



NEWS MAGAZINE

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**RAMSBOTTOM HERITAGE SOCIETY, C/O RAMSBOTTOM LIBRARY,
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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 an information centre.
 - c) To seek to protect the heritage of Ramsbottom
-

Programme for 2023 - 24

Note that monthly meetings are held on Thursday evenings at 7.30 p.m. apart from July and August.

Christ Church Neighbourhood Centre, Great Eaves Road, Ramsbottom, BL0 0PX

December 14 Christmas Festive Fun

2024

January 11 Geoffrey Scargill - Edward Watkin : Railway King

February 8 Joseph O'Neill - Angel Meadow: A Manchester Slum

March 21 Elaine Taylor - Gardens for Lord Leverhulme

April 11 Sid Calderbank - Edwin Waugh - The Lancashire Burns

May 9 A.G.M. followed by Peter Watson - North Country Folk Learning

June 20 Sharon Ruston - Reading Sir Humphry Davy's Notebooks

Ramsbottom Heritage Society

News Magazine No 65

Autumn/ Winter 2023

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Front Cover

Besses o' th' Barn Brass Band playing at the Nuttall Park bandstand
re-opening day Sunday 1st October - Photograph by John Leyland

SECRETARY'S REPORT

In Issue 64 there was an article about a new Project forum designed to share resources and make all the research that members of the Heritage Society do available to all, either through books, via the website, Facebook or News Magazines. Most of the articles this issue are written by members of the forum. The forum has met twice to consider the best way forward, and it has been agreed that the website needs updating to make the research easily available. There is currently a large amount of information on the website, e.g. photographs, tape recordings, articles, etc, but they are not easy to find, and there is a lot of research that hasn't been uploaded yet. The group is still open to new members joining, and we are considering holding public sessions to encourage people to come forward and help with this process.

John Leyland

UPDATE ON UNITED UTILITIES'S WORK IN NUTTALL VILLAGE

Issue 63 outlined the work that United Utilities are undertaking in Nuttall Village to improve the River Irwell's water quality. There was an update in issue 64, and we are still meeting with United Utilities, the latest being on the 3rd October.

The planning application 69680 for the scheme was submitted on the 24th May 2023 and approved with conditions on the 15th September.

The meeting on the 3rd October was attended by John Leyland, Janet Smith and Sheena Crombie on behalf of the Heritage Society, and three representatives from United Utilities.

The initial focus of the meeting was four trees that were mentioned in the planning application, as to be saved if possible. This included an oak tree in the centre of the temporary compound, and three others at the exit of the new temporary roadway. This area is in front of the Nuttall mill chimney.

It was explained that since the application was submitted in January, a survey had indicated that the railway tunnel that runs under the compound, could not

tolerate constant heavy machinery movements, and thus the four trees had to be removed to accommodate the amended route of the temporary road.



Photos before and after the tree removal.

It was suggested that seedlings of the oak tree were preserved and replanted when the work is completed



The new road would now exit the compound further down Nuttall Road near the sign. The existing wall would be removed, stored and reinstated after the work has been completed.

Another wall of interest is in the main compound, which will form part of the new electric substation. Once again, this wall will be removed and replaced using local stone.



*Top 3 photos by John Leyland August and October-
bottom photo by Joe Crompton - July*

BARBARA PARK (NÉE FORSTER) 1931-2023

Barbara died on 24th June, aged 92, one of a vanishing number who were involved in our Society from the start. She and husband Trevor had attended that inaugural meeting at St Paul's School on 26th Feb 1987; and she became a committee member right away. Bubblingly keen, Barbara was one of the more helpful voices, always full of ideas, involved, and sane in relation to the forcefulness of some early activists! There were some fierce arguments in those early days. Somehow I managed to chair these fixtures, with Secretary Dorothy Moss the great diplomat, and I think we managed to keep walkings out down to one! In ancient Rome, one capital punishment was to be sewn into a sack with a dog, viper, cock and monkey, and cast into the Tiber – sometimes, being RHS chairman at those early committee meetings wasn't much different.



Barbara was not in that mould, very much a backroom mainstay, though very much from an activist tradition, and as the Society became focused, she came into her own. She pitched into exhibitions, the taping project, publications, and put together and edited the magazine for its first years. It is now possible on our website to search for key words in the 1,419 pages of the first 60 editions – and there are over 60 references to her! She and Brenda Decent, another early stalwart, did lots of the research for the individual photographs in *Around Ramsbottom* (1995). The three of us spent much of that sweltering summer in the old Heritage Centre, later the site of the Sure Start Centre, opposite the new library. Once we'd selected photographs to include, from tables spread with

possibles, they would go off and use their numerous contacts to provide the raw material for the captions. 'The best thing we did!' Barbara reckoned years later. And yet characteristically she and Brenda wanted no mention as co-authors.

