

Saddleworth Historical Society Bulletin



Volume 13 Number 3

Autumn 1983

BULLETIN

OF

SADDLEWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Volume 13

No. 3

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1983

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TELEGRAMS FROM DELPH
GLIMPSES OF A SADDLEWORTH BRANCH RAILWAY

In 1969, the signal-box called 'Delph Junction' at the spot near Moorgate, Uppermill, where the old branch line to Delph left the Stalybridge - Huddersfield main line, was demolished. Revealed in the process were some old, faded telegrams which had evidently lain hidden in the structure for many years. The barely legible messages, forwarded here in their passage between Delph, Greenfield and beyond, give detailed information on the day-to-day operation of the branch and show the human side of a quiet backwater of the mighty London and North Western Railway Company on the eve of the First World War.

'My yard full'. 'No room'. Such were common reports from Mr. Buckley, the station-master at Delph, about congestion in the goods yard adjacent to his station. Buckley would often reply in these terms to enquiries from the Wagon Controller at the Diggle marshalling yards as to the quantity and distribution of rolling stock on the Delph branch. Just before noon on the 9th April 1912, Buckley sent the Controller the following list:

'15 Yorkshires
5 Midland Railway and
17 Private (owner) via Buxton
8 Great Central at Delph
12 Midland via Buxton at Bankfield
12 Yorkshires at Chaddertons.'

Of this substantial total of 69 wagons, the 'Yorkshires' would certainly have been for coal for domestic use and for the steam engines of the textile mills near the line. The 'Bankfield' mentioned was a woollen mill with its own private siding from Wall Hill. The coal wagons at 'Chaddertons' would be in the siding serving Bridge Mill, hard by the halt at Dobcross. The remains of the coal drops can still be seen here. Other local manufacturers received their coal via this branch. On the 2nd April 1912, 5 wagons of coal arrived at Delph for despatch to a local mill, whilst on the 14th, 12 wagon loads from West Leigh Colliery were received, the firm of Astbury and Pickford being the Consignee.

The branch's obvious importance as a transporter of coal was supplemented by its use for bringing in other raw materials, such as kegs of potash from St. Helens for the use of William Buckley Ltd. in Delph. There are many references to the carriage of wool. On the 18th April 1912,

'Farnhill and Hirst 6 bales....hence 7.15 p.m.
Bradford to Hillhouse (Huddersfield) yesterday'

Local firms despatched their finished goods by train, adding to the brisk traffic over the line. As an example, Delph informed 'Parcels, Stockport' on the 21st August 1911:

'10 bales felts, 7 Hinchley, 3 Atherstone loading
you for transfer 2.5 train today'.

For some firms, the line was the first link in an export chain. This message was wired to Buckley from an official in Manchester on the 28th August 1911:

'....accept shipping goods for Liverpool, Southampton also London
....You can freight Garston traffic.'

The smooth working of the branch must therefore have been important for the local economy. It was probably with some chagrin that Buckley wired Crewe on the morning of the 19th April 1912:

'At 8.35 a.m. 5 empty coal wagons derailed in siding caused by wagon running back out of No.1 and coming in contact with train moving out of No.2 siding. No injuries.....
Curtailement of passenger trains 9.45 a.m. at Greenfield and 10.5 a.m. at Delph'

Most of the morning was occupied in despatching the latest reports to various officials at Manchester, Crewe and even head office at Euston. No doubt Buckley was relieved to wire 'All clear 12.20 p.m.' and remove this quiet corner of the system from the spotlight. Perhaps it was mere coincidence that Manchester wired six days later:

'....coal stock - posters re none liability of company in case of delay and damage to goods to be taken down at once'.

The previous year had brought more protracted disruption to services, the summer of 1911 having been marked by a countrywide wave of strikes from which Delph and its railway were not immune. Throughout July and August of that year, the Delph Junction signalman was constantly forwarding messages commencing 'owing to labour troubles' and detailing some delay or other arising from disputes. As early as the 4th July, a Manchester official was citing this reason for his inability to guarantee delivery of any goods Buckley might despatch to the city. Several weeks later, the same official had to send an almost identical message informing the station-master on the afternoon of the 8th August that:

'Owing to labour troubles you must not accept any traffic for Liverpool. Accept urgent perishables to be carted by traders themselves and without any liability for delay.'

The luckless Buckley had to 'advise traders' of the poor service his company had to offer. By the 21st August, the end of the disputes was in sight for Manchester ordered Buckley:

'Wire me at 7.0 p.m. number of men at your station who have not yet handed in their names for resuming duty and that of men still out by post.'

Any recriminations were forestalled by Buckley's report at 9.35 p.m.:

'Labour troubles instructions understood. All men returned.'

Despite its frequency, and with the exception of the brief interruption occasioned by the derailment in April 1912, the Delph branch passenger service seems to have caused Buckley and his staff few problems, judging by the almost complete absence of reference to it in the telegrams. One exceptional working did cause a slight headache, however, this being an excursion from Delph to Belle Vue on the 23rd August 1911. After its departure, Buckley wired Manchester that:

'....excursion train too long to run (engine) round.
Change or reduce before return journey.'

His plea fell on deaf ears and Buckley had to seek the assistance of his colleagues at Greenfield:

'Belle Vue ex Longsight wires owing to full train cannot reduce. Reduce at your station before sending here tonight....'

Seventy years on and almost thirty years on from its closure, it is hardly credible that an afternoon outing to Manchester could attract enough passengers to over-tax the capacity of Delph station.

