

## **Delving into the past....**

The u3a Archive Group is helping to transcribe and record historic documents about Ilkley and district. A wonderful example is this account, by a Mr C Whitehead of his experience as a child and as a mill worker in Burley in the late 19th Century. Insofar as is possible everything is exactly as he wrote, but in some instances his handwriting was a little difficult to decipher. The document came from a bundle of papers left by Mrs Esme Greenwood who died in 2018.

*In the year 1867 I went to work at the mill as a half timer. The hours of work were from 6-7.50 am when we had 40 minutes for breakfast. This was a pleasant interlude. We had time to walk home, enjoy breakfast and return to work at 8.30 am. We then worked on from 8.30 - 12.30 noon when our work at the mill ended for the day. At 2pm we were at school till 5 o'clock. This continued thro the week. The next week the order was changed to school in the morning and Mill in the afternoon. We commenced work at 1.30 and worked until 6 o'clock in the evening. My memories of this period are very happy it was not one of drudgery and misery as spoken of by men, who have never had experience of it. The evenings were taken up with lessons in preparation for school work the next day. We had plenty of time for play. The early rising of 5.30 meant early to bed at night. The dark winter mornings were not so pleasant but we faced them as a task to be done and this habit of early rising does not desert one.*

*The work at the mill was not all drudgery. It sharpened our wits and made us observant and was a preparation for the responsible duties of after life. The education provided at the school was the best of its time and developed religious and moral principles, gentlemanly conduct and intellectual ability. The masters were all men of sterling character and educational ability. The influence of Rt. Hon. W.E Foster as proprietor and patron of the school made it the best in West Riding.*

*In the summer we were taken out on Saturday afternoon to Brownsholme and Wharfedale and he encouraged us to study after leaving school. In 1871, left school and went to the mill full time and attended night school 3 evenings.*

*In 1874 apprenticed to Otley*

*Christmas annual school treat tea provided and Lenten Lecture & entertainment in Lecture hall by Mr and Mrs Foster. Mr Foster and Miss Florence Arnold gave an account of their visit to Constantinople and Athens. Mr Frank Fisor spoke of his ascent of Mont Blanc and of his canoe cruise down the Wharfe and Ouse to the Humber.*

*Our life was full of interest and security knowing our employers were conscious of our welfare and we looked to them for guidance and learning in the years to come*

*While at Otley I taught myself Latin, I read Cicero and Caesar and studied Mathematics.*

*The elementary education of the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century might not have been perfect in the eyes of today, but it led a solid foundation which anyone who chose could build himself up further. After going to Otley 1874 it was still my duty to be at work at 6am and though I walked two and half miles was always punctual. Even in winter when the weather was bad and the road flooded by the river. I continued to walk daily to Otley & back till 1931 then I took the bus.*

*Corn and grasslands extended up the hills on both sides of the river. The hills on the south side were scarred with stone quarries busy with demands of new building. The oldest part of the village consisted of one storey thatched cottages occupied mostly by farm workers. But a more pretentious type of house was springing up where dwelt people employed by the mill. The mill was so hidden from the village, down the bank of the river that it was possible to go through the village without realizing it had any industry. The owners were men who having made their brass saw to the welfare of their work people.*

*A good school, village hall and reading room provided. The houses by the owners down by the river where school children were frequently entertained. The church was a modern structure, the vicar was respected by all. The old stocks stood by the church gates. The inn close by low doorway and small windows, thatched roof. Man (?) of dignity & allowed no rough house. He belonged to the tannery, a short distance away on the other side of the road, which had been in his family for many years and his ancestors fought in the Civil War under Fairfax. Up the street stood the Wesleyan Chapel now becoming too small, many leading families were members. A private boarding school on the outskirts, owned and staffed by Wesleyans. A vigorous Sunday school was housed in the old Chapel. A Congregational Chapel was led by a principal resident. Primitive Methodists had a Chapel and School off the main road. The railway has not yet come. Nearest station 7 or 8 mails away. One walked to nearest station or waited for the stage coach. A voluntary company was formed and a Scottish drill instructor put them through the drill.*

*1862, I use to sit in the gallery of the old Chapel Mr Lundy was preacher Mr. Place played the organ. William Baker led the singing, John Lister at the bellows. The Sunday school was held in the body of the Chapel round a huge stove, in charge of John Lofthouse, Thomas Casson and Mr Place were Superintendents. Thomas Champress and John Fordham came into the circuit. St Johns Methodist was opened June 1867 and until 1932 it was known as the Wesleyan Chapel, then the name was dropped and called St. Johns, One of the first to be built in new gothic style and offended many older Wesleyan Methodist who preferred the older simpler building next door which is now the Sunday School. They did not like the chancel and the pulpit at the side instead of centre and the tinted glass windows. It savoured of Popery. In 1862 Mr Fisor agreed of buy a piece of land known as Fox Garth and let the Wesleyans have some of it, but they needed all of it, it cost £500 and when they built the chapel and some of it left over and sold for £512, The present chapel sprang from a small building 1816.*

*The years following The Napoleonic war were full of poverty and misery. The Nonconformist were not in a happy state. The Church of England regarded John Wesley as a renegade and forsaken of the of the true faith. One vicar averted his eyes when near the Chapel.*