Barbara Forster had married WEA tutor Robert Trevor Park in 1951. Both on the progressive side of politics, Trevor was Labour MP for Derbyshire South East during the Wilson government years of 1964-70, and had numerous awards from different NUM branches for his support during the Miners' Strike of '84-5. He had made Ramsbottom's famous Chartist, Peter Murray McDouall, a life interest, collecting biographical material for years.

Trevor had died in 1995, and Barbara remained active in the Society as long as she could, despite battles with bad health. In later years she moved out of Ramsbottom and into sheltered accommodation just off Walmersley Road. But she never lost interest in the Society, or in the many members with whom she had been friends.

Barbara's funeral on 11th July was par for the course, humanist, lasting only an unassuming 20 minutes, yet attended by people who were truly moved by her loss. 'A constant for so many people,' said the celebrant, who then read the famous poem, 'Miss me but let me go'. We shall miss her.

Andrew Todd

FROM NEW ZEALAND TO RAMSBOTTOM, SEPTEMBER 2023

This slightly ruffled Kiwi survived her twenty-six hour plane journey to Ramsbottom, Lancashire to walk in her forebears' footsteps. (Although it was September the temperature was 32°C when I arrived and absolutely sweltering.)

Ramsbottom Heritage Society member Bren Richards kindly showed me places of interest pertaining to my family. We had 'met' through the Society's Facebook page and I had purchased the amazing book *Nuttall Ramsbottom's Lost Village*. My ancestors, the Sutcliffes and the Grimshaws, lived there from about the 1830s. We found two family graves in Ramsbottom churchyards, one

in St Paul's and one in Holcombe Emmanuel's. Both tombstones added vital information to my family tree.

Brenda and I also visited places where members of my family had lived: my three times great grandparents Grimshaw homes in Old Engine Lodge, off Nuttall Hall Road, and in Lower Nuttall Lane. Here, I knocked on the door and the occupier invited me in. Gobsmacking! The house was built in the late 1700s and I was in seventh heaven to stand in my ancestors' home. We then walked down to the site of Nuttall Village, where all that's left is part of the mill chimney and some old stone walls. We also went to the Sutcliffe homes at Barwood Lea and Rose Hill. Next day I had an appointment at Bury Archives. It was also a gold mine, every genealogist's dream!

On 6th September I visited Whalley, Wiswell and Pendleton where the Sutcliffes originated before moving to Ramsbottom to work in the cotton mills. At St Mary and All Saints Church in Whalley I stood by the gravestone belonging to my four times great grandfather Isaac Sutcliffe and his family. He was a farmer at Wiswell Moor Bottom up until he died in 1843. In all we had five generations of Isaac Sutcliffe in a row.

Somehow, on my way to Wiswell I managed to get myself on a very narrow one-way lane with high hedges like they have in Cornwall. It was hair raising especially as I can't reverse at the best of times. In some places the bushes were brushing against both sides of the car! When I got to Pendleton, so relieved, I had a beautiful chicken liver pate lunch from the *Swan with Two Necks* Pub. It won best pub in the Ribble Valley this year.

I had a wonderful four days in Lancashire. The architecture is very interesting: rows upon rows of 'two up two down' attached cottages whose doorways open up onto the streets which are clogged with residents' cars. I met interesting people including, at the Swan, a look-alike of Mr T (the A Team TV Series), complete with greying hair and white beard and adorned with many silver chains. He told me how to get back on to the motorway to Ramsbottom then sent me off with a hearty 'God bless you'! Travelling alone one meets all kinds

of folk and all of them very helpful.

I loved my stay in Lancashire; the beautiful countryside and the welcoming, very kind people who helped to make my stay so memorable. Thank you all.

Anne Mackintosh

BARWOOD LEA (OR LEE) – A GLIMPSE INTO ITS EARLY YEARS- 1780S-1880S.



Barwood House in
1988 - Photo taken
from Bury Archive
RHSBA-1665

Barwood Lea or Lee is the name of an area off Kay Brow. There are at least two explanations for the name – a) that it is a derivative of Boar's Wood from the Anglo-Saxon 'boir', meaning a wood infested with boars, or b) a name for one of the most widely used of natural dyes, easy to apply to wool and the basis of many brown combinations.

A house was built there in the 1780s for Henry Kay, partner in Peel & Yates, calico printers at 'The Old Ground'. In the 1794 Actual Survey of the Township of Tottington, it was noted as having 'certain buildings' occupied by Peel & Co. It was later sold to John Rostron before being resold in 1819 to William Grant & Bros. It then became the home of Charles Grant who added a gate house accessed from Bolton Street. Charles died in 1825, and c1841 it briefly was the

home of his brother, Daniel and wife Jessie before her early death. It was close to the family's flagship mill – the Square - which lay further down the valley beside the River Irwell.

