school again. Alas! I was not permitted to go. My elementary schooling was over until after school age.

It is held by some as a firm principal and strenuously contested that children from the age of four years until seven take in more ideas than they do in their life afterwards, and that these ideas are permanently fixed in the memory. Whatever truth there may be in that contention the fact remains that at four or five years old ideas come quickly into the youthful mind and lodge themselves securely in the memory. During the years referred to above many of the things around imprinted themselves upon my memory, both of what I heard and what I saw, but especially of what I saw.

Holmfirth in 1843 was a very different place to the Holmfirth of 1910. For one thing among many there was no way for traffic or vehicles to be got across the river between the Bridge at Upperbridge and the one by Tom Charlesworth Mill at Bridgefold, where the mill now stands, owned and run by Messrs Benjamin Mellor and Company. Victoria Bridge was not in existence. There was then a footbridge from Holmfirth Mill across the water to Norridge Bottom which is supposed to have been built by Mr George Garside, who was the owner of the mill when the new bridge was opened. Foot passengers continue to use it until the great flood came and swept it away. At the same time there was also a private footbridge about 50 yards above the new bridge. This was for foot passengers to go to and from Cuttall Bottom where Mr Joshua Moorhouse, then a woollen manufacturer, had his place of business. This footbridge, which came across the river into Hollowgate, along with the whole of Mr Moorhouse's works were clean swept away by the great flood. (*George means the great flood of February 4/5th 1852 when the dam wall at Bilberry reservoir collapsed. 81 people lost their lives in the Holme Valley as a result. Ed.*) The building and opening of the new bridge was quite an epoch in the business life of the town. It was finished in 1844. Then the street was opened up across Mr Moorhouse's field onto the high road at Norridge. Presently the right hand side of the street became available and valuable building sites and

buildings sprang up quickly, which very soon filled the whole of the site available . It scarcely needs to be said that a substantial amount was secured for each plot of ground. There were no buildings on the opposite side of the street which overlooked the remainder of the field before referred to and also Mr Moorhouse's business place. The buildings that now occupy the opposite side were not erected until after the flood.

(Morehouse or Moorhouse? Many people prominent in Holmfirth life in the 19th century share both versions of this name and confusion can be caused. For example there is both a Tom Moorhouse and a Tom Morehouse. The index of "Wool and Worsit" lists 43 with these two names. I have followed George's spelling, (unfortunately not always reliable,) in the hope that he knew who he was talking about. Ed)

About this period (1845) two incidents took place which made a deep impression on my mind. One was a little boy about my own age and that I knew. I saw him killed at what is now at the top of Victoria Street by an iron road-roller. I saw the boy picked up and bleeding taking home to Underhill where he belonged. The boy's name was Daniel Cartwright, youngest son of James Cartwright of that place. In after years and for many years afterwards whenever I saw that roller I thought of the boy that was so mutilated and crushed underneath its enormous weight.

The other matter that impressed my mind was a man getting off the bus about the same place where Daniel Cartwright was killed. I may say here that this was five or six years before the railway was opened from Huddersfield to Holmfirth. This was in the time of the stagecoach. Buses plied between the two towns. The folks were as much interested in the arrival of the coach as they afterwards became in the arrival of the train at Lane End. The man that I saw getting off the bus had been kept in York castle for a great number of years, some say 29 years. His name was Tom Charlesworth.

I have already alluded to Tom Charlesworth's mill at Bridge Fold. This mill had been for a long time disused, empty, and had become stripped of everything that was valuable, not only the window frames, but the doors, the floorboards also the very joists, all had been taken away. Nothing remained but the frame of the old waterwheel, the walls and the roof. The old mill had become the trysting place for the children and for the youth of the neighbourhood.

Now this man Charlesworth was undoubtedly the rightful owner this old mill and its water rights. But owing to a dispute about the water rights with the owner of the mill next above on the same stream, that is the owner of Holmfirth Mill, a lawsuit was the result. Charlesworth lost the case and as a result had to pay the costs. Being unable or unwilling to pay he was sent to gaol York, as I have stated above. This matter was the more deeply fixed upon my mind by something that happened sometime before. When I went to the Dame school at Hey Gap our good teacher gave us holiday that we might go to the funeral of the owner of Holmfirth Mill, Mr George Gartside, who in his lifetime had to contribute towards the maintenance of Charlesworth while he was in York gaol. But after Mr Gartside's death his widow declined to contribute any longer towards Charlesworth's maintenance. So he gained his freedom.

There is something further about this mill that excited the public of the neighbourhood at this time, 1845. The mill was situated immediately above the

bridge and about 30 yards below the bridge there was a weir which cut across the stream. This weir was intended to dam up the water, so that it could run into the shuttle on the opposite side of the river to supply Bridge Mill with sufficient water. Now Tom Charlesworth claimed one half of the river which had then been appropriated by the owners of Bridge Mill Messrs Joseph Broadbent. Charlesworth complained that Broadbents had built the weir on his property. As no agreement could be affected the result was once more a lawsuit. The main part of the interest was caused by Charlesworth's resolve to have the weir taken away from his property. He employed men to do this work. The attempt was made and was only partially successful. Another attempt was made and half of the weir was removed. Then began the lawsuit. Mr L Floyd was council for Mr Broadbent. Mr Harry Booth of Thorpe Heys was council for Charlesworth. The sympathies of the people were mostly on the side of Charlesworth, especially the working class, he being a poor man and not able to bear the expense of the lawsuit.

There was at this time sort of deputy constable named John Brooke who was of an officious nature. He made himself conspicuous on most occasions and was ever ready to take offenders to prison. This man Brooke appeared on the scene when the men were heaving up the stones on the weir. He interfered, trying to stop the men in their work. There was a man standing on the plank very near the water whose name was James Morton. He was a very determined man and not one to be played with. Morton got hold of Brooke and flung him into the water to the delight of the crowd of onlookers. This act of Morton aggravated Charlesworth's opponents and and strengthened their determination to proceed and to go to law. It may be said here that the sympathies of the people were mostly on the side of Charlesworth. He being a poor man ,subscriptions were collected among the people resulting in the hiring of a great lawyer from Manchester to plead for Charlesworth. The lawyer's name was Robertson, but known by his nickname "yellow breeches". This man successfully pleaded for Charlesworth and a result was declared in his favour. He won the case completely. This greater trial happened on the Saturday and was held in the Town Hall. Previous to this the court had been held at the White Hart Inn. The reason for this change was said to be that Robinson refused to plead in a public house. Afterwards for many years the court was held in the Town Hall.

Charlesworth having won the suit ordered the weir to be pulled up again, for in the interval it had been repaired by Broadbent,. On the following Monday morning a gang of men appeared upon the scene and destroyed the half of the weir belonging to Charlesworth. I was very young at the time, but have a distinct recollection of the circumstances. The final result of the business was that Broadbents entered into negotiations with Charlesworth and agreed to purchase the whole property.

It is thought by some that about the age of 6 to 8 the young mind takes in ideas very rapidly and expands more and more. But be that as it may, my mind began to widen out. The world of men and things began to spread out before my vision. More and more I began to observe and reason. I was always of a quiet disposition, shy but observant, rather sheepish than turbulent. For one so young I was a keen observer of the weather, especially in the winter season, which was a pleasant part of the year because of the frost and the snow. What helped to impress my mind with these ideas what that at about this time my brother bought me an almanac called "Tom Treadle Hoyle", and I used to delight to hear my older brothers read out of this. Some other things so impressed themselves upon me that I thought them real, especially those that referred to the moon, the man in the moon, the ruling of the

planets and the ordering of the weather. I fancied that there was a region where all these things were dealt with and the results sent to us. It was just childish ignorance on my part. But I found that after more than three score years, notwithstanding the education act of 1870 and since, I find there are many people still in the year of our Lord 1911 who believe that there is a connection between the moon and the weather. That the full moon or the change of the moon can bring a change in the weather. A little consideration of the subject however will soon convince the thoughtful mind of the futility of such a contention.

There is one matter that has some reference to the weather that I want to mention here. It is a matter upon which there is a variety of opinions. The remark is often made and also accepted as true, that we do not have such severe winters as we used to have, not so much frost and snow. I have heard of young people whose fathers and mothers are younger than I am make the same observation, not once but many times. As a matter of fact this identical remark is made about our weather generation after generation. It is an old tale that does duty every winter season. I distinctly remember when I was about seven years old hearing my mother and another elderly woman talking about the weather and they both agreed, that there were never any winters like there used to be. The same old tale is told today and perhaps will be until, we have a better and stricter system of education. But the little bit that I know about the grand subject of the solar system convinces me of its utter futility.

To return again to the affairs of my early youth. When I was about seven years old I was sent to the Wesleyan Sunday school where early religious impressions were made upon my mind and which have remained unto this day. As an example, several portions of the Sermon on the Mount were fixed in my mind and memory. I distinctly remember the teacher giving a lesson on the concluding question of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, about the building of the house on the rock and the other upon the sand. This incident to my mind is one of the most beautiful pictures in the whole of the New Testament. It fixed itself up on my mind and I may say that it has influenced my life for good. I also at this time became acquainted with a good many texts and passages of scripture. On the walls of the school were placed large cards with passages of scripture upon them. These passages were such as could help the youthful mind to learn the idea of God and our obligation to serve and fear him and to gently lead the mind to trust. I used to look at those cards and as much as I was able I used to study them and I never forgot, and they linger in my memory still. I became at this period acquainted with a good many grand texts of scripture and in after years when I joined the Christian church and when I came to read my Bible regularly I used to wonder that my mind should be so familiar with what I'd read. But some of the force of it lies here in this, namely we were required to learn tasks, that is, we had to come on a Sunday morning to school prepared to repeat a portion of the Scripture to the teacher which had been read out to the whole of the school on the previous Sunday by this teacher. I became acquainted with a considerable portion of the Bible. This practice I'm sorry to say was discontinued in the schools, as is also the reading of the catechism in after years, a great mistake in both instances, I firmly believe.

I remember well the teachers and superintendents of my Sunday school days. I need hardly say that they were unlearned men, inferior perhaps to the teachers of this day (1911). But they were very good men and true. I can also say with confidence that the teachers were a class of good men and women anxious for the

well-being of the children committed to their care. The names of the superintendents were as follows, Sam Wild, John Moorhouse, Joseph Barraclough, Joshua Moorhouse JP and last but not least Joseph Butterworth of Upperbridge. At that time there was no young men's class in connection with the place for young lads to go to after you left school, which we were supposed to do when we were 14 years of age. After having left the school many of the boys were in a sense thrown up on the tender mercies of the careless world. At this time I was required to attend chapel twice on the Sunday, and I'm glad to say I did this until I finally joined the Church of my father and my mother. I never forgot all together the lessons and the addresses, the appeals that were made to me from the teacher's desk, especially those of Mr Butterworth. There were two distinct features in this kindly man which appealed to me, namely his love for the Sunday school and his burning anxiety for the conversion of the scholars. It was the usual practice of the superintendents to give a short earnest address after the lessons of the day were done. Some of the words used by these men have remained with me until this day, as I had to attend the services at the chapel after I left the Sunday school. These addresses and appeals often come to my mind and had some effect in influencing me to join the church in after years. It was customary when a boy or girl left the Sunday school to present each with the Bible. Accordingly I had one given to me before the assembly by the Rev Thomas Hill who was then a very old man. I have that Bible with me still.

In the early part of my Sunday school days, that is in the year 1845, our family removed from Lane End to Underhill. Not long after this my day school days came to an end also. I had to go to work. When we had got settled down at Underhill new thoughts and new ideas began to take possession of me, some of them of an unpleasant kind. One of the first things I found out was that it was a crime in the eyes of the people of this place to belong to the Methodist body. My father and mother were members of the church and we the children attended the Sunday school and also chapel on Sundays. The people of this place belonged to the Church of England, although very few of the men or women ever attended its services. They sent their children to the Sunday schools, but many of the parents went not themselves. My mother and father and all my brothers were more or less regular attenders at the Wesleyan Chapel. For this we were looked down upon and despised because we were dissenters. Our family was persecuted and we were made the butt of ridicule and the object of such scorn as these people were capable of. But this spite and malice did not end there. Stones were thrown at us by certain mischievous spirits and we were considered as worthy object of serious mischief and real injury and this continued all the time we lived at this place.

On one occasion a foul disease broke out in the shape of a fever among the children. A number of families had one or more of their children afflicted by it. Two of my sisters and my younger brother were prostrated by it. My brother got better, but my little sisters both died in the month of December. We had a large family with only a little girl to help my mother with the work in the home. Some of the neighbours were loud in their complaints about my mother neglecting the children in their illness. Now to lose two little girls, the only girls in the family, was grief enough, but to be charged with hastening their death by neglect was more than my mother could bear. We never settled at this village again after the loss of our two children and the unfeeling behaviour of some of our neighbours. Our people, that is my father and mother, were on the lookout for a suitable house in another district. Very soon house was found at Cliff to which we removed as soon as the home could be made ready for our reception. This was in the year 1850. The manner in which

our family was regarded and treated by these “good” church people did not cause them to form any strong attachment to the Church of England. Neither did it cause us to slacken in any way and in our love for the Church of our fathers. Our neighbours thought us not so good as they were. To them it seems sufficient to have been baptised at the church and have passed through the Sunday school. That seemed to be all that was required. I am not sure that their children were confirmed to make them good churchmen.

The action of these church people left an indelible mark upon my mind and my memory which remains to this day. The men and women were church people at church. They were was something else in ordinary life. Just to give one example of this spite against us. On one occasion we had all retired for the night, except my two eldest brothers and the baby. My eldest brother had not yet come in, the other had the baby on his knee asleep by the fire. There came a big stone down the chimney followed by a gooseberry bush tied by a string which brought with it a large quantity of soot nearly choking the child. This act was regarded as a bit of good fun. However, enough of that. In 1850 as I said above we got comfortably settled down at the new house. The name of the house which we gave it afterwards was Cliff Bottom.

From the age of 7 to 12 many things came into my mind and took shape and were fastened upon my memory. I began to know men and know that some men were better than others, and their women were mentioned with respect. Others were referred to in a hilarious fashion, others were regarded as men to be feared. I began to take a wider outlook upon the great world of men and things. And at the age of 15 ideas began to crystallise in my mind. At this time the Holmfirth flood had become a great fact and I had fairly good knowledge of things in general. Among other things I found out that my education was very defective. The golden opportunity of laying down the foundations of an elementary education passed away, to my misfortune and regret. If true and solid foundations are laid, if the footings are placed upon solid ground, you may make the superstructure as beautiful and as ponderous as you may wish. It will be safe. But if the foundation of the building be defective, of unsuitable material and loosely placed, the superstructure will be of an inferior nature. It will be “Jerry”. *(Interesting that George uses the expression “jerry” short for “jerry built” i.e. of poor quality. It had only recently entered the English language circa 1870. N.B. It has no connection with the slang word for a German. Ed.)* The same may be said of education. If the elementary stage has been neglected, passed over, the opportunity has gone, hopelessly lost and can never be reclaimed. This I am sorry to say was my position at the age of 15 and to some small degree I knew it, but by no means as I found out in after years and that now an old man I see it now more clearly than ever before.

In 1850 when I was about 12 years old a great many things came within the range of my vision. My mentality began to expand. My knowledge of the district began greatly to increase. Churches, chapels and schools became interesting to me. Besides attending our own chapel I often went to the parish church with a friend and began to like the church ritual and may say here that I like it still. At the time just referred to there were men the district who were well known and respected in their various spheres of life and were useful public life. At this period of time there was only one church in the district, that was the old parish church, a plain building, but of historic fame and eminent as a religious centre. Rev R E Leach was then and for a long time vicar of the parish. He was a good man, a sound evangelical

preacher and an ardent educationalist. He also took a deep interest in public affairs. Many of the leading families and principal tradesmen and manufacturers of the district were members of his church and congregation. Some of its importance as a religious centre will be manifest when we take into consideration that three, if not four separate Sunday schools were connected, and the children of the schools were regularly brought to the service on the Sunday afternoon. These Sunday schools were situated at Cliff, Upperbridge, the National in Ribbleden Road and another branch school at Choppards. I was most acquainted with the school at Cliff, for we lived only a few yards from it. This is the oldest school of the four and at the school feast we will always walk first. Something of which to be proud. I knew nearly all the scholars and most of the teachers. This was a most important school, not merely as a Sunday but also as a day school. The children of the district got a fair amount of education, judging by the standards at that time. But the Sunday school was a great boon to the neighbourhood. It truly was a light in a dark place. The children became acquainted with the great principles of the Christian religion and the foundation of our faith. The children of the school and district were remarkable for their good singing. They had good voices and it was not uncommon on Sunday evening to hear group of boys and girls singing the songs of Zion. The wardens or superintendents of the school were all good men and true churchmen. They were as follows, Robert Ramsden, Benjamin Mellor, and Enoch Pearson who was all my time of living there also the day school teacher. I am not quite certain whether Mr John Boothroyd was not one of the superintendents. At one time I think he was. The school was the means of spreading religious truth among the youth and also making them acquainted with our grand evangelical hymns. Every Sunday afternoon if the weather was decent, the scholars were taken to church, I often saw them, for they had to pass our house. Not long ago the last of those who are teachers in my young day passed away. This was Mr James Roebuck, who had been a teacher for 50 years. Reference already been made to Mr Enoch Pearson as the day school teacher. He was a really good schoolmaster and a very good teacher of the boys and girls under his tuition.