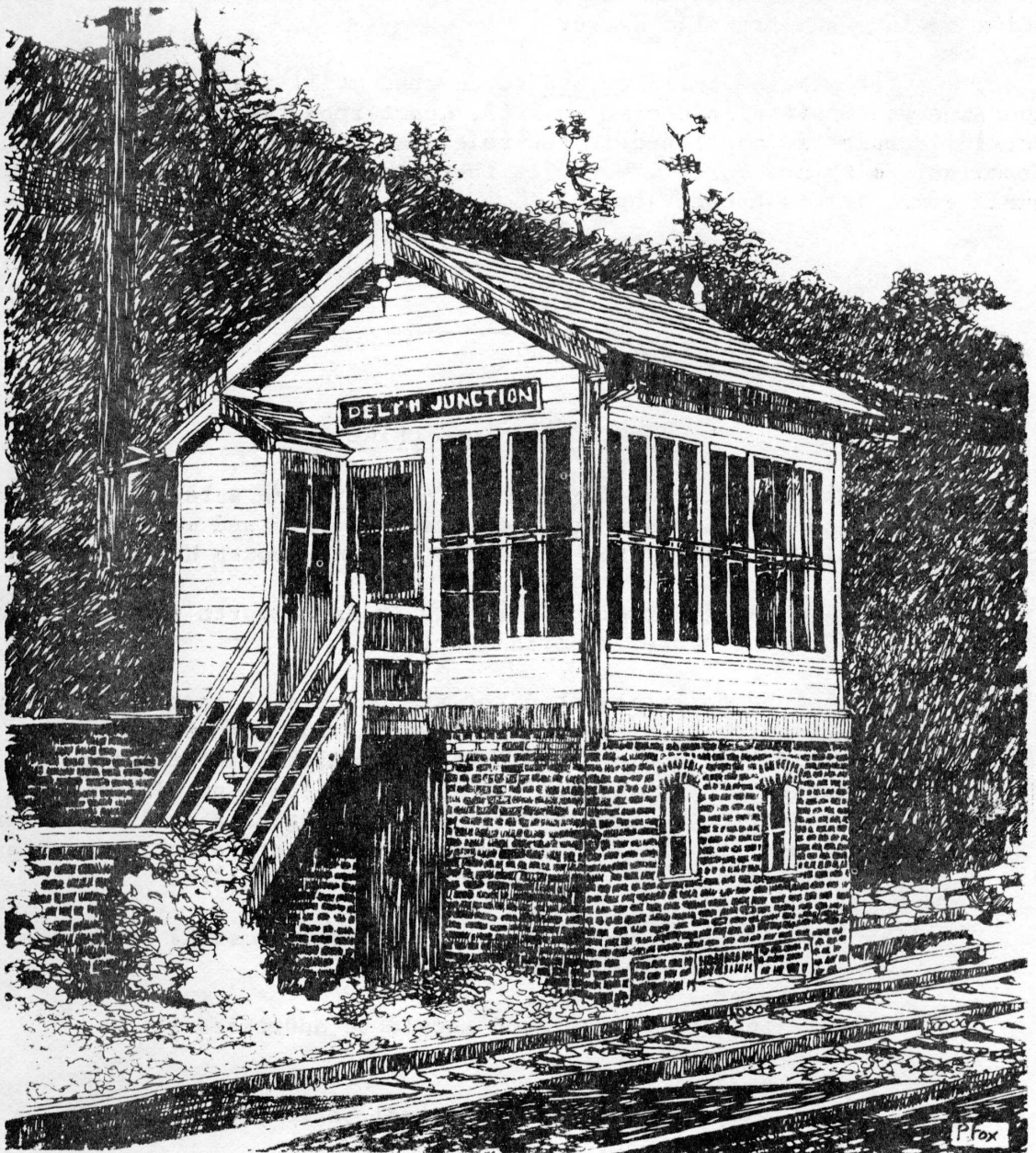
Much of Buckley's work was routine, such as the provision of sheets for covering the contents of the numerous open wagons then in use. Stalybridge seems to have had an insatiable appetite for Delph's stock of these and was for ever hounding Buckley for more. This message of July 1913 is typical:

'despatch all possible sheets today.'

Occasionally a note of desperation crept in, as on this undated telegram:

'every possible sheet. Matter most serious'.

The parsimony of the railway company also made demands on Buckley's time. Each week he was required to inform Manchester of the quantity of coal owned by the company on his premises. On the 8th of March 1912 he wired back:



Delph Junction Signal Box

'....about 3 tons on hand for passenger station, cabin and Goods.'

A week later, Manchester wired:

'unless you hear to the contrary no weekend watching necessary.'

Evidently the inhabitants of Delph could now be trusted not to pilfer the company's coal. The company's careful husbanding of resources is further illustrated by this directive from Manchester on the 29th of March 1912:

'Yard sweepings allow Syke and Campinoll remove all at 2/6 per ton.'

Spillages from the large number of coal wagons handled at Delph obviously built up into a worthwhile asset.

The station building and goods shed still stand at Delph although the line was officially closed in 1963. Apart from the station-master, Mr. Buckley, employees mentioned in the telegrams include Messrs Chappell, Hall, Thomkins, Smith and Purser. No doubt there were others whose service to a small community is not forgotten.

Michael Fox.

BERNARD BARNES MEMORIAL FUND

A substantial sum of money has already been subscribed to the Bernard Barnes Memorial Fund. Its aims are threefold and were outlined in a recent resolution passed by the Committee of Saddleworth Historical Society.

- i. An annual lecture to be held in Saddleworth entitled 'The Bernard Barnes Memorial Lecture'.
- ii. A fund be established for the purpose of encouraging historical research relating to Saddleworth. The precise objectives of this fund would be left wide but might take the form of contributing towards the cost of a piece of historical research, helping towards the funding of a publication or assisting with the finance of an investigation such as a building survey or archaeological excavation.
- iii. In addition, it is proposed to create a small permanent memorial to Bernard.

Any further contributions to the fund should be addressed to:

John Murray
Chairman, Saddleworth Historical Society,
134, Oldham Road,
Denshaw,
Oldham OL3 5RP.

Please make cheques payable to Saddleworth Historical Society (Bernard Barnes Memorial Fund).

Some Local Settlement Certificates 1697-1741

The basis of the Elizabethan poor law system was the obligation of each parish to provide for its own paupers. Successive Acts of Parliament sought to strengthen the rules so that poor people were less able to move to another parish where they might become a burden on the community. One of the most disliked poor law Acts was that of 1697 which required a pauper moving to another parish to present a certificate signed by the Overseers of his home parish guaranteeing to take him back should he or his family subsequently be in need of poor relief. Although no such certificates have come to light in Saddleworth, the poor law records of neighbouring parishes often contain details of individuals of Saddleworth origin.

