



## NEWS MAGAZINE



Cover picture: Holcombe Old Church - drawing by Zena MIDDLETON

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**RAMSBOTTOM HERITAGE SOCIETY**

**THE HERITAGE CENTRE  
CARR STREET, RAMSBOTTOM**

**Telephone:** Ramsbottom 821603

WE AT THE ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND IN RAMSBOTTOM HAVE BEEN INVOLVED WITH THE RAMSBOTTOM HERITAGE SOCIETY FOR SOME TIME NOW, PRINCIPALLY IN ALLOWING THE USE OF ONE OF OUR BRIDGE STREET WINDOWS FOR DISPLAY PURPOSES.

HAPPILY, OUR NEED FOR EXTRA SPACE COINCIDED WITH THE SOCIETY'S ACQUISITION OF PREMISES IN CARR STREET WHICH HAVE BECOME THE RAMSBOTTOM HERITAGE CENTRE.

WE WISH THE SOCIETY CONTINUED SUCCESS AND ARE HAPPY TO CONTINUE OUR SUPPORT BY FUNDING THE FIRST SPONSORED EDITION OF THE SOCIETY'S NEWS MAGAZINE.

BEST WISHES FROM EVERYONE AT:-



**THE ROYAL BANK OF  
SCOTLAND PLC  
27 BRIDGE STREET, RAMSBOTTOM**

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Editor: Barbara Park

Welcome to the second issue of the Ramsbottom Heritage Society News Magazine. The Magazine will be produced twice yearly in June and December and our aim is to provide a combination of news about the Society and its activities, and articles about Ramsbottom and its heritage, past and present. We also hope to provide a link between people who are doing research into local history and those who may be able to help them in some way - perhaps with local or specialist knowledge, photographs or documents.

Readers will not be surprised that this particular issue is dominated (if not completely taken over!) by news of the Heritage Centre, which opened its doors to the public over the Spring Bank Holiday and had its official opening by the Mayor of Bury on the 17th June. The Centre is the culmination of much hard work on the part of many people and a

demonstration by Bury Council of their confidence in the Society's ability to staff it, raise sufficient funds to cover its running costs, to mount displays which will attract and interest the people of Ramsbottom and the many people who now visit the town, and also to provide

a safe home for the many documents, photographs and artefacts *which* have been entrusted to our care.

Our first summer season has been a great success. The display - "Ramsbottom - the last 200 years" has been highly praised by many visitors and we all hope that the Centre will go from strength to strength, learning as we go, and that next year will be even better. Those readers who are already members of the Society will be well aware of the appeals for help of all kinds. If you are not a member, but would like to help, the appeals are reiterated throughout this magazine.

better still, to carry on until you have sufficient material for a booklet. It is also essential that the many changes taking place in the town now are recorded either for publication or to be placed in the archive. These can be recorded on tape or in writing or by photography

project on the Carr area which may be of interest to those who either feel that they do not have the time to tackle a project on their own, or just feel happier working as part of a team.

By doing these things we can help to preserve our history and heritage for the benefit of future generations - whether it be our descendants wishing to know more about life in the time of their forebears or researchers wishing to study various aspects of Ramsbottom's past. It is often difficult to find the time and energy to undertake these tasks, but the satisfaction gained makes the effort well worthwhile - whether it be a week-end session at the Centre, a piece of research completed, an event recorded, an idea for fund raising or helping out with a display. It should also be pointed out that these activities can be most enjoyable - new friends are made, skills and knowledge are exchanged along the way. So, in, either come along to one of the monthly meetings or pop in to see us at the Centre - you will be very welcome.

At this point I would like to thank all those people who have contributed articles - without their help there would be no magazine. Also Zena Middleton and John Taylor for the drawings, and Irene and Andrew Todd whose help and expertise are invaluable to a first

time Editor who is "learning on the job"  
Finally a special word of thanks to our very first sponsor, the Royal Bank of Scotland, who have paid for the printing of this issue and to Mr S W Heaton, Manager of the Ramsbottom Branch, for his help in arranging the sponsorship. Their continuing support is much appreciated by the Society.

I do hope you enjoy reading this Magazine. I realise it is impossible to "please all of the people all of the time" but hope that most people will find something to interest or amuse them. Of course, if you find that your own particular interest has not been included, then please sharpen your pencil or plug in your computer and send in your contribution to the June issue straightaway! Contributions are not just welcome - they are essential! Ideas for improving the magazine are also welcome - so please put on your thinking caps!

Barbara Park EDITOR

## HERITAGE CENTRE UPDATE

The official opening ceremony of Ramsbottom Heritage Centre in June 1990 was a remarkable event in the short life of Ramsbottom Heritage Society, inaugurated only three years previously.

In the first place, credit must go to the Committee for their perseverance and imagination, for how could they know whether members would give up their precious week-ends to keep the Centre open, and could they really find the talent to collect and display enough interesting materials to please the public? And how could they raise the WIND?

our case in Committee and with Councillors at Bury, so that they took the courageous decision to allow our use of the redundant Library building in Carr Street. Generous help has come from Bury Council in refurbishing, decorating and the "start up" grant was invaluable. Our thanks to them must be recorded here.

