



# RAMSBOTTOM HERITAGE SOCIETY

No 24

Spring/Summer 2003

ISSN 0960 - 1244



NEWS MAGAZINE

RAMSBOTTOM HERITAGE SOCIETY  
*THE HERITAGE CENTRE*

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The objects of the Society shall be:-

- a) To advance education of the public, by creating an awareness of and interest in the study of the history and heritage of Ramsbottom (as defined by the boundaries of the pre-1974 Ramsbottom Urban District Council).
  - b) To locate relevant documents, records and artefacts. To retain, catalogue and/or copy them where possible, and to operate as an information centre.
  - c) To seek to protect the heritage of Ramsbottom.
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## PROGRAMME

### 2003

16th Apr	Mrs Christine Gillies - <i>Working class housing conditions in 1930s</i>
21st May	Annual General Meeting and Members' Night
18th June	Mr D Lewis, illustrated talk - <i>Textile Mill Engines</i>
16th July	Visit to Northern Mill Engine Society Museum, Bolton. Meet at Heritage Centre 6.30pm [transport by car sharing]
20th Aug	Visit to Portland Canal Basin Museum, Ashton-under-Lyne. Meet at Heritage Centre 6.30pm [transport by car sharing]
17th Sept	Mr Andrew TODD - <i>Ramsbottom's early housing</i>
15th Oct	Mr C Mintz - <i>Tales from the Bench</i>
20th Nov	Members' Night - <i>The Crow Lane Project</i>
10th Dec	Mr A Gill, illustrated talk - <i>Lantern Magic</i>

Please note that all indoor meetings are held  
on the third Wednesday of the month in the Civic Hall, Market Place,  
Ramsbottom, at 7.30 for 7.45pm.

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*FRONT COVER* - Crow Lane from the eastern end. Drawn by John B Taylor of Stacksteads for the *Crow Lane Project*

## INTRODUCTION

When in 1990 Andrew TODD, our esteemed President and first Chairman volunteered to take over from Barbara PARK as editor of the Ramsbottom Heritage Society News Magazine, did we realise just how prestigious this twice-yearly publication was becoming for the Society. Each issue is now eagerly awaited, particularly by the many members who live away from Ramsbottom but maintain their roots here.

The magazine has helped to encourage research by members (many of whom have contributed articles to the Magazine) and has carried the message that we are a recording Society and need to document the history of our town.

As a local historian, Andrew was well placed to inspire interest, and editing the News Magazine was an ideal medium for this. However, after giving of his valuable time to this important and much appreciated work for the past eight or nine years and 16 editions, he now feels it is time to take a back seat.

Andrew's work for the Society will continue to be greatly valued. As Chairman, Magazine Editor and President, he has put so much of himself into ensuring the viability of the Society in so many ways and has always been willing to give freely of his knowledge and considered advice. We shall indeed miss him but are greatly encouraged that three of our members have come forward to edit the News Magazine from this edition. *The Editorial Team* will consist of Barbara PARK (Editor from 1990 to 1993) Janet SMITH and Elizabeth DUXBURY. I know they are immensely grateful to Andrew for his help in producing this and future editions of the magazine and that you will join me in wishing them the very best of luck in all their endeavours.

CHEERS ANDREW - THANKS A MILLION FOR ALL YOU HAVE DONE FOR THE SOCIETY.

Welcome to the *Editorial Team*. Please support them with articles and items of local interest for inclusion in future editions of our own *Ramsbottom Heritage Society News Magazine*.

Dorothy Moss, Chairman.

## **RAMSBOTTOM MISCELLANEA**

Very sadly we have heard that three of our members died at the end of 2002. We tender our sincere condolences to their respective families.

**John Garnett HILLIS** (1923-2002) - we were sorry to hear from John's wife, Audrey, of his death in early December. He will be remembered as the blind gentleman who attended our meetings for many years, together with a companion who helped interpret all that was going on. He recalled "the early days" and was able to help our archivist in research and was valued for this. John was for the last two years a resident of the Royal Star and Garter Home in Richmond, Surrey, and Audrey tells us that as he had difficulty in reading she used to read him extracts from our news magazine. John was born in *Bank House*, Bolton Road, Edenfield, and had contributed a piece, *Childhood Memories of Edenfield* (no 14, Spring 1997).

We are also sad to hear of the death in November 2002 of **Betty ULLATHORNE** who was an early and active member of the Society. She returned to Northern Ireland to be near her daughter, but maintained contact (always sending the Society a Christmas card) and she was in touch with many individual members of the Society.

**Joan BROMLEY** was one of our earlier members and she was valued greatly for the help she gave at the Heritage Centre for many years until her recent illness. Her gentle kindness and pleasant smile will be remembered with affection by visitors to the Centre.

**Pebble Beach** - This has been mentioned in a recently taped reminiscence. Where was it? What was it? Does it still exist? It was in the Stubbins Lane area of Ramsbottom. We believe that children used to play there but have never heard any stories of sandcastles or paddling! So if you remember it, please contact the editors. We would love to have your reminiscences - or better still - a photograph.

**Heritage Centre** - We also take this opportunity to remind you that the Heritage Centre will re-open on Easter Saturday 19th April 2003 with a new exhibition entitled "Round and about Ramsbottom." The Centre will be open each Saturday and Sunday 1pm to 4pm. We always welcome more helpers for the Centre, for an hour or an afternoon. If you would like to help, please ring 82 7602 and speak to Linda or call into the Centre any Saturday or Sunday to chat to the volunteers there.

### Editors' Notes on future magazine items.

Hazlehurst School celebrates its Centenary this year. Were you a pupil (or teacher) at Hazlehurst? [See "Around Ramsbottom" page 74 for a 1905 photo of the children and staff.] The first recorded Methodist meeting in Hawkshaw was in 1803 and there is still a strong Methodist presence in the village. The present church building of Emmanuel Church at Holcombe was consecrated 13 th April 1853. All contributions to the magazine on these or any other local topics will be welcome and can be handed to the editors or in at the Heritage Centre.

The Society collects written and oral histories, so write down your memories or speak to anyone at the Heritage Centre.