The National School situated in the Ribbleden Valley was also connected with the parish church. It was both a Sunday school and a day school. It was managed by Mr Joshua Charlesworth of South House, his brother Joseph Charlesworth of Eldon House, and by the various members of the Hinchliffe families. The scholars and teachers of the school also attended the services at the church on Sunday afternoon. This school was under the immediate supervision of the vicar the Rev R.E. Leach. This school from the time of it being built was carried on as a day school, and the children of the district of Underbank especially received their instruction there. It was also opened and carried on for a long time as an evening school, and many a young man received great help and a good start in life through the instructions obtained there in the evenings.

Upperbridge

The school at Upperbridge was always considered good, both as a Sunday and weekday school. There were four superintendents at the school on Sundays. All honourable and stalwart good Christian men. Their names were James Charlesworth, Richard Bower, Nathan Thewlis and George Thewlis. These were all well supported by a staff of teachers. The school dates back a long time even into the 18th century. My mother in her childhood went to the school and the children of the school had to go to the parish church on the Sunday afternoon. When St John's

church was opened and made a parish church the children of Upperbridge school were taken regularly to this church. There were four superintendents at the school on Sundays. All honourable, stalwart good Christian men. Their names were James Charlesworth, Richard Bower, Nathan Thewlis and George Thewlis. They were well supported by staff and teachers. (*George sometimes repeats himself, as here, perhaps because there had been a time gap in his writing, or perhaps his memory was becoming a shade unreliable. He was after all 80+. Ed*) All the children of the school came from a wide district. One of the great days of the year was the school feast, held on Easter Monday. After having attended Divine service at the church and paraded around the district, the children were served with tea and good sized bun, and a big cake to take home with them. After the children had been served they were sent home and the teachers and friends had tea and a meeting held afterwards. But as Easter was so early in the year, it was seldom fine weather and sometimes very cold. So the school feast was very reluctantly changed to Whitsuntide, which was a change very much for the better. Up to the time of change all three schools walked together, Cliff school, which was the oldest, was in the lead with the Old Band. (*A brass band in Holmfirth. Ed.*) More was thought of the school feast when it was held at Easter than was the case after the change. Another important time of the school was St John's day. This was held at Christmas. There was a tea and a meeting afterwards. At this meeting the St John's church choir asked a number of members and singers to give a few choruses and solos. I was one of the invited friends and we rendered music to the utmost of our ability.

There is a matter which I would not omit to say in my reminiscence, in regard to the parish of Upperthong. Before the church was built, that was in the 1840s, it was thought that the district was too large for only one church, so services began to be held in Upperbridge School and then in the Town Hall. A number of gentlemen then put their heads together and formed a scheme to get a large amount of money in subscription, and in a short time the church was built. The new church was opened in 1848. The Bishop of Ripon was the preacher on this important this occasion and he also consecrated the burial ground.

The building of this church supplied a great need and the church became the centre of influence and Christian activity and evangelical truth. The gospel of Christ was preached as the power of God unto salvation. The first incumbent of St John's was the Rev J Fearon who remained for a good while, but retired through ill health, but retained the incumbency for many years. Immediately after the retirement of Mr Fearon the Rev. J. Town became curate in charge and continued to minister to that church until he was appointed vicar of the parish church of Lindley.

The Rev J Town was succeeded by the Rev M Flower who had been a curate previously of this Church and who had married the daughter of Mr Joseph Charlesworth or Eldon House, Holmfirth. The Rev R.E. Leach and the Rev M. Flower were the two clergyman of the district so long as I remained in the district. The opening of this new church in Upperthong was to meet a great need, the result has justified the course that was taken by the men of the day. It meets the needs of a very large district. St John's maybe said to be a large and influential church and truly a centre of light and learning. Many manufacturers and well-to-do tradesmen, as well as a large number of the working class population, became members of this newly established church. The day school at Upperbridge was carried on by a very capable master and good churchman in the person Mr Hoyle. This man turned out some excellent scholars. He was afterwards succeeded by Mr Arkwright who is also

a good man and capable schoolmaster. He was also a teacher at the Mechanics Institution. (*A forerunner of the present Adult Education Centre, previously the Technical College, but not held in the present day building. George has more to say on the Mechanics Institution later. Ed.*)

The churchmen of my time were a very respectable body of men. There were some very good men as leaders. In respect of the old parish church, there were a number of eminent families, the Charlesworths, Joseph and Joshua, the Farrers,, the Hinchliffes of Nab and the Hinchliffes of Cross, commonly known as the Hinchcliffe's of Washpit. Robert Ramsden of Cliffe and B. Mellor were other individuals that might be mentioned. And in respect of the parish of St John there was James Charlesworth, Richard Bower, Nathan and George Thewlis and their sons and their daughters, and many more that might be named. The churchmen of the district were a respectable and powerful body of men, and certainly the largest of anywhere in the neighbourhood of Holmfirth.

Lane Chapel

My earliest recollection of Lane chapel was when we as Sunday scholars had to go to join the scholars at their school feast to hear the Rev John Cockin give an address to scholars and teachers. I was in the lowest class at the Wesleyan school. The two schools walked out together. Our scholars went to their school or chapel one year, their scholars came to our chapel the following year. This continued to be the order year by year for many years. The school feast was held on Holmfirth feast Wednesday. I have a good recollection of Mr Cockin. In appearance he was a peculiar looking man. He was well built, broad set, square shouldered. He had a large head well set upon his broad shoulders. He was a man and a fine intellect and commanding personality. He was a powerful preacher and a great political leader. He was also a strong Calvinist at a time when some of the nonconformist churches bore the same relationship to each other as the Jews and the Samaritans in the time of Jesus of Nazareth. The Congregationalists and the Baptists were strongly tinged with high Calvinism in those days. Their attitude towards the Wesleyans of the day was after this fashion, "Stand-off, for I am holier than thou." But the reverend gentleman in the later end of his ministry and in his more mature days did so far condescend on the special invitation to come to our annual missionary meeting and make something like an "omnibus" speech, more for amusement than for the edification of the people. Mr. Cockin managed to keep his church in hand and well together. Mr Cockin had a long ministry. He served this church for 40 years. After his retirement he went to live in Halifax, his native town, where he died. Mr Cockin's congregation was an influential and a wealthy one. A goodly number of important families attended Lane Chapel at this period, families such as the Brooks, the Carters, the Wimpennys, the Mellors, the Greens, the Dysons, the Bates, the Coldwells and the Moorhouses. Some of these families had many branches and family connections. There were many others in connection with this church who took great interest in, and did good work in the cause of God in the district.

After the retirement of Mr Cockin the Rev James MacFarlane became the pastor of this church. He was an excellent preacher, but he did not remain long. After Mr MacFarlane retired then came Rev Robert Willan. Things went smoothly on. Mr Willan was an energetic evangelical preacher of the gospel. He had little of Calvinism in his sermons. This gave offence to some of the leading families and

wealthy part of the congregation, who severed their connection with the church and opened a place of worship of their own, namely in the Town Hall. The peace of the household was broken and for many years the church was torn in two. Strife and ill-will obtained persisted among them, which was never subdued. Those who went away never returned. For many years the church at Lane held on in a weak and languishing condition and never again attained the strength it had in the days of the Rev John Cockin. (*Here and elsewhere in his narrative George hints at the stresses and divisions developing in the Methodist church resulting in the Reform Movement of 1849. Lane Chapel were independent non-conformists later linked to the Congregationalists. Ed*)

The Wesleyan Chapel

My recollection goes back a long way, to the days of the old chapel that was built in 1810. Its outward appearance was much the same as we see the Wesleyan Chapel that was built in the former part of the last century i.e. the 19th century. It had little or no outward adornment, it was playing this in itself. It was a most substantial building, both inside and out. In the 1840s when it had become the custom or the fashion to have choirs and also improved congregational singing and organs, it was thought to be time to alter the inside arrangements and bring it up to modern requirements and taste, and also to introduce a better system of warming the place. A combination of wants in the chapel caused the authorities to determine to take out the interior and begin afresh. The old interior was taken out right up to the gallery itself. In the previous arrangement that gallery ran on three sides. The pulpit was at the end against the wall and the singing pew was in front of the pulpit and the communion rail. In the new arrangement the gallery, or as some would say the loft, was made to go all round taking up all four sides. The choir occupied the side previously occupied by the pulpit and the pulpit itself was immediately in front of the choir. The arrangement of the pews was made in accordance with modern ideas and was more up-to-date.

Is unnecessary that I should attempt to give a description of the interior of the 1810 Chapel beyond saying that it was in its arrangements suitable only to the time in which it was built. It had not much form all comeliness about it. It had high-back uncomfortable pews and was warmed by two stoves, one at each side. But I may say that it was well attended and had a large congregation which did much to help the two stoves to make and to keep the place warm. When it was pulled down to make way for the new chapel it was found to be substantially built and of excellent material as if it was intended to stand for ever.

I must go back to the time of its renovation in 1848. The new arrangement was a very great improvement upon the old in many ways. Its adornments were modern, it had a panelled roof, the gallery went all around the building, the pews in the bottom and in the loft were symmetrical in arrangement and in form. New method of warming was a great improvement on the old. The style and mode of singing sensibly improved and it was considered to be a very fine chapel. But there was no organ. The choir itself was of a primitive nature, as were the tunes they sang. It consisted of a few men and a number of girls, with admittedly very good voices. They were assisted by two single basses and occasionally by a double bass, and by

a fiddle. After a few years it was thought high time to have a change and to have an organ. In the year 1854 the new organ was placed in the gallery behind the pulpit. Very soon after this it was thought that we ought to have a new choir. This new style and a better one was introduced to help and lead the congregation in the singing of the sanctuary. The congregation on Sundays and especially in the evenings were very good. It is a treat to call to mind the vast congregations and the mighty volume of sound to be heard on these occasions, for it was the practice in those days to sing with all our might. Culture of the voice and voice training and not even begun to obtain, except among a few. These to my mind were grand times and called forth feelings of joyous gladness.

I propose to stop here for the present in my reference to our chapel matters, as there are a great many things I wish to make reference to and also because I intend to devote a whole chapter to Methodism and my connection with it. But I may say that my connection with the chapel terminated when the old chapel was pulled down and the new one built and opened in its place in the year of our Lord 1871 and 1872. (*This "new" chapel has also since been pulled down, in the 1970s. Ed.*)

The Methodist Free Church

It was in 1848 and 1849 when the unrest and the agitation in the Wesleyan body attained its culmination and resulted in what was then called the Reform Movement. There was not that violent upheaval in the Holmfirth circuit as was the case in some other parts of the country. A number of members of the Wesleyan body at Holmfirth left the Methodist body in town on account of the sympathy they manifested towards those ministers who were expelled from the Methodist connection by the conference held at that time in 1848 or 1849. It is an unpleasant thing to remember and to write about, even after the lapse of 60 years. These men who acceded were harshly and unjustly expelled from our society. It was for forming an opinion in regard to facts, as they appeared to their minds, and for giving expression to that opinion. It was for thinking, and for thinking aloud.

It may be as well here to mention the names of those ministers who were expelled at that period from the Methodist conference. The names were the Rev James Everett, Mr Griffiths and Mr Dunn. They were the ministers in the Holmfirth circuit at that period. One man that exerted this cruel severity and was the chief means of expelling members was the Rev Mr Faull. (*? Correct spelling? Ed*) This minister exceeded authority with great and unnecessary severity. It is not my purpose to enter into the mouth of that long ago question, further than to say it had its merits and also its demerits. The whole of the movement took the name of Wesleyan Reform and its adherents called themselves Reformers. These men who left the old body along with their families and adherents organised themselves into a separate religious body and held their services and their various meetings in the Town Hall. The public services were conducted by lay men, mostly from other districts, some from Sheffield, Barnsley and from Huddersfield and also from Wakefield. A few local preachers in the Holmfirth circuit left the old body, as it was sometimes termed and joined the reformers, but not many of them. These services were held in the Town Hall for a number of years with fairly good congregations, but not with the success that was deserved or expected. Like many other new movements, in time the newness began to wear off and the adherents began to fall away, and would seem that less expensive rooms was sought. These rooms were found on the opposite

side of the valley at the Druids Hall. The services would continue there for a few years until the society or I may say the church, was able to erect a church and school of their own.

The present church was built about 1860, but in my time has never attained to the ideal with which it began. It has however lived on in a weak and languishing condition. Sometimes weaker and sometimes rather stronger, but never vigorous. It has continued to maintain its ministry to this day, largely dependent upon the services of lay preachers. Whilst the services were held at the Druids Hall a young man from the town of Sheffield was engaged as their minister, who did excellent work amongst them and for them. In his time they became able to build on their own premises and hope and then a new chapel and formed themselves into a Christian church. It would be a mistake on my part if I do not mention the names of some of their foremost men. They have some grand Christian men in their society and as leaders in their church. All the names I'm about to mention, whilst they were members of the "Old Body," were obscure but useful members of the church and the Sunday school, but they were by no means prominent. When they had to take leadership in the new reformed Church they manifested gifts and abilities to engage in useful church activities. I may mention the more prominent names, some I may have forgotten. There was Christopher Dawson, Joseph Senior, Joseph Morehouse, John Morton, Enoch Brown, John Beardsell, John Wimpenny, George Harbin, John Schofield, John Beaumont, Jonathan Thorpe and all his family, John Ward, and Ben Stanley. These and their families were members or active supporters of the new cause. Besides, there were a number of young fellows growing up into manhood who rendered what service they could in support of the new venture. Notwithstanding, much bad feeling manifested itself against the old body of Wesleyans. These men in their day and a generation did very much good work under the ministry of Mr J Holmes the young man from Sheffield.

I wish to go back to the year 1849 for the purpose of referring to the Reform Movement. I was a boy about 10 years old at this time. My father and mother were members of the Wesleyan body and all our family attended the services and the Sunday school. My father being a very peaceful man and very much inclined to mind his own business and leave other people alone remained a member of the old body. He remained with the "Old Ship" is the phrase he often expressed, and as a family we remained with the old society and Sunday school.

There was much said and done that went a long way in justification of the men who left our Society, and much has been done and confessed since, that if it was done before at the request of these reformers it would have saved much trouble and loss to the cause of God in the land. Still, those who left cannot justify the action they took altogether. So far as our own town was concerned it was setting up an opposition cause, which is a serious thing to do. Such a course has been done in former times and more injury has been done outside than good inside. But the matter did not rest there. These men left our body with the intention of destroying the cause of Methodism. Of this they made no secret. They proclaimed it openly. They did so in the most objectionable fashion. Young as I was I saw the spirit of hatred to our cause when ever I went among them. This hatred was not confined to the men and women. It reached down to the boys and to the girls. Although some of my playmates belonged to families that had joined the Reform Movement I occasionally went with them to their Sunday meetings. I was always made to feel the effects of their expressed hatred of our own church. They often referred with an

effective contempt to the “Old Body”. This and much more could not induce me to throw in my little lot amongst them.

In contrast to this line of action on the part of the Reformers, the Methodist Society in our town was quiet and left them alone, severely alone, and attended to their own affairs. We lost in various parts of the circuit a great number of members. Before this movement broke out we had three ministers on the circuit. One had to be dropped and discontinued and the Holmfirth circuit has had two ministers ever since. So far as the Holmfirth society was concerned this was no great loss. I might have expressed this last in stronger language, but I suppose to the wise the word is sufficient.

1850

The year 1850 was a very remarkable year. There was much disturbance of a political nature on the continent of Europe. It was about the time of the revolution in Hungary when President Kossuth tried to gain Hungarian independence. I distinctly remember that a few Hungarian refugees came to our country, and some of them came to Holmfirth, political exiles, men who for the love of their country and the efforts of freedom, had to flee for their lives. These men suffered the loss of home, friends and country human through the cruel tyranny of the House of the Hapsburgs. The Austrian Emperor, Franz Joseph, was a young man at that time and he ruled the people with the cruelty of an Eastern despot. As the saying goes with a “rod of iron.” The record of the various family connections of this ill-fated House of Hapsburg's is one of the most fiercely wicked, bloody and unfortunate that we find in history. It may be said to take rank with the family of the Medici in Italy and in the days of the Italian Republics in the Middle Ages. (I may say here in the year of our Lord 1918 that Franz Joseph, the aged Emperor, has passed away to his account. I believe the “judge of all the earth will do the right thing.”)