Thirdly the work, undertaken by "the few" who cleaned up after the workmen so that we could open on time, was heroic, as was that of the Display Team.

Looking back after four months - how goes it with us?

Using the grant, we have equipped the office with workbench, filing cabinet, drawers, typewriter, telephone message recorder, and correct storage bays and boxes for our archives. We have bought curtains, kitchen and cleaning equipment, and are now proceeding to copy photographs and documents for our future displays.

Opening each week-end and Bank Holiday, we have played our part in several events connected with the East Lancashire Railway, such as the visit of the DICKENSIAN FELLOWSHIP and THE TEDDY BEARS PICNIC.

Members have come forward and spent happy sessions at the Centre covering one or two hour periods. So how can I volunteer, you will be asking

There is a ROTA SHEET available at the Centre covering several weeks, and we invite you, urge you (even twist your arm!) to come along and put your name in one of the blank spaces. The Centre is warm and comfortable and you will meet many friendly people. Tasks include serving on the stall, serving tea and coffee, welcoming visitors and inviting them to sign the visitors' book, the enrolment of new members, accepting donations of items for the Archive. Best of all, you will receive a non-stop stream of information about Ramsbottom and its past - shorthand would be a definite PLUS. If you were born and bred

your memories and local knowledge with visitors and helpers alike. If you are new to the area, there is no pleasanter way of learning about the town and its history.

Fundraising needs to be organised to cover the running costs, such as insurance, electricity, gas, telephone, water, cleaning and expenses incidental to the displays themselves. We cannot charge for entry, so we are heavily dependent upon membership fees and donations the the Centre. The sales counter needs developing, perhaps by members making items which can be sold on those days when there is a market in Bridge Street. This year we raised £ 100 selling plants and flowers donated by Dorothy Moss, Barbara Palmer, Norene French

We appeal to people of all ages and talents

people with ideas (the first prerequisite)

people with an artistic bent to make up displays  
hunter/gatherers to locate and collect items promised

people to promote the Centre - press, publicity, etc

woodworkers and modellers

people with craft skills to produce saleable goods, preferably items which are  
exclusive to Ramsbottom, rather than things which are available everywhere else

people with FUND RAISING IDEAS and TIME

people to produce footpath, trail guides, or even lead walks, make maps, etc

We believe that we are running a tight ship with a valuable cargo in full sail and on course.

Why not join the crew? Welcome aboard.

Barbara Palmer

### LIKE TO HELP THE CENTRE IN A "FRIENDLY" WAY?

In exchange for a subscription of £5.00 per year, you can become a "patron" or "friend" of the Centre. You will receive the Magazine twice yearly and have the satisfaction of knowing that you are helping in a very practical way to keep the Centre going.

If you are interested in supporting the Centre in this way your financial and moral support will be most welcome. Please contact Jack Palmer at the Heritage Centre

(Ramsbottom 821603).

## HERITAGE CENTRE HIGHLIGHTS

Saturday 26th May 1990 - the great day dawns fair - can hardly believe we are to be so lucky. The display team have had only two clear days since the workmen left to set up the display "RAMSBOTTOM THROUGH NINE REIGNS - THE PAST 200 YEARS", in fact the last two panels are put in place at 11.30 a.m. and the Centre is due to open at noon.

Our first visitors are our local Councillors who have done so much to encourage the setting up of the Heritage Centre. They sign our beautiful Visitors Book, hand bound in royal blue

leather and blocked in gold with exclusive end papers - generously donated by Mr Cyril

Formby - to whom go our grateful thanks. A trickle of visitors follows them, local newspaper photographers, residents of Ramsbottom, representatives from Bury Council (with whom the Society has co-operated in opening the Centre). Then the trickle becomes a flood and over the three day Bank Holiday we welcome over 500 people.

On Wednesday 13th June members of the Dickensian Fellowship came to Ramsbottom and naturally visited the Heritage Centre.

On Thursday 14th June the Mayor of Bury, Councillor Monty Adler, accompanied by the

Mayoress, performed the Official Opening ceremony by unveiling a plaque. The Mayor

local authority departments also attended the ceremony, together with the Society Committee and all those members who helped get the Centre opened - in fact around 70 guests crowded in. Norene and Hilda French and Hilda Barrett, to whom we are eternally grateful, provided much appreciated refreshments.

The local press covered the event and flashbulbs, video recorders and cine cameras added to the air of excitement (not to mention the heat of the room!). It is hoped that some of the film will be shown at one of our meetings, and of course a tape recording of the event has already gone into the archive. On a sad note one of our special guests, Mr Jim Welding, aged 94, who lived in the last cottage in Nuttall, is alas no longer with us. He was well known to many people and is sadly missed.

Three days later, 17th June, the Mayor of Tulle, our French twin town, paid a visit. He was accompanied by a party of French people and all enjoyed a cup of English tea. Lillian Cullen, who, dressed in 18th Century costume, sat spinning as part of the *Early days in Ramsbottom* tableau, speaks fluent French and delighted the Mayor by conversing with him in his native language.

In July, members of the Worsley Rotary Club came to the Centre seeking clues in their motor rally. It was a pleasure to greet them and also many other visitors from all parts of the country, and indeed the world.