Joseph Whitehead, the Oldham Assistant Overseer who died in 1902, was a great collector of local books and papers. Amongst his vast collection purchased by Oldham Free Library after his death was a bundle of poor law documents handed to him in 1876 by the then Clerk of Oldham Parish Church. These are now in Oldham's Local Studies Library and include a book of settlement certificates dating from 1697 to 1741. The book is endorsed: "This Book belongs to the Town of Oldham in the County of Lancaster: it was bought to enter Certificates into: for paupers that came out of other parishes and towns: it cost sixteen pence:" Its index contains references to 208 pages of certificates, but only 138 of these were copied into the book. In this abstract of the Saddleworth entries, the first page has been transcribed in full to illustrate the form of the document; thereafter only names, places and dates have been extracted.

(2)

Sadleworth

Certificates

To the Churchwardens and Overseers of the poor
West Ryd: of the parish and Townshipp of Oldham in the
Com Ebor: County of Lancaster - These;

We the Churchwardens and Overseers of the poor of the Townshipp of Quick in Sadleworth in the Country of York do hereby Certifie you and all other persons where it may concern that we do Acknowledge and own Peter Bradbury and his family, Alice Wylde: Elizabeth Whitehead and her Children and Mary Schofield to be Inhabitants legally settled in our Townshipp of Quick in Sadleworth aforesaid. And we do hereby undertake to receive and provide for them and every of them according to Act of Parliament in the case made and provided as our Inhabitants Aforesaid when and as they shall become chargeable or be forced to Ask Reliefe. In Witness whereof we have hereunto sett our hands and seals the fifth Day of July Anno RRs Willim tertii dei grat Angle &c nono Anno Domini 1697.

Sealed and signed in presence of

Daniel Whitehead)) Churchwardens
Henry Buckley)

John Buckley
Tho: Bradbury

We whose names are hereunder
written two of his Maties Justices
of the peace for the said Ryding
do allow of this Certificate

Thomas Booth)
) overseers
Edward Ednsworth)

his mark

Tho: Horton
Gilbt Rigby

(27)

Mary Shaw of Sadleworth the wife of Thomas Shaw and her child or children if she have any to come into and remain in Oldham with her father Edmund Taylor [Keverlow crossed out]

11 Jan. 1699

(54)

James Buckley of Sadleworth linnen webster & Elizabeth Buckley his wife

6 Jan. 1702

(55)

Elizabeth Wood of Sadleworth spinster is dersirous for her better Employment and convenience of living to dwell for some time in Oldham.

13 Sep. 1703

(65)

John Kershaw of Sadleworth clothier & Elizabeth his wife

10 Jan. 1703

(71)

Miles Mayall of Sadleworth, Anna Mayall his wife, John Mayall and Robert Mayall his children, Samuel Wrigley his servant

25 Sep. 1704

(85)

Phillip Buckley of Sadleworth Anne his wife and Josiah their son

20 Apr. 1708

(92)

Jno. Wood of Sadleworth clothier Anne his wife and Jennet his daughter

27 Oct. 1711

(93)

Isaac Hall of Sadleworth Anne his wife, Alice, Mary, Anne and James their children

16 Sep. 1710

(101)

Edmd Hilton of Sadleworth Anne his wife Martha and Sara their daughters

17 Jul. 1714

(103)

Josiah Whitehead at Little end Sadleworth Mary his wife Mary his daughter and Daniel his son

26 May 1714

(108)

Jonathan Horrox Anne his wife and all their children Sadleworth

n.d

(111)

Edward Mallalew of Sadleworth Anne his wife Anna Martha Mary Sara and Hannah their daughters

18 Apr. 1719

(153)

Robert Buckley Jane his wife Jas. & Anne their children Saddleworth n.d.

(155)

Myles Scholefield his wife and children Saddleworth n.d.

(170)

James Platt from Saddleworth n.d.

(173)

Thomas Horrocks from Saddleworth n.d.

(176)

James Scholefield from Saddleworth n.d.

(185)

Josiah Buckley from Saddleworth n.d.

(194)

James Broadbent his wife and children from Saddleworth n.d.

(206)

Nathan Holden his wife and children from Saddleworth n.d.

(208)

Joseph Wrigley his wife and children from Saddleworth n.d.

J.M.H.

TRIP TO VIROCONIUM, WROXETER ROMAN CITY AND LLANFAIR CAEREINION

11 JUNE 1983

It was too much to hope for our wishes for a brilliant blue sky came to naught, and we pulled out of the car-park at 8.45 a.m. with an unending drizzle pinning itself to the coach windows. Gathering speed on French Top sure enough Seva's Hollow on Warlow Pike was obscured completely by the father and mother of all moor-grime curtains. So Seva was right after all. We bowled along towards Haddons, and I thought of all the Romans who must have tramped the lonely way over by Bucton Castle, eventually arriving at the river ford in Greenfield. We too have reasons to be proud of the Roman occupation.

Books and pamphlets relating to the purpose of the journey were passed round the coach, stirring our awakening interest in the days activities. Threading our way through the outer confines of the city, we hoped once more that gradually the skies would clear. Various stories could be heard of how these things had occurred in the past. Still the clouds lowered and held down our spirits.

The roads widened out and sure enough the Wrekin hove in sight, that well-known beacon used by the trainee pilots in their solo flights. Eventually the coach driver drove his vehicle like a chariot into the Wroxeter Museum car-park, and thankfully we drifted down to ground level.

The whole concept of the museum is a fine idea, setting out so well the story of Wroxeter, its beginnings, the thriving middle period, and how the site suffered a decline. This account I found far more interesting than looking at the exhibits. I became so involved that when I heard the lecturer begin his fascinating delineation of the Roman occupation, I really forgot about our own coach, and had to apologise for being late.

Onwards to Shrewsbury and lunchtime. Shortly afterwards we set course for Welshpool, where the narrow gauge railway engine was hopefully raising steam. Quite a disappointment to find that most of the engines on station were in the process of being serviced, and we had to make do with diesel.