### THE CROW LANE PROJECT

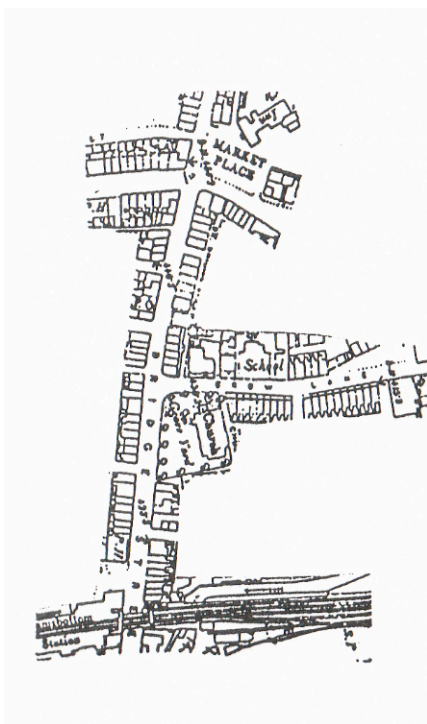
Ramsbottom Heritage Society members and Crow Lane residents are currently researching the history of Crow Lane, Ramsbottom. This fascinating street of Victorian houses is situated off Bridge Street and whilst the School, the Church and the Drill Hall are still there, other buildings such as Crow Trees Farm and the earlier Police Station no longer exist. Three of the houses were once shops.

What is unusual about this project is that the residents will be researching the history of their own houses.

Recently over 30 came to a meeting in St Paul's Church Parish Room where Kate SLINGSBY introduced the project and Andrew TODD presented a short illustrated history of the area. Details from some census and directories were available plus information to help them to continue their research at home, Ramsbottom Library, Bury Library and Bury Archives.

There seemed to be great interest and enthusiasm as the present-day residents began to find details of people who had lived in their homes in the nineteenth century. Some material from the Crow Project will be published in the next News Magazine, and exhibited in the Heritage Centre.

The Heritage Society's website will carry information and photographs as available. On 10th May members of the Society' and the general public are invited to a Public



Meeting in St Paul's School to view the results of the research thus far and the North West Sound Archive will be recording memories of Crow Lane. In the meanwhile, if any readers of this magazine have any photographs or wish to contribute their own reminiscences of Crow Lane, we would be very grateful.

You can contact Kate, Barbara, Janet or Elizabeth in the Library.

Kate Slingsby

### **SCHOOLDAYS AT ST PAUL'S, RAMSBOTTOM.**

*This article was written in April 1988, George ASHWORTH died in 1990. Editor.*

I only attended one Day School - namely St Paul's, in Crow Lane, Ramsbottom. I was born at 95 Callendar Street, Ramsbottom on 1st August 1902. I had two brothers - John (older) and Harold (younger) and a younger sister (Annie) who also attended St Paul's. We did not attend St Paul's Church - we were Wesleyans. At no time did they ever press us to attend the Church, in fact, on those occasions when the scholars went into Church, we were allowed to go home. I can well remember the Vicar (Rev J J LEWIS); he often came into School and on many occasions addressed the scholars. I always appreciated what he had to say to us. I have no fixed idea of my age when I first went to school but I think I must have been about five years old.

The Infant School and The Senior (i.e. Junior) School were separate buildings each with a different entrance. I can remember quite well the teachers I had in the Infant School, Miss WHITTAKER (she lived along Bolton Road West, about no 500). I have recollections of her in later years when schooldays were long past, also Miss HARTLEY and Miss HEAP. I have group photographs of my class and also my sister's class (copies are available in the local library). I do not remember any problems, I enjoyed going to school; I was good at most subjects - I particularly liked reading and spelling and I can remember that on one occasion I was given *Id* (one penny in old money) for spelling *Constantinople* in the infant School.

In due time I was moved into the Big School - I was quite keen<sup>1</sup> about it. The Head was Mr Henry PRICE, the next in seniority was Mr John RENWICK (he was Wesleyan) and I had contact with him from time to time in the Wesleyan Sunday School. He was strong in his opinions about the evils of drinking alcohol. Miss L WEST (I think she lived with the PRICE family) used the class-room upstairs; we called her "*Cocky*" WEST. I am not sure if she was aware of this. It was most amusing when she was taking the Music lessons, for she had an awful singing voice. Miss Janey HOYLE (also a Wesleyan) used the classroom downstairs. The other teacher, and the one I liked best of all, was Miss Margaret PARKIN (I think she attended the Presbyterian Church) - she had Class 1, the first we joined in the Big School. I and a friend of mine (George RAMSBOTTOM) were selected to be monitors. From time to time we remained in school at the close and she often treated us to chocolate taken from large blocks. It was very seldom indeed that I

was given *'the stick.'* In those days from the age of 12, it was possible for boys and girls to be 'half-timers', so that one week they were able to go into the mill in the mornings and the following week it would be in the afternoons. I never did this and I don't think my sister or brothers did so.

At that time the School Managers gave prizes each year to scholars for "Conduct & Diligence." I still have the book which I was awarded in 1913 when I was 11 years old - it has been well used over the years and is entitled *The Parents ' Book - Answers to Children's Questions.*

I left the school in August 1915 at the age of 13. Shortly afterwards, I began my working life in the Ironmongers Shop at 41 Bolton Street, owned by Mr J YATES and is still the same type of shop. [It remained so until 1999 Editor!. In April 1916, I secured a job in the Co-operative Society Offices. I cannot remember the date of Mr PRICE'S retirement but I went to the presentation which was open to the public. As an Old Scholar I was invited to the platform and asked to speak of him as "*My Headmaster.*" In December 1929 Mr PRICE sent me a letter on the occasion when I was promoted to the position of Secretary of the Local Co-op Society. He liked to keep in touch with his scholars of old.

There is another item I should mention. It was not until I went to the Day School that it was discovered that I had one good eye and one 'bad' - my problem was astigmatism. I used to turn my head to get in focus with my good eye. After a few years I had to have a separate pair of spectacles to read with.

We did not have a school uniform - I don't think that any of the Elementary Schools did in those days. We did not partake of any sports. There was only a small paved yard for us to go in during playtime, and the school did not have a field or premises to use for this purpose. Physical exercise inside the school was minimal. I was never taught to swim and never possessed a swimsuit of any kind. The nearest baths were in Bury and I could never afford to go there. None of my friends were able to swim and when I was at the seaside (in later years) I was only able to paddle.

During my time at St Paul's (in the Big School) they commenced a scheme whereby the scholars were able to go once per week to the Technical School (now demolished - but was opposite the present Fire Station.) Joinery was not in my line. The wastage of good timber must have been quite expensive. In a similar manner the girls went for Cookery' lessons.

