

Ranmoor Society News

April 2012

New Faces!

Following elections at the AGM in January, the Society's committee has a new look to it. We warmly welcome Anthony Riddle as chairman and Peter Marrison as a member of our 2012 committee.

A Fulwood Road Family Business

Alan Bond, now living in Wantage, shares with us some personal memories of his grandfather, father and the family plumbing business Edgar Bond & Co. of 360 Fulwood Road

My grandfather, Edgar Bond, and his brother Walter started the plumbing business around 1890 from a shop at the top of Barber Road in Walkley. Its success was due to the fact that mains water was now available and there was a lot of building in the area. My grandfather built a number of houses on Fulton Road and adjacent roads, financed at 2.5% from the Oddfellows Friendly Society.

I think my grandparents moved to 360 Fulwood Road around 1899 as my father, Thomas, was born there in January 1900 when they took over the living portion of 362 Fulwood Road. The business prospered with large houses being built in the area and fitted with the latest plumbing amenities. The Bond plumbing business also did quite a lot of drainage work as the civic sewage system was being brought into operation.

One large job my father spoke of was installation of main drainage at Ranmoor College, where the student halls are next to the Principal's home on Fulwood Road. The sewage had been run out into the porous rock and earth at the Nether Green end of the buildings and this had to be all dug out and pipe work laid to the sewer in Fulwood Road. This work was done in the hot summer of 1914; apparently the stink was unbelievable, a foul job! One day grandfather brought his men some beer only to be met by the College Principal objecting to strong drink at his college on the grounds this could corrupt his students. Grandfather invited him down to inspect the works, making sure he got the full benefit of the smell. He was soon persuaded that the workers needed some strong drink!

Trade flourished, and in due course the living accommodation behind No. 362 was taken over to give more room. In 1918 my father was called up and was sent to France. In August he was injured and laid in a shell hole for three days before he was found and brought to the field hospital. Amazingly the doctor in charge was Dr Baker White from Riverdale Road,

Sheffield, and he recognised my father. He was the same doctor who had fitted a metal plate in my father's head after he had fallen down the cellar steps aged two. A bullet had gouged his head where the plate was; he had a groove there that was visible until the day he died. He was partially paralysed down his right side as a result of the bullet injury.

This resulted in him being unable to continue as a plumber, and in due course his brother Alan was persuaded, unwillingly, to give up engineering with Edgar Alan and join the firm. As Ranmoor was now quite well developed there were not as many major new jobs and not so much money about after the war. When Alan married in late 1939 he lived over the shop at 360, sub-let part of 362 to a newly married friend while his father moved down the road to number 338, next to the Ranmoor Inn.



Fulwood Road in the early 1900s

An interesting feature of the times was that neither of my grandparents would ever own their homes, preferring to haggle with the landlord as to rent. The rent for number 338 Fulwood Road, fixed when grandfather moved there in 1939, was still the same when my aunt Gladys died in 1985; 38s 6d a week.

By this time the house was in need of some serious renovation. The keystone over the front door had been dislodged during the Blitz and became more askew over the years, the main side wall was coming away from the house to the extent that you could drop coins down the gap between the stairs and the wall and they would land in the cellar. The roof needed overhauling and workman refused to go up there. Features that fascinated our children, who loved the house, were the enormous key for the back door and the "ladies" lavatory seat Edgar had fitted in the upstairs bathroom which he modernised when he moved in.

My uncle Alan worked in the plumbing business from the 1920s, and when his father died in 1944 he inherited it and the one remaining employee. Alan was an Auxiliary Fireman (A.F.S.) during WW2. He used his love and skills as a motor cycle rider and trained dispatch riders. During the Sheffield Blitz, he was

driving his old Austin 12 coupé full of cans of petrol, refuelling and servicing the various trailer pumps that were the vital protection of the factories. After the blitz was over he squeezed enough petrol out of the carpets etc. to enable to enable him and his wife to have a weekend away!