This setback was short-lived, for once aboard and rattling merrily away, all care was banished and we began to enjoy ourselves.

With a superb musical note the engine whistle began to dominate the occasion, it almost spoke to us of the different warnings it had to disseminate.

The wild life on each side of the track was in great abundance. As the wheels began to squeal round the odd bend, rabbits, pheasants, and lambs gave us surprised looks, almost like a Welsh Water-ship Down. There were huge drifts of wild flowers in one spot, and ferny groves appeared from time to time. The distance between the two points of Welshpool and Llanfair Caereinion is exactly eight miles, and the engine pulls up to a central point, a steady gradient in fact.

From thence it begins its descent, and the squealing becomes more pronounced. We had a word with the guard, cum ticket collector, cum opener of level-crossing gates, and general factotum. He said he was born in Altrincham, now lived in Lymm, and wouldn't miss the weekends in Wales for anything. What a happy fellow he was. The arrival at Llanfair was heralded by a whistling kettle, what a lovely sound when ones mouth is parched with conversing too much.

We partook of a meaty snack, and bought books for presents at the railway stall. I wandered down amongst the disassembled engines, and noted their origins, before being brought here. Sierra Leone, Finland, Austria, and one from Gorton Tank. What a descent from these lovely, romantic sounding names is Gorton Engine Works Manchester. Still we must be proud of our nearby city. She has been famous in the past, and may be so again.

Sadly we entrained, for we were leaving a beautiful part of the Welsh Valleys. They have a magic all their own. En route, I half expected to see Ivor the Engine being chased by his favourite Red Dragon.

Rocking and rolling back to Welshpool, I glimpsed a lovely white house, shyly peeping from behind glades of trees. What lucky owners they must have been to live in such a sylvan spot. We waved farewell to the guard on the platform as he made preparations to return, and once more heaved ourselves into the coach. The weather was still gloomy, and the journey back to Saddleworth pretty uneventful. We climbed out of Ashton, over the Barracks road, and our first sight of Quick stirred our great love and esteem for this dear place named

Saddleworth. A curtain of mist still over-hung Chew Valley and Broadstone Moor, as it has been doing for thousands of years when the climate around the North-West sees fit to close in and dampen every nook and cranny. Despite this we still love the place, and are proud to have been born in its stern, wild, human valleys. We're back home we said, as we descended the coach steps, and made our way to the waiting car.

Many thanks to the organisers for a superb day.

Wilfred and Joyce Ashton

BOOK REVIEW

J.P.W. MALLALIEU 'ON LARKHILL'

J.P.W. Mallalieu. On Lark Hill.

Allison and Busby in association
with Davies-Poynter. pp. 211. £9.95.

Scholar of Trinity, Rugby Blue, President of the Oxford Union, author of a best selling novel, and for thirty four years high principled and high living socialist M.P. for Huddersfield, J.P.W. Mallalieu was by any standards a distinguished man. Has he done himself justice in this fragment of unfinished autobiography? Certainly it reads well, the felicitous phrase of the experienced journalist commands attention as he takes us, at increasing pace, through his career until the publication of his best known book, 'Very Ordinary Seaman' in 1944. Sometimes the phrases are memorable. Take the opening of the book:

'Three wild roads link Yorkshire and Lancashire with the no man's land of Saddleworth.'

The book is studded with entertaining little sketches such as this Sunday morning incident:

'My Uncle George, as the baby of the family, had been indulged in by his parents. He was even allowed to play trains with the hymn books during Sunday morning service until, seeking a touch of verisimilitude for the shunting, he blew a whistle in the middle of a sermon on Predestination.'

Personalities are portrayed in a few deft strokes:

'To all but the most senior boys, the Headmaster, Herbert Henry Hardy, seemed a straight-up-and-down martinet. He was tall and lean. His sentences were short, and his dislikes - one glance could set fire to a Fair Isle jumper or buckle a saxophone - were piercing'.

Probably the best sections of the book are the earliest which deal with Mallalieu's home and education, and certainly it will be the Delph background that attracts the Saddleworth reader, but throughout scenes are painted and periods evoked in a telling phrase or paragraph.

'At Swift and Company, in the Chicago stockyards, I saw 'conveyor belt' production for the first time. A large wheel, with chains dangling from it, slowly revolved above a pen of pigs. In the pen, two men attached chains to the hind leg of a pig, which the wheel then swung out of the pen towards a man with a knife. There the squeals of terror ended in a gush of blood as knife opened throat; and the dead pig was conveyed along a line of men, each a specialist timed to a second in his one job, singeing off the bristled, cutting off the head, dislodging with one turn of the knife a complete set of entrails - until at the end of the line live pig had become leg of pork or tinned ham. In one section, bearded rabbis, walking about with little caps on their heads and blood dripping from their long swords, reminded me of my Old Testament pictures of Abraham; but the goat who led successive lines of sheep up a ramp to the slaughter - at the last second himself took a side turning back for another flock - was strictly New Testament. The stockyard men called him Judas.'

So much is sufficient to establish that this is an eminently readable book. But it is not a deep one. Mallalieu's change from an Asquithian Liberal to a left wing member of the Labour Party is left largely unexplained. The catalyst was his two year visit to America in 1930-32, but a simple description of conditions is not enough to explain why the political principles so strongly enunciated at home and reiterated throughout school and Oxford dissolved so rapidly. Similarly, it is disturbing to read on page 175 that the author was jilted by a girl never previously mentioned. Obviously, introspection is not a feature of the book. Yet even this lack of self analysis is a merit. We are thereby spared pages of self indulgent rhetoric and we are usefully reminded that Mallalieu's wide humanity made him more interested in other people than in himself, in what was happening around him than in what he was doing himself. For this is a modest book. Achievements are passed lightly over and more attention is paid to the scene than to the actor when the author is on stage.