The toilets - latrines in the school yard were very primitive, but they were in line with those used by everyone: Flushing by water was not introduced until years later. Electricity was not brought into the town until about 1910. and even then it

was only for lighting purposes. None of the many electrical “gadgets” of our modern times was available until many years later. The housewives had to work very hard in those days. In my home *Baking Day* was the ‘highlight’ of the week. I have two medallions in my ‘stock’ given to most or perhaps all scholars in Ramsbottom in 1911 and 1913. Both relate to King George V and Queen Mary; the date 1911 is in connection with their coronation of 22nd June 1911, the other concerns their visit to Bury on 12th July 1913. The 1913 medallion was presented by John WILKINSON, Chairman of the RUDC [Ramsbottom Urban District Council, Editor] at that time and so marked. Scholars from the schools in Ramsbottom travelled by train to Bury. From the Bury Rail Station we all walked to the place appointed on the main road, and I have since been able to locate it as Heap Bridge. It was quite a long walk, then we had to stand for some time, each with a tiny Union Jack ready to wave as the King and Queen passed slowly along. Then we walked back to the Station and home. I am not quite sure about this, but I think that each one had to take their own packet of sandwiches. I do not remember any other ‘eats or drinks’ being provided until we reached home.

At that time I was three weeks short of my birthday, my eleventh. It was in later years that I came to know more about Mr WILKINSON. He was the senior partner in a very well known Gents Outfitters’ shop *WILKINSON & LANCASTER* in Bridge Street. In more recent years that shop and the one next to it were taken down in order to make room for the Police Station near to St Paul’s Church.

For a long number of years there was an Annual Show between Bury and Ramsbottom (alternate years.) It was on the area which is now Nuttall Park. I am not sure when it came to an end and am almost certain the Bury and Ramsbottom Agricultural Show was in being in 1922. I found it a most interesting show. Scholars from various schools could enter the competitions: I won a prize for pencil drawing.

George Ashworth

## CELEBRATIONS



### THE QUEEN’S GOLDEN JUBILEE

#### Queen Elizabeth’s Coronation 2nd June 1953

What patriotic memories this title brings back to me. My sister, our cousin Joyce and I set off from Ramsbottom Station on 1st June 1953 for our overnight journey



to London. To say we were excited would be an understatement going to the Coronation - even as a bystander - was quite something.

We arrived at Wembley at about 6am and because of the crowds, made our way to Birdcage Walk, which was on the Queen's return journey from the Abbey, settling ourselves down on the already crowded pavement. I had borrowed a long wooden periscope from a colleague at work - quite cumbersome. It was about 18 inches tall and you had to turn your back to the procession and hold it above the people in front - not very popular with those behind, but lots of people had similar ones, mostly made from cardboard.

We heard what was happening from a broadcast - I can't remember whether it was a radio or loudspeakers; the newspapers told us that HILLARY had conquered Everest along with Sherpa TENSING, of course that raised a cheer. In fact anyone who passed got a cheer from the good-natured crowds - road sweepers, the police, soldiers, flag sellers!

At last we heard bands approaching and we knew the Queen's procession was imminent. I can't find the words to express how proud we all felt. The Duke was on our side of the Golden Coach, but just as it passed the Queen leaned forward and waved to us (well, wouldn't she just have to?) and we all cheered and cheered. The other carriages passed, but the greatest cheer after the Queen's was when the Queen of Tonga, riding in an open carriage in spite of the torrential rain, waved to the crowds - what a welcome she got. Afterwards we drifted to the Palace to see everyone on the balcony, but we couldn't stay for the fireworks as we had to catch the train home. London was littered with discarded plastic macs but the rain hadn't spoiled a memorable day Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee June 1977

Next came the Silver Jubilee, a better day if I remember rightly. This time we watched from the bottom of the Mall and the Queen passed, again in the Golden Coach. She was wearing pink and her little pink hat had 25 bells hanging at the back, and as almost always, she was wearing white gloves. The Queen Mother's coach was quite memorable - she was dressed in an apricot colour and the lights inside the coach made her look like a ray of sunshine.

Afterwards it was incredible how the police manoeuvred the throngs up the Mall to the Palace, so we were able to make our way around Queen Victoria's statue with ease. When the Royal party came out on to the balcony - the Queen, a tiny pink figure - we could all quite clearly see her white gloves, and again we cheered and waved.

A little old lady nearby couldn't see. She said she had been up since 6am and she was quite disappointed until a Police Constable lifted her up. She nearly knocked his helmet off with exuberance! Again the crowds were so happy and it's the atmosphere that is electric on these occasions.

## Queen Elizabeth's Golden Jubilee June 2002

Finally the Golden Jubilee - well I just had to go! After the crowds who turned up in the Mall for the free concerts previously, I hoped there would be at least as many to support the Queen on this notable day; I was not disappointed. We arrived in the Mall about 8.30am and found a place near one of the giant TV screens, so we could follow everything! As on previous occasions the crowd was happy - and the day glorious. Coaches and cars passed us with various Royal personages and VIPs, but the one we were waiting for was the Golden Coach - and there it was! We craned our necks and there she was - this time in blue. How we waved and cheered.

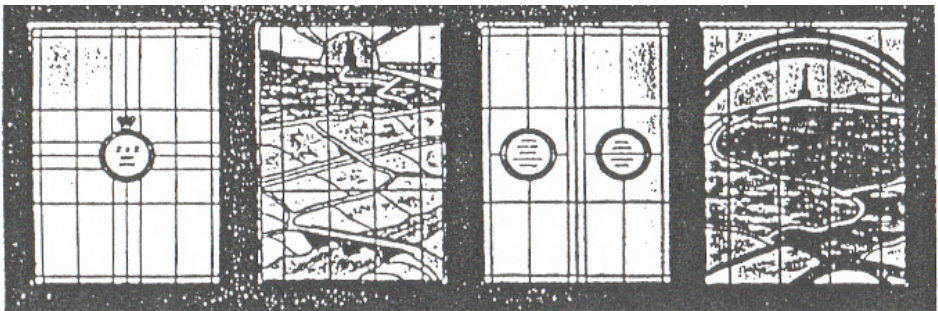
Watching the giant screens, you felt even more part of the proceedings and it was nice to see the important folks in all their finery. On her return from the service the Queen wore deep pink. The wave of cheers engulfing the Coach was deafening and you could see how delighted she and the Duke were with the overwhelming public response.

We ate our sandwiches in St James' Park, then took our places to see the parade. We saw the Princes, returning from Clarence House, walk down the Mall and then the P A R A D E. It went on for ages and ages but it was great fun.

The final moments came after the police allowed us into the Mall which was now a ribbon of people, waving flags and multi-coloured umbrellas and wearing patriotic hats. The fly past was very impressive - everyone pirouetted as the planes flew down the Mall and yet another great cheering roar echoed. At last, dodging between the flags, we caught a glimpse of a tiny pink figure - a dot on the balcony - and then she was gone. It had been wonderful to see the city, and indeed our own towns, decked out for this special occasion. We trooped away, tired but exhilarated - wondering if we'll be lucky enough to see the Diamond Jubilee - I hope so!