Over the late summer Bank Holiday we welcomed well over 300 visitors. The weekend coincided with the East Lancashire Railway's Teddy Bears' Picnic in Nuttall Park, so we held our own mini-picnic with more than 60 bears on display. Each child bringing their teddy received a small gift, and was invited to guess the number of Teddy Bears at our picnic. The winners of the two inflatable teddies were Karl Howarth of Bury and Cheryl Owen of Ramsbottom.

At the end of October the Centre closed until 24th November, to give our helpers a break, and allow the Display Team to prepare a new exhibition with a Christmas theme.

The past six months have been a most exciting time for the Society. New signposts have been erected in the town. We have co-operated in a new guide to Ramsbottom, which we hope will give pleasure to many visitors during 1991. A stone horse trough has been donated by Major and Mrs Mucklow (he was the Huntsman to the Holcombe Hunt for many years). This is now planted with flowers and bulbs and makes a most attractive display outside the Centre. The Society has also been given a desk box made from printing blocks used at W Grant's Square Mill, donated by Mr F Scott. Best of all, we have met many people, made new friends and learnt more of the history of our town.

Our grateful thanks to our wonderful team of helpers - without them the Centre could not have been such a great success.

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## ANNUAL PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

Each October the Heritage Society holds a photographic competition which is open to anybody who has taken photographs around Ramsbottom during the year. Three prizes are normally awarded, as well as six Highly Commended Certificates. The photographs should show the flavour of Ramsbottom for the year in question, be it views of the town and surrounding area, special events, new architecture or demolition of existing buildings.

Technical perfection is not necessary, in fact snapshots have been previous winners. The purpose of the competition is to enable a record to be kept of the events in Ramsbottom during the previous 12 months. For this reason a condition of entry is that the photographs are donated to the archive. Over a period of time the archive should grow into a sizeable collection and should record all the major changes taking place in the town.

The competition has been running for four years and the archive already has 400 pictures. They have all been numbered and archived into approximately 20 categories, such as

Holcombe Hill, Railway, Bridge Street, Churches, Special Events, People, etc. Most pictures belong to two or more categories. The purpose of this categorisation is that when a display is required of a particular subject, a list of all likely photographs is immediately available, and nobody needs to search through the complete archive each time.

The largest category at the moment is the Railway section, as the first competition in 1987 coincided with the opening of the East Lancashire Railway on 25th July, and the railway has continued to provide a lot of material each year. There was, for example, the accident at the level crossing in 1988, the opening of the station in 1989 and the new footbridge and platform in 1990. The Special Events section is the second largest, and this often features events connected with the railway, such as the Circus, the Teddy Bears' picnic and the Santa Special. The Carnival and Country Fair appear in the Special Events category as well as in the Nuttall Park category.

There is also a special category for Architecture and many of the shop fronts on Bridge Street appear in the archives. This is important, as shops seem to disappear overnight. For example 1988 has a picture of the Job Centre which wasn't under threat at the time, but

which is now closed. 1988 also has the building of *KwikSave* and the redevelopment of Square Street and surrounding area. Square Street also appears in 1989 and 1990 as the buildings were demolished and a temporary car park built.

The Landscape section has general views of Ramsbottom which are of great interest. A photograph taken in 1987 of Holcombe Hill from Nangreaves, for example, is different from a similar view in 1989, due to the growth of the Nuttall Lane estate in the middle of the picture. Indeed, it would be interesting if somebody could take the same view of Ramsbottom for each year's competition, and then the differences could be compared and possibly a display constructed in 10 or 20 years' time. This is the purpose of the competition, to preserve Ramsbottom in pictures and provide a record year by year. If the competition didn't exist, then in 50 years time the Society would not have immediate access to the events of 1990, and would be as dependent on public appeals as it has been. A heritage society should not be always looking back into the past, but should also be recording present events for our children and grandchildren to enjoy looking at in future years, and for us to share our memories with them and say "was petrol only £2.30 a gallon in 1990?" except that they will be saying "50p a litre!".

John Leyland

#### 1990 WINNERS

This year's competition was judged by Elizabeth Sykes, proprietor of Little Holcombe Books, and the prizewinners were:

FIRST (The Dickensian Trophy) - John Leyland  
SECOND - Norene French

HIGHLY COMMENDED CERTIFICATES were awarded to:

Dorothy Moss (2), Tom Barrett, Norene French, Patricia Greer and John Leyland

Congratulations to the prize winners and thank you to all who submitted photographs. Now is the time to start taking pictures for next year's competition and to continue throughout 1991.

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## ARCHIVES

*The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* defines ARCHIVE as either a place in which historic documents are kept or, the historical documents so preserved themselves. The ARCHIVIST is defined as a person having charge of the archive, being its keeper.

So where do these definitions find the Ramsbottom Heritage Society? I will try to tell all!

We do now have a place where the catalogued archives can be kept and which can be called the ARCHIVE. The Heritage Centre has an office, part of which is the ARCHIVE. Before the Centre was opened the archives spent nearly two years in a filing cabinet in Jack and

Barbara Palmer's back kitchen (and most of the rest of the kitchen too!) and the Archivist spent thoughtful, puzzled but not unhappy hours there. The filing cabinet containing the archives was moved to the ARCHIVE at the Heritage Centre. At this point heartfelt thanks to Bob Howarth without whose filing cabinet key solving genius the archives would have remained lost for all time.