Above all this is a fair book. It would have been easy for a man of avowed socialist principles to have rejected the upper-middle class background from which he came and in which he was educated, and to have used the autobiography to score points off his political opponents. He never does this. Mallalieu deals with his home and his education with sympathy and appreciation. Thus he sums up The Dragon:

'Certainly 'Lynam's' was a stimulating place, both under 'Skipper' and under 'Them'. Its freedoms, the variety of its opportunities, its eagerness to help boys and girls grow as individuals, its intimations of non-conformity made it distinct from most other schools of its time.'

While of Oxford he remarks:

'.... was not a vocational training ground. It fitted us for no particular job. All of it - the calm and the stress, the discussions aimless or purposeful, the competitive bustle, the playing about, even the academic slog - did, it seemed to me, contribute to a self administered education which extended our powers of thought and our capacity to assess.'

This ability to see everything and everybody (except Nevil Chamberlain) with understanding, perhaps the real result of his reading in the School of Modern History which he dismisses so lightly, makes us wish that Mallalieu had been able to provide the same dispassionate insight into the post war period which would have been the subject of his second volume of autobiography.

SADDLEWORTH AND THE RELIGIOUS CENSUS OF 1851

One of the most interesting results of the Victorian obsession with the collection of statistical detail, was the decision, taken against a background of considerable controversy, to include a survey of religious practice in the population census of 1851. Horace Mann, a London Barrister and the chief advocate of the need for such a survey, was appointed to supervise its administration and the analysis of the ensuing data. After considering several possible methods of collecting the required information, it was finally decided to give the local census enumerators the responsibility of distributing forms to all the buildings used for religious worship in their districts. They were also to check the completed forms for any inaccuracies and to fill in the details themselves in cases where the churches refused to co-operate.

In England and Wales the forms were of two basic kinds: 'Form A' which was issued to Anglican places of worship contained eight questions and 'Form B' issued to all dissenters from Swedenborgians to Roman Catholics which contained nine questions, (a slightly modified version of 'Form B' was produced to be issued to Quakers). On 'Form A' the first four questions concerned the name, location, date of consecration, and in the case of churches erected after 1800, asked for details of how the funds for building were obtained. Question five which asked for a breakdown of the incumbent's income was the source of great agitation being widely regarded as an unjustifiable intrusion into an Englishman's privacy and was in many cases left blank. Question six asked for the total number of sittings available in each place of worship and how these were divided between free and open sittings and those pews rented by or appropriated to particular families or individuals. Then followed perhaps the most interesting question to modern historians of religion - number seven which asked about the number of people attending at each service of the day both on census Sunday 30th March 1851 and on average over the last six months. The final question was simply a request for any other remarks which might be felt relevant to the survey.

Form B for dissenters was slightly different, containing an extra question about religious denomination, and questions about the type of building where services were held and whether it was exclusively employed as a place of worship or had other uses - for example as a day school during the week. All questions of a financial nature were excluded.

The Results of the Census

Well over a year was taken to process the material gathered in nationally from more than 34,000 places of worship, but, eventually Mann published his results in an official report which can still be seen in P.P. 1852-3 LXXXIX (an edition of this has been published in the 'IUP' series of Parliamentary Papers). Only the information about church accommodation and religious attendance was published, because of the controversial and incomplete nature of the financial details.

It was generally agreed by most authorities of the period that, taking into account the multiple use of sittings on a Sunday and making a generous allowance for those unable to attend, sittings ought to be provided for a number equal to 58% of the population. The report showed a shortfall nationally of about 10% though because of the uneven distribution of both population and accommodation the shortfall was nearly 18% in Lancashire and even in the West Riding where provision was 1% better than the national average of the size of its population meant the shortfall was 109,987 sittings. These figures caused considerable consternation especially among Anglicans who felt their claim to be the church of the people undermined by their failure to provide adequate room.

The figures for religious attendance, however, caused an even greater scandal - showing that in what was regarded as a Christian country, at least 5.2 million or over 42% of those able to attend church at least once on Sunday, had failed to do so on 30th March 1851. Low attendances like low levels of accommodation were unevenly distributed, large cities and the industrial north faring particularly badly.

The Historical Value of Attendance Statistics.

As already noted, the information of greatest potential interest to historians of religion lies in the figures for religious attendance because the 1851 census represents the only reasonably comprehensive and quantifiable indication of religious observance in the 19th century. There are however important problems associated with the data which need to be mentioned before looking at the Saddleworth material in detail.

The first and most important of these problems is that the figures in the census represent the number of people going to each service and not the number of different individuals who went to church. It is therefore impossible to work out accurately the popularity of each church since obviously one attendance at each of the morning afternoon and evening services in a given place of worship could represent three separate individuals going once or just one person attending three times. Similarly, even attendances at different times at different churches could represent the same person since links between many denominations e.g the Church of England and the Wesleyan Methodists were still quite close especially at an unofficial level.

If we assume that the incidence of multiple attendance was fairly evenly spread over the country then the figures can be used for comparing one region with another simply by dividing the total attendances into the total population to give an Index of Attendance ('IA'). If however we want to try and work out how many people attend church in a particular place allowance has to be made for multiple attendances usually by employing a modified version of the technique used by Mann - counting all attendances at the best supported service at each church plus half those at the next best and a third of those at the third service if any. This gives a rough idea at best and so attendance figures are much more useful for regional comparisons. Such comparisons were made on a national basis by K.S. Inglis in an article in the Journal of Ecclesiastical History April 1960, where using the official report he produced an IA for England and Wales of 61, the rural areas and small towns avergaing out at 71.4 and towns with a population of over 10,000 at 49.7. Again the northern industrial towns score badly, with Bradford at 42.7 and Manchester at 34.7.

The second set of problems concern the accuracy of the figures given in the returns, for example, some churches may have inflated the size of their congregations, in other cases, there was almost certainly no accurate count taken especially of large congregations and some estimates give suspiciously rounded totals.

Another series of problems flows from 30th March 1851 not being a typical Sunday. The weather over much of the North and East of the country was stormy which may have produced abnormally low congregations especially in rural areas. Also in some rural areas lambing was in full swing demanding the attention of many who would otherwise have been in church. In 1851, 30th March fell on mid-lent or Simnell Sunday, the date of a popular secular festival in much of the North and Midlands and several incumbents remarked that the associated visiting and festivities had heavily reduced their congregations.