1850 the Railway comes to Holmfirth

The year 1850 was also important as being the year when the railway line from Huddersfield to Holmfirth and Penistone was opened for passengers and for goods traffic. This event was looked forward to with very great interest. But the time of opening seem to be a long time in coming. When it actually arrived, old and young were deeply interested, for it was an epic making event. It marked a big change in the life of the town. Traffic of all kinds began to roll into the place which had hitherto been conveyed by carts and by wagons. This change was most manifest in the matter of coal. Hitherto coal had been brought from the pits to the mills and to the houses, sometimes from a long distance. The same may be said of all kinds of goods. Then it was a great treat to be able to go to the town in a much shorter time. Hitherto to go to Huddersfield or to Leeds required a great part of the day to accomplish the business required. Now business could be done in a few hours in the afternoon. And on special occasions and on Sundays it was quite the thing to go to the station to watch the people come off the trains. But like all other novelties it soon became a matter of course, and things went on in their usual humdrum way.

(The first passenger train on the Holmfirth branch ran on July 1st 1850. Church bells rang throughout the Holme Valley, the bass band played on the station platform. It was the intention of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway to extend the line to Holmbridge, construct a tunnel under Holme Moss and from there on to Manchester. This is why the line was constructed with a double track. However the bubble of railway mania burst and Holmfirth became a terminus. Had this plan gone ahead, however, then presumably there would have been a need for a large viaduct across the centre of Holmfirth, since the railway arrived in Holmfirth at quite a high level. Passenger traffic ceased in 1959, but the line remained open for goods traffic to the mid 60s when Dr. Beeching swung his axe. The station master's house and a bit of the platform survives, but most of the former track bed is now built on. One of the best histories of the line is "The Holmfirth (Summer Wine) Branch Line." by Alan Earnshaw, published by Nostalgia Road Publications. Ed.)

I have forgotten to mention some things in connection with the 1840s which I would not wish to forget. There was a very bad time in the early 40s. Work was scarce and corn was very dear. These two things taking together made for much suffering among the poor. In respect to the woollen trade periods of bad trade and shortness of work were of frequent occurrence and there was also then as there are now bad harvests. Now these together, with the corn laws which pressed so heavily upon the people, caused the very poor to have to suffer. When times were fairly good the poor were not well off for food, but in hard times when work was scarce and uncertain and corn of a very inferior quality and still at high price, the condition of most of the people may be better imagined than described. I think it was in the year 1845 /1846 when things were at their worst. I would be about eight years old at the time. I had to go every week to the grocers and I have distinctly a recall of flour being five shillings a stone. This was the top price that it had reached. Not long after, a week or thereabouts, the corn laws were repealed. Corn from foreign countries was allowed to come into our markets and it became plentiful. The abolition of the duties on corn was celebrated as a glorious event. At Jackson Bridge, a huge pudding was made for the public in honour of the great event. At Denby Dale a great pie was made to celebrate this memorable occasion. But a great part of it was wasted. It got into the hands of a lot of rough men and to a large degree the event was marred. It was said at the time that one of the ruffians jumped into the pie before it could be eaten. I also remember a friend of our family went to see the great "monster pie" and he brought a piece of it with him and I had a little bit of it, so I got to taste it.

Outbreak of cholera 1848

(A two-year outbreak of cholera began in England and Wales in 1848 and claimed in total 52,000 lives. Ed)

About this time, that is about 1847 and 1848 and terrible scourge visited many of the towns and districts of this country and carried away a great number of people, old and young. The densely populated districts in the towns suffered very severely, very large numbers were carried away daily. I refer to the disease termed the cholera. Thousands died of it, especially in the summer of 1848. It was at its worst in that year. It did die down during the following winter. Frost and snow were said to help to mitigate that foul disease. A day of thanksgiving was appointed to Almighty God for

the removal of the scourge. Public notices were posted up asking the people to join in the Thanksgiving. As I read the notice I heard a man say in bitter terms and with a cruel laugh, "thanking Almighty God for what frost and snow had done." When that same man was old I used to see him and his wife to be very regular attenders at the services at the chapel. So some sort of change had been wrought in him.

The latter end of the year 1850 saw my father's family planted down at Cliff. The year 1851 was a very remarkable year for this country and also for many other countries to it was the year of the Great Exhibition in Hyde Park in London.

The Great Exhibition 1851

Year 1850 was a year of preparation for the great event which was to take place the following year. As spring is the time for making ready for summer, so was this year for the great event of the next. This was to be a world event and so it proved to be. There were great preparations in all parts of this habitable world, so that each country and nationality might be able to exhibit their manufacturers and their various wares. So a suitable building was erected in Hyde Park and made suitable for all their requirements and designated "The Crystal Palace." Paxton, the chief gardener of the Duke of Devonshire, made preparations at Chatsworth house. Preparations were also made in the Huddersfield and Holmfirth districts, not only to show their goods but also to go themselves to see this great sight.

1850 came to a close and the year 1851 opened in the usual way, summer and winter and run their course and spring had again come. All the talk and excitement seemed to have their centre in the thought of the first of May. May Day was to see a unique and wonderful celebration, such as never seen before, or nearly so. All who could muster up the wherewithal, in other words afford the means to visit London, took this grand chance. A story is told that a Colne Valley man, who was accustomed to trade in the Holmfirth district, and by trade a shoddy merchant, seeing the eagerness of the young bloods among the manufacturers to visit the exhibition in London, took advantage of their absence in London. Instead of going to London himself he came into the district as usual and made some very good bargains. A great number of the people of the district made a visit to the Metropole and some of them took their young sons with them. The exhibition was a great and manifold success. It was held throughout the summer and lasted into the autumn.

The Great Flood of 1852

That Autumn was a remarkable one and also the winter which followed. After the season of fine weather was over a very wet and gloomy season began. There was no frost or snow that winter but an unusual amount of rain in the first month of 1852. Rain fell nearly all the month and the fields were saturated and sodden with wet. The springs and wells were overflowing, and the reservoirs were full to overflowing. Rain fell nearly every day. Old Sol was a stranger and scarcely ever showed his face. It was found that one of the reservoirs, the one at Bilberry, was in an unsafe condition. This state of affairs got abroad in the later days of January. Volumes of water were rolling into it and it was filling rapidly. What caused some easiness was the fact that there was something wrong with the shuttle, it was fast and could not be drawn, so that there was no escape for the water that way.

There was nothing for the excess water to do but flow over the embankment. When the reservoir was built at the beginning provision was made at one end of the embankment for the overflow water. But by the fatal error of someone a spring of water in the foundation of the puddle bank have not been provided for. In the course of a number of years it had gradually percolated and washed away under the bank, so much so that in the middle the reservoir bank was somewhat lower than either side at either end of the reservoir banking. The rain continued to fall and the reservoir continued to fill until the water overflowed the bank and washed away the outer bank. The water then pushed it away in a sudden moment. A great catastrophe took place when much property was destroyed and over 80 people lost their lives. It is not my purpose to give a discussion here of this terrible calamity. This has been done by others and better than I could possibly do it. Moreover it is the story by itself which I do not feel competent to present. I may observe that I was 13 years old at the time and I saw the results of it next morning which made such an impression upon my youthful mind that I shall never forget. A few moments of quiet reflection will bring the whole of the awful seen before my vision. To produce that here in this record is not required. *(Although in fact he returns to it later in his narrative.Ed)*

It would be an interesting sight for the present generation if a view of Holmfirth could be presented as it appeared on a moonless night. Suppose once stood upon Cliff and took in one's view of the opposite side of the valley, that would be looking towards Hill, Underhill and Wood. Or if one is stood at Hill looking towards Cliff, Hey Gap and Underbank. A grand sight would be presented. Let it be born in mind that there were no public lamps in those days, the only light of a public kind was the parish lantern which only appeared on a few evenings during the month. In the absence of the moon the only lights that appeared came from the houses and the shops and in the houses and the homes of the cottagers there was neither gas nor lamps. Candles had to be used for all purposes, both domestic and for carrying on their trade and businesses. And it must be remembered that cloth manufacturing was then the staple trade of the district.

(At this point George Sykes breaks off his narrative and returns to the subject of the great flood of 1852. He does this because he has found some notes on the topic which he is unwilling to omit, even at the expense of repeating himself somewhat. Ed)

The winter following the great exhibition of 1851 was a remarkable one. The back end of the year was very damp and very wet. Rain was the chief feature of the weather. There was neither frost nor snow in the whole of the winter. The opening month of the year 1852 was mostly wet, well into the middle of February. The month of January was terrible. The ground was completely saturated and full of water. The wells and the springs were overflowing. The reservoirs were getting full. The dikes also well well-nigh full. Fears began to be expressed in respect to the safety of the reservoirs at Holme Styes and Bilberry. The Bilberry reservoir had in fact never been in a satisfactory condition. In fact it had never been properly constructed and was passed as finished. But there was a radical defect in the embankment in the shape of a spring of water in the bottom of the puddle bank that had never been properly managed. The spring in the embankment became the cause of the great disaster. It's caused the embankment to settle in the centre of the dam by percolating through the material that formed the bank, washing a large quantity of this material away. This had continued for a dozen years. The reservoir was supposed to be complete and the bank uniform from end to end. At the end on the

side nearest to the village of Holme on the south side there was a wide outlet or what was called a by-wash. On that side there was also a culvert which together under most conditions were ample for any overflow that might arise. But the mischief was the percolation from the spring in the bank dam, mentioned above. This caused the embankment to settle until the middle of it was a number of feet below the by-wash and the culvert. There was no way out for the overflow except over the embankment.

Now it became publicly known that there was something amiss with the shuttle a week or two before, in the latter part of the month of January. The fact had been made known that the machinery to work the shuttle was fast stuck, it would not work. It could not be drawn. It never was drawn. So it was feared that if the rain kept on as it was doing the reservoir we get full and would run over the middle of the embankment and cause the great dam to burst. The above facts were publicly known, but many people made light of it and said when it came off it it would be a sight to be seen and remembered. And it was!

At this time my father was manager for the firm of B. Butterworth, then at Upperbridge. He had all the warping to deal with, besides many other things. I was then 13 years old and I helped him with the warping. And when the weavers came for their warps the subject of the bursting of the reservoir became chief topic of conversation.

Occasionally my father had to go to Hinchliffe Mill for yarn. A good portion of the way to the mill there was a footpath that ran alongside the river and my father usually went and came back that way. A few days before the catastrophe happened he had to go for some yarn to the mill. I remember asking him not to go along the waterside, lest he should be caught and taken away by the flood. He however made light of it and said, "I can walk before it, when it comes." It was generally thought by most people that when it did happen the extra amount of water would simply fill the river; it might cause an overflow into the field but that would be it.

I shall not soon forget that two or three days before the fatal fifth of February a friend of our family had died and the funeral took place on 2 February at the Holmfirth Wesleyan Chapel burial ground. The ground was so wet and the rain continued to fall and the water was so high in the grave that it could not be baled out. The coffin had to be lowered into the water in the bottom of the grave. Truly it was a watery grave, but not at sea. The name of the dead woman was Mrs R. Beardsell. She was a good woman. The fourth of the month also was one to be remembered. Young as I was I was full of fear, and in fact fear of a serious nature began to possess the minds of many thoughtful people in respect of the consequences that might occur, but not to the extent of causing them to leave their dwellings. It is remembered that some of those who lived near the reservoir and those living near the waterside removed their furniture from the lower part of their houses. So far as I remember no one in Holmfirth did so, none had fear to that extent.

My father and I had been working late on the evening of 4 February. We left our work about 7 o'clock. Our home was at Cliff as I have before remarked, and on our journey home we had to cross Victoria Bridge. As we passed over I ventured to look over the parapet of the bridge. I saw such a site as I've never seen before. The dike was full. I could almost touch the water. I was frightened and I held back and went

on, fearing that the bridge was going to fall into the stream. There was a feeling of dread possessing the minds of many in Holmfirth, as if some impending calamity was imminent. I remember my brothers were at home. There were six of us, besides father and mother and a servant. I remember that my oldest brother would go out. He was somewhat wayward in disposition and my mother wished him to stay in. It was a very wet night he persisted in going out in spite of everything. Luckily no misfortune befell him however.

About 9 o'clock of the evening of 4 February the rain ceased. It became fine and clear. The moon was at the full at the time. That very night in point of fact the clouds began to break and it became a beautiful night. At the time of the disaster it was nearly as bright as day. Nothing more happened that night and we all retired to bed. We all slept either in the chamber or in the attic. After we had all gone to sleep there came at about 12:30 or a little later great cry. It was a man at the front door of the great voice shouting through the keyhole: "the reservoir is burst!" Father and mother were awake in a moment. Father got up and went down the hill to the side of the river and got all the information he possibly could. When he got there the flood had just drawn away and left an awful scene of death and destruction. There were some friends of ours living at Bridge Fold and my father went to see how they fared. They were well-nigh overwhelmed. They had had a miraculous escape from drowning. The father of the family came to our house with my father to fetch dry things, for all the children's clothing were flooded and could not be put on. Now he was a man with a somewhat loud and stentorian voice. He made plenty of noise when he spoke. When he came in he almost shouted. Our folks had to remind him that there was boys asleep and he had better not wake them until the morning. My father then went down into the town again to ascertain the result and consequences of the flood. He traversed the whole of the district immediately around the town centre and got all the information he could. By this time the people of the town had become thoroughly aroused and large numbers of people were rendering what help they could to the survivors and to those who were suffering through the great disaster.

About 6 o'clock in the morning my father came to the bottom of the stairs and called out in a loud voice that awakened every one of us. And he spoke in the voice indescribable, that was also strange for him. The impression that his words made upon me was such that I can recall them more than 60 years later. He said: "The reservoir is burst and there are many a 100 people drowned." (*In fact 81 people lost their lives. Ed*) Such a statement made in your hearing when you are nearly awake in the early morning had an awful effect on my mind. He then mentioned many names that we knew who were drowned. He mentioned others who were saved. He used the word "saved" in such a way that I can almost hear it still. I need scarcely say that we hardly knew whether we were dreaming or what we were saying. It caused confusion to take possession of all of us.

We all got up at once and got dressed as soon as we could and by "we", I mean the lads, began to file out of the house to the scene of the disaster, my oldest brother first. After the third brother gone my father locked the door and took out the key. I was told that I and my younger brother must wait until daylight came. This was perhaps wise, for the sight that met our vision when we when we looked upon the scene almost frightened us was simply indescribable. The streets were completely blocked with the wreckage of one sort or another. The battlements of the bridges were all swept away. Houses in ruin everywhere, warehouses destroyed. The course

of the river had also changed. The scene that met my vision was such as would take Sir Walter Scott or Victor Hugo all their descriptive powers to do adequate justice to these awful sights.

Newspapers were not so numerous then as they are now and news could not travel as quickly as is the case in these days. But very soon news of the great calamity spread all over the land. Thousands of people came from every quarter to visit the scene. Material and substantial sympathy came from a great many different districts in various parts of the country. It is not my purpose to enter into a detailed description of the extent of this destructive flood. Neither space nor time, nor vital energy will permit me to encounter the task.

Many months elapsed before the destruction caused was made good. Some of the buildings were never restored and remained to this day as they were left by the flood. The only remains visible at Digley of Hirst's mill maybe said to be the mill chimney, which still stands in its loneliness to tell the story to future generations.

On the following morning, that is on the morning of February 6th, I went down into the town, to the place where I was employed. As I was passing down Burr Hill the sun broke out and as I was passing a certain house at a woman in the doorway exclaimed: "I thought the sun was never going to shine on Holmfirth again." And after a week or two more or less wet weather the days began to be fine. We had a glorious summer. We had little rain until the following September.

The number of those who lost their lives did not amount to many hundreds as my father supposed. The actual number was either 83 or 84. (*actually 81. Ed*) Many of these I knew. Some of them were and had been my playmates. Many of these poor unfortunates were found immediately. Many were not found for many days and one young man has never been found to this day.

(The events of the great Holmfirth flood and the inquiry which examined the causes have been well documented elsewhere. There is for example a detailed account in "Wool and Worsit" which actually quotes from words which George wrote for the Holmfirth Express in February 1922 when he was 84 years old recalling his childhood memories of the catastrophe. But George's eye witness account as a child is a valuable contribution. Ed)

Change comes to Holmfirth

There are those who have contended that Holmfirth has never regained the state of prosperity that it had up to the time of the catastrophe. There may be some truth in that contention. But if it be true, I am confident that it is from some other cause rather than the bursting of the Bilberry reservoir. It happened at a time when a great change was taking place in the industry of the district. The whole of the work of piece making, as it was called, was gradually being done in the mills and leaving the homes of the people as had been the case up to that period.