The 1842 Tithe Map Schedule shows the area had been developed and now had mills including a Gas Works and Callender Works, a Bleach Works, and a Print Works - all owned by William Grant & Bros. There were also reservoirs, embankments, stables, plantations, gardens, and a large number of cottages occupied by people working in the cotton industry, servants for the house, and other miscellaneous workers such as the Sutcliffes (mentioned by Ann Mackintosh in her article about her visit to her ancestors' home town in 2023) who were agricultural labourers.

By 1842 Barwood Lea House had been the home of the Reverend Andrew McLean, Presbyterian Minister of St. Andrew's Church, for around eight years. He lived there with his wife, Elizabeth Grant, daughter of James Grant, his son Daniel Grant McLean aged five, and two servants. Reverend W. Hume Elliot mentions them in his books on the Grant family and he says that the Reverend McLean lived there until 1863 when William Grant, the nephew, asked him to leave. This caused much consternation as he had to break up his natural history museum. (William Grant, later in the Autumn of 1869, ousted him from St Andrew's Church, passing it over the Episcopalians. Reverend MacLean died three weeks later.

After 1863 Barwood wax returned to the Grant estates and for a while was used by their Estate Manager. The house had other occupants in the 1870s and 80s, including three people who had pews in St. Andrew's (Dundee) - John Maiden (1877-1882), James French (1878- 1883) and George French (1885-1888). The house still exists today but is now divided up into several residences.

Bren Richards

SIGNS OF THE TIMES 1875

An extract from a report of a Ramsbottom Local Board Meeting

(The Local Board pre-dated Ramsbottom Urban District Council. A Public Health Act of 1875 required local authorities to provide central slaughterhouses but they were only given powers to close unsanitary slaughterhouses in 1890.)

THE SLAUGHTER HOUSES

In answer to a question, the Clerk said there had no alterations taken place in the slaughter-houses (at Tanners and behind the Grant's Arms) since they were reported upon two months earlier. The offal was being thrown out on the middens, which were close to the houses and the street, and the stench was very bad.

Mr Smith (Medical Officer of Health) – said there was a difficulty in the way of providing a remedy so long as the boards had no “tip”. He thought the question had better stand overt until a tip was provided, for the butchers at present had no place in which to deposit their offal. In all other places where the requirements of the Slaughter House Act were carried out, the body forming the sanitary body for the district provided carts for them.

Mr. Barlow: That is not so.

Mr. Smith: Well, in Manchester they do.

Mr. Barlow: In Bury they don't remove it.

Mr Smith: The question is not settled there; it is in consideration.

Mr Barlow said it had been settled aforesaid, and the butchers had had the responsibility. The mischief in their own case was that they were not acting up to the byelaws, which said that the butchers must keep boxes, tubs, and vessels, for the purpose of receiving and conveying away all manure, garbage, and filth, and that immediately after the killing and dressing of cattle they must cause such manure etc., to be removed to such places as might from time to time be fixed by the Local Board. The fact was, they had not got covered tubs and vessels. Let them comply, and then they might rely on the Board.

Mr. Smith: You can serve them with notice to comply with the byelaws, which is an absolute responsibility.

Mr. Barlow: I don't see that it is.

Mr. Smith: I don't think that up to the present the deposit of offal had had a prejudicial effect on the health of the neighbourhood.

Mr. Barlow: The doctor, it seems, appears here as the advocate of the butchers. I lay it down it is not our business either to provide a tip or remove the matter. The butchers carry on a business from which they make a profit, and they must carry it on in such a manner as not to be injurious to their neighbours.

Mr. Stead: I think we are honour bound to provide a tip.

Mr. Smith: It is only a question of justice, I think.

On the motion of the Chairman, seconded by Mr. Knowles, it was agreed to leave the matter in the hands of the nuisance committee.

Transcribed by Brenda Richards from the *Bury Times*, 8th February 1875.

OPENING OF THE NEW BANDSTAND IN NUTTALL PARK

The new bandstand in Nuttall Park was officially opened on Sunday 1st October 2023 by the Mayor of Bury. It would be appropriate to say the bandstand was thoroughly christened, as the rain poured down for much of the afternoon. But such is the commitment of the people of Ramsbottom that this did not deter a surprisingly large number of people from unfurling their umbrellas and folding chairs and sitting throughout the deluge. During the drier moments the Mayor, her consort and the other visitors came to the *Ramsbottom Heritage Society* bookstall and the *Friends of Nuttall Park* refreshment stalls and Tea Room. *Ramsbottom Rotary Club* members worked alongside us helping to put gazebos up and generally supporting us.

For the formal opening, Gwenda Newton, Chair of the *Friends of Nuttall Park*, who had worked so hard to see the building of the bandstand through to its

completion, and Brenda Richards of the Heritage Society accompanied the Mayor and her consort on to the bandstand.

