

EARBY OF LONG AGO

MILL OWNER WHO WAS KNIGHTED

THE MARRIAGE FESTIVAL OF SIR DYSON MALLINSON

It is interesting to old Earby residents to recall those who were associated with the Bracewells in their management of the spinning mill and weaving sheds. Curren Moorehouse, who came from Airton, was the overlooker in the card room section. Jack Ellis was in charge of the "throstle" spinning, and Duncan McPhail superintended the mule spinners.

"Duncan," as he was always called, was a real Scotchman, and had a natural weakness for a "wee drop" o' whiskey.

Other prominent positions were held as follows: Engineers, William Varley and Richard Webster; fireman, William Bailey; mechanics, Henry Hartley, Thos Crowther, Henry Brown and H. C. Smith; joiner, Richard Demaine; blacksmith, John Taylor; weighman, Thomas P. Burrow; roller coverer, Daniel Parker; head tackler, William Turner; warehouse manager, James Hartley; head loomer, Edmonson Watson; tapers, William Hartley, Henry Bailey and T. H. Hartley.

In the office the members of the family were assisted by Thomas Swire and James Moorhouse.

At the old shed, John Green, who came from Gargrave, was in charge of the warehouse, and later Joseph Cowgill; the engineer was Robert Bradley, who was succeeded by Richard Wilkinson (Dick o' Bowes). The tacklers were John Wilkinson and Robert Higson. At an earlier period, Stephen Pickles, who founded the famous Barnoldswick firm of that name, was a tackler at the old shed.

Robert Bradley also removed to Barnoldswick, and his three sons, Watson, Christopher and Arthur, established the well known firm of Bradley Bros.

Mr. Dyson Mallinson, who belonged to a highly respected Huddersfield family, succeeded to the proprietorship of the Victoria Mill and Old Shed on the removal of the Bracewell family to America. On May 13th, 1880, he had married the eldest daughter of the "Old Master" amid scenes of unparalleled public interest. The Wesleyan Chapel was crowded, as it was also the first marriage which had taken place in the sanctuary. The workpeople and their families, to the number of 700, were entertained on the following Saturday, tea being served in the Victoria Institute and the Baptist and Wesleyan schools. A gala was afterwards held in the Cricket Field, and a party of gymnastic entertainers provided a thrilling display. Refreshments on a lavish scale were provided, and the village Brass Band played for dancing. At the close of the day the Band paid a visit to Green End House, and played for the enjoyment of the guests.

Within four years, 1885-1889, the Mallinson era in Earby drew to its close, and it was a gloomy experience for the village community. Bad trade, poor work, low wages, and constant unrest breaking out in spontaneous strikes, were the outstanding features of that period. For a short time Mr. Mallinson, with his wife and two children, resided at Heather View, Green End.

BUSINESS COLLAPSE

He appointed a gentleman manager for the two mills, Mr. Scholes, who took up his residence at Heather View. There was no improvement in the state of affairs, and the business collapsed, the permanent stoppage coming in the first week in July, 1889, on the eve of Earby Feast, the village annual holiday. The firm had been styled " Victoria Spinning and Manufacturing Co." Mr. Mallinson resumed his business as a cotton broker at Liverpool and Manchester, and resided at Ormskirk.

During the Great War he rendered valuable service in organising hospital equipment in Liverpool and ministering to the soldiers, for which he was knighted, and he became Sir Dyson Mallinson. In his later years he was an outstanding figure on the Manchester Royal Exchange, where he had offices. He was one of the very few who retained the "top hat" equipment, and in his business associations he assumed a genial disposition. He died a few years ago.

The Victoria Mill and weaving sheds were closed for about four years, but the mill was eventually purchased for £8000 by Messrs. Thompson Brothers, of Trafalgar Mill, Burnley, and the Earby firm was known as the Mill Co. Ltd.

Mr. James Witham Thompson took a keen interest in the development of the village after he became associated owner of the mill, and he formulated the scheme for a new entrance to the village from the bottom of New Road, making a new road across the Cricket Field, which became known as Victoria Road. This has since become the main shopping street in the new part of the village. He also erected two blocks of houses in the vicinity of Victoria Road, and enlarged the weaving portions of the mill premises. In these developments he was assisted by Mr. George Proctor, chartered accountant, of Burnley, who was the secretary of the Mill Co. Mr. Proctor eventually acquired the ownership of the whole property, including the Gasworks, which had been formed into a separate company.

