

Heanor & District Local History Society

January 2020

Newsletter No. 410

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FREE TO MEMBERS! (£1.00 to non-members)

We wish a happy and prosperous new year to all our members and supporters! Now brace yourselves . . .

friendship with the star whilst running a successful business in the town.

*Well it's one for the money,
two for the show,
three to get ready, now go cat go . . . !*

And with those seemingly immortal words we launch into 2020 with the King of Rock and Roll, Elvis Aaron Presley, to tell the story of how a Heanor man rode the tidal wave of 50s and 60s Pop Culture to strike up a personal

Following that you'll find an eye-witness account of Lawrence of Arabia's accident in Heanor, a story of a test pilot from Smalley and much, much more

Blue Suede Shoes

Words and Music by Carl Lee Perkins



Clive Booth
Chairman

GETTING THE U.S. MALE BY THE U.K. MAIL

(Contributed by Clive Booth)

From the mid-1950s, through the 1960s, Elvis Presley was the one of the biggest popular music stars on the planet. And with chart topping records coupled with the success of thirty-one movies at the cinema box office, he remains to this day the largest selling artist in the history of pop.

Born in Tupelo, Mississippi in 1935 in the southern United States of America, he never once set foot in England (the nearest he got being a stop-over at Glasgow Airport, Scotland whilst in the U.S. Army in 1960). It therefore wouldn't be unreasonable to assume he would never have heard of a small town in Derbyshire, England called Heanor – but he had, and it's all thanks to one man, Albert Hand.

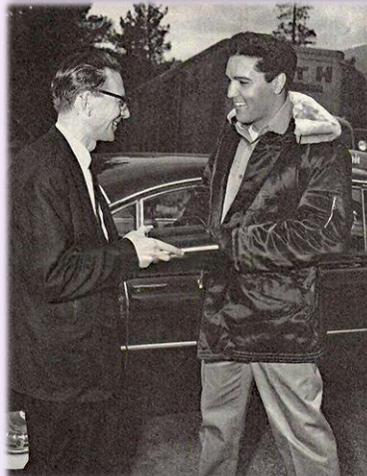
Albert was born at Heanor in 1926 so would have been twenty-eight years old in 1954 when Elvis released his first record. We don't know when Albert heard that record, but we do know he became a big fan. We also know that Albert loved music and that he ran a record shop at 41 Derby Road called 'Heanor Record Centre'. In April 1959 he started the Worldwide Elvis Fan Club so that fans from all around the world could obtain Elvis records at discount prices (from Albert's shop, of course). But it wasn't just Elvis Presley records that Albert sold worldwide to fans from his store; he also kept a stock of almost every other popular



artist's releases that he would supply by mail in the same manner.

In February 1960 Albert, a printer by trade, produced his first magazine dedicated to Elvis, naming it 'Elvis Monthly'. It was arguably the first fan magazine of its type and it was a big success, at one stage selling over 100,000 copies a month. It was also available in a French language version called, 'Elvis Mensuel'.

In the following year, 1961, building on the success of 'Elvis Monthly', Albert published the first 'Elvis Special Yearbook' with a cover date of 1962. This became a regular annual publication, published by Albert until 1972 with all but one of the issues having hard covers. Also in 1961, Albert published a 100 page 'Elvis Pocket Handbook' (*illustration overleaf*) containing everything fans wanted to know about Elvis. But Elvis wasn't the extent of Albert's printing empire, through his business, Printhouse, he also published numerous other fan magazines, like Pop Weekly, Teenbeat and Swap Shop. Demand for his publications was so great that printing sometimes had to be outsourced to other local businesses.



Also in 1961, Albert, and his wife Phyllis, visited the United States for the first of five trips, and for the first time he got to meet Elvis. The meeting took place on the set of Elvis's tenth movie 'Kid Galahad' which was being shot on location in California.



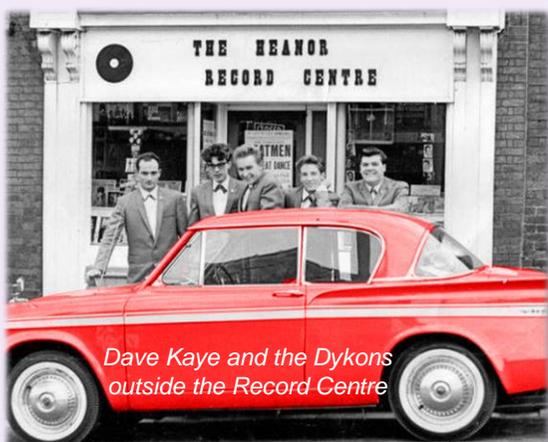
Albert (left) and his wife, Phyllis, with Elvis on the set of 'Kid'

Whilst all this was going on in Heanor, over 100 miles away in the metropolis the 'Official Elvis Presley Fan Club of Great Britain' was being run by Jeanne Saward and Dug Surtees.