Gwenda delivered the opening speech, welcoming everyone to Nuttall Park and to the 2023 official opening of “this beautiful bandstand”. She added, “I would like to thank all the people who have in any way helped to make today’s opening possible. It is good to see some of them here and their support has been invaluable. *Besses o’ th’ Barn Brass Band* and *Rossendale Ukulele Band* are waiting to entertain you and you can see the various stalls where food and drink are available. Your generous donations today will help to support *Bury Hospice*.” She handed over to The Worshipful Mayor of Bury, Councillor Sandra Walmsley, who officially opened the bandstand.



Photo
by Barry
Aldous

The formalities ended with the playing of the National Anthem.

However, the major event of the day could be said to be the first concert on the new bandstand, which more than compensated for the weather. Stirring music played by *Besses o’ th’ Barn Brass Band* and the cheerful sound of the *Rossendale Ukulele Band* were the perfect antidote.

Nuttall Park itself was given to the people of Ramsbottom in 1928 by Lieutenant Colonel A.T. Porritt, a prominent and generous local mill owner.

It was a year later he added a bandstand, much to the delight of local people, who often came to listen to the bands after working hard in the mills all week.



Colonel Porritt opening Nuttall Park July 1928 - RHSBA-1593

Unfortunately, the metal structure of Colonel Porritt's bandstand was removed in the 1950s but the stone plinth remained and our regular newsletter readers will remember that the Society was involved in its repair and restoration. Nuttall Park's new bandstand has been modelled on the original, whose roof and uprights were removed seventy years ago. Since so few photographs remain of the old one, virtually no-one knew what it should look like. However, those who have now seen the new bandstand have all expressed delight with its smart and attractive appearance. It is a great tribute to both the Porritt family, the original benefactors and to those who have worked so hard to overcome delays and problems, to build its replacement.

Restoring the bandstand to its former glory was instigated by *Friends of Nuttall Park* and *Ramsbottom Heritage Society* and has been done in partnership with Bury Council. Work began on the new bandstand in 2021 and has recently been completed by a Derbyshire company, Leander Architectural, who also created the castings.

It is expected that there will be regular band concerts and other groups and individuals will be encouraged to use it as a platform on which to entertain the community. It is a wonderful addition to the facilities in Nuttall Park and we are looking forward to the events it will host in the coming months and years.

Kate Slingsby



Photo taken by John Leyland in August

Who knew?

After Colonel Porritt donated the bandstand for Nuttall Park in 1929, there were two bandstands in Ramsbottom. It was reported in the RUDC minutes of 2nd July 1925 (before the Peel Brow housing estate was built), that the East Ward Band Stand Committee had placed the contract for provision of a bandstand in the Peel Brow Playing Fields. It was resolved that the Council bear the cost of preparing the foundation for the stand.

RAWSON'S RAKE, RAMSBOTTOM

Tour of Britain 2023

Hundreds of people lined Rawson's Rake, also known as The Rake, on Sunday 3rd September 2023 waiting to cheer on Tour of Britain cyclists, who were about to tackle one of the toughest hill climbs in the country. Accompanied by their support cars and motor cyclists - apparently there was one motor cyclist to every five cycles in the race - competitors had ridden along the part of their long-distance cycle route through Edenfield from Rochdale, southwards along Whalley Road and down Peel Brow. Arriving in Ramsbottom they were welcomed by the sounding of a whistle from a steam train.

Parts of Greater Manchester were hosting Stage 1 of the prestigious eight-stage Tour of Britain professional cycle race, with one of the day's two designated *King of the Mountain* climbs being Rawson's Rake. Designated as a category one challenge, The Rake is perhaps Lancashire's most famous ascent, thanks to regular appearances in the Tour of Britain and also the championships of the Ramsbottom Rake Cycling Hill Climb time trials.



Photo by Dorothy Moss - 1993 catalogued HPC-93EV-014

The British National Hill Climb Championship has been held annually since 1944, with the location varying year on year. It has involved an ascent of The Rake previously in 1999, 2005 and 2012. The hill climb course is only 875 metres long. But, though short, it makes up for it in steepness – reaching a maximum gradient of 22%. It starts at lamp post No. 3 outside the public library in Carr Street and proceeds via Carr Street, Tanners Street and Rawson's Rake to finish at the lamp post opposite Exeter Cottage, Chapel Lane, Holcombe approximately 120 yards before the junction with Helmshore Road.

An extract from the Ramsbottom Urban District Council's April 1925 surveyor's report reads,

The Secondary Road, that is the road leading by way of Bury New Road, Bridge Street, Carr Street, and the Rake, and affording means of communication between Manchester Road and Helmshore Road has involved a total expenditure, exclusive of scavenging, of £274. A further expenditure for tarspraying on this road has cost £29.