After a few years, during which the spinning section of the mill was run by the Thompson firm, Mr. Sam Dugdale, of Luddenden Foot, took over that part of the business, and he was very successful. Mr. Dugdale was a very public-spirited man, and he associated himself with every movement for the improvement of the community. Although he had been a Congregationalist he joined the new struggling cause of the United Methodists, and very largely helped in the erection of their new chapel and school. He was a staunch supporter of the Village Institute, and a very keen member of the education committee. In politics he was a sturdy Liberal, yet always friendly with other parties. Mr. Dugdale and all the family were very highly esteemed. They resided at West View, Skipton Road, and when, after about a dozen years, they returned to their native heath, Mr. Dugdale gave £500 for a recreation ground in that neighbourhood as a memento of his residence in Earby.

"ROOM AND POWER"

A new company, The Walden Spinning Co. Ltd., took over the business from Mr. Dugdale, with Mr. Tom Pickles as managing director. Soon after, a strike of the mule spinners took place, but no settlement was arrived at, and the spinning machinery never started again.

The weaving department of the premises underwent extensive alterations, and the enlarged space was let off to several newly formed firms on the "Room and Power" principle.

Mr. James Moorhouse and Mr. Thomas Henry Hartley established a successful firm as Moorhouse and Hartley, in 1892, and after the partnership was dissolved, about ten years later, Mr. T. H. Hartley retained the business and Mr. Moorhouse started on his own account at Barnoldswick. Mr. Moorhouse was successful in his venture, and ran 650 looms in Wellhouse Mill in Barnoldswick, and later bought a weaving shed at Trawden with 400 looms. He also had a doubling mill at Gorton, has a cloth agency business in Manchester. While living at Barnoldswick he occupied Bank House, and then built "The Knoll," near Bracwell. In his later years he resided at Leach House, Barrowford Road, Colne.

Mr. T. H. Hartley removed to the New Brook Shed in 1908 where he installed a new plant of 408 looms, for the manufacture of high-class sateens. He was assisted in the management by his son, Mr. Bracewell Hartley, jnr., and his son-in-law, Mr. Ernest Jenkinson. Mr. Hartley was a prominent member of the Baptist Church, and for some years had a seat on the Parish Council. He was well known throughout the North of England as a poultry fancier, and was a frequent exhibitor at the principal shows. More than twenty years ago he retired to Lightcliffe, near Halifax, but returned to Earby to spend the last few years of his life.

A new company was formed to take over the looms and plant at Victoria Mill formerly run by Mr. T. H. Hartley, the new firm being styled "The Seal Manufacturing Co. Ltd." The principal members of the firm were Mr. Albert Jackson and Mr. Robert Thornton, who had been associated with Mr. T. H. Hartley in the management of his works.

Mr. Jackson came to Earby from Burnley 40 years ago, and is one of the best known men in the district. He had a long term of service on the Skipton Board of Guardians, becoming one of the vice-chairman. He is now the chairman of the Earby Education Sub-Committee. Mr. Thornton, who came from Barnoldswick, had been an esteemed Earby resident for more than 50 years, and both he and Mrs. Jackson are prominently associated with the Baptist Church.

A NEW FIRM

The Earby Manufacturing Co. Ltd. was formed in 1895, and took over a new section of the Victoria Shed, with space for 420 looms. Mr. Hugh Curren Smith was mainly instrumental in the formation of the firm, and the other partners who were directors in the establishment were Messrs. John Parker, Joseph Parker, Hargreaves Wallbank, George P. Hartley, Henry Brown and S. Duxbury.

Mr. Smith had several years experience in mill management with the Thompson firm and Hy. Bracwell's, and also as manager and salesman of the firm of James Shaw, Salterforth. When the spinning mill was discontinued, in 1910, the large building was adapted for preparation purposes for weaving and as warehouse accommodation for the weaving shed adjoining. The Earby Manufacturing Company increased their weaving space to include 684 looms. The chairman of the company is Mr. Smith Duxbury, the only surviving director of the original number. Mr. John Hartley is the manager and salesman, and is the son of the former chairman. Mr. H. C. Smith went to reside at Ansdell, in 1913, and five years later removed to Didsbury, near Manchester. He returned to his native village in 1929, but only survived a few weeks. He was very well known in his earlier years in cricket and musical circles. Mr. T. N.

Parker, son of Mr. Joseph Parker, and a former manager, has been a well-known and successful cloth agent for thirty years. His younger brother, Leonard Parker, is the manager of the new firm at Airebank Mills, Gargrave.

The firm of Messrs. Charles Shuttleworth & Co. Ltd. occupy the space, with 600 looms, at the south end of the mill premises, a portion of the original weaving shed having been extended in that direction. Mr. Charles Shuttleworth was at one time in business as a joiner and builder at Barnoldswick, and prior to taking up manufacturing was the landlord of the Punch Bowl Inn, between Earby and Thornton.