The industrial condition of the people will now be considered. I have before observed that the manufacture of woollen cloth was the staple trade of the Holmfirth district. There were many other trades carried on, but only on a small scale, such as iron founders, builders, masons, joiners, and such as are of absolute

necessity in a populous district and such as were necessary for the trade of the place.

At the time about which I am now writing the weaving of the cloth was done in the homes of the people. I can remember when nearly all the weaving and a good deal of the spinning was done in the homes. I had earlier made reference to this in my reminiscences. Now I will resume from that point and continue my narrative.

The conditions of the working classes at this juncture would be an eye-opener to many in the present generation, if it could be truly depicted. In winter time the chambers, as they were called, were lit up in the evening, often till late, several lights in a room. The weaver would have his candle, which was the only light then available, and he would ply his trade unto a late hour. Several lights might be seen in one house according to its size and according to the number of workers in the family. Hundreds, if not thousands, of families earned their own living in their own homes in this way. I cannot go into detail on the conditions of the people, as I would wish. Very many of the cottages had only one bedroom and this chamber had to serve both as work room and bedroom. But that is a story in itself and I cannot go into detail. It would take too much time.

George's poetic side is given an airing!

There are three hills in the immediate vicinity of Holmfirth, each of which gives an interesting picture. There is Ward Bank, there is the hill called Hill and the third one at Cliff. For a spectator to stand at Cliff on a clear moonless night and lift up his eyes to the firmament, he would see a beautiful sight. The heavens studded with burning luminaries in there several constellations. Some of these stars are clear and others more dim owing to their greater distance. He would see the Pole Star and the Great Bear and others I might name scattered about in the starry heavens. I cannot refrain from quoting the grand hymn of Joseph Addison:

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heaven a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.

.....

In Reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious vice;
For ever singing as they shine,
The Hand that made us is divine.

Then turning his eye back down to earth beneath he would see many little stars twinkling in the chambers of the cottages on the opposite side of the valley, a beautiful sight, almost a reflection of the starry sky. Distance lends enchantment to the view. Things on earth are not always what they seem to be. In these cottage homes that might look beautiful in the evening and they might be plentifully supplied with light, but they were not always as happy as they appeared. Many of these homes were those of poverty and scarcity of food and some of them knew

both want and scarcity. Many of these families knew severely well what was meant by “short commons”. But enough of that for the present.....

Technology arrives in the Holmfirth woollen industry

In the early part of the 1850s the manufacturers and began to introduce machinery into their mills,- mules, looms and condensers. Consequently the work was slowly but gradually taken from the homes. This for a time caused a certain amount of suffering amongst the very poor. But the old folks used to say: “as one door shuts, another door opens.” In this case there was some truth in the adage, for many of those who were deprived of their work in their homes found it again in the mills. But the introduction of machinery into the mills brought about a great increase of business, so that the needs of those who have been deprived of the domestic or their work at home had been largely met. There are those who are so fond of saying that the former times were better than those in which we now live. There may be some truth in this saying in respect of some things. But there is no truth in it, not a vestige, in regard to the conditions of a large part of the working people of the Holmfirth woollen district. I will give one more instance. It often happened that the mother of the family had to work hard in one way or another, in connection with the work in the chamber amongst the weaving. And the cleaning of the house had to be done on the Saturday evening, often after dark. When I begin to form a contrast between these present days and the days to which reference has just been made I am filled with astonishment. I can scarcely believe it. Yet I am bound to believe it, for I know it to be true. Once more I say: “enough of this.....”

Great Changes

On my taking a survey of the past 50 or 60 years, mighty changes have taken place in the Holmfirth Valley in respect of Mills and their owners. From Honley Bridge to the head of the Holme Valley there are few that have not changed owners since the early 50s. The men themselves according to the ordinary course of nature must have gone. Upon very careful consideration I find there are some few members of the old families that are carrying on business at the same place. Notably among these maybe mentioned Robinson Brothers at Smithy place, Roberts of Hinchliffe Mill, and also at Holme Bridge descendants of the Barber family are still in the trade. There are not many more.

The introduction of machinery into the district had been a great boon and in this way work and become more plentiful and far more regular. The vast expense of the new machinery was a stimulus to the manufacturers to keep their mills in full working order and to increase and extend their business and their premises. The manufacturers were not slow to see this and act upon it.

(In the paragraphs which follow Michael Day's "Wool and Worsit" will prove to be a valuable reference and a source of more detailed information on the mill owners mentioned. Ed)

At the time I am here dwelling upon, the principal firms in the Holme Valley were the before mentioned Robinson Brothers of Smithy Place, and also Isaac Beardsell at the same mill, and George Robinson at Thongsbridge. There was also Joseph Mellor and Sons, there were four of these sons, each with a place of business of his own, Samuel at Lower Mytholmbridge, Joseph at Upper Mytholmbridge, Thomas and Godfrey at Thongsbridge. The Mellor brothers employed a large number of families in a wide district. There were two mills at what was called Bridge Mill. One was occupied by Mssrs James Brooke and son, the other by Broadbents of Longwood. Holmfirth Mill was owned by Mr George Gartside who had also a dye house which he managed himself. The mill itself was occupied by a number of what now would be considered as small manufacturers. Their names were Nathan Thewlis, George Thewlis, Ramsden of Cliff and the Hoyle brothers, Joshua, James and Jonathan. These men did much in their day for their generation in finding employment for a large number of families in the immediate neighbourhood. The above mentioned Robert Ramsden also employed a number of men and children at Green Lane Mill. John Thorpe Taylor occupied Dover Mill., Abel Cuttall Swan Bank Mill and also what used to be called Cuttall's Mill, but now called Underbank Mill. Ribbleden Mill was owned by Joshua Moorhouse and Joseph Butterworth jointly and was largely managed by James Buckley as engineer. After the flood and after the death of Buckley Mr Joshua Moorehouse gave up the business as manufacturer altogether, so that Mr Joseph Butterworth had the mill in his own hands. It was chiefly employed as a mill for spinning "country work", (*the processing of loose wool into yarn on behalf of self-employed weavers. Ed.*) until it was bought and taken over by J.T. Taylor from Dover mills. Newfold Mill was owned by George Hinchliffe of Nab. This place was largely occupied what what was called country work, done for little manufacturers.

I must not forget to mention the fine mill at Washpit. This was considered one of the finest mills in the district for its size. The mill was owned and occupied by David, William and John Hinchliffe. The firm was usually termed Hinchliffes of Cross. David was one of the foremost politicians of the district and most prominent leaders of the Tory interest. By some he was considered a bigoted party man. The "Blue of the Blues." I remember that at this time party spirit ran very strongly, both among the Blues and the Yellows. There was not much to choose between them.

Just before my time the above firm, I mean Hinchliffes of Washpit, received a great blow in financial matters by the suspension of a grant from the Yorkshire Bank. Whilst it did not knock them over completely, it crippled them and was the cause of them ultimately retiring from all business, to the regret of a number of their work people. So far as I know this firm was the soul of honour and plain dealing. It was a great loss to the district. The mill at Washpit was bought by J Watkinson who has occupied it ever since and who have made many additions to it. It has been and is one of the best and most constant employers in the district.

Lower Hill was owned and occupied by Mr Hobson Farrar in my very young days and among other firms in connection with it were the brothers Hoyle, Eli and Joshua, who did very good work in finding employment for good number of out weavers. This mill then got into the hands of the firm of John Bower and Sons of Parkhead. This firm carried on there for a long time and did good work for the neighbourhood. When the old man died the brothers did not get on so well, with the usual result. Three of them retired from the business. One of the brothers, Jonathan and his sons, carried on at Dover mill formally run by J T Taylor.

Upper Mill was owned and occupied by the Farrar brothers. They carried on an extensive dyeing business there. I do not remember much about this place, only I knew the chief bookkeeper and general factotum. Mr John Batley of South Lane was their general manager. In the latter part of my time in the district it was bought from the Farrar brothers by the firm of James Holmes and Sons who carried on business there.

Mssrs B. Butterworth and Sons carried on businesses in their own premises and at Upperbridge and had their scribbling and spinning done at Hinchliffe Mill's mill. It was in connection with this firm that my father was engaged, and it was here and in connection again with them that I was first taught the art and mystery of making cloth. I had to leave school and go to work when I was 9 or 10 years old. I had not a chance of getting even an elementary education. This want has handicapped me ever since. I was about 15 years old when I found this fact out, but it was then too late to catch up with what I have lost.

I have omitted to mention two matters in connection with the Ribblesden Valley which I may now mention here. There was a mill at Choppards owned and occupied by the Bray family, but it was not in a flourishing condition in my time. There was also a mill at Holme Styes, but it was empty and old.

Another person I would not forget was Jonathan Thorpe. He was a thriving manufacturer and had his scribbling and spinning done at Swan Bank Mill. Afterwards as his business increased he took the whole of what is now called the Holmfirth Mill rented from Miss Gartside, daughter of the above mentioned George Gartside. After Jonathan Thorpe's death his sons carried on the business for a number of years. Then they built a mill of their own at Dobroyd, Jackson Bridge. Harry Thorpe seem to have been the principal of this firm. I may also observe that in the latter part of my time in Holmfirth the mill at Bridge Mill was occupied and owned by Joseph Turner, one of the Huddersfield merchants who made great improvements at that place, bringing an increased number of work people. This was the latter end of the day for the little manufacturers, who were fast disappearing. The big fish were devouring the little ones.

The firm of Jonathan Roberts of Hinchliffe Mill owned and occupied what was called Dysons Mill. Thomas Hinchliffe, little Tom as he was best known by, rented and occupied Victoria Mill. David Brook, also of Burnlee, had rooms at Lockwood factory. This man made a remarkably good cloth of superfine quality. The mill, called the foundry, was owned and built by the Pogson Brothers. They were iron founders and engineers, but they let part of the upper rooms to Hobson brothers, who carried on a small business only.

Then we come to Bottoms Mill, commonly called Harpin's Mill. Several firms occupied rooms at this place. It was a large mill for those days. Barbers of Hinchliffe Mill, Wimpenny of Burnlee, Barbers of Cartworth Moor had their scribbling and spinning down here, and also their milling. John Harvey was the engineer; Charles Batty was the fulling miller.

The next mill is Hinchliffe Mill mill. No-one in the Holme Valley will be muddled by the same words occurring so close together. It can soon be explained. Hinchliffe Mill is the name of the village, the other is the mill of the village. There were a

number of makers who had their work done at this mill. Thomas Butterworth, William Butterworth, Joseph Butterworth, separate firms that all had their scribbling and spinning done here, besides what I might call the smaller manufacturers. Mr Anthony Green also had his work down here. This latter gentlemen, along with the Butterworths mentioned, was joint owner of the mill. There was also a mill called Yew Tree. This firm did business under the name of Butterworth and Roberts. This Roberts was Harry, son of John Roberts and grandson of the original Jonathan of Hinchliffe Mill. The Butterworth was brother of Joseph of Holmfirth mentioned above. This Mr Butterworth was one of the Huddersfield merchants. Barbers at Holmebridge Beardsell's of Holme, Roebucks and Croslands of Bank End, these with others, who may be called little manufacturers were not few, but of small account compared with the other manufactures of the district.

Besides the woollen manufacturers, there were no big firms of any kind, only such trades as were necessary to do work that was required in connection with the mills, like engineers, masons, joiners etc. And none of these was on a large scale. I might mention also that there were millwrights. These were a necessary and important branch of business in respect of millwork. In respect to engineers Pogson Brothers of Bottoms, or Foundry Mill, were chief of the firms in this respect. Then came John Mitchell of Bank End, near Thurstonland, Jonas Cartwright of Ribbleden Mill, and Rogers of Hinchliffe Mill. These were on a small scale but quite sufficient for the needs of the district.

I may next mention the joiners and builders. The chief of these also were not many. Joseph Barraclough may be said to be a master joiner and builder. His name stands connected with most of the buildings erected in my time. Mr Barraclough was a pushing and vigorous businessman. I think that his ability was far greater than the needs of the district could furnish. Had he lived in a more thriving and expansive neighbourhood, that would have called for all his energies. There is little doubt in my mind that he would have been a great builder and extensive constructor.

There were other joiners too, John Shaw of Upperthong, George Beever (?) of Hollowgate, Thomas Booth of New Raw (?), Jonathan Shore of Hey Gap, the Hampshires and Enoch Brown of Upperthong. Some of their descendants are in the business to this day (1918.) Also I must mention Mr John Milner of Town Gate. But I cannot enumerate all men of business at this time I am writing about, to do so would land me further in the subject than I propose to go. But I must mention the masons of the district, although there have not been many new buildings erected in my time, especially in comparison with places like Lockwood, Honley, Milnsbridge, Linthwaite, Slaithwaite, Golcar, Longwood and Marsden. Especially in Marsden; in this little town during the last 15 years hundreds of very good cottages have been erected and a great many of these owned by working men. All the other places above mentioned have greatly increased both in buildings and population, whilst Holmfirth has remained stationary. Nor is there likely to be any change in this matter in the immediate time before me. The reason for this condition of things may be found in the facts first that the neighbourhood contains no natural resources and second that it is far removed from great centres of railway accommodation and commercial facilities. Our railway in Holmfirth is only a branch line and is itself a terminus.

Tradesman or shopkeepers, businessmen and publicans might easily be mentioned, but being of such a numerous order and of considerable variety of callings there are

too many to be individually mentioned. Holmfirth never was or could be a great centre of business because of its insularity. There was no room for any great extension in any line of business. Many of these tradesmen did fairly well, as long as they were able to attend to their trade themselves and relied upon a modest competence. No great fortunes were built up by any of these men. They were in a limited sense successful tradesmen from a village standard. The chief of these were the draperies, the grocery or provision dealers, the clothiers and the boot makers.

I would also add the publicans. These last named were men of business as well. I cannot refer to all the shopkeepers of the town. I may mention a few of those who were leading businessmen in my time. To mention the drapers first, those who were what may be called the principles. There were the "Quakers", carried on in my time by Mr Alfred Wood. He combined the grocery business as well. There was Mr James Boothroyd at the corner of Victoria Bridge. His business was of a high class. Then there was Mrs Schofield in the same street, a Mr. Mc (?), Robert Kippax at the top of the street. The clothing businesses were carried on by Mr. Wilson Haigh in the Town Gate, Mr. Isaac Sykes in the centre of town, Mr. Joshua Woodcock at No. 1 Victoria Street and Joel Haigh and son in the same street. This firm is still in existence at the present time (1918).

The chief grocery businesses were as follows: Mr John Hoyle of Upperbridge, Mr Henry Mitchell at the bottom of South Lane, Mr. Samuel Wimpenny in Victoria street, Mr. William Gledhill who succeeded to Mr. Wimpenny's premises in the same street. Then there was the Old Co-Op in Ribblesden Road. There would be others on a smaller scale. These were the main ones.

Of the boot shops there were not many of these, for much work of this class was done in private houses of the workmen. The chief of these were the Woodhead Brothers in Towngate, (the firm is in existence to this day,) Mr James Whiteley in the centre of the town, Mr Joseph Haig in Hollowgate, Mr John Hargreaves in Victoria Street, Mr John Jagger at the corner of the street and Huddersfield road.

There were iron mongers and tanners, James Garside by the Church Gate, Mr Johnson in the centre of the town who is also a tinner and there was Mr Dyson by the Old Gen and for a time Mr William Lawton at Upperbridge, afterwards continued by his son John.

It would be a mistake if I omitted to mention the butchers of my time. I should be sorry to leave this class out from my observations. For the butcher, almost as much as the grocer, is an essential to the well-being of the community. My earliest recollection of these were Mr Boothroyd in Town Gate, George Shaw by the church, George Haigh in the centre of town, James Haigh on the Ribblesden Road, Joseph Haig at the bottom of Rotcher, Jonathan Butterworth also near the same place, Henry Bower by the Elephant and Castle, George Bower at the Kings Head inn (now better known as the "White Door"). The last name combined butcher, farmer and innkeeper in one place. These were the principals in that line of business.

The innkeepers of my time and acquaintance were generally of a respectable class. Victoria Hotel was kept for a long time by Mrs Kippax, afterwards by Mr Charles Taylor. The "Friendship" by Mr William Wadsworth, the "George and Dragon" by William Howe, the "White Hart" by Mr Christopher Moorhouse, and by Mr William Dyson and by Mr Thomas Boothroyd, the "Shoulder of Mutton" by Mr James Haig,

Mr Jonas Woodhead, Mr John Lodge, who afterwards went on to keep the “Elephant and Castle.” Reference has already been made to the “White Hart” kept by Mr G Bower. The “Wagon and Horses” at Norridge was owned and kept by Mr Andrew Sanderson. The “Crown Hotel” was first kept by Mr McDonald. These were the principal pubs. These were the principal inns. There were also a number of beer houses. These changed their keepers oftener than the ordinary inns. These have being very much reduced in later years. (I should also have mentioned earlier the grocers Mr George Broadhead and also Mr Godfrey Woodhead in Victoria Street.)