However, we are told that up to the 1950s The Rake was still surfaced with small stones rather than tarmac. Even so, back in 1929, Bury Cycling Club are said to have started a challenge to see who could ride the furthest up The Rake without falling off! As more managed to ride to the top, it became a test of who could climb the fastest. After World War II, as preparation for the National Hill Climb Championships, competitors would frequently train on The Rake. It became an open event in 1962 and has increased in popularity until, for example, 77 riders took part in the time trials in 2019. In 2012, the road was resurfaced just before the competition.

In 1991, these hill climb trials, organised by the Lancashire Road Club received sponsorship from local businesses for their own event with prizes for winning considered to be "not bad for two minutes work"! On 15th October 2023 the Rake once again became the focal point for cyclists from all over the north west when the LRC held their event.





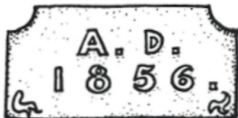
Photos dated 1998 courtesy of Ramsbottom Library

The Rake's History

Both Foot o'th'Rake and Tanners Lower Tenement are recorded on the 1795 Survey of the Township of Tottington Lower End. The Old Rectory on The Rake or Chapel Lane was built on the site of the old Courthouse after its demolition in 1864 and has a datestone (1856) on the lintel of an upstairs window. There is also a plaque above the front porch.

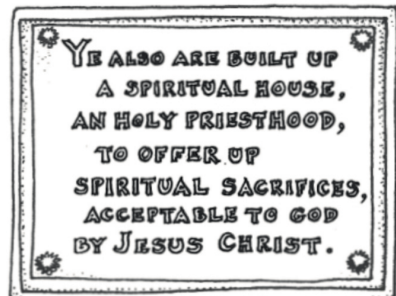
1856

The Old Rectory, The Rake or Chapel Lane.



Lintel of upstairs window

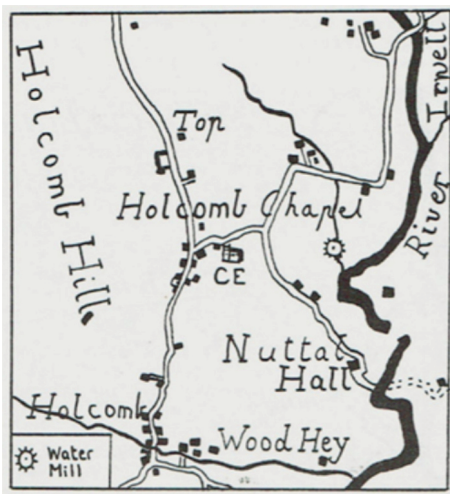
1839 - 10.1.1917
Rev. Henry Dowsett writer of
'Notes on Holcombe' and
'Holcombe Long Ago' lived at
The Old Rectory 1875-1905



Taken from *Stories in Stone - Datestones in Ramsbottom* by John B. Taylor -

Other buildings by The Rake with datestones include 1, Rawson's Rake (DOMJAC Jan 88) and Sundial House (1989), postal address 284, Dundee Lane, Foot o'th' Rake. Also, Hume Elliot's 1893 book has an image of an old glass pane, which had been removed from an old Foot o' th' Rake house, with the date 1664 on it.

The Rake's origins are lost in Dark Age time. It was already centuries old when William Yates surveyed Lancashire in 1783, and published 1786. The inset (below, left) is based on the map's Ramsbottom area. By 1818, when Christopher Greenwood published his more precise county map (below right), two turnpike roads had sliced across the district, relegating the old lanes and trackways to mere traces of the old routes.



The Rake's transition from major arterial road to minor byway. The two new turnpike roads can be recognised by their one thickened black edge and (long-vanished) numbered mileposts. The older route from Bury northwards towards Edenfield is now represented by Holcombe Old Road, The Rake, Carr Street, Bridge Street, Crow Lane and Factory Street.

The Rake, with its gradient of very nearly 1 in 4, survives today as part of the original west to east link track which connected the main route north (Holcombe Old Road/Moor Road) with the valley bottom. Traffic for the Edenfield direction split either left at Foot o' th' Rake; or right into Dundee Lane, for Nuttall and Walmersley. The 1783 map shows that the town of Ramsbottom did not then exist. Until the late 18th Century any human population of the area lived on higher drier land at Holcombe and moved around following higher level trackways. Holcombe was the hub of local settlement and therefore transport routes.

The trackways replaced by the new toll roads were truly ancient, developing over as many centuries as people travelled the area. The Rake, however, had evolved millennia before anyone thought of travelling any distance out of their home area.

In his excellent history, *The Lost Forest of Holcombe*, Mark Fletcher has summarised how The Rake was just one of several ancient livestock routes:

Since the medieval period, the vastness of Holcombe Moor had served as an 'intercommon', where the rough pasture could be used in the summertime by people from the adjoining townships of Tottington Lower and Higher Ends, Quarlton, Edgworth, and Musbury, seeking to feed their cattle and sheep, so as to conserve their own scanty lowland resources for the winter months. Similar arrangements existed elsewhere in England, wherever there was high moorland in close proximity to lower areas.