Mr. Shuttleworth's sons, George, Edgar and Richard, were associated with him in the conduct of the business, but the youngest brother laid down his life in The Great War. The business, which has had a successful career, is now under the control of Messrs. George and Edgar Shuttleworth.

MR. BIRLEY'S PART

After the alterations, in 1911, the middle room of the large mill was taken over for weaving purposes by Messrs. James Stockdale and W. Jones, with 280 looms. This firm ceased after a few years, and the Coates Manufacturing Co. Ltd., from Barnoldswick, with Mr. Walter Wilkinson as managing director, took over the Seal Manufacturing Co's. business and that of Stockdale and Jones.

Another change has recently taken place, and the Victoria Manufacturing Co. Ltd. have taken over most of the space occupied by the Coates Manufacturing Company. This new company is on the co-partnership principle, and the secretary and salesman is Mr. Percy Lowe.

Mr. A. J. Birley came to reside at Earby 40 years ago, and in the course of that time he has become the leading manufacturer and public servant. His early life was spent in Burnley, his native town, and his family were engaged in cotton spinning, at the Lodge Mill, Barden Lane, on the outskirts of Burnley.

Following a disastrous fire, Mr. Birley turned to Earby as a promising place for a new venture, and took a portion of the Victoria Shed, which Mr. J. W. Thompson had intended to occupy, and started manufacturing on his own account. After about five years a new section was added to the Victoria Mill premises, and a large weaving shed was built on the old cricket field, with space for 850 looms, for the occupation of Mr. Birley. The power was provided by a new shaft from the mill engine, which was carried over the beck to the new block.

For his manager Mr. Birley had engaged a former Burnley manufacturer, Mr. Joseph Waring, and he also had the assistance of a very experienced salesman, Mr. Robert Thistlethwaite, who also came from Burnley.

In the meantime the Lodge Mill had been reconstructed as a weaving shed to accommodate 1000 looms, which was owned and run by Mr. Birley, with the assistance of another salesman and manager.

Still the business extended, and when the Albion Shed, at Earby, was restarted, in 1904, Mr. Birley took space for about 400 looms. The new portion of the Albion Shed was in close proximity to the Victoria Shed premises, occupied by the firm. The total number of looms run by the firm was about 2500, and they were constantly run in full work. Mr. Birley was also a

director of the New Hall Spinning Co. Ltd., Burnley, one of the best mills in East Lancashire.

PUBLIC SERVICES

After the war the Lodge Mill was sold to another Burnley firm, and the New Hall Mill closed. The Earby business has been transferred to the Albion Shed, which has been taken over in its entirety by Mr. Birley's firm. The shed has loom space for just over 1000 looms. Mr. Birley is assisted in the management by Mr. W. Crowther and his three sons, Bolton, Norris and Tom.

It is not possible to do full justice to the public services that Mr. Birley has unstintedly given to Earby and district. When he came to reside at Springfield he had married the daughter of Mr. Christopher Barrett, one of the leading farmers in the Earby area. He at once threw himself into the public arena, and was elected a member of the Parish Council. On the retirement of the Rev. L. B. Morris, J.P., Mr. Birley succeeded to the chairmanship of the council, and prepared the way for the subsequent leadership of the Urban District Council. The foundation which was so truly laid in the earlier years of the Council's administration has largely contributed to the eminent position which the local authority holds in public esteem.

Mr. Birley has been the chairman of the Earby and District Manufacturers' Association almost since its inception, and the regard in which he is held in business circles was evidenced by their unanimous choice of Mr. Birley to be the assessor for the manufacturing side of the industry at the industrial court held at Manchester Town Hall in 1920, a choice which was warmly endorsed by the operatives as well. As a local magistrate, Mr. Birley has rendered distinguished service, which has been crowned by his appointment to the chairmanship of the Skipton Bench.

In his earlier years, Mr. Birley was a keen sportsman, and played football with the Burnley team. He has stimulated interest in local sport, especially as the president of the Earby Cricket Club.

Mr. Birley has always been a convinced Conservative in politics, and is the leader of the party in the division, and in religion a loyal churchman and churchwarden of long standing, but he has always maintained the most friendly relations with other parties and churches, and has supported local charitable institutions in a munificent manner.

During the War he not only officiated as the local referee, but took the lead in the administration of relief for those in distress.

Earby has been most fortunate in the possession of such a sterling leader in her public life during these 40 years now ending. Mr. Birley has resided in the neighbouring village, Thornton-in-Craven, at "Throstle Nest," for over 20 years, with his wife and daughter, Miss Betty Birley. His other daughter, Mrs. Brooks, lives in a new residence in the same grounds.

[J.H.]

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