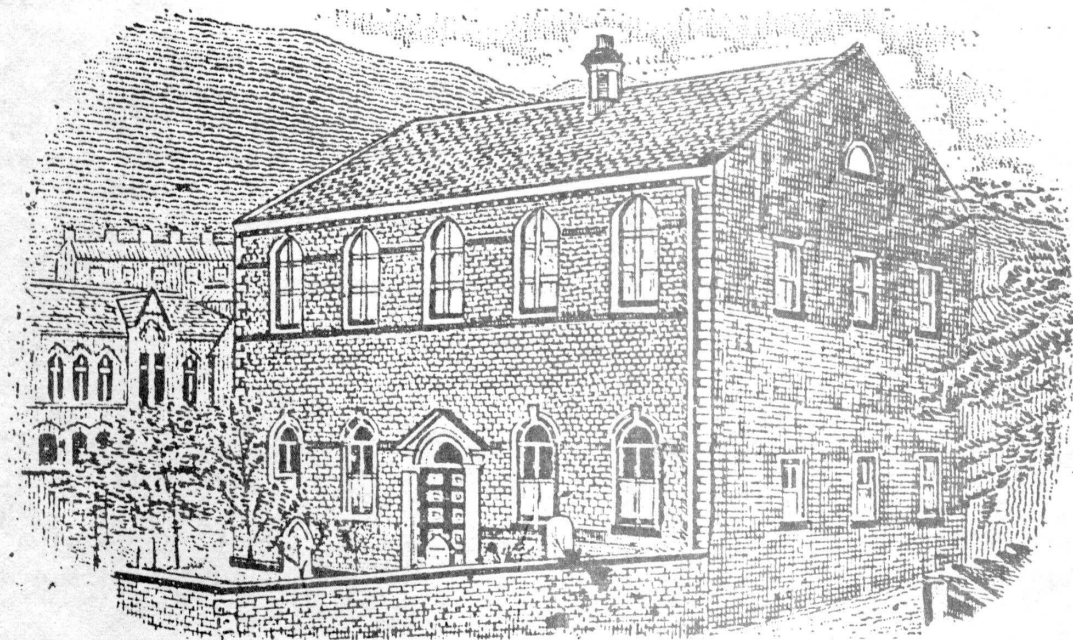
These problems can to some extent be overcome by substituting the figure for average attendance for that of attendance on 30th March. However in a large proportion of cases no average figure was given and even where it was, the problems of inaccuracy must have been even greater than for attendance on the one Sunday.

Finally there are the problems of incomplete coverage, some returns were sent in with the questions on attendance left blank and sometimes without giving a reason so that there is no way of knowing whether a blank space indicates a large congregation that could not be counted accurately, or a small one which would have reflected badly on the minister. More seriously, some places of worship may have been missed altogether, especially cottage meetings which could have been more important in total than the chapel particularly in areas, like Saddleworth of dispersed population.

The Saddleworth Returns

The Manuscript returns sent in by the various churches can be seen bound in a single volume at the Public Record Office at Kew (Reference HO 129 vol. 496) and contain returns for 17 places of worship in all, plus a lengthy explanatory letter from Peter Bennett the then curate of Saddleworth Church. The returns are as follows:-

In the Subdistrict of Delph for: St Ann's Quickmere, St. Thomas' Friarmere (Anglican); Baguley Chapel and Delph Chapel (Wesleyan Methodist); Providence Chapel, Springhead and Independant Chapel Delph (Independant); New Connexion Meeting room Delph (Methodist New Connexion); Day School in a garret at Baguley (Roman Catholic); 'Christians Meeting Room' and 'Licensed Preaching room for Protestants' both giving their address simply as 'Saddleworth', (the latter was an undenominational Sunday school - precise address illegible).



Wesleyan Chapel, Delph built 1800, destroyed by fire 1894

In the Subdistrict of Uppermill for : St Chadds - Saddleworth Parish Church, Holy Trinity Dobcross, Christ Church Friezland (Anglican); Ebenezer Chapel Uppermill (Independant); Wesleyan Chapel Uppermill, Wesleyan Chapel Greenfield (Wesleyan Methodist); Chamber Chapel Uppermill (Particular Baptist).

Accommodation

An analysis of the number of sittings in all the above churches shows a total of just over 3,800 in Delph (which had a population of 9,440 in 1851) fairly evenly divided between Anglicans, Independants and Wesleyans. Uppermill had just over 4,000 sittings for a population of 8,359, well over half being provided by the Anglicans with the Wesleyans the next largest provider on 822 sittings.

Both these total figures are below the agreed desirable level of one seat for every 58 in 100 of the population. However, since almost all the places of worship opened twice, and most of the Wesleyans opened three times, on a Sunday, the total seating theoretically available in Saddleworth was 17,790¹ - enough for the whole population to attend once on a Sunday.

Unfortunately, this rather rosy picture of the provision of accommodation breaks down when examined in detail. Of the 17,790 available sittings 11,126 were listed as appropriated. In some cases this meant that they were unavailable to families who couldn't afford a pew rent, and even in those cases where the sittings were merely traditionally annexed to one family, perhaps in return for work done on the fabric of the church in the past, it must often have meant that the sittings could not be occupied by any one else when members of the particular family in question were absent. Additional problems were caused by a lack of accommodation for particular groups, for example, to quote the 'Remarks' column of the return for the Roman Catholics at Baguley: 'The room has been used as a Catholic place of worship for 5 Sundays, it will only hold 100 people and there are 300 adults and children, Catholics in the mission.'

Some of these problems may have been alleviated by attendance at places of worship strictly outside the boundaries of Saddleworth, for example at St John's Hey or at one of the churches or chapels in Lees. There may also have been a considerable amount of 'hidden' accommodation in the form of cottage meetings missed by the census. Nevertheless, it seems clear that there was an accommodation problem in Saddleworth (particularly pronounced in some Anglican and most Independant churches) - a problem not of overall numbers but of distribution.