In order to drive livestock from lowland settlements onto the upland pastures, the Holcombe Forest tenants used trackways known as 'rakes' (or 'strakes' in south-west England). Everyone knows of 'The Rake' which connects Ramsbottom to Holcombe, but how many have heard of Chapel Rake, Green Rake, Long Rake, The Rakes, and Stanley Rake? All of these 'rakes' run steeply uphill onto the Holcombe Moor plateau, from the valley of the Holcombe Brook.

Indeed *Rake* had a double meaning in Middle English, *steep track*, but also *rough pasture for sheep and cattle*. It is probably this far longer use of our Rake for animal movement that has gouged the track into a deep *sunken way* or *hollow way*.

Yates map shows the old trackway continuing down the present Tanners Street and Carr Street towards Crow Trees Farm and adjoining buildings (known as Lower Ramsbottom), probably represented by the two black squares at the right-angle left turn in the road to the north. St Paul's Church now stands on the site of the farmhouse and on its meadow.

When the textile industry grew during the 18th Century creating a need to transport much larger loads of raw materials and finished goods, turnpike trusts were set up to improve existing roads, build miles of new road and take responsibility for maintenance. Although the ordinary horse-drawn vehicles which used these roads did have brakes, very heavy loads sometimes had additional horses behind to slow the vehicle down on steep hills.

Winter Weather 1865



On 9th January 1865 Mr. Henry Hunt, the first Master of Holcombe school wrote, "As may be expected attendance figures seem to have been much affected by the weather and sickness. In the winter heavy snowfalls, frost and fog resulted in very low attendances as many of the children were unable to make the journey from outlying farms, or up the Rake, and often the children were sent home early so that they might get home in the light." Heavy rain and violent storms are also described and on some occasions resulted in the children being kept back until the weather eased."

Runaways

Fred Hanson, recalling some of his childhood memories from between the wars, remembers that a steam roller once ran away down the Rake.

Photo taken from:

*Let's look at
Ramsbottom
by
Kenneth Beetson
and
Roger Shilton*



(We think it is likely that the incident is the subject of this photograph.) Fred knew the driver, Bill Markham, whose job in the 1930s at the age of 18 or 19, involved driving the RUDC's steam roller. (Fred lived at Carr Fold and Bill lived nearby, next to the Rose and Crown on the site of the present car park.) Fred's account of the runaway, which he said was talked about for decades afterwards:

"One day when Bill was working on the road - the Rake with its very severe gradient of 1 in 4 – the steam roller ran away. There were possibly still one or two houses immediately opposite the bottom of the Rake. Bill, who boxed at Belle Vue about 1935-8 as "The Unknown (masked)", ran to the front of the steam roller and braced himself and gradually held it until his mates scotched it – tremendous performance! It was reported in the *Ramsbottom Observer*. Four yards short of the house! I don't know!! Bill was about 16 stone when 16 years old. His mother said he had 12 muffins with ham and six scones for lunch."

Occasionally, there are still incidents on the Rake. The road is narrow with very little "wiggle room" or even a footpath. Along the wall right by the roadside is a bannister-style handrail for pedestrians. A car driver had a lucky escape in 2019, when his vehicle was wrecked with a front wheel torn from its axle, after sliding down the icy roadway. Warning signs are now in place and in bad conditions there have been closures.

Sledging

Ernest Hutchinson described the sledging route in his memoirs. "We would spend all night sledging down the Rake from Holcombe, down to Rostrons Road and sometimes getting down to the Market Place via the little ginnel and steps that go into Carr Street. Then we would walk all the way back to Holcombe to do it again."

Fred Hanson tells us more, "The toboggan run down to the Newmarket Inn, which was at 3, Market Place in premises that were later occupied by the Community Education Service (*since July 2023 The Cocoa Tree chocolate shop and café - Editor*) must have been around half a mile long! Some of the lads, however were even more daring. If the station gates were closed, we'd hit them. Otherwise, we'd come to a stop just where you turn in for the cricket club!" At the time Bridge Street was often busy with traffic and on a bus route!

Nor was this precarious pastime a male-only affair. Amy Greenhalgh (nee Entwistle) reminisced about a childhood just off Carr Street and later 'up Tanners'. They would sledge right from Holcombe Church "down on the left hand side of the Rake over the top of Rostrons Road then you shot across the road down the right-hand side over Callender Street and ended up at the Newmarket. But you only did it once because you were too buggered to walk back up again!"