Holmfirth was lacking in its powers of expansion. It had, (as it has today 1918), to depend on other centres for its supplies and also for its work for its artisan population. Although it may be regarded as a centre in point of trade and business, it always laboured under the disadvantage of having too many shops for its retail trades, in other words it could always have had great deal more business if its customers had been more numerous. Of course this could be said of most other places. The people of Holmfirth might with advantage agitate for the extension of the tram system which among other things will give impetus to the building trade, not only in respect of cottage properties, but for better class houses and by this means tend largely to improve and increase the population. But this is a matter for themselves to consider.

Public Men.

During my time of living in my native town of Holmfirth there was a goodly number of men of whom it might be said that they were public men and that they took a leading part in all public affairs, political, religious and the common affairs of the district, in music, temperance and in cricket. I have already mentioned above the various religious bodies, more especially that to which I belonged, the Wesleyan Methodists. There were other men in the district who were notable characters and who distinguished themselves by their humour, their quaint sayings and their odd ways. These also shall have a share of attention, at least as far as my memory will serve me. Let it be remembered that I'm speaking from memory. I have not consulted one single document in these reminiscences and the wonder will be very great if I do not leave out some names that might or ought to have a honourable mention.

In Holmfirth, as in other towns, there are many and various walks of life, in which man can and does distinguish himself. The principal or chief of these are religion and politics. Mention has already been made above of those grand men and true who have taken a leading part in the religious activities of the various churches of the town. It is my purpose to deal with what I may call public men, and notable characters, in sections or under the following headings, politics, temperance, music, painting, cricket and humorous notables.

Politics

Speaking in a political sense Holmfirth was regarded as a great centre for many miles around, it was the polling centre of an extensive district. A general election day was regarded as a greater day than the annual feast. The visits of various

candidates for Parliamentary honours for the purpose of addressing the electors and seeking their votes were great occasions. At these times the various candidates were met by the gentry and the voters of the polling district, and when the voting day came it was made a general holiday. I have a somewhat distinct recollection of the elections that took place in 1841 and every subsequent election that took place, so long as I remained in the town as a resident. At the time of the 1841 election the county of Yorkshire was divided into three Ridings, as the various divisions were termed, - East Riding, North Riding and West Riding. The latter comprised what was the great woollen district with Sheffield and its suburbs. The West Riding at this time about which I am writing sent two members to Parliament. The candidates at the 1841 election were Dennison and Wortley for the Tories, or the "Blues", Morpeth and Melton for the Liberals, or the "Yellows". I was very young at this time but have a recollection of a few things about it. I know among other things that I saw a man dressed in yellow riding on either a horse or donkey. And I also remember that there was a riot in Town Gate and there was a neighbour of ours who kept a small shop there as barber and umbrella maker and as a dealer in small wares like spice and green groceries. His name was Henry Seddon and he was so affrighted by the riot that he ran home and closed his shop and put up the shutters. There are one or two more things I can remember, but they are too trivial to mention at this time and place.

The leading and prominent men in the political affairs of the town, namely the Blues and the Yellows, were those who went to church or those who went to chapel. Very few Blues went to chapel and very few Yellows went to church, but there were some. The principal supporters among the Tories in my very early days were the Hinchliffs of Washpit, David and William, but more notably David. (*As with the Moorhouse/ Morehouse question there were in Holmfirth Hinchliffs and Hinchliffes, and many of them. "Wool and Worsit" lists some 47 of them. Ed.*) On account of his majestic figure, and his pronounced enthusiastic bigotry as a churchman, he was known as Great David. He was a determined upholder of church and state and also of church rates. And when the time came round to impose afresh the church rate upon the district, David was sure to be present with his jibes, his sneers and his insults heaped upon dissenters who wanted to oppose the infliction of the rate. (*Church rates were abolished in 1870. Ed*) Nothing was too coarse or bitter to hurl at people who were of opposing views. He did not always come off best. He had a match, and more than a match on the other side in Mr John Hinchliffe of Barnside who was his equal in enthusiasm for the side he stood for and by far he had the superior brains and knowledge. David would have compelled everyone to go to church if he was allowed power. John of Barnside was made of stuff familiar to Oliver Cromwell. David partook largely of the character of Archbishop Laud. (*William Laud 1573-1645 and Archbishop of Canterbury 1633-1645 was opposed to all radical forms of Puritanism. Ed*) When these two champions encountered each other David had to stand aside. The liberals were always the stronger party. David's strongest weapons were fun, scorn and ridicule. John was a man of strong common sense, an a man deeply impressed with liberal principles and an ardent enthusiast for religious freedom and political liberty, a born leader of men. I am not quite sure whether I ever saw this grand old gentleman, but I knew some of his sons, who inherited much of their father's views and political and religious faith. Abel, one of the sons, became a journalist and for many years was editor of a radical Yorkshire newspaper. The other sons distinguished themselves in business life in various branches.

But to return again to David. He dearly love to poke fun at those who went to the Lane Chapel and who were members of Mr John Cockin's congregation. He did not always come off best with these. On one occasion two of the out-weavers were taking their work to the mill at Washpit to be looked over or "pinched". (*A way of testing the weave of a piece of cloth. Ed.*) One of the two said to the other:

"I want thee to help me when I am pinching. I have a poor piece, my work is rather bad."

The other made answer and said: "Alright. I'll help thee."

These two men were by name Israel Cartwright of Rycroft and David Bailey of Town End. The piece that was the difficulty was Israel's work and he knew that David was a sly old fox. Israel too was an attender of the Chapel at Lane and a member of Mr Cockin's congregation. It may be said it once that Mr Cockin was one of the most effective advocates in the district against the Anglican church.

When David Hinchliffe began to "pinch" Israel's piece, David Bailey, standing by, took hold of the piece and looked at it in a critical sort of way. In an instant Israel said: "Let that piece alone.. Thou has nowt to do with that." David Bailey replied: "I shall touch thy piece when I have a mind. Go home to thee hussy of a wife." Other words passed to and fro until the piece was passed over the rolls. The master had never seen the piece, nor any of its faults. He had been listening all the time to these two men "fratching." David Hinchliffe gave orders, however, that the two men should not leave the mill together, lest they should go out and fight and there be a breach of the peace. The two men met again at the first public house and had a friendly quart of beer together.

The bigotry and hatred against dissenters was so great that in the matter of church rates David was credited with saying that he would rather compel a man to pay half a crown and that you should pay five shillings willingly. David had two brothers, William and John, all joined in the woollen manufacturing business. They were badly hit and had to sustain a great loss by the breaking of the great bank of Halifax.

Mr James Charlesworth and his brothers, Joseph and Joshua, were all prominent men, both in church matters and in politics. They were influential men in other matters, in philanthropic and educational matters they all took an active part. Mr James lived at Upperbridge and kept the bank. Mr Joseph lived at Eldon house and Mr Joshua lived at South house. Mr James and Mr Joshua were both patrons of Sunday school and lovers of the young.

Mr. George Hinchliffe of Nab House and his son George Henry were also prominent men in public affairs and took great interest in them. Mr George Thewlis and his brother Nathan, and the sons of former, took a deep interest in matters connected with the church and the state.

I must also not forget to mention Mr Joshua Moorhouse, although he was a Wesleyan, he was also a true Blue, and was for a long time chairman of the Blue or Conservative committee. Mr. G. Floyd also belonged to the same party, but he ceased to take any public interest in Holmfirth affairs, although he lived and died at Sands House in the immediate neighbourhood. His good intentions for the welfare of the district were misunderstood, in regard to the new local government act which

he endeavoured to put into operation. This was violently rejected and much bad feeling was expressed and much unjust opprobrium was heaped upon him. Afterwards the act was adopted by the district which was a vindication of Mr Floyd's character and motives.

There were many others of perhaps less note who took interest in these matters, but who formed the strength and the backbone of their party organisations, - such men as Richard Bower, Robert Ramsden of Cliff, John Burton who kept an academy at Upperbridge, Mr Wylie who was also a schoolmaster at Upperbridge, Mr Crawshaw and his son William, Mr John Ramsden, son of the above Robert Ramsden. All of these and many more were always to be depended on all matters connected with the church and with party politics. Mr John Ramsden was a member of the choir of the Holmfirth Parish Church for 50 long years.

Mr Benjamin Mellor who was son-in-law to above mentioned Robert Ramsden and who also lived at Cliff, was also a prominent man in the district and respected by all who knew him. He was courteous and kind to all with whom he came into contact. Mr Mellor was in business as a cloth finisher. He was when I first knew him in business in Upper Mill, or as it was sometimes called Prickelden Mill. He also built Albert Mill and built up a good business there under the name of Benjamin Mellor and Son, which continues to the present time (1919). The son, Mr J R Mellor, is now the head of the firm; he and I were boys together. I am glad to say that the friendship and kind regards is still maintained after all these years of change, when nearly all of our contemporaries have passed away.

But there is one name that I cannot and must not pass by in connection with these reminiscences, because he was an important personage in the Conservative party and the general affairs of the district. That name is John Sanderson. John Sanderson was a churchman, a schoolmaster, a politician, an artist, an auctioneer and a journalistic reporter. He figured in all of these various capacities. As a schoolmaster he did not distinguish himself much, he was not a success. There is no doubt about his being able to impart elementary knowledge to the children under his charge, but his manner of dealing with the children was not the most effective. He allowed the older boys to get the master of him. He lacked firmness and decision. The older boys laughed in his face and addressed him as "Jack". He lacked command and lost control. Mr Sanderson was a good and a loyal servant of the church, a good supporter and a constant attender at its services. I need scarcely say that she was a staunch upholder of the Conservative cause. I am not aware that he did much in the way of public advocacy, but he was ready in season and out of season to uphold any good old cause. Privately and among his friends he was a little bit tinged with a common party feeling characterised by a bygone generation namely "my party right or wrong," and also the party cry "Blue for ever."

It has already been observed that Mr Sanderson was an auctioneer and valuer, but he did not greatly distinguish himself in this kind of business, although he continued in it to the end of his days. Mr Sanderson at an earlier period of his life studied and practised as an artist, in other words as a painter, but not many, perhaps not any, of his works have attained to the position of "old master". Perhaps they may at some future date emerge into fame.

Mr Sanderson distinguished himself most as a newspaper correspondent. He was by no means destitute of humour. This feature was not only visible but permanent.

He was the Holmfirth correspondent for one or perhaps both of the Huddersfield weeklies. As such it was his duty to attend and report meetings of a public nature. Any meeting that might be called in any way "great", no doubt he would answer the call and be present to report. But there were some meetings, such as the meetings at schools and temperance meetings in various parts of the district to which he did not go, but would get his reports from someone else who was present. Mr Sanderson was so well acquainted with the district and the various speakers at these meetings that he prided himself on being able to report without going near them. He knew the line of thought that would be taken by these men and would be able to report accordingly. On a few occasions he rather overreached himself, for on several occasions there were meetings that had been advertised, but because of some cause or other had not been held. All the same Mr Sanderson had sent in his report of them and also the general line of thought pursued by the speakers. When this was pointed out to him he never gave a reason for it but was always ready with an excuse. The accounts of these meetings and the speeches which were not held or given furnished much amusement to the reader and also to Mr Sanderson himself, who joined in the laughter. John Sanderson belonged to one of the old families of the district, the various branches of which resided in the neighbourhood of Norridge. He was a kindly man, I may say and a good man, and had the respect of those who knew him.

Another of the ancient families of the district I might mention are the numerous branches of the families of Hoyles. This must be one of the most ancient families of the district. They may be traced back to the 18th century. In my young days there were many branches of the original family, some of them only remotely connected. There were some of them at Cliff, some of them at Hey Gap,, some at Modd, some at Wooldale, some at Underbank, but most of most of them were at Hill and Underhill. There were at this last place three branches of the family. One or two which I will refer to because I knew him well in my youthful days. Hoyles of Hill were of importance because they were tradesmen and found work for a number of the people of the neighbourhood. The name of the father I do not know. There were four sons, all having names beginning with J,- Joshua, Jonathan, John and Jonas. The oldest, Joshua, and the youngest, Jonas, were never married and lived and died at Hill. Joshua, besides being in business as a manufacturer, farmed a good lot of land managed mainly by Jonathan, who resided at Underhill. Jonas was employed in managing the cloth finishing department. John was established as a corn and provision merchant at Upperbridge. These families were all staunch church folk and wielded a great influence among their neighbours. Another branch of the family lived at Underhill. These I knew well. The name of the "Old Man" who was the only survivor of the previous generation was Abel, born in 1799, and he lived to a very great age. I knew his two sons and all their families down to the third generation. There were three daughters, each with families of their own, so that this one branch alone had very numerous progeny. There were other branches of the family of Hoyle in different parts of the district. Out of one of the branches of the family came a number of ringers of the bells of the Holmfirth Parish Church. I mentioned families especially because they were without exception strong and rigid adherents of the Conservative cause. Some of these families carried their party spirit so far as to persecute those who belonged to the nonconformist bodies. I had myself had to endure much at their hands that was very unpleasant, which made me hate the very name Church.

There are some notable matters about the names of the various families of the Hoyles, more especially among the males. Most of them had scripture names. I have mentioned a few above, but there were others that were notable. I knew nine Elys, five Abels and five Jonases. Then there were David, Daniel and Nathan, besides the ordinary ones beginning with J. There may be nothing very remarkable in this, but it is noteworthy. All of these were good Conservatives and adherents of the church, although many of them scarcely ever went to the services.

Another of the important families of the district who took a leading part in political matters with the Messrs Barber, of Holmbridge. All of these were upholders and strong supporters of church and state and the Conservative cause generally. Of course there were many more, but to enumerate them and deal with them separately would be outside the scope and purpose before me.

I may also observe that there were certain of the families among church people and leading Conservatives who exercised a strong influence among their work people and their dependents. Such were the Charlesworths, above-mentioned and the Ramsdens at Cliff. These, and similar, had a numerous following among the people and helped to form the bulk of the Conservative party. When, at the time of the general election, the various candidates came to address the electors, the Conservatives always gave them a loyal and enthusiastic welcome. I remember a few such demonstrations. The bells of the parish church sent forth a merry peel. And what was then called the "Old Band" was engaged for the occasion and played patriotic music, especially "Rule Britannia", to the delight of the Tory party. One of these visits I remember well. That was when Denison and Stanhope contested against Lord Milton and H. Beaumont. The Conservatives made a splendid show, but unfortunately for them did not win the election in their favour.

The Liberals

Although the Conservatives formed a very numerous and influential body, they were not by any means the more numerous of the two great political parties of the district. Throughout my time the Liberals or what was generally called the "Yellows" were the most numerous and their voting power was the greatest. The bulk of the people were on the side of the Liberals. Whatever the result of the election might be the Yellows always had a majority in Holmfirth, so that if they lost the day there was always that bit of satisfaction of having the most votes of the two parties.

The Liberal party in Holmfirth always had some good leaders. It is my purpose now to speak of a few of these as I knew them. Although the Wesleyan denomination was numerous and well-to-do they as a body or as a party took little active part in political affairs, so far as promoting the interests of the Liberal party. But when the election day came they were ready at their posts at the proper time.

The Congregationalists were different. These to a man and to a woman were fighters and very determined fighters. They formed a numerous and powerful body of men and women, from a large number of well-to-do families. I give them here without order and as they occur to my memory.

The Bates of Winney Bank, James and Benjamin, the Brooks of Upperthong, the Carters and Hinchliffs of the same place, the Beardsell of Holme and the

Beardsells of Hagg, Godfrey Mellor of Thongsbridge, George Robinson of the same place, the Wimpennys of Burnlee and the Wimpennys of Hill, Newton and John, the Greens of Holmbridge, the Coldwells of Liphill Bank and of Burnlee, the Woodheads of Pog Ing, the Woodheads of Hollowgate and Town Gate, the Moorhouses of South Lane, the Ramsdens of Dunsley, the Dysons also of Lane. Alec McLellan may also be included.

These, trained and led by the redoubtable John Cockin, were a formidable host and did good work for the Liberal party. The above mentioned families were those who chiefly took a leading and active part in political matters. But there were many more who formed the rank and file of the Liberal cause, who will be too numerous to mention here, and who are mostly connected with the Congregational Church at Lane. It would be outside my purpose to give a description of all these representative men. I may not do more than make a selection of them and refer to a few of the most prominent.