Doris Hibbert

## Stained-glass windows at Ramsbottom Library November 2002



EIIR

Grant's Tower

Narrative

Peel Tower

On 30th November 2002 Colonel John TIMMINS KCVO OBE TD JP Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant of Greater Manchester dedicated the new stained-glass windows at Ramsbottom Library. They had been commissioned to commemorate the Queen's Golden Jubilee by the Ramsbottom and Tottington Area Board.

*The Lord Lieutenant is the Queen's representative. George Ashworth [see pp3-6] writes: During my lifetime there has only been one occasion when a reigning monarch has visited Ramsbottom. It was in 1945 when King George VI and his Queen Elizabeth made a tour of Lancashire towns. Gilbert HOLT was the Chairman of the Council at that time. The party occupied a specially erected platform in Market Place.*

The ceremony was preceded by a short visit to the Ramsbottom Heritage Centre where those present included the Mayor and Mayoress of Bury, artist Bryan FARLOW (who designed and made the windows) and piper Mr Wilf MARR. On show were copies of Bryan's initial sketch book work, his original full size drawings and information and photographs about the design process, materials and construction stages. Sir John and Lady TIMMINS spent some time viewing this display before, escorted by Councillor Dorothy GUNTHER. Sir John and the other visitors were piped by Mr MARR from the Heritage Centre, across Carr Street and up the library ramp.

The dedication took place in the Library's Local and Family History area where the windows are installed. They comprise two panels incorporating commemorative plaques and two more depicting views to the east and west of Ramsbottom. The focal point of the "eastern" window is Grants' Tower which has lost none of its detail as it has been kiln fired on to a single piece of glass. The "western" panel shows Holcombe Hill and Peel Tower and the position of the Millennium Seat is shown as a piece of faceted glass known as a jewel. Other special materials used in the project include streaky glass with swirls of two or more colours mixed together but not blended.

Bryan FARLOW was born in Eccles within hailing distance of the tugs and ships on the Manchester Ship Canal. He often visited Eccles' "Carnegie" Library finding pleasure in the architecture and stained-glass windows. After serving an engineering apprenticeship, he became a marine engineer on the Manchester Liners, but spent most of his working life as an engineering draughtsman. Just before his retirement he attended a Bury College course on stained-glass work and he also acknowledges the help of Jaycee Stained Glass of Rossendale in the development of his knowledge. The River Irwell continues to play a part in Bryan's life as he has now lived "upstream" in Ramsbottom for the past 20 years. Residents and visitors are encouraged to visit the Library and to look at the windows from the inside and to write their comments in the visitors' book.

Janet Smith.

## **The Queen's Golden Jubilee in Ramsbottom May-June 2002.**

The town was decorated with bunting, and the varied and interesting shop window displays and the Union and England flags evoked a nostalgic yet celebratory atmosphere. As the Jubilee weekend approached, local involvement increased and the community spirit was reminiscent of former great royal or national celebrations.

Early in Jubilee week, Bryan FARLOW's commemorative stained-glass windows were installed in the Library. East Lancs Railway held their famous Wartime Weekend in Jubilee Week which added to the patriotic fervour already present. On Friday 31st May, Ramsbottom Civic Hall was the venue for the "*Made in Ramsbottom*" Exhibition, organised by Christine LEARY of T.N.T. It was opened by David CHAYTOR M P and attracted many visitors. The following evening, guests were entertained by "*Sounds 18 Big Band*" at a Jubilee Dance in the Civic Hall.

Despite poor weather, the Bank Holiday Country Show in Nuttall Park, attended by local dignitaries and with the very popular local resident Martin HENFIELD on hand to present prizes to the competition winners, attracted huge crowds and was a great success, enjoyed by all. Many thanks to all who helped so unstintingly, with the planning, preparation and participation on the day itself. Your support contributed to the show's smooth running and the friendly Ramsbottom atmosphere.

The money raised from individuals, companies, traders, various local organisations and Ramsbottom Area Board enabled us to stage a magnificent weekend of events as a fitting tribute to this special occasion. The amount raised locally to promote the Jubilee events was £9,190 (and all this without any help from the Lotten' Fund) a magnificent total considering the size of our town. All credit to you all for your financial support and enthusiastic response. Our town's image can only be enhanced by hosting such events.

Linda de Ruijter, Jubilee Events Organiser.

## **RAMSBOTTOM RAMBLINGS.**

I have lived in the US now for 39 years and obviously I like it here for many reasons, although some of those reasons are fast dwindling now, but that is the reason for writing this. In my later years, I have thought many times of my upbringing in Ramsbottom and the more times I visit, the more my interest in my heritage grows. On one of my many visits to my brother Ken's house in Bury, I was privileged to meet a very remarkable lady, Joan YOUNG. Through Joan I became a member of the Society. This year on my visit, I met an old school friend, Eileen WHITTAKER.

These memories are not in any order, and were set off by Andrew TODD's article on 'The Model.' [No 20, Autumn 2000] Ken and I read it several times and

discussed it in detail on my visit this year. I lived round the corner at 35a Back Bridge Street, behind the old Co-op on Bridge Street, and remember my mother telling me to watch out for old men. The Co-op building is now *Memories*, the collective antique store. It was separate from the Co-op's shops, three storeys high with the house portion at one end:

The remainder of the building was not used and consisted of two huge rooms on each floor where we used to play and ride our bikes. It was known as the house with the ghost and underneath the stairs where the floor and the bottom of the stairs met, was a gravestone. The shop next to the ginnel was the furniture store and next was the grocery where everyone had a number and a book for credit. My father, Willie SLATER, better known as Bill, was manager in the furniture store. Ken and myself had the advantage over all the other kids as we used to get to play with all the toys before they were bought and knew which kid was getting which present for Christmas! There was never a surprise, as we used to tell the kids which toys were earmarked for them. My father was also the Co-op's Funeral Manager, source of a good story.

One Sunday, my mother's sister and her husband came to visit from Manchester. As we sat and ate dessert, my mother poured the tea, which my aunt had made, and my mother remarked on the very poor quality' of the brew. Mother told my aunt that just because she scrimped on everything we didn't, and she should put more leaves in the pot. My aunt was very put out and told mother that she might have a fancy tea caddie, but her choice of tea was her problem. Mother asked her sister about the fancy tea caddie and my aunt pointed to the sideboard to this urn. It was somebody's ashes that my father had brought home to take to their house that evening!!