Ramsbottom Radio Relay Station, which was a cabin at the bottom of the Rake, was managed by a Mr Monks. During an outbreak of measles on 16th October 1932 Fred Hanson and his brothers were collected from school and sent home! Fred was 13 years old but never went back. Having to leave school enabled him to get a job before Christmas at the Radio Relay Station. He writes, "Inside were two large benchlike tables, each about six by five feet, with a radio receiving and sending set on each, a mass of valves, condensers, resistors, wires, amplifiers etc. Wires ran from these to poles outside and from there via poles down to Bridge Street, covering Ramsbottom, Shuttleworth, Edenfield, Ewood Bridge, Helmshore and Summerseat. Mr Monks supervised at the relay station twice a

week. There was him and me and four polemen, and a Mrs Kay who collected round the area.

Wireless sets were in their infancy in the 1930s. We put a speaker in a house and ran two leads in from poles to a two-way switch on your window sill with your speaker, provided for your choice - Home Service and one other, charge one shilling a week. Good money, 15s 6d a week and 5s 0d extra for every customer you got. I got a shilling a week pocket money. I started work there in November 1932 and worked for 10 weeks. It was a short walk from Carr Fold - I kept the cabin clean, supplied wire, poles, nuts, bolts etc to the workmen as required. Kept records of same and when Australian cricket was on, was there before 7am. An interesting job."

The Well at the bottom of the Rake

On the left at the bottom of Rawson's Rake, there was a well in the wall. Before 1838, when the Radcliffe and Bury Waterworks Company was established, the people of Ramsbottom relied for domestic water supplies on the River Irwell and the area's many springs and wells. The river was often polluted and unfit for domestic use. Water obtained from springs and wells was not always pure either.

Local Cycling's Early Days



In this locality bicycles had first begun to make an appearance in the 1850s and, as they were improved, cycling became a popular hobby.

Cycle Club 1859

The Cycle Club in Ramsbottom was active in raising money for Ramsbottom's Aitken Memorial and Jubilee Cottage Hospital, which opened in 1899. They supported it and other district nursing funds by organising an annual Rose Queen Festival, which was also known as the Cycle Parade.

CYCLES CYCLES.—Vertical Feed Sewing Machines (Best on earth). New Machines fixed on old stands for £3 15s. Filter Rapides Bassinettes, Pianos, Organs, Wringers, &c., &c Safeties £7 10s. 0d, Warranted; Do., Spring Frame (splendid riding), £10 10s. District agent for the famous New Rapid, Ormonde, and Rocket Cycles. Any Cycles supplied. Cheapest House in the trade for everything. Cushion tyres £9 0s. 0d., Pneumatic do., £12 0s. 0d.—J. HALLIWELL, Edenfield, and Bacup Market.

Advert from Ramsbottom Observer Friday 18th September 1891

In 1891 the following results of long-distance cycling competitions were reported in the *Ramsbottom Observer*.

15th May 1891:

CYCLING – MR. H.J. WHITWORTH WON THE LONG-DISTANCE MEDAL

On Monday last Mr. H. J. Whitworth of Irwell Vale won the Gold centre Long Distance Medal (12 hours) of the Rossendale Bicycle and Tricycle Club, by riding 125 miles in 11 hours 55 minutes on Lancashire and Cheshire roads. Mr Whitworth rode a Beeston pneumatic tricycle, weighing 42lbs.

18th September 1891:

A CLEVER CYCLING FEAT - On Monday September 14th H. J. Whitworth of Irwell Vale, won the bronze long distance medal of the Catford C. C. by riding from Old Trafford (Manchester) to Shrewsbury and back as far as Hanley, a distance of 108 miles in 11 hours 58 minutes on a pneumatic tricycle, rain falling almost the whole time, which made the roads exceedingly heavy.



During his long career Henry Whitworth won many trophies. Along with his brother-in-law, Herbert Ruthven, also of Irwell Vale, Henry was an original member when the Rossendale Bicycle and Tricycle Club was founded in 1878.

H.J. Whitworth
With kind permission from
John Simpson.

References

- Holcombe School Log Book 1865
- RHS News Magazine number 60 "A Young Boy's Recreation in the 1920s"
- Andrew Todd, *Ramsbottom Reminiscences Volumes 1 and 2* (2022)
- RHS News Magazine 15, 27 and 51
- John B Taylor, *Stories in Stone – Datestones in Ramsbottom* (1966)
- Reverend W. Hume Elliot, *The Country and Church of the Cheeryble Brothers* (1893)
- John Simpson, *A History of Edenfield and District* (2003)
- Mark Fletcher, *The Lost Forest of Holcombe*, Ramsbottom Heritage Society, Facebook group (in 8 parts, Feb-April 2020)

LOCAL RESEARCH UPDATE AUTUMN 2023

The Ramsbottom Heritage Society's Collection is on permanent loan to Bury Archives. The Heritage Society cannot offer a research service.

Free access to the Ancestry database is available in all Bury Council's libraries.