My earliest recollection was of Mr John Hinchliffe of Barnside. He was a strong and well built man, powerful and sturdy in his personality. He was also man of brains and intellect, wielding a mighty influence in the neighbourhood of Hepworth. He was a sturdy Liberal, a powerful leader and a staunch worker in support of religious freedom, always at his post at a time when a man was needed. He rendered good service at the time when church rates were imposed upon the people. He, and such as he, did much to bring about the abolition of church rates altogether. His name was mentioned and his memory fragrant long after he had passed away. Although two or three generations have gone, he is still remembered by the older men now living.

Another of the names of the men who took active service in the Liberal cause was John Robinson of Thongsbridge. Mr Robinson was chairman of the committee at the time of the general election. He was a man with a sound judgement and well-informed, a good speaker and a man of affairs. He rendered a good service to the liberal cause as long as he lived. He died before he became an old man. His death was a great loss to the cause. After the death of Mr Robinson Mr James Beardsell of Holme became president of the Liberal council and rendered splendid service to the cause for a long time. Mr. Beardsell occupied the position of president to the end of his days.

Mr Joseph Woodhead and Mr Samuel Wimpenny are closely associated in my mind and memory. I can scarcely think of one without thinking of the other. In political matters they were always in the van; they were the leaders in the politics for most of my time after the days of those previously referred to. Two men took a leading part in all public matters, local, national and political, in religion and education. They were strenuous opponents of church and state, and advocated the disestablishment of the church. In all matters involving church dissent these two are always to be found at their post and prepared to spare no pains to secure the object in view before them. They were both educationalists of an advanced type. In my very young days the Mechanics Institution was in a very flourishing and vigorous condition and these two men were heart and soul in the matter. Mr Woodhead was the teacher of a class of young men. Two of my older brothers were members of the Institute and subsequently when I was old enough I was also made a member. Both of these men, Mr Woodhead and Mr Wimpenny, were very ready speakers. Each had the power to say what they believed to be the truth, clearly before the minds of the people. It

need scarcely be said that they were very popular in the district. Both have now joined the “great majority” and both lie in the same God's Acre at Lane Chapel. “In death they are not divided.” In justice to the memory of these two men I ought not to forget, and would be sorry to do so, to add that they were both strong temperance advocates, ardent workers in the Christian church, and preachers of the gospel. They were among the first promoters of the Holmfirth Mechanics Institute.

Another name I ought to mention in this connection and who rendered service to the cause of Liberalism in the district, that is the name of Mr McNish. He was a Scotchman who came to Holmfirth in his youth as a travelling draper. He married the daughter of Mr William Lawton, tin worker of Upperbridge. As an advocate of matters before the public and in point of eloquence he was inferior to the two mentioned above. He was also ready to render a valuable help when required. I have often heard him speak well in the Town Hall on the questions that were in the front at the time, whether it might be religion, politics or the temperance question, or on other local matters. I was then very young and had not had much education. I was thirsting for knowledge, and oh! how I envied these men who can speak so well before the public. I longed to be able to do so myself, to me it seems to be the acme of human ambition. That was more than 60 years ago. Much water has run under the bridge since then. I have stood as a speaker before the public many times since then. I may not have become as good as they were, but I have formed much pleasure in platform and pulpit work and it is still my delight today (1919).

There is another name I should be sorry to omit, for he rendered very good service in his day towards the advancement of education. I refer to Mr John Hixon (Hickson?). He was president of the Mechanics Institute for nearly as long as it existed. I am sorry to have to record that this noble institution declined and finally collapsed for the lack of public support. The cause of the education of the adult or the youthful part of the population suffered by its collapse. I will not pursue this matter further, for it is a subject in itself and might be taken up and usefully considered by itself. It must have been great pain to the above mentioned Mr Hixon to see the death and extinction of that useful institution. Mr Hixon did not take a prominent part in political affairs, although he was a good Liberal. He was not a strong party man but a man with a strong sense of his duty to this country, and his God.

To resume my review of men of the Liberal party in this district I would observe that the best work is not always done upon the political platform and by public speakers. There were men who would not be able to do much on the public platform, but who could do much more among the people. There were a good number of these and they took an intelligent interest in the advocacy and the spread of the principles of Liberalism. I could mention a good many, but I will however name only a few. Mr. David Brooke of Burnlee, Mr Henry and Samuel Wimpenny of the same place, Mr Newton Wimpenny and his brother John, the Coldwells of Liphill Bank. There were quite a number of these, notable among them was Abel, a man of few words, but when he spoke his words seemed themselves to be clothed with wisdom and strong common sense. Abel and his brothers, and many of his cousins, all were good Liberals and did good propaganda work for the cause. It would be a mistake to omit to mention in connection with Liberalism the name of Alexander McLellan, that redoubtable Scotsman, who lived on Hollow Gate. He, and also his sons were enthusiasts in the propagation of Liberalism among the people of the district.

I may also mention here the name of another man prominent among the same party. I refer to Ben Stanley who is sometimes called the "Holmfirth poet". Mr Stanley was strong for his party, whether it was as a politician or in the cause of religious freedom. Although no platform man he was in his way a splendid agitator for what he considered to be right. Mr Stanley composed a good many short poems and published them, but they never gained a wide circulation. One of the best of them is to be found upon a gravestone in the churchyard of St John's church, Upperthong. It is engraved upon the headstone as an epitaph on the grave of Tom Kaye, the celebrated huntsman of the Holmfirth pack. This epitaph will perpetuate both the name of the huntsman and the poet. (*This gravestone can be seen in the top left hand corner of the graveyard. Ed.*)

There is one other name however that I cannot and I must not forget to mention in this connection. It is the name of Joe Moorhouse, shoemaker of South Lane. He was a very active worker in the cause, although he was not much of an advocate on the public platform. However objection was often taken to the somewhat extreme manner of his advocacy of any cause he took in hand. But he was a useful and good Liberal. Many tried to make fun of Mr Moorhouse and laughed at him. But he believed that once he had got the right sow by the ear, none could laugh him down. Mr. Moorhouse's pet cause was total abstinence, where his name will come up again.

I might have mentioned the Stanleys and the Lindleys of Rycroft, the Holmes's of Larch House, (*Cartworth. Ed*), the Hinchliffes of Scholes and the Hinchliffes and Tinkers of Hepworth, the Littlewoods and the the Moorhouses of Damhouse, particularly William and his many sons., the Bowers of Parkhead, more especially of Jonathan and his son John. Many more names might be added of men who rendered good service to the cause in various parts of the district. Mr. John Harpin of Booth House, Burnlee was also a supporter of Liberalism, but he did not take prominent part beyond recording his vote. It has been observed that the Wesleyans did not take any active part in committee work at election times. But they always appeared at the proper time at the polling booth.

The Roberts and the Butterworths of Hinchliffe Mill formed a numerous party when counted up, and their numerous votes and the weight of their influence was always cast on the side of the Yellows. Mr. Benjamin Butterworth, his brother Joseph and his sons were a strong and staunch Liberals and rendered useful service to the cause. Mr. John Thorpe Taylor of Oaklands was a good liberal in his early days and it did good work for the cause, like Mr. H. Butterworth of Hinchliffe Mill. One or both of these gentlemen inclined and leaned towards Unionism when Mr Gladstone endeavoured to pass the Home Rule Bill for Ireland. So their zeal for Liberalism considerably abated in their later days. Mr. Joshua Woodcock of no.1 Victoria street was a staunch and very consistent Liberal to the end of his life.

I may mention one more name that was prominent in local politics. That name is Joseph Haig of Fearnought. He was a somewhat peculiar man in this way, intelligent and genial and also a sound liberal, and not afraid of making known his opinion in whatever company he might be found.

Mr Joseph Shaw, joiner and builder, also might save be mentioned in this connection, for he was an upright and worthy man and a good Liberal.

The Haighs of Hollowgate and the Mettricks of Underbank deserve honourable mention in connection with the cause. All these I have named were men in active service when I was a boy and in my early manhood. All these names I have mentioned and the memory of the men who adorned them are fresh in my mind and I can call to mind many of the scenes in which these men took an active part. I love to think of these past days, where distance lends enchantment to the view. All these worthies whose names have been mentioned have long since passed away and are gone.

“Time like an ever rolling stream
Bears all its sons away;
They fly forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.”

(Isaac Watts, 1674-1748, hymn writer and theologian.)

But it is a source of great satisfaction and of pleasure to know that many of the objects for which these men spent their time and energy and thoughts are now realised facts. And in our own days we are reaping the reward of the arduous labours of these men. But we have not reached the millennium yet. I ought to mention Mr. Jonathan Thorpe and his son Henry. The latter I knew well. We were schoolboys together and at the same school.

The Radicals

Before I dismiss the question of politics I would refer to a branch of Liberals which was always regarded as extreme. They were known under the name of “Radicals.” They were an advanced wing of the Liberal party. These men held and advocated extreme views, as the name implies. Their object was to change the whole system of government. This party was composed of men of extreme religious views and also of some men of infidel proclivities and atheistic opinions. There were really two sections in this political party. They were sometimes designated as “Chartists.” They all advocated the adoption of the “five great points” which constituted the Chartist program. Chartism in those days carried with it and was regarded very much as anarchy and Bolshevism are looked upon now, that is with contempt and horror. The whirligig of time brings things around in strange manner. As a matter of fact nearly all the measures contended for by these men have found their way to be placed upon the statute book of England.

A leader of the political section of this party was the son of John Hinchliffe of Barnside. His name was Abel. He was a man of very considerable natural ability, well educated and of considerable literary pretensions. He had a considerable following in Hepworth and Scholes and in that particular district. I do not wish to be understood as charging Abel Hinchliffe as belonging to the infidel section of the party. I should say he did not belong to that section, but rather to the liberal wing and the purely political side of the party. Radicalism in its various forms was rampant in the villages named above. There was much bitterness and hatred expressed, not only against all forms of religion, but also against all forms of

constituted authority. To say that Chartism was strong and had many adherents would be saying little. It would be truer to designate them revolutionists. Abel Hinchliffe was a leader amongst them. He was the stormy petrel among them and around the countryside. In his early manhood he left the district and became a journalist in the Barnsley district. Mr Hinchliffe had a somewhat chequered career. He did not succeed well in any of his undertakings in his later days. He came to live at Holmfirth, a somewhat disappointed man and also broken in health. In Holmfirth he ended his days. After a stormy life he came in the evening of his days to Holmfirth and died in quiet and in peace.

Another member of this party who may be named as prominent among them was James Lockwood of Lane End. Jim, as he was always called, belonged to the infidel section of the party and he was a leader among them. There were a number of men who were associates of Jim Lockwood. None of whom could be called very intelligent men. Many of them were very ignorant and only took the knowledge from one another and from Reynolds Newspaper. (*Launched in 1850 it finally closed in 1967 under the name Sunday Citizen.Ed*) None of these men ever read a book in their life and some could not read at all and did not know the English alphabet.

A few names of men in this following may be mentioned, such as Hugh Lang, Joe Perkin, Nathan Sandford, George Wimpenny and Tom Battye, and others of lesser note. When I was about 20 years old Charles Bradlaugh, (*1833-1891, political activist and one of the most prominent atheists of the 19th century. He founded the National Secular Society. Ed.*) came into the district, lecturing against the Christian religion. He was then a young man and very popular. He assumed the name of "Iconoclast" which means image breaker. And it was hoped by his adherents that he was about to demolish the whole Christian faith. This is a story in itself and foreign to my purpose, so I refrain with this remark, that while much injury was done in the way of poisoning the minds of the young, much good was also done, for it caused men to make sure of the grounds of their faith. Bradlaugh and all his then followers are gone forever, like last winter snow, but the truth of the word of God remains.

What with the efforts of the Chartists, or "Levellers" as they were called on the one hand, and the Iconoclasts or image breakers on the other, who were going to do away with the parson and his religion, these men were looking forward to the "good time coming." One is reminded of the once popular song of that day composed and sung by Henry Russell, a very popular artist. The refrain runs thus:

"There's a good time coming, boys,
A good time coming.
There's a good time coming, boys,
Wait a little longer."

In this good time coming these men, or some of them at least, believed that the rich and the well-to-do would have to share their prosperity and goods with the poor, and hence they were termed "levellers." I need scarcely say that these men were ignorant and ill-informed. Some of them could not tell a B from a bull's foot. As an instance I was having a conversation with one of them about the mysteries of the Bible. He frankly told me that he did not believe in mysteries of any kind. After that avowal the dispute came to an end. Now this man had never read a book in his life.

He could not read. He did not know the English alphabet. Nor was this an isolated case in this party. They refused the Scriptures, never having read them. This party never made any headway in the neighbourhood. They were neither men of intelligence or of standing, or of strength of character. These men passed away leaving neither trail nor trace behind.

The Temperance Party

From my earliest recollection there has been a Temperance Party in Holmfirth with an organised body. In its beginning it was a sort of motley party, that is belonging to no one religion or sect. It was a despised party, it was a hated party even by some of the churches, not one of which as such befriended the movement and some were distinctly hostile to it. It was scorned and laughed at and condemned, but still it grew in numbers and in force until it became a powerful organisation with its various ramifications in all parts of the neighbourhood. The Holmfirth Temperance Society held his anniversary on the first Monday in August, which was a bit of a holiday, not totally on that account, but partly. On this day the anniversary of what was called the Old Sick Club was held also. This club contained a large number of members. In the vernacular of the district it was called the Old Club Feast. On this day the dinner was provided at four of the public houses of the district for the members of the club.

After the dinner the rest of the day was spent in more or less a state of revelry. The Temperance Society selected this day partly as a protest against the drinking customs of the day and of the place. Early in its history it formed and established a brass band, all the members of which were required to be total abstainers from intoxicating liquors. This band became very useful for the Temperance cause. It also became a very efficient body of instrumentalists and also a formidable rival to the Old Band, named after its leader, John Beaumont. The brass band held together for a long time and did good work for the cause of temperance and also for the district generally. But like all other such bands time and exigencies of circumstances caused a decline to take place, deaths of members, or removal from the district, also lack of interest amongst younger men. It declined and died a natural death.

Not so however the Temperance cause itself. It maintained its hold on this district until the establishment of the great Band of Hope movement, when the temperance question took a new form. Churches began to see the worth and importance of the total abstinence movement, and also the necessity of children being brought up to the principles of purity and sobriety. For some time the Wesleyans refused to allow temperance meetings to be held in their school, but the Band of Hope movement shed a new light upon even hostile churches. Bands of Hope in connection with the churches became the order of the day and the order became changed and the working of the movement got into the hands of the young. The men at the head of the temperance movement took an active and leading part and were men belonging to the liberal or the extreme radical party. The Conservative party with very isolated cases and exceptions looked with lofty scorn upon the whole movement.

Some of these leaders of the total abstinence question belonged to one or another of the religious bodies. There were a few men who were connected with no religion, who were men who claimed to be freethinkers, secularists and some of them infidels. Some of the older members of the churches looked upon the movement

with disfavour, because there were men among them who were unbelievers and secularists. For a long time the authorities of the church bodies refused to give their sanction for temperance meetings to be held in their schools. There has been a great change since then. The cause was maintained and kept up its interest through a good many years. Not however gaining much ground, nor losing much. And although the body itself died away and lost its identity as a body, the principles of Temperance maintained their hold on men.

There were few ministers in those days friendly to the movement, and still fewer that were abstainers themselves. Many were hostile and brought their influence to bear against it. I repeat what has been before observed, a great change has taken place among the ministers of the gospel in their attitude to the temperance question. Most of the churches now have Bands of Hope and other kindred institutions, all of which are working in the direction of temperance. The ministers of the dissenting churches are almost to a man in favour of total abstinence. Also there is a growing number of the clergy of the established church in sympathy with the movement.

I propose to mention a few of the names of those who rendered good service to the cause in my time and who resided in Holmfirth. I have named above Mr J Woodhead, Mr. Samuel Wimpenny and Mr MacNish as leaders in political matters. They were also closely identified and rendered excellent work by their advocacy of the principles of total abstinence. Joseph Moorhouse, bootmaker of South Lane, was also an ardent worker. Jonathan Thorpe and some of his sons were also workers in the cause. Also I might mention William Lawson of Upperbridge and his son John, who was not only a zealous propagandist in the district but then went to live in the town of Halifax where he did good work as a Sunday school teacher, local preacher and temperance lecturer. Through the efforts of one of the Cadburys (*the famous chocolate company who were Quakers and strictly teetotal. Ed*) he took up a situation in Birmingham as agent to the Band of Hope mission in that city. For over 30 years he did useful work as a public worker. He also became a magistrate and rendered service as a justice of the peace. He died in his 81st year in the month of January of this present year (1919).

My memory furnishes me with many more names of men and workers and adherents of the temperance cause. Their names will be too numerous to mention here. Those I have already named will amply suffice.

The Wesleyan Church in Holmfirth

I propose now to take up the subject of the Wesleyan body as I promised on a former page. I may perhaps be asked, why do you dwell so much and so long upon matters about your particular church? I would answer because I was most interested in it and that I know most about it.