My earliest recollections of 'Rammy' were about escaping from our back yard. Other than going through the back doors of the furniture or grocery store, my only route was through the big yard gate. I never went anywhere on my own without my tricycle, so the gate was my only way out. I found that if I stood on my trike. I could open the bar and lift the latch and so I was off!! Unfortunately, everyone in town knew who I was through my Dad and so when Mam came looking for me. people would say: '*Art lookin 'fer yung un wi ' blonde hair?*' I was caught and had to pay the penalty. There was no spare-the-rod in those days.

When I reached the ripe old age of 2'A years, I decided to find out where 'Kenny went to school'. I went on my trusty trike and made myself known to the faculty of St Paul's, which I knew was only down the street and round the corner of the Bank. Here I first met the Misses HASSEL and WHITTAKER, the most dedicated and wonderful people that a child could hope to meet. Miss HASSEL taught what we would call kindergarten and Miss WHITTAKER taught grade school. My Mam was informed as to my whereabouts and I guess suggested that seeing I was

not in nappies and was quite happy 'in school', I should be allowed to attend kindergarten.

It was a fun time for us kids in 1935 really! We had our lessons, learned by rote and had our own band. To us we sounded great, but we were never invited to play anywhere! I think we needed a better marketing strategist. Some in our class were Kathleen HOUGH, Gordon BARNES, Doreen BOWERS, Eileen WHITTAKER. Glynis HUTCHINSON, Joan WARBURTON, Jean KNOWLES and Marjorie WHITWORTH. We played at *Robin Hood* and *Cowboys and Indians* after school, carving some fabulous swords out of wood. Our bows and arrows were the best in Rammy. We were the Crow Lane Gang, consisting of Alan RICHARDSON, Billy and Barbara RICHARDSON, Doreen BOWERS, Jean KNOWLES, Evelyn ROSTRON, the BLAINE twins (Geoffrey and Alan) Florence HADDOCK and her brother, and Austin FINNERTY, along with my brother Ken and myself. We had Stone Fights with the gang from Rostron Road. How we never killed each other, I will never know. I guess we were very agile and could see the rocks flying through the air. We also had Sod Fights in which you tore up a large sod of grass and bashed your enemy on the head until all the soil was gone and all that was left was a handful of grass, the soil being in your hair, down your shirt, in your socks and in your shoes.

In summertime we used to walk for miles through the woods, go swimming in the ponds and reservoirs and spend hours on the moors picking whinberries. We used to do 'swealing', which meant setting fire to the moor grass and trying to contain it. We would build huts with old bricks and wood and sheets of corrugated iron, salvaged from the tip or junk yard. We used to build fires in them and roast potatoes in the ashes and go home smelling of burnt wood.

In winter, we went sledding down St Andrew's fields [Church Field - Editor] and the Rake. Anywhere there was a slope. I once remember us sledding in a field at the back of Carlton Terrace. The farmer would chase us away, but we would return. I had just come down the slope, Billy RICHARDSON was coming down behind me with Evelyn ROSTRON on the front of his sled. Just as he was three quarters of the way down, there was a stick, about half an inch in diameter, pointing up. It stuck into Evelyn's thigh. We hadn't a clue what to do and didn't realise how serious it was. The stick broke off close to the skin and at least we had the good sense to leave it in and take her home. Off she went to the Cottage Hospital, had it removed, stitched and was sledding again the following day.

We all built our own sleds and went to the smithy to have the irons fitted to the wooden sides, unless you built a skeleton sled. This was made from two pieces of round metal stock bent into the shape of a letter C. A piece of wooden slat was then fastened to the open form of the C and another was screwed across the two

slats to form the sled platform. We also used to take slats from old barrels and fasten leather strips to the barrel staves into which we could stuff our feet. Our unique form of skis! These barrels were 'swiped' from the mills on Kenyon Street.

We used to play marbles at night by the light from the shop windows - very little traffic on the roads at that time. Coal was still hauled from the railway yards to the mills by two wheeled carts drawn by huge Belgian draft horses and Clydesdales. I would go round to the smithy on Paradise Street and watch them being shod. They were so big that as a child I could walk under their bellies. Another great thing, for us at least, was haymaking in the Fall. Gathering it into sheaves and then on the cart and into the barn. We would spend hours in the barns making hayslides and jumping from the top of the loft into a pile of hay below.

I remember climbing the chestnut trees and collecting the big spiky pods to dry out the inner conkers. When they were completely dried, you threaded string about 18 inches long through a hole poked through the middle and tied a knot on one end. The 'Conker' then swung like a pendulum. The object of the game was to smash your conker on your opponent's which was suspended in the air. Each took turns, until you split his conker, or he split yours or you got fed up trying. For every one you split, it counted one - if you split five others, yours was known as a 'fiver'. If you split a 'sixer', your fiver became an 'elevener'.

Prior to the outbreak of World War II, one of the major events of the year was 5<sup>th</sup> November, Bonfire Night. Each area of Rammy had its own bonfire. Weeks prior, we kids would go out collecting anything that would bum, no matter how large or small, carrying it on a 'bogey'. This consisted of a plank of wood, about six feet long, with a pair of fixed wheels at the back and a pair of steerable wheels at the front. The front wheels were attached to a piece of wood about 36 inches x six inches. A hole was bored through the plank and the centre of the wheel assembly and a coach bolt held the two pieces together and allowed the assembly to pivot. Steering was by means of a piece of rope with the ends attached to either side of the front wheels, in a loop. For brakes, you used the sole of your shoe or clog.

Older kids and fathers were pressed into service to stack the wood, to heights of 20 or 30 feet and around 15 feet in diameter by the time of the big day. On top of course, had to be 'The Guy', the effigy of Guy Fawkes who was executed for trying to blow up Parliament. Old clothes, hats and shoes were donated to make the lifesize effigy and the final result was placed on top of the pyre. We younger kids were allowed to stay out longer than usual at this time, as we had to guard our pile from raiders from another area. There was many a Sod Fight and plain old fisticuffs prior to the lighting. On the night, whole families in the area gathered round for the lighting of the pyre. The parents set off fireworks for us kids and we used to run around throwing *Penny Bangers* and *Ha 'penny Demons* behind people

to make them jump. We would stuff several of these bangers into the old-fashioned locks on people's doors, trying to blow them up! Needless to say, we were never successful as the doors were solid wood about three inches thick. You had better be a fast runner when the owner came out or you would 'get your ears boxed', as the saying went and a large boot up your backside to finish it off. You could never go home and complain that *Mr So and So* had hit you, because then you would have to explain what you had done to deserve the bashing. What happened to that simple way of life? Now all you hear is sue, sue, sue.