However, the filing cabinet itself will not be used for storage in the new ARCHIVE. With the advice of Kevin Mulley, Archivist in Bury, and Jim Garretts of Bury Museum, we have learned that keeping items in plastic bags, old envelopes, clingfilm, or not covered at all, in flimsy files is archival suicide. Each item is to be refiled in archivally sound containers and stored in archive boxes in a new cupboard purchased for the Heritage Centre Archive. With more than 1,000 archives this is not going to happen overnight, but if we are to preserve them in a reasonable state, it is the only way to proceed. With the help of

volunteers - Marion Beech, Hilda Beswick, Kathleen Denny, Madeleine Patry, Margaret Quayle - the contents of bulging, crumpled files are now looking a lot healthier in the new boxes, and should be a lot easier to find. To be as useful as possible the archives must be easy to locate. Still a long way to go, but encouraging to have made such a good start in such good company.

Up to the opening of the Centre, I have worked from home using our Amstrad 8512 PCW. The items in process of being catalogued, or definitely nowhere near being catalogued, are

in my house still. Many have been processed since May but the wardrobe still bulges!

So this Archivist admitted to the Committee and the Society that it was all a bit out of hand, and asked for help in all areas of the work. As you have read above, many volunteered.

Apart from filing the material, keeping the archive involves other routines which the Archivist performed, and which are now being streamlined as an imperative.

**Release Letters** whereby a donor has to sign that their gift is an absolute one for RHS use, and which were sent out by the Archivist, have been replaced with **Release Forms** which, volunteered to send any Release Letters needed if there is the odd snag in the new system, whenever possible, are filled in and signed at the time the donation is received. The forms

Barbara also helps with computer work, as she has the same machine as the Archivist. Cataloguing. Each item handed to the Archivist has to be catalogued ie described, dated, allocated a position by subject in the Archive, the donor's name listed, and be given a number. This is the vital process - nothing else will happen if this isn't done. It is then recorded by subject in the Record of Archives. The Donors and Loaners are then **listed in name order**. These three jobs have been streamlined and made far less time consuming and boring by using the word processor. Three copies of item records are printed out and tipped into the Card Index. Record of Archive (Joan Murphy is glad to do this) and the third sent to volunteer Kathleen Frost, who has used her computer skills to compile a magnificent Donors and Loaners File, which can be simply amended at any time. Linda Owen will do any typing needed. For instance, handwritten memories are always typed out, and eventually the whole record will need reprocessing. Barbara Palmer is experienced in obtaining good copies of photographs and does most of this work, as well as all her other work for the RHS.

What is crystal clear is that we must make use of word processors/computers. Many societies don't keep an ARCHIVE at all. Many are snowed under and are coming to the same conclusions about the use of the computer as the RHS Archivist. The RHS, if not snowed under, is just waving its hand above the snow. My word processor has to stay in our home as my husband needs it for his business. I am determined to get hold of a satisfactory second-hand one and the committee, who have all been very supportive, will consider the purchase as soon as funds can be found. (If anyone can help in the search, the committee would appreciate it very much). The ARCHIVE office has been well equipped with a fine desk, drawers, cupboard, so I can take uncatalogued items to the Centre and bring them back to my house a few at a time to work on, until the Centre has a computer. So maybe I'll be allowed to live at home a bit longer!

I hope this hasn't been too boring. We all want the ARCHIVE to be a success but I had to explain what is involved in achieving this. *It cannot be done by one person*, so all effort is being made to make it an efficient and usable collection, with the help of volunteers and technology. Otherwise, there is little hope of success, only chaos. Any positive ideas from any reader will be welcomed. Thanks to members, friends, not named here, for their encouragement with ideas, knowledge and humour.

Whilst eventually we hope that our archives can be available for research, I think it must be some time before this becomes possible.

Sometimes now I feel I don't give a big enough hello to new accessions as my heart is acutally sinking! With help from members I hope to be more jolly. So I will not sign off as Archivist because I would like to be part of an Archival Group. Remember there is always room for you. I'll be gaffer!

Brenda Decent (Archivist)

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## RAMSBOTTOM - WHAT'S IN A NAME? (*New theory unearthed?*)

Since coming to live in Ramsbottom 18 years ago, I have heard various ideas about the origin of our town's name: ideas that range from the fanciful to the downright profane! One idea that seems to have found favour in recent years is that Ram sbottom was so named because it was the "Valley of Ramsons, or Wild Garlic". As a botanist, I have always been

sceptical about this. Ramsons is certainly a rare plant in Ramsbottom today. In my 18 years in the area, I have only seen three plants that have not obviously been planted by man, and they were all in the Holcombe Brook area, rather than Ramsbottom itself. I have been told that Ramsons used to be prolific in the grounds of the former Aitken Sanatorium, but I have not seen it there myself and know nothing of its origin or possible introduction at this site.