The year 1854 seems to form an epoque in the affairs of the Wesleyan church at Holmfirth. In this year the basses and the fiddles were superseded by a new organ made in London. This was soon followed by a new choir. This was also followed by an improved order of service. Up till this time the hymn was nearly always the same: "Come Holy Ghost to inspire our hearts." This was substituted with "Te Deum" in the morning and "Sing unto the Lord of the new song" in the evening.

These novelties were an attraction for a time, the congregations were very good and the change was considered to be a great improvement.

But good singing and playing is not everything. Chapels are not opened and churches are not formed merely for good singing and for an elaborate service. There is something more to be considered. There is the worship of God and the souls of men. The chief end of the sanctuary is not merely to have an elaborate ritual but to preach and to teach the everlasting gospel of the grace of God and to publish glad tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ, the Saviour of the world.

With all the above improvement in the services of our sanctuary there was not much, if any, increase in the membership of the church. This state of things went on until the year 1859 and something happened. This something was a great and a strong revival of spiritual and evangelical religion. After the lapse of more than 60 years the effects of that revival are not yet exhausted. Here and there are to be found men and women living who were brought into the church at that time.

At the time about which I am writing the congregation worshipping at the Wesleyan Chapel was a large one, especially on a Sunday evening and it was grand to hear a large crowd of people joining in singing the songs of Zion. Men's voices predominated and the tunes usually sung were those chiefly which were contained in that psalmody called the "Holdsworth", a book that is nowadays seldom seen and many of the tunes never heard. It is supposed to be out of date and all together forgotten. Another common thing was to be seen in those days, that is not seen now in our sanctuaries. That is the family pew filled with the members of the family at morning service. With the greatly improved service the authorities hoped and looked for an improved membership, which did not take place. Then something happened. A young man, a local preacher from one of the circuits in the north of Yorkshire, came into the district to conduct several services in the Huddersfield and the Holmfirth circuits. If memory serves me right he came to Honley first and held mission services there for one or two weeks and a great number through his ministry were added to the church. After Honley the people of Meltham secured his services with similar good results. Many were added to the church at Meltham likewise. After Meltham the people at Hinchliffe Mill secured Mr Storr's services. for Storr was his name. The mission at this place was so successful that the missionary remained weeks in his work. A great number of young men and young women, and also many adult men and women, were brought into the Society. Most of these young persons, male and female, did good work in various departments in the Church of God.

After Hinchliffe Mill Wesleyans had ended their mission with Mr Storr by invitation he came to Holmfirth to the chapel where I was brought up. A somewhat lengthened and prolonged series of services were held here with results greater than at any other place, if we may judge by the number of converts. Hundreds of men and women and youths of both sexes were gathered into the church. This movement was not confined to the poor among the working class. Many members of well-to-do families were brought into the church, all of which were well educated and respectably brought up. I may not go into detail in this matter beyond saying firstly, that hundreds were added to the church, and secondly that many of these became preachers of the gospel, and a good few entered the Christian ministry.

Now before the time of this great revival it was a usual thing to see heads of families with their children at the morning service. The father sat at the door of the family pew, the mother at the head with sons and daughters. I can see them now. When I look back I cannot refrain from thinking that these were grand days and a glorious time.

There were the Butterworths, the Moorhouses, the Woodcocks, the Mellors of Thongsbridge, the Cuttels, the Barrowcloughs, the Brookes, the Boothroyds, the Lodges, the Gutteridges, the Shaws, the Booths, the Harpins, the Garsides, the Battys, the Mettricks, the Littlewoods, the Mitchels, the Gledhills, the Hargreaves, the Schofields and the Sandfords. And a host of others of lesser note, such as the Woodheads and the family to which I belonged, which perhaps carries no great weight with them. These above named and many others formed the church and the congregation at the Holmfirth Wesleyan Chapel in my time attending there.

(As a parenthesis I would not forget to mention the families of Joseph Swan, and the Goldthorpe's, the family of Joseph Barker and George Broadhead, and of John Seddon. These, although they belonged to the society at Wooldale really were members of our congregation. There were also the Stanleys, the Lindley's and the Smiths of Rycroft and Scholes Moor.) These and many more who might be mentioned who formed the church and the congregation and were also the backbone of Methodism in Holmfirth.

There is one more matter I ought not to forget in this connection, that is the formation and the usefulness of an "essay class", or as it was sometimes called a "mutual improvement class". A few of the young men of the church met on a Friday evening with the minister as leader. This was for the purpose of acquiring useful knowledge and for instruction in religious knowledge. The class was carried on upon this principle. The minister, Rev W Fern, was the head or president of the class. He was to bring a paper on some specific question once a fortnight and the members in turn would come with a paper the intervening Friday evening. This class continued for a long time. After the Rev W Fern left the circuit, a Mr H Brooks the day schoolmaster took hold and became our leader. Much good came from this essay class. The cause of Methodism greatly profited as a result. The subjects of the papers, both those given by the ministers and those given by the members, were theological and biblical with few exceptions. This line of procedure was adopted with a view of making the members of the class useful in the Sunday school and in the church. That the formation and the carrying on of this class year after year did great and lasting good, this is without question. Nearly every member of this class became either a minister, a local preacher, a certificated school teacher or a Sunday school worker. I leave the reader to judge the value of this class.

I will now proceed to justify my above statement respecting the usefulness of this essay class. Eight of these young men became ministers of the gospel: Mathew Butterworth Moorhouse became a clergyman in the Anglican church, Richard Butterworth, Amos Dyson, John Sykes, Joshua Haigh, John Jagger and Harry Haigh all became ministers in the Methodist church. The last name mentioned became a minister in India for 25 years. After Mr Haigh returned from India he became a mission secretary, after that President of the Methodist Conference. Several other members of the above-mentioned class became local preachers and these did useful service in their day and to their generation. The present writer being one of

them. Others became certificated school teachers and nearly all became connected with the Sunday schools.

When I think of the zeal, the enthusiasm, the exuberant joy and the useful and happy times of these young men, I'm induced to be glad that I shared their work and a joy, and also that I'm still alive and well to preach the gospel of salvation to sinful and cynical men (1919.)

The Musicians of the District

Holmfirth and its neighbourhood was, and still is, remarkable for the cultivation of the taste for music, not only vocal but instrumental. A goodly number of men and women bred and brought up in the district have distinguished themselves locally. Some of them have gained fame and on an extended scale in towns and cities of the land. I shall however confine myself to those I knew in my own time.

Whilst there were those who were lovers of music in one or other of its forms in the villages around Holmfirth as a centre, there were certain of the villages where music was cultivated and practised on a larger scale. It used to be said of the village of Hepworth that nearly every young man in the village could either play or sing. But music has its dangers as well as its joys. The study and especially the practice of music was not always to the advantage of the persons themselves, or their families. In some instances it proved their curse and was the cause of suffering and poverty. My reference is to cases where it led to drink and laziness, and these were followed by ruin. I must now mention a few of those who were prominent musicians that I knew in the early part of my life.

I will begin with instrumentalists. Organists were few in the district, for there were not many organs in those days. I remember a young Albert Lister Peace when he was a very little boy was organist at Holmfirth Parish Church and who in after years became organist at St Georges Hall, Liverpool. (*Albert Lister peace was born at Lockwood, Huddersfield in 1844, son of a wool-stapler and singing teacher. He was described as "precocious" and became organist at Holmfirth church at the age of 9. He later obtained a post as organist at Trinity Congregational church in Glasgow. He was awarded a degree, then a doctorate by the university of Oxford. In 1897 he became organist at St. George's Hall Liverpool. He died in Liverpool in 1912. Ed.*) One or two more rose to respectable positions in the musical professions.

I knew a good many instrumentalists both in my boyhood and in after years. I will begin with violinists and violoncellos. First and foremost comes Jack Bailey of Cliff. He was an excellent and most beautiful artist, but he was spoiled by his love of drink and his love of drinking company. There was Henry Pogson and his brother John, also of Cliff, Charles Buckley of Hepworth, William Roberts of Choppards, Charles Etchels and Job Hampshire of Totties and the brothers Beever of Hepworth, and Joshua Hinchliffe of Upperthong. These were all men that I knew very well, but there were others of lesser note, but to use the oft repeated phrase "time would fail me to tell all."

Then we had the violin cellists. There was Jonathan Beever of Hepworth, brother to the violinist mentioned above, G. Charlesworth and William Hobson of Hinchliffe Mill, George Boothroyd of Honley, James Gaunt of Shepley, and of course John

Mosley who seemed to be at home either with his double bass, the single bass or the fiddle. As has already been observed there were others of the lesser note that occasionally could handle the base or the violin cello and who might be named as David Woodhead of Netherthong and Will Shaw of Totties. My own brother made some little progress on the violin cello, but he took more to the organ and afterwards became an organist.

We had not many men who played the flute. In my early days there was a man at Netherthong who distinguished himself on this instrument but he joined an opera company and left the district. He travelled with this company and spent the rest of his life as a flautist. But when he could no longer follow his calling he came home to die. He died in the Deanhouse workhouse. His name was William Littlewood. Two more names I will mention as flautists, Elizabeth Roebuck of Hepworth and George Coldwell of the family of Coldwells of Burnlee. There are not many other instrumentalists of any kind, save the brass bands to which reference has been made in a previous connection. I think the brass bands ought to have something said about them, for their function and use was more of a public nature. Also on certain special occasions their services were needed and well they answered to what was required.

The Vocalists.

Before I enter upon a reference to the vocalists, I might mention two more names of players on the violin cello that were eminent in the profession. I just knew the personality of one of them. I refer to David Woodhead of Netherthong. He was a splendid performer on his instrument. He died when I was a boy. The other name was William Sandford of Pog Ing. He too was an eminent musician, but he was dead before I knew him.

Of all the vocalists I knew a good many. Of the sopranos, there were not many that distinguished themselves. Miss Lavinia Charlesworth who afterwards became Mrs Ben Hirst, was one of the best in the district. She often performed before the public both in oratorios and also in concerts. She was a very good and effective singer and her services were greatly in request. There was also miss M J Hinchliffe, the daughter of Mr Jonathan English of Halstead, New Mill. She afterwards became Mrs Harry Roebuck of Moldgreen, who was a cabinetmaker and furniture dealer. She was also a very fine artist and often appeared upon the public platform. There were many others of lesser note, too many to make a speciality of them.

Of contraltos there were not many. There was one lady that was very good and a useful singer. Miss Martha Pogson of Cliff, who afterwards became Mrs John Coldwell of Burnlee. This lady was the principal contralto at the parish church for a long time. There were a few very good alto singers as men were called that took that part. Among them I may make mention of Charles Kaye, son of Tom Kaye the old huntsman sporting fame. Mr Charles Kaye left Holmfirth and then went to Leeds parish church as a principal alto and remained there for a good number of years. When he was getting an old man he came to live at Brockholes and became a farmer where he ended his days, an old man.

John (Jack) Charlesworth, the father of the above mentioned Mrs Hirst, was a very good alto singer and also used to do his part in the public house and "in his cups."

He had a very good and tuneful voice. Another good alto singer was John Littlewood of Deanhouse, whose daughter Cartwright married. There were not many more of note. I might mention Mr John Senior, who has died very recently in his 84th year. He was very good alto singer in the choir, but not as a soloist. He had a natural voice and in the upper part of the register his voice changed to falsetto. There was also George Hirst who left Holmfirth in his early manhood and went to live at Rochdale where he ended his days. Mr Hirst sang from behind and through his nose, which was a misfortune as a soloist. Hirst formed a choral Society in Rochdale and was its conductor.

I ought also to have mentioned the name of Mr William Brown as an alto. Mr Brown was a very good principal. He often used to take solos at meetings and sometimes at concerts. I am now reminded of another name that I should not forget to mention, for she rendered very good service in her time. I refer to Mrs Elizabeth Bower of Wooldale who afterwards became Mrs John Hirst. Perhaps I had better not omit to mention Miss Crabtree, who was principal soprano at the Holmfirth Wesleyan Chapel for a few years. Miss Crabtree died very young. She was a fine singer in her day. But I must also mention Miss Elizabeth Renshaw as fine contralto and her father Will Renshaw as a very good tenor singer.

I must now take notice of the tenors that I knew, who were eminent as local singers. And the first I may mention in this connection is Mr Hugh Ramsden of Cliff. Mr Ramsden had a splendid voice, either as a choral singer or as a soloist. He was a most tasteful and accomplished artist. But his voice failed him in middle life and he had to give up public work as an artist.

Next I may mention Mr Flint(?) Burrell. This gentleman had about the biggest voice that I ever heard and it was round and sweet from top to bottom. Mr Burrell was not a good renderer of music. He was a very poor timekeeper and he often got across with the band, especially in the solos of the Messiah like "Comfort Ye," and "Every Valley." Runs in the latter number were rather too difficult for him. In congregational singing he could be heard through all and above all. He had a grand voice.

There were other of lesser note, Daniel Roebuck, William Cartwright of Underhill, John Beaumont on Hepworth, George Coldwell of Hinchliffe Mill, Harry Hardy and others that I might have mentioned.

I will now come to the basses that I have known. And first I will mention Abel Roebuck of Bootham, with a voice like thunder and as tuneful as the lark. Benjamin Wood of Cliff was a very good musician, but his voice was rough. I also forgot to name his son, Joseph, as an organist. He was a very good musician. He left his native village to take up music as a profession in Barnsley. He spent his life there. Mr Joseph Moore was a very fine bass, he had one of the deepest and strongest voices I ever heard. His voice made you think of the great deep. It was so profound. David Clegg had good voice also, but he was somewhat deaf and his sang out of tune. Mention also ought to be made in this connection of Mr George Greenwood of Thongsbridge and Thomas Kaye, brother of Charles, already named. There might be many more that deserve mention, but they escape my memory at this time.

Musicians are a peculiar order of men in some few respects. They appear to be highly strung, soon offended with one another, jealous of each others honour and very sparing of their praise of their fellows and capable of deep dislike and even

hatred of one another. These bad feelings do not easily subside. They last through life. If one of them is asked privately his opinion of another, he, as often as not, will first have recourse to the faults of that person in question. Some of the men I knew would not sing or play if so and so was playing, and so on. But there was one quality among musicians and vocalists, they were always found to be generous to young musicians and learners generally.

There was an old musician at Cliff in my time who was very fond of teaching and instructing young people in the art of singing. His name was Matthew Bailey better known as "Oud Maff". He was a man possessed of a good knowledge of music and he was the means of training a large number of youth of the district in the art, mystery and noble science of music. He would gather a number of the young around him, male and female, and teach them to sing. He would find room in his house for his pupils. But the pupils must find the candles for their light to enable them to see. This old man bestowed his services upon, and taught them for nothing. Very many owed to this old man their thanks for their knowledge of music. Hugh Ramsden, already referred to above, owed his knowledge of music to the old man and he married his daughter. John Ramsden, the brother of the above, was also one of the old man's pupils. John Ramsden early in life joined the Holmfirth Parish Church choir and remained a member for 50 years, in point of fact until he was an old man. So far as music was concerned Matthew Bailey also served his generation.

I do not need to say much about the choirs of the district, as there were few of any eminence until organs became general, then choirs began to improve and to get into proper shape. There was always in my time fairly good choir at the Parish Church as well as an organ.

The Holmfirth Choral Society

I must now say something about the Choral Society which I knew so well, as I was a member of it. The Holmfirth Choral Society of which I was a member, (there had been a society before my time of which I know nothing), was formed about the middle of the 50s, say 1856 or 1857. It was formed on a good basis. It had a large membership, it had a president and a strong committee. It was non-sectarian and clear from any party. C.S.Floyd (*Cookson Stephenson Floyd at one time owner of Holme Bottom Mill, New Mill. Ed.*) and Mr. J.Brook the secretary. (*Mr. James Brook of Bridge Mill? There are so many Brooks involved in the life of Holmfirth at this time, mid 19th century, that it is not always easy to distinguish between them. Ed.*) Joe Perkin of Cliff was the conductor. (*Joe Perkin is best remembered now for his association with the Holmfirth Anthem, "Pratty Flowers." He is sometimes called its composer, but this is unlikely, as the song is found in other parts of the country and the words of the song seem to belong more to the 18th century than to 19th. century Victorian Yorkshire. Ed.*)

This choral society had its meetings for time at the Victoria hotel and held its concerts at the Town Hall. Subsequently its meetings were held at one of the lower rooms of the the Town Hall. Disaffection of various kinds, like a disease, got amongst the members and wrought havoc. Eventually it came to an end. I need not go into that! Concerning the Choral Society, I and two of my cousins, are about the only persons living today(1919), that were members of that society.