The highlight of Bonfire Night was when the fireworks had all been set off, the fire had died down to a large mass of red hot ashes and we put potatoes in the hot ashes to roast. You just peeled off the blackened skin with a lot of ooohs and aaaahs because it was burning your hands, slathered it with salt and butter and scoffed it down whilst waiting for the next one to be pulled from the fire.

People rallied round to help each other when someone had a misfortune. The fact that you didn't know the person had nothing to do with whether you helped or not... you just did what you could do or afford to.

The biggest event of my life, of course, was the outbreak of World War II. I was 6 1/2 years old. I remember listening, with my parents, to Neville CHAMBERLAIN on the radio, announcing sombrely that as of that date, 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939, Britain was officially at war with Germany. Worst of all, the street lights were shut off for the duration of the War. It was crummy in winter, when it went dark early, but in summer it didn't have much effect, as it stayed light until around 9.30pm and wasn't fully dark until 10pm. Being the kids that we were, we now shrugged off our cloaks, swords and bows and arrows, for our new games - Fighting Jerries! We made tin hats out of colanders and carved wooden guns from food crates. No kid worth his salt did not earn a sharp penknife. One big kick we got. was when we were issued gas masks! At school, we had to practise putting them on in case a gas bomb was dropped. Instead of pulling the straps tight as told, we used to leave them slightly loose and blow hard through our mouths. This caused the rubber around your face and neck to vibrate and sounded to us kids like someone was breaking wind. We thought this was hilarious and competed for longest and loudest!

Most houses had railings and as we walked down the street we used to run a stick across the railings to make a noise. This ceased when all iron was taken away to make munitions or ships. Suddenly, there was no fruit in the stores. Meat and Fish became scarce and toffee, chocolate, ice cream and cigarettes were a memory. This didn't sit well with us kids, as we were used to our Fry's bars, with the five faces on the wrapper and going to the cigarette machines for Five Woodbines and Five matches for 6d for your Dad. The Chip Shops suffered due to the shortage of fish,



but being the entrepreneurs they were, came up with Rice Cakes - two slices of potato with rice in between, then dipped in batter and deep fried. Then came *The Black Market*, mostly in the bigger cities. There were some *Carryings On* in Ramsbottom, but most people bartered and swapped amongst themselves for things they needed. Remember those cigarettes called "Pasha?" What a stink they made! No one would swap anything for them.

Everyone went to *the Pictures* at least once a week, where British Movietone News or Pathe Pictorial kept us abreast of the war happenings along with the newspapers. Saturday night was a ritual. We ALWAYS went to *The Royal* picturehouse, second showing. Several families had seats permanently reserved. We had E12, 13, 14 and 15. When my mother owned the hairdressing shop, she had a phone. The lady in the ticket booth at *The Royal* used to phone to make sure that we wanted our seats for the show.

I remember going into NICKSON's Bakery and watch them making bread, muffins and cakes. Nothing tasted quite as good as a muffin straight from the oven. The Salvation [Army? Editor] Band played on Friday nights on NICKSON's corner. Any kind of band seemed to fascinate me. If my mother was looking for me and she heard a band playing, she knew I would be there on the front row, missing nothing. Prior to the outbreak of war, my family used to go for a ride in the car on Sundays, after church. We would go visiting relatives or just go to Blackpool or Southport. With the onset of wartime, the car was sold, because of petrol rationing and father's loss of sight. Then all of us as a family would go for Sunday walks in summertime, and we thought nothing of walking up the Rake, through Holcombe Village, up to Peel Tower, down into Holcombe Brook and then back to Ramsbottom. The other walk was up Peel Brow, through Shuttleworth into Edenfield and back to Rammy through Stubbins.

If anyone would care to contact me, my address is:-

Alan Slater, Springfield, Massachusetts, USA

## **MOTOR CYCLING IN RAMSBOTTOM 1950 - 1966**

I have had a love of motorcycles from the first time that I set eyes on one and from then on that's all I wanted to own. But not having any cash and being a lowly- paid apprentice at Edward KEMPSTER & Sons of George Street, Bury (next door to Robert HALL & Son) the prospects of owning one seemed decidedly poor. My mother did not like bikes, so help from that direction was out of the question. I was told "*If you can save up for one you can get one*" As I was only earning £3. 1s.6d. per week things did not seem hopeful.

However at about this time I had a stroke of luck and won £17.10.0. on the Bury Football Supporters' Club Draw at work; a heck of a lot of money to a poverty stricken apprentice. So now the search for a suitable bike was on. Eventually I

heard of an old bike near the Hospital at Jericho which I bought for the sum of £10 and I sold the sidecar chassis off it for £2.10s to a friend in Eliza Street. It was a 1948 500cc AJS. EN 9481; I still remember the number. Eventually the wreck was refurbished with help from my father and was used for travel to work and around the district.

There was quite a sporting community in Ramsbottom in the 1950s and quite a few of the local lads were into racing, trials and scrambles. Scrambles had been held on Holcombe Hill but due to the difficulty of getting injured riders down and general inaccessibility, the "*Lancashire Grand National*" and the "*War of the Roses*" scrambles were moved to Curden Park near Preston, but the events weren't the same. The hill was one of the more difficult tracks in England at that time and Curden Park was more like a grass track.

Motor cycling was popular in the Ramsbottom district then and motor cycles with sidecars were quite common. Not many people had cars and the traffic was not so heavy. Many travelled to work by bike but it was rough in the winter months. We were living at 81 Victoria Street in 1963 and if getting up Rostrons Road on my 500 Ariel (that I was using then) on packed ice was quite an epic, coming down was a never to be forgotten experience.

It's now 45 years since I worked under a sheet stretched over the yard wall, with candles in jam jars illuminating the 500cc AJS as I worked on it with the snow falling; that was enthusiasm. The love of the old bikes is still there. I still restore old bikes and have a small vintage collection.. I wonder how many of the riders I rode with 45 years ago are still riding. Not many I think; I still remember my rides around Ramsbottom with fond memories. I now ride in better weather and the problems now are not freezing cold but heat. It gets a bit hot sometimes and 60 year old engines prefer the cold.