Similarly, a reasonably thorough search of the old botanical literature that exists for this area has revealed nothing to suggest that the status of Ramsons was ever very different. I have certainly not found any evidence that Ramsons was ever sufficiently abundant here to merit naming the place after it.

I was interested then to find the following paragraph in a book that recently came my way in the course of business. The book is called *Round about Bradford* written by William Cudworth, published in 1876 and, I think, reprinted several times since. On page nine, under the heading "Local Nomenclature", we find:

*Legrams* (a district near Bradford) is a corruption of "ley" or low-lying, and "ram", Norse for strong: and, as applied to land, indicating a stiff clay soil. It is the same as Ramsbottom. The family name of "Ingram", when we think of it in connection with Temple Newsam (an erstwhile stately home near Leeds), has a more aristocratic sound than "Ramsbottom", but it means precisely the same thing. Etymology is a radical science in more senses than one!"

As anyone who has tried to garden in Ramsbottom will surely agree, this is a far more likely, if more prosaic, origin of the name. There is ample evidence of Norse settlers in the area, and the nature of the soil - which would greatly influence their daily lives, livelihood and food - would be a sufficiently important factor to merit giving a name to the area; much more so than the possible abundance or otherwise of an economically not very important plant.

So without making any claim of originality, I would like to suggest that this explanation - valley of stiff clay - is both more down to earth (!!) and more likely than the other ideas I have heard.

Trust a Yorkshireman to dent the more fanciful notions of his Lancashire neighbours!

John Sykes

*[Has John finally dug up the truth about the origins of our town's name? Or do you adhere to one of the older theories? Or do you have an even more earth shattering explanation?*

*Comments are eagerly awaited ]*

## EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF A DEDICATED GARDENER

*April*

For a second year the winter was unusually mild with little snow and no sustained frost. Dire warnings were issued of dreadful attacks of beasties in the garden - slugs - aphids -

and worse.

But in fact the first delight was the explosion in the ladybird population, well ahead of the aphids in our garden. One may think that this boded well in the "green" fight against the pests, but not so. Soon blackfly encrusted our Viburnum and giant juicy grey aphids smothered the lupins. No matter how many ladybirds were encouraged to attend the banquet, the food was never to their liking. They preferred instead to amble about in the

warm soil and bask on the stones in the sunshine. Later, the greenfly appeared on the rose trees in the yard, at least the colour did not clash, but on approach they leaped about in a veritable cloud. Yes, we had rose hopper as well and soon the leaves dropped.

### May

May was a hot dry month, and later record temperatures were reached, 90F in the shade and over 100F in our yard. Meals were taken out of doors under the rose tree not yet denuded. Drought soon threatened after the long hot summer of '89 and the dry winter, but dozens of frogs enjoyed the sun on the pond and the slugs were well controlled for months.

A blissful time passed watching the birds nesting. Wrens built in the garden wall, tits in their boxes, thrushes in the ivy and the songs of the robin, dunnock, blackbird and finches .... but...what noise was that?

....The rooks from Kay Brow rookery (an ancient settlement even if a shifting one, and a noisy gang at the best of times) had transferred themselves to the oak and beech at the foot of the garden and were in dire distress. For days they cried out, at their wits end seemed to best describe their behaviour. For many of their trees by the lodge had been felled - the trees where they had built nests and were breeding as was their custom. A sad time.

### July

Happier days were spent watching the Greater Spotted Woodpecker feed in the dead elm tree, a real treasure house. Perhaps this was the youngster "spotted" two years ago, the first cap and a return visit by several Spotted Flycatchers. These delightful birds are small, brown and nondescript in appearance and will sit on their chosen perch, perhaps a telephone line or a tall garden stoop or a branch in our favourite dead elm, from where they will make a looping flight to catch insects on the wing, returning then to the same perch. Only they can do this.

### September

Butterflies have increased in number in the garden and each year seems to bring something new. Orange Tips and Tortoiseshells and Red Admirals add colour to the Michaelmas Daisies and the *ivy*, but this year we were delighted to find a Comma butterfly feeding alongside their commoner relatives. This joins the fritillary and the blue as "one off" visitors, but we will be watching closely next year.

Maybe the changes have come about as a result of the mild winters, more a bonus than the predicted disaster, or maybe of the hot summers. Even the oak and beech are overladen with nuts and the ground beneath is a crunchy surface. Today, for the first time in our garden I have seen a grey squirrel. Or perhaps all this is happening following the disturbance of the habitats between Nuttall and Summerseat?

## RESEARCH PROJECTS

One of the Society's most important aims is to encourage research into Ramsbottom and its past.

A group of members has recently begun researching the Carr, Tanners, Springwood area, looking at housing, mills and the land. Census returns, directories, maps, photographs, newspapers, and other documents will be used as well as people's personal recollections.

It is hoped eventually our findings will be published either as a booklet or as an article, in the Magazine.

If you are interested in becoming involved in this project, or have any information which may help, please contact us at the Heritage Centre. We would also like to hear from people who are already involved in their own research, or who have ideas

for further group projects.