Attendance

The total attendances morning, afternoon and evening for all the churches in Saddleworth, calculated from the manuscript returns thus avoiding any inaccuracies in the official report, were on 30th March 1851, 5,941. This would give the area an IA of 33.4 which is astonishingly low compared with Inglis' national average for rural areas and small towns of 71.4, it is even lower than its major industrial neighbour Oldham which had an IA of 37.6².

A rough estimate of the number of different individuals attending on 30th March calculated by the method described above, gives 2,228 in Uppermill and 2,363 in Delph, a total of 4 591 or 25.8% of the total population - again well below the national average especially outside the large towns.

Religious Attendance in Saddleworth, 1851
(Including Sunday Scholars Attending Services)

	Place of Worship	March 30th			Average		
		Morning	Afternoon	Evening	Morning	Afternoon	Evening
1.	<u>DELPH</u>						
	St. Anns Quickmere	19	40	-	-	-	-
	St. Thomas Friarmere	50	104	-	80	150	-
	Baguley Chapel (Wesleyan Meth.)	-	39	57	-	125	80
	Christian's Meeting Room	310	400	200	-	-	-
	Providence Chapel (Independent)	272	388	-	-	-	-
	Undenominational Sunday School	-	-	42	-	-	52
	Delph Chapel (Independent)	198	301	-	-	-	-
	Preaching Room, Delph (Meth. New Connexion)	32	54	-	60	-	-
	Wesleyan Meth. Chapel, Delph	104	205	140	150	240	180
	Roman Catholic Room, Baguley	80	40	-	100	50	-
2.	<u>UPPERMILL</u>						
	St. Chads (Saddleworth Ch.)	60	290	-	200	630	-
	Holy Trinity Dobcross	147	208	-	On enclosed letter now lost		
	Christ church Friezland	320	415	-	-	-	-
	Ebenezer Chapel (Independent)	276	345	-	310	370	-
	Wesleyan Chapel Uppermill	104	146	76	-	-	-
	Chamber Chapel (Particular Baptist)	16	22	-	-	-	-
	Wesleyan Chapel Greenfield	120	221	100	-	-	-

In part this surprisingly low result may be explicable in terms of the special circumstances of March 30th. Something of this can be traced in the figures given for average attendance. In all eight of these have survived and only one - that of the New Connexion Methodists records a congregation larger than usual on March 30th. The larger average congregations would add a nett total of 1,003 attendances giving a new IA of 39 and a new rough estimate of individual attenders of 5,309 or 29.8% of the total population. These figures might be further increased had the average congregations been stated for the other nine places of worship. (In at least one case this was done on an accompanying letter which is no longer with the manuscript returns).

A second explanation for the low general result would be missing attendances either at churches outside Saddleworth or in cottage meetings. It is rather surprising that Primitive Methodism which was strong in all the surrounding areas should not (according to the census) have a single adherent in Saddleworth and it may well be that this body in particular met in cottages and was overlooked. Another possible line of explanation is that some Sunday school children who did not attend church services were ignored by the census. Saddleworth with a slightly younger than average population - the result of adult emigration - may have been badly affected by this.

However it must be noted that for either the particular circumstances of March 30th or missing attendances to be significant in a comparative sense Saddleworth must be shown to have been affected more severely than the average which would require more research and also comparison with other local studies. Pending such further work, it must be assumed that on the basis of the 1851 religious census, Saddleworth was, in comparative terms at least, a blackspot in the geography of religious attendance in England.

M.A. Smith.

Notes

1. Calculated simply by multiplying the number of sittings in each place of worship by the number of services held there. Only one place - the undenominational Sunday school failed to make a return for the number of sittings available and this would in any case have been small - an addition of perhaps 100 at most.
 2. This is a figure for the whole Oldham Poor Law Union plus the district of Leesfield - calculated from the original returns since the official report makes some significant omissions.
-

OLD SADDLEWORTH

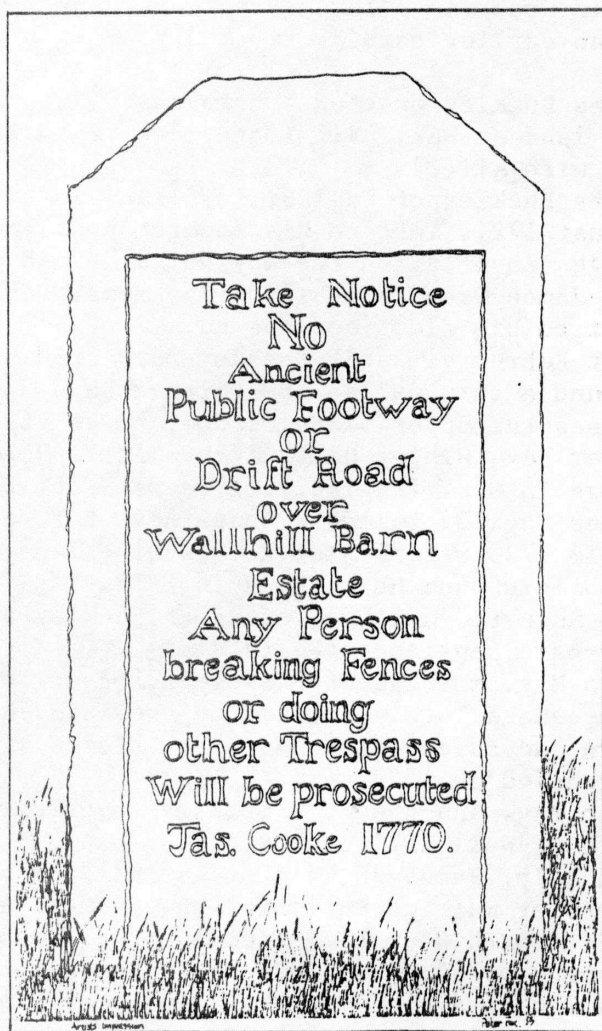
This is part of the work being carried out on a Gazetteer of Saddleworth by the Historical Society. As more of this work is completed, details will be published in future editions of the Bulletin.