### **Some of the riders and their bikes that I remember in Ramsbottom in the period 1950-1963**

Frank CHAPMAN, railway Fireman of Chatterton Lane – *AJS 650cc twin*

Bobby HENDERSON of Stubbins - *Matchless 650 twin*

John DAVENPORT of Stubbins - *BSA 250cc*

Dennis BRIDGE, hairdresser. Pin Meadow, Stubbins - *Triumph 350cc single TT Rep*

Stanley HALL of North Lodge, Strongstry - *Excelsior Talisman twin 250cc*

Malcolm GREEN, Well Street, Chatterton - *Royal Enfield 500 Bullet*

Mr DEMLIN, Edenfield, insurance collector - *125cc Two Stroke (Enfield7)*

Colin ANDERTON, 17 North Street. Strongstry - *500ccAJS/197 James/Ariel 500*

Frank HURST. Ramsbottom - *DOT 250cc Ariel Colt 198cc*

Brian ASHWORTH, Strongstry - *A MC 250cc*

Peter WALSH, 1 Farm Cottages, Stubbins Vale Road - *125cc JAP/ Cyclemaster 32cc*  
Harry WALSH, Stubbins Lane - *Velocette 500cc*  
Kenneth BAILER (worked in Stubbins Co-op) - *Autocycle* make not known  
Graham BROOKS, Stubbins - *BSA 350cc B32*  
Arnold RACE, Edenfield Council Estate - *Triumph 350cc T3 Twin*  
Laurance McAVOY, Ramsbottom - *BSA 650cc Road Rocket*  
Mr MAGERISON, shoe repairer, Bridge Street, Ramsbottom (lived at 82 Albert Street) - *Ariel SQ4 JOOOcc & Sidecar*  
George GLOVER, Ramsbottom - *Ex w/d 350cc Royal Enfield*  
Barry KIPS, Dundee Lane area - *BSA 125cc Bantam/197 Francis Barnet*  
Gordon ISHERWOOD, Dundee Lane - *BSA 250cc*  
Peter CHADWICK, Tanners, Ramsbottom - *BSA 125cc Bantam D1*  
Raymond CHADWICK, Eliza Street - *Sunbeam S8/Vincent Rapide 1000cc*  
Alf WHITWORTH, Albert Street - *BSA 500cc M20 & Sidecar*  
Donald WRIGHT, Strongstry - *BSA 350cc Gold Star Comp*  
Burt JEFFERIES, Strongstry - *Ex w/d Matchless 350cc*

***Local riders who competed in Trials/Scrambles/Road racing***

Garry BRITAIN, Tum - *AJS 350cc Model 16MCS Comp*  
Joe ROSCO, Ramsbottom - *BSA 500cc Gold Star DBD34*  
Ken EMET, Eliza Street - *197cc James (Special)*  
Harold ISHERWOOD, Peel Brow Estate - *Ariel Comp*  
Jack ISHERWOOD, Peel Brow Estate - *Ex Surtees NSU250 Racing*  
Brian INGHAM, Ramsbottom - *BSA/Triumph 500cc Special*  
Bill BARAUGH, Ramsbottom? - *DOT 107cc (works rider)*  
Harold LINGARD, Peel Brow (plumbers shop) - make not known but small - *Villiers T/Stroke*

There were probably a lot more but after 45 years that's all I can remember. All the best.

PS I hope it's of some interest and will prompt others to record perhaps an earlier period.

Colin Anderton, South Africa

**WITH REFERENCE TO "PORRITTS MILL"**

*We heard of the death of Edwin in 2002. Eddie was very interested in the history of Hawkshaw Lane and the Methodist Church there. We send our condolences to his family and thank them for their kind permission to use this article. Editor In response to your notice in the Bury Times, ref "PORRITT'S MILL", I am myself ex-PORRITT's. I lived at 20 North Street, Strongstry, and attended Stubbins Council School until the Summer of 1929, when, after the holiday, we*

had to go to Peel Brow Central School which opened in September. I enjoyed everything at that school, including football instruction on Saturday morning.

My birthday was the 9th November; and when I became 14 years I had to leave this lovely school at Christmas end of term. After Christmas I went to PORRITTs to see Mr James HOYLE, the Manager, and he said I could start on Monday, which was 30th December and at the end of that day, the foreman, Mr Jack CROMPTON, said would I come at 6 am in the morning, so there was I at 6am on New Year's Eve working, reaching in! Tom SWINDLEHURST moved on when I started, then I had a good relationship with George BONE before he moved on to weaving, being replaced by George DUCKWORTH.

When I had been there a few months, Mr Frank WHITTAKER, an elderly weaver, told me to come to him in my spare time and he taught me to weave, unofficially. After two years reaching in, I was moved to drawing in, then two years later I was sent to learn weaving with Herbert DENNIS. In the war years PORRITT's paid 10 shillings weekly to "single" dependants. I left PORRITT's in November 1947 to become apprentice overlooker at SHEPHERDS Ltd. Ramsbottom.

At this juncture I would like to say my Grandfather Edwin "Ned" WAKELIN also worked at PORRITT's and indeed gained a 50 years service certificate. He was a stockwright and joiner and supervisor and is reputed to have made and fixed the large window facing the road, of the cottonfelt weaving shed. Edwin WAKELIN'S father (Joseph WAKELIN) had responded to an advert in the 1870s in the national newspapers for people to come and work at PORRITT's. They would be provided with a job, a house to rent and their travel expenses paid. So Joseph WAKELIN *upped sticks* as they say and brought his wife and family from Croughton in Northamptonshire to Stubbins. In the 1881 Census he was living at Stubbins Vale, occupation carter. All these people, including my grandfather, Edwin WAKELIN and my great-grandfather, Joseph WAKELIN are buried in Stubbins United Reformed graveyard.

In addition to this, William and Martha YATES came from Bamford, near Rochdale, to live at Stubbins. William and Martha lived at 25 North Street, Strongstry, and Edwin WAKELIN married their daughter, Rachel. Edwin WAKELIN's brother James WAKELIN also worked at Stubbins Vale, then went to South Africa in the 1890s. Looking up North Street, Strongstry today (the odd numbers are then on the right) I realised that there were 14 families, the same number that in previous Census returns had been called *Buckden Terrace*. The even numbers on the left were built in the 1870s, all back to back houses, and those were offered to immigrant workers. Indeed, I think according to the 1881 Census there were five or six families called NUTTER on the even number side, these people came from the Gisburn area. So I think *Buckden Terrace* became *North Street*. Yours in Historical Research

Edwin Longworth (age 85)

## MEMORIES OF "THE FLAN"

*"The Flan" (as it was known locally) was "the Flannelette Shop" or "Hope Mill" or "BDA" (Bleachers and Dyers Association). The Mill was situated on the Holcombe Brook side of Nuttall Lane, and new houses including Lansdowne Road were built on the site in 2002. Editor.*

I started working in the BDA office in February 1946 and stayed there for 13 years as a comptometer operator. Working in the office then were a few older men but most of the staff were young women. As the men came back from the forces they replaced the women and in the end there were twice as many males as females. We worked from 8.30 - 12.30 and 1.30 - 5.30 from Monday to Friday. On Saturday we worked from 8.30-12 noon.