*Local historian and artist John Taylor is well known for his fascinating book on the datestones of Rossendale "Stories in Stone" and many members will remember the excellent talk and slide show which he gave to the Heritage Society on the same topic. John is now researching a book on the datestones of Ramsbottom and asks us to assist him in his task....*

## A MONUMENTAL TASK *(Discovering the Datestones of Ramsbottom)*

When a building is started, or refurbished, the builder or owner will often incorporate a dated stone. This datestone, sometimes with initials or names, sometimes elaborately decorative, although obvious at the time, becomes a tangible historical feature as the years roll by. An oldish datestone on a cottage, together with an analysis of its architectural style and other knowledge of the building, may be the key to its age and history.

Seemingly a contradiction, datestones are sometimes made of brick, slate, wood, metal, glass or plastic as well as the more usual stone, but they are all termed datestones. They are found on every type of building from mansion house to hen-cote. They come in various shapes and sizes and are not always as expected over the entrance or on the main frontage. An unusual type of datestone quite common in Ramsbottom is found on or just under the stone trough or guttering.

There are many different types of datestone from foundation stones of churches, iron girders in old mills, lamp posts with maker's names and commemorative plaques to drainpipe heads and peals of inscribed bells. All these are included as long as they have

a date.

The older pre-1750 datestones are usually carved in relief, the letters and numbers being solid and projecting with the background carved away. The more modern type of datestones are usually incut or incised like an ordinary gravestone. Some datestones incorporate unusual decorations such as flowers or objects, some of which may have. To sort out the full name or names behind any initials on a datestone involves a lot of book

and newspaper reading and research into census returns, directories and electoral registers, wills and parish registers. Much work on this is still possible. It can be a never-ending task.

In 1972, in preparation for a local history slide show, urged by Rev Roy Carmyllie, a chronological check list was issued. Since then more eyes have been looking and recently

various members of the Heritage Society have been very helpful.

Look in at the Heritage Centre where a photocopy of much of the 50 page book is on display.

\* Is your datestone in?

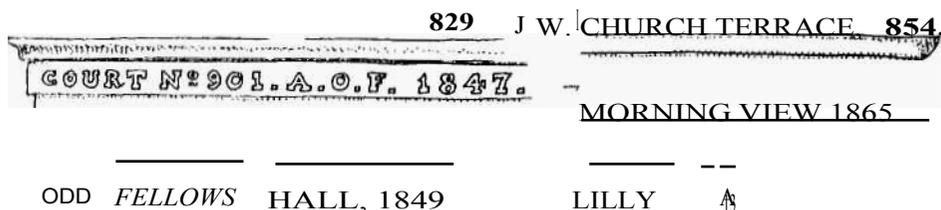
\* Can you add any information.

I will never say I have recorded all the Ramsbottom datestones. There are new ones being carved right now and there will always be a few lurking in cellars, hidden in gardens or just unnoticed. So please keep me posted of any discoveries which you make. You may even get your name in the acknowledgements if you find a datestone which I have not yet recorded!

### \* \* \* COMPETITION \* \* \*

In order to get our eyes focussed and our brains thinking "datestones" Andrew Todd suggests the following competition.

Do you know the location of the following six datestones?



Entries to the Editor, Ramsbottom Heritage Centre, Carr Street, Ramsbottom, to arrive not later than 1st April 1991.

The first correct entry out of the hat will be the winner and will receive a small prize (yet another mystery!)

Solution and prizewinners will be announced in the June issue of RHS News Magazine.

## RAMSBOTTOM RECOLLECTIONS

### CHILDHOOD IN STUBBINS LANE IN THE EARLY 1920s

Across from the house was a low wall behind which was a goyt. This fed the Victoria Mill, where we used to play amongst the skips in the mill yard. George Smith the greengrocer from Stubbins, used to go round with a horse and cart; these he stabled here.

Along from the pub, standing well back from the road was the pebble beach; so called

because the pavement was all cobbled. Then came the twelve row and the six row (guess how many houses these had!)

On the other side of the road from these rows was a coal yard, then Mr. Marsden had a smithy. Next came Hillary's builders. They had a mortar wheel. It used to fascinate us watching the mortar being made. Then came the tram shed and next to that the spare ground (now the Town's Yard) which we called the Lodge. On this was a tank and a cannon from the First World War. We used to play on them on our way home from St Paul's School. (My father told me strolling players used to give shows there),

In Stubbins, old Charlie, the clogger, had a shop next to the Co-op. That was where we took our clogs for new irons; it was great kicking sparks after they had been shod.

Sunday would see my sister and myself going to the Mission in Stubbins Street and in the evening, after an early tea, Mother and Father would take us fora walk. It was always round he used as a shop. Dad always bought us some sweets. I always wanted Rowntree's Clear Gums, 6d (211zp) a quarter - they used to last me all week.

We would then go through the Snig Hole, or sometimes Ravenshore, but Dad always stopped to have a word with an old gentleman by the name of Mr Sparrow: he had a lovely garden. From there we went on to the moor to pick cotton, then back home down Buckden, arriving back tired but happy.

With loving parents, my sister and myself truly had a happy childhood on Stubbins Lane.

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## RAMSBOTTOM'S IRON RAILINGS

To many people it must be a mystery what happened to the iron railings of the town. Along Bolton Road West in particular the evidence of their existence is very clear in the form of burn marks made by a cutting torch on the small walls and door posts of the houses.