Bury Archives and Local Studies, Moss Street, Bury, BL9 0DG

Access is BY APPOINTMENT ONLY. Please contact us in advance to arrange a visit on 0161 253 6782 or email us via archives@bury.gov.uk

OPENING HOURS

Monday – Closed

Tuesday-Friday – 10.00am-1pm and 1.30pm-4.30pm

Every Saturday – 10.00am-1.00pm

Catalogues of collections and the extensive range of records, (including Ramsbottom's) held at Bury Archives are at www.bury.gov.uk/10620. Local history items can be searched by using the Library Catalogue available on the same webpage.

The Bury Archives blog is at www.buryculture.wordpress.com

Lancashire Family History and Heraldry Society

Society information is at www.lfhhs.org.uk. Email contact for the local branch is via bury@lfhhs.org.uk.

Ramsbottom Library and Adult Learning Centre, Carr Street BL0 9AE

LIBRARY OPENING HOURS AND ACCESS – now back to normal:

Tuesdays from 10am to 4.30pm

Wednesdays from 10am to 4.30pm

Thursdays from 12.30pm to 7pm

Fridays from 10am to 4.30pm

Saturdays from 9.30am to 1pm

Computer access may be booked by calling 0161 253 5352 but booking is not essential.

The IT suite boasts a visually impaired and disabled friendly workstation.

Collections e.t.c.

Back copies of the Ramsbottom Observer 1890-1950 are on film for use on a microfiche reader.

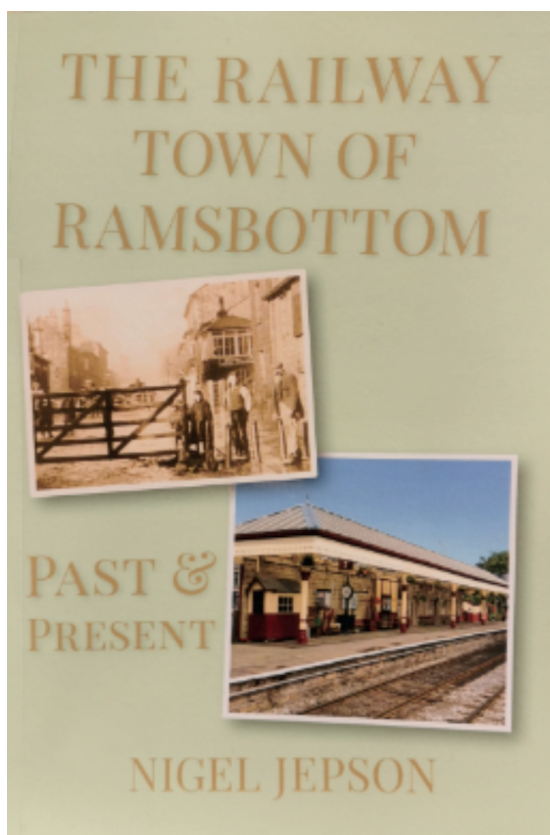
Much of the Ramsbottom local collection of the late Rev R R Carmyllie, local census returns and several filing drawers of local newscuttings and booklets.

There is a drop-in Family History Surgery every 3rd Thursday from 1pm to 4.15pm.

Nigel Jepson, a Heritage Society committee member, and an author of several books about local history, including the histories of Ramsbottom Cricket and Ramsbottom United Football clubs, as well as the life and times of Peter Murray McDouall entitled Ramsbottom's Revolutionary Doctor, has written a book called

The Railway Town of Ramsbottom - Past and Present

The book, which has 148 pages, includes text taken from articles in previous News Magazines as well as photographs from the Heritage Archive.



This book tells the fascinating story of how Ramsbottom became a railway town in the 1840s after a group of local businessmen met in a pub in Bury to set up a company which became known as the East Lancashire Railway.

The various ups and downs in the process of building the line connecting Ramsbottom with Bury and Rawtenstall are described here using a variety of sources, including newspaper reports of an 'alarming riot' of railway workers at the Grant Arms.

The arrival of the railway brought immense benefits as far as local industry and the town's growing population were concerned. However, the 'Beeching Cuts' of the 1960s had telling consequences for the existing East Lancashire rail network. The impact on Ramsbottom is gauged by exploring the views and reactions of local people as well as those in Summerseat where police had to be brought in to suppress protest action.

Although the demolition of Ramsbottom Station in the early 70s seemed a nail in the coffin for its railway town status, a brave campaign, spearheaded by the East Lancashire Railway Preservation Society (ELRPS) was already underway aimed at re-opening the Bury-Ramsbottom line.

Against the odds, victory for this brave band of rail enthusiasts came about in 1987 and marked by the re-opening of a heritage line between Bury and Ramsbottom. The development was seen as 'a heaven-sent opportunity', galvanising the life of the town as a whole. First-hand accounts are used to highlight the significant impact railways have had on people's lives up to the present day.

The book is priced at £10 and is available from

Ramsbottom Heritage website and local outlets, including Hearts for Homes, Park Farm Tea Room and Bury Tourist Office.