I might also mention here a matter which is not perhaps of much importance, but it was thought something of at the time and it is within the circle of music. About the time of which I am writing there was a campanology band, in other words a band of handbell ringers at Hey Gap, conducted by Henry Pogson of Cliff. This band under the able instruction of Mr Pogson, obtained a great efficiency. Their services at meetings were much in request and for time did good service. They won the first prize at Belle Vue , Manchester, at one time. But through a variety of causes this fine band declined and died a natural death.

Brass Bands.

Before I conclude my remarks upon the subject of music and musicians I ought to notice the brass bands that were in existence in my time in the district.

The Old Band which I have mentioned before was held in considerable estimation. Firstly because it was an old established institution and also because it contained some good musicians and some respected men. John Beaumont was its leader who was himself a good musician. Many of the members I knew, especially James Bailey, George Cartwright, William Coldwell and Ben Sykes. This band did excellent work for a long number of years. It was regarded essentially as a Conservative band. Its services were always in request when the Tory candidates selection time came to address the electors. But it ultimately gained notoriety for it not being total abstemious!

The Temperance band began its existence when I was a very little boy. It began well and had a long career. It was looked on as a rival to the Old Band and there was a dislike and then a hatred besides rivalry between the two as long as they existed. The Temperance band remained compact and held together much better than its rival, for one reason it consisted of younger men and it kept well to its principles. It also received more patronage and had more engagements. It qualified itself for contesting, but I am not aware that it did much in prize winning. It was generally regarded as a very good band.

About this time which I write there were quite a number of brass bands found in the district around Holmfirth. There had been a band in existence in the village of Holme from my earliest recollections. This was a very good band and won a great many prizes in its time. There were certain numerous families in the village sufficiently musically inclined, as to largely maintain it with young men. Like most other institutions it too declined and went under for lack of men and support. A band like this ought not to have been allowed to go down.

Other brass bands were formed at Wooldale Town End, at Netherthong, Hinchliffe Mill, Hepworth, Crow Edge and at Hade Edge. Most of these disappeared long ago, although Hinchliffe Mill and the Band at Hade Edge are still in flourishing condition today (1919). All the rest including the Old Band and the Holmfirth Temperance brass band with all its glory have long ago disappeared. Many of them will now be forgotten by the present generation.

Professional Men

Is one class of men I ought not to leave out of my reminiscences, for they were a useful and the necessary order of men. I mean those of the learning professions. The solicitors. Their names were C.S Floyd, Harry Booth and his son Samuel, Martin Kidd and John Iveson. These were the solicitors in my time and an honourable and distinguished group of men of their class, or perhaps I ought to say of their order.

The other order of learned professionals in the district were the men of the medical profession. The doctors were Dr Beeley, Dr Berry, Dr Edison and the ancient family of Trotter. The Trotters have continued in the medical profession in the district for four generations and they have maintained a good reputation, even to the present representative of the family.

Characters.

There were a few men in my time who may be distinguished as “characters”. Some of these had far more wit than wisdom. They were quaint in their mode of speech and some of them peculiar in their manner. They did not see matters in the ordinary light. It was their whim to be different in mode, manner or in speech. “Nature hath formed strange things in her time”, so says the great William of Avon. (*George has not quite got the quotation right, from the Merchant of Venice. It should read: “Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time”. Salarino. Ed.*) Nature hath evolved strange minds as well. They look at things from the view point of their own and peculiar to their cast of mind. Their minds are struck with the humorous side, if not the fantastic side of objects that become before their mind and vision. Let us take one of these characters, Jimmy Fitton of Cliff. Everybody knew Jimmy Fitton and his five donkeys when he was living. I have very good reason to know him, for his place of residence was the very next to our own home when I was a young lad. For a long while I saw him nearly every day, when we resided at Cliff, which was during the 1850s.

Jimmy and his donkeys were well known. It will be remembered by those living who knew him that the calling that he followed was that of retailing cinders, or coke and in his business if he happened to have only one customer to serve he took with him all his five donkeys. To say that he was odd and queer is to say almost nothing. He seemed to be in possession of a notion to be different to everyone else. He went barefoot. He sometimes wore women's clothing, even to the cap with frills and flowers. In hot weather he sometimes had a shawl on his shoulders and when reminded of the heat of the day he would make answer that that which kept out the cold will keep out the warm. His was a spirit of fantasy. Jimmy Fitton was a one off. Everything about him, clothes, ways, speech, action, house, all may be best described as fantastic.

I have a great number of names in my mind and memory who may be described as oddities and characters in their way, some by their way of action and others by their way of looking at things, and their quaint observations about them. Mr Isaac Sykes for instance would make numerous plays upon a word of more than one meaning. When talking with a friend one day standing by a provision centre he observed: “I am a gross man, but that man is a grosser (grocer!). There were many more names I might mention but obvious reasons it would be a better not to do so. One man I knew was so different in his language that he often put the cart before the horse. At

other times he would make an “Irish Bull” (?), as an instance he once said: “I dream that one night that I was dead and when I wakened at morn I was fast asleep.”

But I would not have anyone who may read my lines think that this kind of person was the general run and character of the people. Far from it. The general character of the people of Holmfirth and the neighbourhood and its district were then as I believe they are at the present time, respectable, thrifty and honest and will compare favourably with most districts throughout the country.

It is now 49 years since I left my native town of Holmfirth and I have mixed pretty freely with the people of other places. I have never found anything that made me ashamed of my native town and birthplace. On the other hand I met with much that make me swell sometimes with pride that I am an old “Holmfirther” , wherever I have lived or gained acquaintance. I have here and there in responsible and respectable positions met men from the “old country.” These are men that have had the spirit of enterprise and courage to seek their fortune away and they have generally been able to give a good account of themselves.

The task I set myself to do, and the purpose of my aim, I have finished, but not entirely to my own satisfaction. In the course of my effort to give my reminiscences of the period covered by my work, that is from the year 1842 to the year 1872, I have met with difficulties and perplexities. Facts and circumstances have sometimes crowded upon my mind. I've had to select and discriminate. I have tried so to write as not to give pain or annoyance to anyone. The work I set for myself to do has given me much pleasure. Now that I've got to the end I am like a man after a long and tedious journey. He finds the joys of home and rest.

Many changes have taken place since I left the town of my nativity. Nearly two generations have passed away and have joined the Great Majority. I like to come to have look at the dear old place. I have lost none of my affection for it. Old associations have charm about them. I like to look upon the old hills. It was said of old that the hills around about Jerusalem were as a fortress against an enemy, but the enemy was within. The Jews were their own greatest enemy. Our little town is surrounded by those majestic hills, Cliff, Ward Bank and the Hill that bears that name. The outlook upon the landscape is very much the same as of old, oh! but when I look on the faces that I meet I feel sometimes like Rip Van Winkle, a stranger in his native town. As I grow older I feel a growing fondness for my native place, the scene of my childhood and my youth. Close on 50 years of passed since I left. Much has been said, done and suffered in those years. All those grand men and all those little men who formed the adult population in my youth have passed away to that bourn from whence no traveller returns. They have been carried downward by the stream of time. Many have gone and and left none to continue their name, but our fathers sepulchres are here.

The poet Cowper in “The Task” said

“England with all they faults
I love thee still.”

My native town, I love thee still.

Dated June 17th, 1919. G. Sykes

APPENDIX A

FROM THE HOLMFIRTH EXPRESS JANUARY 6TH 1923

THE LATE MR. GEO. SYKES

HOLMFIRTH NATIVE'S NOTED CAREER

As widely-known a gentleman as there is in the whole district passed away at Longwood yesterday week, Mr George Sykes breathing his last at a very advanced age. Although Mr Sykes had resided at Longwood for some time he was closely associated with various activities in the Holme Valley. It is well known, he himself often expressed himself proud of the fact, that he was a native of all Holmfirth, and, while residing in the Colne Valley latterly, kept up his intimacy with the various movements in this area in which he was interested. Having regard to the fact that he had reached such an advanced age, -he was in his 85th year, -Mr Sykes up to quite recently was a most active man. Few men over 80 are more alert either intellectually or physically than was the deceased gentlemen, and, esteemed as he was by all classes, it was with the greatest regret that many people in this district became aware during the latter part of last week that there was little hope of his again appearing in the haunts of which he had for so many years been so popular figure.

Mr. Sykes can look at Holmfirth of the middle of the last century with the eye of an artist. He could picture scenes of 1850 in the Holme Valley as no other man now living could. He remembered vividly the Holmfirth Flood of 1852, and often described the scenes to interested listeners. Indeed, so recently as last February we published from the pen of Mr Sykes, who was a valued occasional contributor to the "Express", some of his reminiscences of that awful catastrophe, from which we quote the following to serve the double purpose of giving a glimpse of Mr Syke's early life as well as the graphic pen he was able to wield:

"I was at the age mentioned above (13,) helping my father to warp at the firm he was engaged for, B. Butterworth & Sons, of Upper Bridge. When the weavers came for their warps they would talk about the flood we were likely to have before many days were over. I well remember the day and the night before it occurred. We had had a very wet day, the water in the dike was rising higher hour after hour. My father and I had been working. About 7 o'clock we made for home, we lived at Cliff at the time. We had to cross over Victoria Bridge. As we got to the bridge I looked over the

parapet, the arch seemed to be full. I was frightened, and I suddenly drew back my head and went home.”

“That same night” - continued Mr Sykes in his narrative to the “Express” the moon was at the full. About 9 o'clock it began to be fine, and it proved a brilliant night, unusually clear, the rain had ceased, but there was a feeling of dread of something about to happen. We returned to bed in a kind of fear. I and my little brother slept the sleep of the innocent. My three elder brothers retired at their leisure. Meanwhile, all in the house were asleep. About 1 o'clock some man with a great voice called out through the keyhole the front door, “Reservoir is burst”. Who this person was we could never find out. Mr Sykes was able to describe the scenes, and further wrote: “The impression left upon my young mind was strong and deep, and although 70 years have rolled away, the impression is still in my mind and memory. A bit of calm reflection on my part and the whole scene comes up as fresh as if it had only occurred a few years ago. If I could paint like Hogarth or Reynolds, like Rubens or Raphael, I could draw portraits of a number of those who were drowned. Some of them were my playmates.”

As will be gathered from the above, Mr Sykes began to work in the mill at the early age of nine. His early education was consequently of a limited character, but Mr Sykes make the most of the scanty opportunities for acquiring knowledge. He became diligent student at the old Mechanic's Institute at Holmfirth, and there gained valuable knowledge. He was particularly fond of history and poetry, and was often in request to give “An Evening with Burns.”

Mr Sykes death is a severe loss to Wesleyan Methodism. So long ago as July 1858 Mr Sykes became a member of the Wesleyan church at Holmfirth, laboured in the Sunday school as a teacher, and served the church in various ways. Three years later, Mr Sykes became a local preacher, and on November 5 last year he had completed 60 years of faithful service in that capacity. Comparatively recently, Mr Sykes conducted services at the Holmfirth and Wooldale Wesleyan churches, and in the course of his discourses made use of words which appeared to bear the belief, - almost prophetic- that he was paying his farewell visit. For about 10 years Mr Sykes was in the Holmfirth circuit, but for business reasons he moved into the Colne Valley, where he has spent about 50 years of his life, broken only by short period of two years, when he resided at Sowerby Bridge. He has been connected with the churches at Slaithwaite, Linthwaite and Milnsbridge, all of which he has served in practically every office open to laymen. He was a very able preacher, and his services was sought after by churches other than his own. He was a member of the Committee of the Huddersfield Mission and class leader at Milnsbridge. He had a very wide knowledge of men and affairs, and his mind was wonderfully alert almost to the last. In politics Mr Sykes was an ardent Liberal, and he had rendered excellent services to the party in the Colne Valley, having been a vice president of the Colne Valley Division Liberal Association. He leaves three sons and two daughters to mourn their loss. His wife died 3 1/2 years ago.

Abundant testimony to the esteem in which the late Mr Sykes was held was borne by the large number of people who attended the funeral at Linthwaite Wesleyan Chapel last Monday. The Rev George W. Appleby of the Huddersfield Mission, Milnsbridge, officiated at the house, and was joined in the chapel at Linthwaite by the Rev. Colin A. Roberts, (superintendent of the Mission), and the Rev. Percy L. Townend. Mr. A.J. Haynes presided at the organ. The superintendent and Mr.

Appleby officiated at the graveside, where the hymn "Rock of Ages", a favourite with the late Mr. Sykes, was sung.

The private mourners present were Mr and Mrs J T Sykes, (son and daughter in law,) Miss Sykes (daughter), Mr Norman Sykes, (son), Mrs Steers (daughter,) Mr and Mrs Arnold Sykes, (son and daughter-in-law,), Messrs Norman Sykes and Bernard Sykes (grandsons), Mrs Ben Sykes, M. and Mrs Harry Haigh, Mr. and Mrs Hoyle, Mrs Matthewman, Mrs Noble, Messrs Smith Sykes, Albert Sykes, F.L. Moorhouse, H.E. Moorhouse, Bernard C. Collins, J. Wilfred Collins (Manchester), T.A. Collins,



and George T. Coldwell.

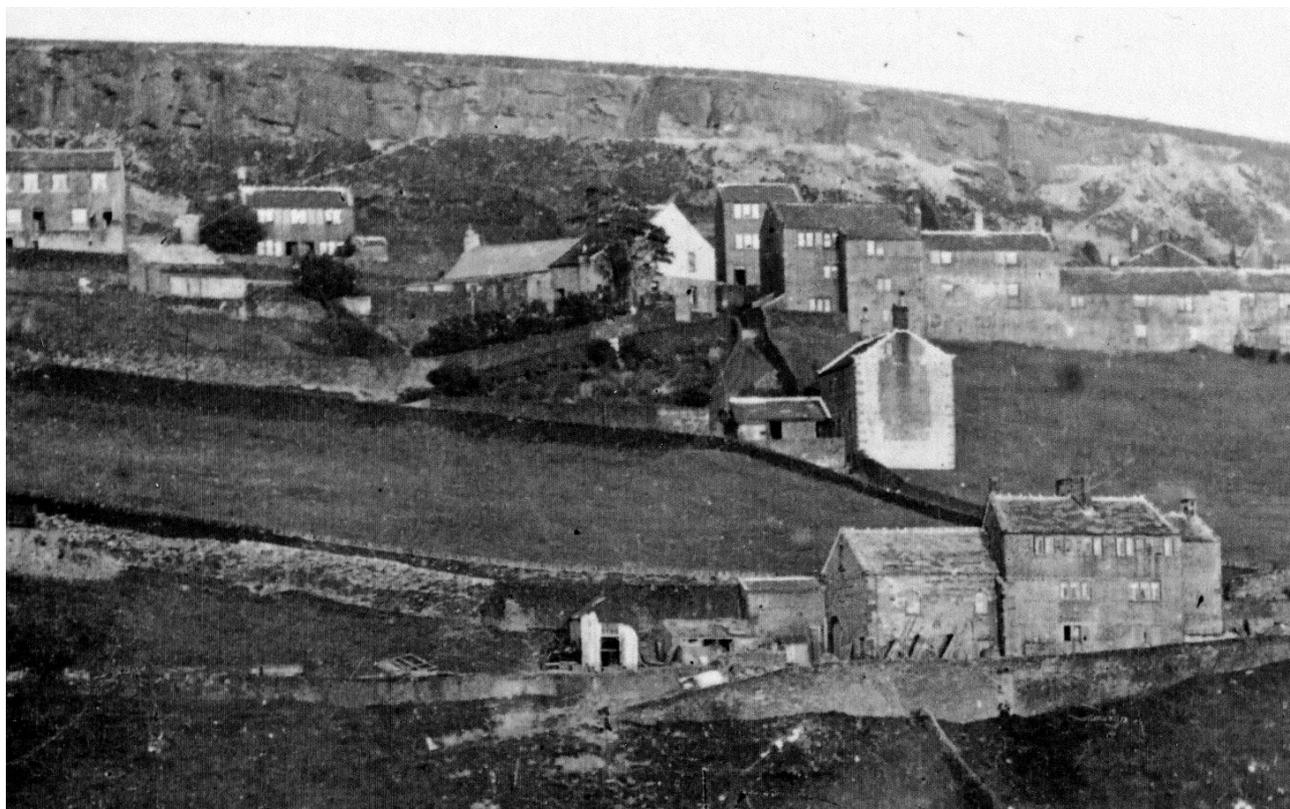
George's grave in Linthwaite Methodist church graveyard. It has fallen over and is looking rather neglected. One of his daughters is also buried here, as well as his wife Louisa. At the foot of the stone is recorded the death of his grand-daughter Florence Emily who died in 1920 at the age of 12. She is buried at Golcar Baptist chapel.

APPENDIX B

Holmfirth on the OS map of 1854 showing most of the places associated with George's early years in the town.



APPENDIX C



Cliff Bottom in 1904 where George lived as a child and young man.



Lindley Street, Huddersfield. George's last home where he died on December 29th, 1922.