In the early days of the Second World War the Ministry of Supply decided to remove iron railings from all over the country to help the War effort. Ramsbottom had a number of streets with lovely ironwork but it had to go. Some still remain and the reason for their fortunate survival is that railings could be kept if the householder could show it would be dangerous to remove them. We should remember that at this time a Blackout was in

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Fred Entwistle

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## THE SHUTTLEWORTH ROAD DISPUTE, 1836.9

The principal roads in our area were, for the greater part of a century, maintained by turnpike trusts. These comprised local industrialists, landowners, farmers and members of the professional classes who wanted to see standards of road maintenance improved. The trusts were created by individual Acts of Parliament, with powers to raise loans, and to service these by charging tolls.

It is well known that the system aroused much hostility. Tolls were payable immediately the trust came into being, even though improvements to the road might take years to materialise. Also, local responsibility for maintenance did not disappear when a road was turnpiked. Since 1555, the inhabitants of each township were required by law to undertake 'statute labour', thereby keeping the township's roads in repair. Inhabitants took it in turns each year to serve, unpaid, as the 'surveyor of highways' - the township officer who supervised his neighbours' surly efforts to fill potholes and perhaps lay a few stones. Statute labour was abolished in 1835 (it had largely disappeared anyway), and a highway rate was payable instead, so that regular road labourers could be employed by the township.

Turnpike trusts were able to demand an appropriate proportion of a township's statutory obligation - thus a farmer might find himself paying tolls to drive his produce to its market, and also having to contribute to the maintenance of the same stretch of road through his annual rates payment. It must have been a commonly expressed sentiment that people were paying twice for the same road.

I have never found any references to attacks in our area on tollhouses or their associated gates. It is clear, however, from a wad of solicitors' correspondence that I was loaned this summer, that feelings against one local turnpike ran very high at the beginning of Victoria's reign.

Mr Geoffrey Wild PHILIPSON, who now lives in Hoghton, is descended from the WILDS of Shuttleworth and Higher Barn, Holcombe, and these documents are in his possession because Richard WILD of Shuttleworth Mill was Shuttleworth surveyor of highways for 1837-8. (Although part of the township of Walmersley-cum-Shuttleworth, the Hamlet/Division of Shuttleworth was independent for highway purposes.)

The Rochdale and Edenfield Trust's road entered Shuttleworth at Dearden Clough, passed through Turn Village, and left the township at Cheesden Bridge, two miles in all. Much of this was a new line of road, supplanting the older route from Shuttleworth to Rochdale along such trackways as Black Lane. During the 40 odd years since 1795 (when its Act had been passed) the trust and the Hamlet of Shuttleworth appear to have co-existed without disagreement, although evidence to the contrary may appear in future. Turnpike trusts, however, invariably became financially insolvent and one way out of difficulty would have been to exploit township responsibility for repair as much as possible. Almost certainly, the Highways Act of 1835 created some legal grey area which one side or other saw as potentially a means of escaping some financial obligation.

The correspondence begins with a letter dated 11th March 1837 from Thomas HOLDEN, of the Bolton solicitors WOODHOUSE and HOLDEN, addressed somewhat generally to

'The Inhabitants of Shuttleworth' (one wonders how it was ever delivered). The hamlet had been indicted at the Quarter Sessions, held at New Bailey Courthouse, Salford, for 'not repairing the Rochdale and Edenfield Turnpike Road'. HOLDEN had retained a London barrister, Lawrence PEEL, who had demonstrated to the court that the turnpike mist's

indictment was defective. HOLDEN, however, urged the inhabitants not to think that they had won:

**I can now only give you the same advice and opinion (which I have all along expressed**

proceed to the repair of the road in question, because **I do** not entertain a shadow of doubt that by the Common Law you are liable to do those repairs-..

Ultimately, concluded the solicitor, Shuttleworth would face a fine as well as being compelled to make the repairs; and

the longer the road remains unrepaired, the more, it is probable, will be the cost of reinstating it.

There was a possibility, however, under the new 1835 Act, that the trust could be forced to contribute to the maintenance expenses. Determined to fight on, the inhabitants in May 1837 issued a summons against James GASKELL, surveyor to the Rochdale and Edenfield Trust, to compel him to repair the disputed road. The magistrates found in their favour, and the Shuttleworth surveyor commissioned one Robert KAY of 'Nuttallane' to produce an estimate of the likely expense of the repairs. For this service, he charged £1-00s-0d, and the delay could have been because KAY's was just one of several bills to be met - Thomas HOLDEN had submitted one in March 1837 for £22-1 is-2d, and more were to follow.

At the September Quarter Sessions, the turnpike trust got their original indictment upheld, and it becomes clear that there was considerable discontent amongst some inhabitants about the whole issue. 19 of them summoned a meeting to be held 'at the House of Lawrance DUCKWORTH innkeeper' at 6.00 pm on Wednesday 27th September. (Another notice in the collection indicates that this was then known as *The Duckworth Arms.*) The purpose of the meeting included

putting a stop to the Wasteful Expending the **Hamlets Money** in Law [*sic*] and for having it shown by the Surveyor Richard WILD how much Money the *sic*/have spent in Law already and Whether it was not determined by the Law Last quarter Sessions that the Hamlet must mend the Road the same as if there had been no Law...  
Richard GRIME Closes

The notice carried the following names:

EH LEACH

John HOWARTH More Side

John RAMSBOTTOM Limit  
Robert HOWARTH Smithy Hill

James HILL Dungggon

James HOLT Bottom Lane

George RAMSBOTTOM Brick House

John HILL Wham

Jeffrey GRIME - -

George LORT Turns th lane [?]