WALL HILL BARN

Grid Reference SD 975058

- Location:** The two farms on the Wall Hill Barn estate are now called White Gate and Field House. Both are approached by a track from Huddersfield Road, Dobcross.
- Description:** White Gate, a modern two storey stone built farmhouse, was rebuilt in the 1930's, but the 1723 datestone of an earlier house is over the nearby cowhouse door. The large barn has two datestones showing it to be an 1878 rebuild of a 1690 structure.
Field House is a late 18th Century house, possibly a rebuild of an earlier barn.
- History:**
- James Buckley erected a barn on the South East boundary of his land at Wall Hill (datestone IB AB 1690 refers also to his wife Alice).
- 1721 James Buckley of Wall Hill yeoman, in his will dated 28th August 1721, left to his younger son James £60 and a 7 acre rough close called the Hey which he had purchased from John and James Greaves in 1693. The remainder of his estate was left to his elder son Edmund.
- 1722 21st February. James Buckley buys from his elder brother Edmund a barn called the Further Barn or New Barn with the closes the Upper Slade Meadow, Lower Slade Meadow, Lower Inner Hey, Oxhey, Half of the Little Dole and the End of the Rough Intake. (Registry of Deeds S 161 220).
- 1723 James Buckley builds a house next to the barn. (Datestone IB IB 1723 refers also to his wife Jane, formerly Jane Schofield whom he married in 1714).
- 1724 9th August. James son of James Buckley and Jane his wife of Fur-barn baptised. (Registers)
- 1732 20th May. Mortgage to James Harrop of Thamewater, yeoman of a messuage lately erected by the said James Buckley with the barn and three shippens... The fields listed are those purchased in 1722. (EE 77 120).
- 1733 20th May. Ann daughter of James Buckley yeoman and Jane his wife of Wall Hill baptised.
- 1745 4th July. James Buckley of Wallhill Barn in Saddleworth clothier married Betty Kershaw of Mottram Parish spinster at Saddleworth Church. Their daughter Sarah was baptised 5th November 1745; a daughter Mary 5th March 1749 (buried 24th May 1763); a son John 30th September 1750 (buried 17th April 1756); a son James 12th January 1752; a daughter Hannah 27th April 1753; a son Joseph 7th October 1754; a daughter Anne 11th July 1756; a son John 6th November 1757; a son William 12th October 1760; a daughter Mary 30th July 1764; and a daughter Fanny 31st October 1768.
- 1750 8th March. Nelly daughter of Jane Buckley of Wall Hill Barn spinster by James Shaw of Hills clothier baptised.

- 1766 27th May. Will of James Buckley of Wallhill Barn, leaving his land to his son James. Mention of daughters Jane and Mary who are to inherit seats in Hey Chapel in lieu of 2 guineas given to them by his son John, of a daughter Anne and of Sally Buckley of Hanson House. Executors: his son-in-law Isaac Savil of Netherlees and friend Ralph Mellor of Scouthead.
- 1772 12th March. Isaac Savil of Netherlees and James Buckley of Wallhill Barn sell to the Rev. James Cooke, incumbent of Heaton Norris, the messuage now divided into three dwelling houses called Wall Hill Barn with the Upper Slade Meadow, Lower Slade Meadow, Lower Inner Hey, Oxhey (lately divided into two closes called Back of the Stone Wall and Back of the Barn), Half of the Little Dole and the End of the Rough Intake, 20 acres of the measure there used, and the Acre, Marled Hey, New Limed and the Hey, 18 acres. (BO 745 976)



This inscribed stone still stands beside the gateway to White Gate Farm, Wall Hill. It is now more than half buried beneath the footpath and the wording on the lower portion is from a transcript in the Higson Mss.

- 1856 5th November. Sale at the house of Mr. Thomas Lawton, The Swan Inn, Dobcross. All that valuable estate situate near the village of Dobcross, in Saddleworth, called Wall Hill Barn, consisting of farmhouses and farm buildings, and 40a 2r 36p of meadow and pasture land, lying within a ring fence, partly in the occupation of Mr. George Rhodes and others as yearly tenants and partly untenanted. The above property is freehold of inheritance and tithe free, is within one mile of Saddleworth Station, on the Manchester and Huddersfield Railway, and adjoins the Turnpike Road leading from Oldham to Huddersfield. Stone for fencing, draining and repairs may be got on the premises. Two small streams of beautiful water pass through the estate, suitable for bleaching, dyeing or printing. The estate is capable of considerable improvement, and presents a rare opportunity for a favourable investment. On 27th November 1856, Andrew Thomas Moss agreed to purchase the estate for £1,370. (Lancashire Record Office DDX 228/107).
- 1857 James Kenworthy Cooke of Newport Pagnell but now of Elverston, gentleman, conveyed to Andrew Thomas Moss of Waterhead Mill, cotton spinner, a messuage now or late divided into three dwellinghouses called Wall Hill Barn formerly in the occupation of James Buckley the elder and James Buckley his son but now of George Rhodes and William Hill, with the Upper Slade Meadow, Lower Slade Meadow, Lower Inner Hey, the Oxhey (lately divided into two closes called Back of the Stone Wall and Back of the Barn), half of the Little Dole and the end of the Rough Intake, 20 acres of the measure there used, the Acre, Marled Hey, New Limed and the Hey, 18 acres of the measure there used, and also all that other messuage erected by the said James Cooke on some part of the said last mentioned premises now in the occupation of James Sutcliffe and Sydney Shaw.
- 1927 2nd May. The executors of the will of Edward Howard Moss convey to Percy Heywood of Manor House Farm, Wall Hill, farmer, 76a 6r 4p of land comprising Manor House Farm and Wall Hill Barn for £1,412.
- 1932 1st July. Percy Heywood of Wall Hill Barn Farm conveys to Harry Sykes of Manor House Farm two plots of land comprising part of Manor House Farm, the northerly plot containing 10½ acres and the southerly plot containing 14½ acres, for £1,000. (Deeds).

J.M.H.

The Society would welcome any further information on the houses and hamlets mentioned here, and also on any other property of possible interest in Saddleworth. The Gazetteer will also encompass turnpike roads, canals, bridges, railways, etc.

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