After setting up the Fan Club in June/July 1957 they had built up a strong following of over 7,000 members. There was, however, a surprise for all those members when, in January 1962, Jeanne and Dug issued a single sheet newsletter stating that owing to 'personal commitments' it would be the last one. On the 31st March 1962 Jeanne and Dug closed down the Official Elvis Presley Fan Club of Great Britain (aaahhhh).

But then, the following day, the 1st April 1962, it re-opened (hooray!) with a new address in Heanor and with Albert Hand at the helm – the transfer having been done with the blessing of Jeanne and Dug. Albert set about rejuvenating the club and issued a new newsletter called the 'Elvis Express' in the same month.

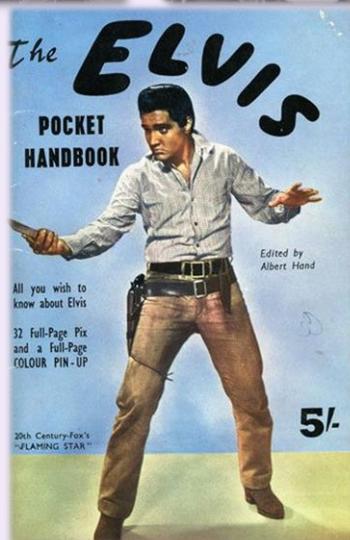
Business thrived at the Record Centre with both the retail of music discs and Albert's pop publications doing well. He moved into management taking some local groups under his wing, including Dave Kay and the Dykons, a local group from Ripley, that cut their first disc under the guidance of the recording genius, Joe Meek (*Telstar*). Perhaps unsurprisingly, the voice of lead singer Dave Kay, has more than a passing resemblance to that of Elvis Presley!



Dave Kaye and the Dykons outside the Record Centre



Mike Sarne, Marty Wilde and Billy Fury at Albert's Heanor home.
Photo: Margaret Granger



Recording artists of the time began to appear at Albert's shop in Heanor, including Mark Wynter (*Venus in Blue Jeans*, *Go Away Little Girl*) and there were also rumours that Albert used to have secret parties at his home on Douglas Avenue in Heanor where top stars of the era would be smuggled in. (incidentally, his house on Douglas Avenue was named 'Gracelands' – what else would it be?) At least one of our History Society members was lucky enough to get to one of the after-show parties at Albert's home and has been kind enough to send us the photograph above. This was taken following a show at Derby Odeon around 1962/63.

Albert continued to run the Elvis Presley Fan Club until 1967 when he sold the business to Todd Slaughter, who continues to run it right up until today, fifty-three years later. Todd nowadays, hosts an 'Elvis Presley Hour' podcast. (Incidentally, Todd appears with Elvis in a short 1977 film that is allegedly the last ever recorded of the star.)

Albert became involved in local politics representing Heanor on the local Council. He died in 1972 at just 46 years of age after a year of ill-health. He had just finished compiling the 1973 edition of the 'Elvis Year Book'.

When news of Albert's death reached Elvis on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, both he and his manager, Colonel Tom Parker, responded by sending condolences to the family by telegram (*below*)



WHEN LAWRENCE OF ARABIA CAME TO HEANOR

The following is an eyewitness account by Mrs May Bradshaw (nee Gillott).

(Contributed by Clive Booth)

Last year there was some discussion on social media (Facebook) about Lawrence of Arabia visiting Heanor. I said we had an eyewitness account of the incident and promised to print it in a future newsletter. Well, it's taken some time, but here at last is that eyewitness account from May Bradshaw. It was originally published in issue 234 of this newsletter back in September 1999 having been submitted by Society member, Frank Bacon.

"It was May 1926, the time of the Miners' Strike, and I was six years of age at the time. I lived at 127, Loscoe Road, Heanor, on the bad bend known as 'Ben Clarke's Corner'. Inger's farm was opposite and a group of miners stood on the corner talking about the strike.

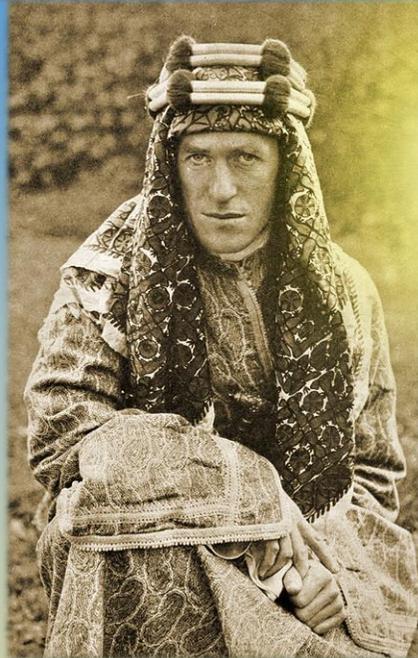
There were trams running at that time and a young man on a motor cycle came down Loscoe Road from Heanor and when taking the corner his wheel caught in the tram lines which fetched him off his machine. His head was bleeding so the men carried him into our house and put his motor cycle in our yard.

In the yard we had a blacksmith's shop as my grandfather was the local blacksmith. They laid him on the sofa and mother put the kettle on the fire. She sent me upstairs for some white pillow cases which she tore up to clean his wound.