When I first went there we each had a light over our desk, hanging from the ceiling. Then all the offices were fitted with fluorescent lights - most of the fitting done while we were trying to work. This was a great improvement. If any figures were wanted urgently at the head office at Bradford, we had to work overtime. If someone was off ill or on holiday and the work was piling up, we had to work overtime to get straight. Late one afternoon the Bradford office rang to say that they wanted a report the next day. Two of the men in the costing department stayed on to do this and I had to go back in at 8.30pm and I worked until midnight with them. Because we were on the staff pay-roll we didn't get paid for doing overtime. But we did get a tea allowance of one shilling and sixpence. We usually went out to the chippy and brought back fish and chips which we ate at our desks.

About 1950 or 1951 the BDA had a celebration [could be 1951, Festival of Britain Editor] a special train was hired and we waited at Ramsbottom Station for the gates to close at the level crossing and to see the train come steaming in. When we arrived at Blackpool Central Station we went our separate ways and we had to meet again at 11.30pm. We all had a good time, it was a nice sunny day and some of us had booked to go to the Tower Circus in the evening.

The Ramsbottom Wakes Week changed from August to July. This was the week when all the mills, factories and shops closed. Because this was stock taking time, someone had to work on the comps [*comptometers*] and I always worked this week. Later when everyone had two weeks' holiday I worked the fortnight with just a skeleton staff in the office.

A lot of the staff played badminton for the different Churches in the area. The week the badminton tournament was on at St Andrew's School, we were all there every night. Each morning we couldn't start work until we had had a discussion about the previous evening's play. We talked about who played well, who was still left in the tournament and who we thought would win at the end of the week.

We had a few staff trips in my early years there. We left by coach one Saturday-morning and had a day out at Llandudno. Another time we had an evening trip to

a theatre in Bolton. We also went to Manchester one Saturday afternoon and had a look round a newspaper office. Another Saturday we went to Clifton Junction to be taken round a tile manufacturers!

I have a lot of happy memories of my time at the BDA. We were a very friendly crowd and had a lot of laughs. That is where I met my husband and we have been married for 44 years.

Barbara L Howard [nee Freeman]

### **ROBERT D WITTENBURY: RAMSBOTTOM'S UNSUNG ARCHITECT**

Readers may remember the reference in issue No 22 (Autumn 2001) to BIRD & WITTENBURY of Manchester as architects of the 1876 extension to the Cooperative Stores. It seems highly likely that the *Robert D WHITTENBURY* recorded at Square Lodge in WORRALL's 1871 Directory was one of these partners. Readers of *Around Ramsbottom* (1995) will be aware that the GARNETT family were the architects of many of our town's most prominent buildings, but it would appear that WITTENBURY ran them a close second. I am grateful to Bill BENNION, archivist of St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church on Bolton Street, for pointing out that WITTENBURY was also architect for the church's construction in the late 1870s.

It can hardly be a coincidence that this Manchester based architect lived so close to these two buildings, both situated on the south stretch of Bolton Street, the ribbon of the town largely built during the 1860s, '70s and '80s. The current presbytery (the priest's residence), built in 1862, was the first Roman Catholic place of worship. The chapel was on the first floor, the priest living on the ground floor (Bolton Street level). The school was in the basement, and was accessible from Lodge Street which has always been a storey lower, on account of the gradient engineered into Bolton Street. Bill BENNION points out that the presbytery's steeply pitched roof is an indication of the first floor being given as airy a character as possible, in keeping with its use as a place of worship.

The present school was opened in 1878/9, and the current church in 1880. WITTENBURY planned a rather grander building, despite the physical limitations of the site. A chancel and a tower were to occupy the east and south sides of the church respectively. Perhaps the money ran out, for neither was ever built, the space for the tower now famously occupied by the priest's garage!

Bill incidentally also points out that Miss Gaby PORTER, writer of the 1978 letter quoted in the article in the last magazine, was curator at Bury Museum, and that the photographs referred to will now be in Bury Archives or Museum.

Andrew Todd

## LOCAL RESEARCH

The Heritage Society has no staff, and cannot offer a research or query service. The following institutions could be approached:

**1 Bury Archive Service - Edwin Street (off Crompton Street) Bury BL9 0AS; tel: 0161 797 5897** - preserves the historical records from the 1650s to the present day of a wide range of organisations and private individuals from all parts of the Metropolitan Borough. There are over 30 tons of documents, maps, plans and photographs, almost all of which are available for consultation in the public reading room. Holdings include the records of local authorities (eg Ramsbottom Local Board, and UDC, including many building plans) schools, churches, businesses, trade unions, sports clubs, charities, political parties and other social organisations. The Heritage Society's Collection, including photographs, is on permanent loan there.

The service is in Edwin Street (off Crompton Street, next to Plumb's Hi-Fi shop), and entrance is via the yard at the far end of the street on the right-hand side. The reading room is open from 10am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm every Tuesday; and at the same times on other weekdays Monday to Friday, but please make an appointment in advance by ringing archivist Kevin Mulley before any visit. Group visits (minimum six persons) on evenings and weekends are available if booked in advance.

**2 Bury Central Library (Reference and Information Services Department) Manchester Road, Bury, BL9 0DG; tel: 0161 253 5871** - has publications on local history, historical printed works of local interest such as trade directories, older Ordnance Survey maps for the whole of BMBC, including Ramsbottom, copies of local newspapers, thematic collections of newscuttings worth pursuing for local biographies, census returns and parish registers on microfilm.

The library is open from 9.30am to 5.30pm each weekday (open until 7.30pm Wednesdays), and from 9.30am to 4.30pm on Saturdays.

**3 Ramsbottom Library, Carr Street, Ramsbottom, Bury; tel: 01706 822484** - has much of the Ramsbottom local collection of the late Rev RR Carmyllie, local census returns and several filing drawers of local newscuttings and booklets, as well as Hume Elliot's history.

**4 Lancashire Family History and Heraldry Society; membership secretary Vicky Barlow, Bob's Ley, 6, Mowbreck Lane, Wesham, Preston, Lancs PR4 3HA; tel: 01772 687234** - membership is only £9-00 per year, and this entitles you to four magazine issues, an opportunity to publicise your research queries and findings, and 14 meetings each month with speakers at venues all over the county, including Bury and Rawtenstall.

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