George RAMSBOTTOM Engine  
Richd RAMSBOTTOM Moss

James HOLT Bottom o Lane

Mr[s?] P HALL Nackey [?Knockers]  
George PICKUP Top oth Lee

George HORROCK Brookbottom

Judging from those of the above farm names which are readily identifiable on the First Edition six inch Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1844-8) this list represents a perambulation

around properties in the *upper* part of Shuttleworth! Clearly, these were the farms whose owners would benefit most from the repair of the disputed road, since it passed close to their holdings. Conversely, the rest of the hamlet's ratepayers stood to benefit rather less from the repairs, hence their determination to seek any possible legal pretext for evading the expense.

Although we do not know what transpired at *The Duckworth Arms* that evening, we can be certain that it must have been stormy. Richard WILD may well have faced tough questioning. For almost certainly, WOODHOUSE & HOLDEN's bill of £37 12s 9d for April-September had arrived, addressed to him at Shuttleworth Mill.

One factor in the dispute seems to have been that Wolstenholme, the next highway division along the turnpike, was also involved in litigation with the trust. The 'don't repair' party were apparently waiting for that case to be settled so that a precedent were established. In a letter of 11th December 1837, Thomas HOLDEN was again strongly advising WILD to insti -. to repair work which had clearly still not been started:

**I have this morning seen the copy of a Bill which has been Introduced by Government (similar to the one brought forward last session, but dropped by the King's death) & which meets the present case, leaving it to the Justices to investigate the trustees accounts & to apportion the repairs either upon the Trustees or Inhabts. of townships, as the state of funds permits.**

**Nevertheless**, the Shuttleworth ratepayers remained divided on the issue, convinced that they dared not expend rates until they were unanimous - clearly, the surveyor might find himself personally exposed to legal proceedings for illegal expenditure from the 'don't repair' group!

At Easter 1838, Richard WILD's year of office came to an end; consequently the correspondence from HOLDEN was henceforth directed to the new surveyor. This was a member of the 'repair' party, Henry RAMSBOTTOM, whose name had appeared on the

notice summoning the *Duckworth Arms* meeting.

The only clue we gain about the outcome of the dispute is contained in the last document Quarter Sessions at Salford on 25th February 1839 for payment of the fine of £350. This had been imposed by the court on 8th January 1838, and had evidently still not been paid.

If the fine was eventually paid, the total cost to the inhabitants of Shuttleworth of their disagreement with the trust must have approached £500. It must have caused acrimony within the small community for years.

One wonders how many similar cases of parochial dispute about road repair could be found in the records of Quarter Sessions or turnpike trusts. Parochialism, however, may be too grand a word - for the dispute was not between parishes, not between townships, but really between the two parts of a *division* of a township! I doubt whether the dictionary has an administrative word for it.

Andrew Todd

I am grateful to Mr Geoffrey Wild PHILIPSON for the loan of these documents, and for

## PROGRAMME 1991

16th	January	Messrs Joseph and Kevin Grimes <i>A Pennine Highway</i> illustrated <i>Top Hat and Tales</i>
20th	March	Mr Douglas Barber <i>The Pendle Heritage Centre Story</i> illustrated
17th	April	5th A G M Mr John B Taylor <i>Stories in Stone - Ramsbottom Datestones</i> illustrated <i>Groundwork in the Ashworth and Naden Valleys</i>
19th	June	Mr R K Baines <i>A Decade of Archaeology in Prestwich</i> illustrated
17th	July	Mr Noel Booth <i>A Guided Walk around Holcombe</i>
21st	August	Visit to Croal Irwell Moses Gate Country Park
20th	November	Mr Brian E Holden <i>Restoration of the Rochdale Canal</i>

Meetings of the Society are held in the Civic Hall, Ramsbottom on the third Wednesday of each month at 7.45 pm. New members and visitors are welcome at all meetings.

### SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP

I hope that by the time this appears in print most members will have paid their annual subscription.

Your financial support is more important than ever before. The opening of the Heritage Centre earlier this year means that we now have additional financial responsibilities. So please, if you have not yet renewed your membership, do remember that your support means a lot to the Society.

### SPECIAL OFFER FOR NEW MEMBERS

If you are not yet a member of the Society, just a reminder that our subscription year commences in April. But in order to encourage you to join us NOW, we are offering half price membership to cover the period up to April 1991 for £2.25 (£1.00 concessionary). Subscriptions may be left at the Heritage Centre, Carr Street, or handed in at any of our meetings.

Judith Appleby Vice-Chairman

Contributions, comments and correspondence to contributions may be sent to the Editor at the Heritage Centre, Carr Street, Ramsbottom. Telephone Ramsbottom (0706) 821603.

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