After the war, Alan carried on the plumbing business as a one-man band. Old customers and new brought in a steady but modest income until he retired and gave up the shop. He and his wife Rena secured the tenancy of 12 Ranmoor Road which had a sunny rear aspect and garden rather than the dark, depressing room behind the shop in which the family had lived for 70 years. This gave him and his wife Rena a happy retirement.

Did your ancestors live in Sheffield during the Great War?

If so Peter Warr would like to mention them in a forthcoming book that will look at Sheffield people's experiences at home and work in the 1914-1918 period. This will not cover soldiers and events on the battlefield but will focus on the many changes in family life, the huge expansion of armaments production, the key role of women workers, the treatment of German residents, widespread help for Belgian refugees, and Sheffielders' voluntary activities of many kinds. It will include material from the archives of principal companies, the Cutlers' Company, the University and other city organizations.

He is particularly interested topics like these. How did Sheffield families cope without a father? Where did people work, especially those women who moved into munitions or other jobs? How did they learn about the war-zone activities of their men folk? Which families were affected by the influenza epidemic of 1918 or other Sheffield WW1 events? Are there descendants of Belgian refugees or interned Germans in the city? It would also be good to include some local ration books or other documents, as well as letters or telegrams about a casualty or death,

If you are able to help in any of these (or other) ways, please contact Peter at warr@ranmoor.plus.com or 80 Storth Lane, S10 3HP. You don't need to commit to anything at this stage, and all contributors will be fully acknowledged. Thank you.

Peter Warr

Sheffield's Early Waterways

Sheffield's nearest port in mediaeval times was at Bawtry on the River Idle, a tributary of the Trent. From here Swedish iron was brought to Sheffield by pack horse to be used in the numerous water mills on the five rivers.

Although the Canal Age started in Britain in the mid eighteenth century, it wasn't until later that some small 'cuts' were made around Sheffield. The River Don was deepened and widened. The idea of connecting it to the Trent by a cut from Stainforth to Keadby was proposed about every 10 years from 1763 and finally carried out in the late 1700s. In 1779 a short canal to bring coal from Lord Rockingham's collieries at Greasborough to the Don was cut, after surveying by Smeaton and William Fairbank II.

Easier transport of coal was becoming the driver of canal development. (The Duke of Bridgewater's canal near Manchester was built for this in 1761.) The extensive coalfields around Barnsley needed outlets and consequently the Barnsley canal to Wakefield and the Dearne and Dove canal to Swinton on the Don were surveyed in 1792. With mines of its own there was less need for carrying coal on canals in Sheffield; the necessity was more for iron and other materials and the export of products. Between 1792 and his death in 1801, William Fairbank II surveyed the Don 'to facilitate the Navigation thereof' from Sheffield. He also surveyed the land for a canal from Sheffield to Tinsley, and from Tinsley to Eckington in 1792. His sons Wm III & Josiah continued his work but took a long time to complete it. The Sheffield to Tinsley canal didn't open until 1819; there was a gap between 1804 and 1813 when little seems to have been done by the brothers; they were falling out at the time.

In the late 18th century there was nearly as much of a Canal bubble as the later Railway bubble. Some of the schemes to connect Sheffield to other cities seem farfetched today, but interestingly some aspects translated into later railway plans. In 1810 Josiah Fairbank surveyed the High Peak Junction Canal (HJPC) to connect the Peak Forest Canal and the Cromford Canal (near Matlock). In 1813 a branch from Padley to Tinsley was mooted; it was also called the Sheffield Canal, so confusing it with the 1819 canal. It would have followed the valley of the Sheaf and crossed the Don by an aqueduct. Both this & the HPJC had tunnels: at Topley and Cowburn. A later proposal in 1824 for a canal from Sheffield to Manchester via the Peak Forest Canal (near Chapel en le Frith) would have included a tunnel at Woodhead. All three tunnels were later excavated for railways; surveyors commonly use previous surveys in later work. The last canal for Sheffield was proposed in 1832: the Sheffield Junction Canal from the Sheffield & Tinsley Canal to the Chesterfield Canal at Killamarsh.

Adrian Padfield

Ranmoor Society Committee 2012

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