When he recovered consciousness, he had a cup of tea with the men who had brought him in. He apologised for causing my mother any trouble and said he was on his way to Matlock and asked if anyone could repair his machine. One of the men sent for Eric Worthington, the son of a nearby butcher, as he had a motor cycle and would know what to do. Eric came and after examining the machine said there was too much damage.

The young man was so concerned about his motor cycle that he asked Eric if he would ride to Basford near Nottingham and ask George Brough, the motor cycle manufacturer, if he would come to repair it. So, Eric rode off and many more cups of tea were drunk. The young man said he was feeling quite a lot better.

Eventually Eric arrived back with George Brough in his lorry which the men looked at, saying it was a Ford. It was a curiosity to them because locally it was mostly horses and carts. The men lifted the motor cycle into the lorry and the young man thanked my mother and promised to call again on his way back to Matlock when the machine was repaired. He took a coin out of his



pocket, pressed it into my hand and told me to be 'a good little girl'. He then got into the lorry and they drove off with much waving of hands.

We had never asked his name, but Eric Worthington said, "I know who he is. George Brough told me that he was his friend, Lawrence of Arabia." We were all amazed that Heanor was honoured with such a great soldier passing through the town.

I opened my hand expecting to see a penny there, but it was a half-crown. My father took it from me saying that at last we would be able to buy some food."



T.E. LAWRENCE

The original 1999 contributor of the preceding article, Frank Bacon, included with it the following further information: Thomas Edward Lawrence was born in Tremadoc in 1888, attended Oxford University and studied archaeology. We know of his deeds during the Great War (1914-1918) when he earned the title of Lawrence of Arabia, but after this he was disillusioned and disappointed by the treatment of the Arabs.

In 1922 he joined the R.A.F. in the name of AC/2 J.H. Ross, then transferred to the Tank Corps also under the name J.H. Ross. In 1925 he returned to the R.A.F. and legally adopted the name of T.E. Shaw in 1927.



He was discharged in February 1935, but died in May of the same year as the result of a motor-cycle crash in Dorset on the same Brough Superior motor cycle he had ridden in Heanor nine years before. There were no witnesses of the crash and the cause is still a mystery, a fitting end to an enigmatic figure.

On reflection, there cannot be many other towns which have been visited by the two famous Lawrences - Lawrence of Arabia and D.H. Lawrence of Eastwood

After reading a recent article in a local newspaper about the crash of a Sterling bomber at Stanton-by-Dale in 1944, it bought to mind for our member Peter Wright the day, in January 1999, when a pilot came to talk to us at a meeting of the History Society. That pilot was Herbert Clifford Rogers. He was known as Cliff and was a resident of Smalley serving on the Parish Council there in later life.

CLIFF ROGERS, TEST PILOT, OBE, DFC,

*(From an idea by Peter Wright)
(Additional material by Clive Booth)*

It was at a meeting of the History Society in January 1999 when Cliff Rogers, OBE, DFC, visited us to give a presentation titled 'Test Flying Reminiscences'. He told of his experiences as the Chief Test Pilot for Rolls Royce at Hucknall aerodrome in Nottinghamshire and also touched on his wartime experiences in the R.A.F.

He was born in 1922 and joined the R.A.F. in 1938 as an aircraft apprentice. His training at Halton in Buckinghamshire was cut short by the outbreak of World War II and he was passed out as an aircraft fitter, class IIA airframes, going on to serve as a fitter at a number of locations before applying for pilot training. He was accepted for the training and carried it out in Alberta and Manitoba in Canada. He then returned to the United Kingdom where he completed his training at RAF Bruntingthorpe, Leicestershire and RAF Winthorpe, Nottinghamshire.

Having been trained on Lancaster and Manchester bombers at Winthorpe, he was posted operationally to 630 Squadron at East Kirkby, Lincolnshire from where he flew a total of 32 operations with the Lancaster, earning him the DFC.

In 1944 he trained as a pilot instructor before moving back to RAF Winthorpe where he trained pilots on Sterling and Lancaster bombers.

He next moved to 158 Squadron at RAF Lisset in the East Riding of Yorkshire, teaching Halifax pilots to fly Sterlings.

For his final posting before leaving the RAF he was sent to 46 Squadron at RAF Stoney Cross in Hampshire as a transport pilot.

After being demobbed in 1946 he acquired a Civil Commercial Pilots Licence and was appointed Chief Flying Instructor at Nottingham Flying Club, based at Tollerton Airport. Whilst there he also raced Auster aircraft.

Whilst working at Tollerton he met the Chief Rolls-Royce test pilot, Captain Ronald Thomas Shepherd, who was impressed by Cliff's extensive experience with aircraft. He offered Cliff a job with Rolls-Royce at the Hucknall airfield where much of the testing of Rolls-Royce engines was carried out. Cliff accepted the job offer and, in August 1948, began working as a test pilot for Rolls-Royce, going on to become Chief Test Pilot at the airfield in 1962.

He told the History Society that he chose the dangerous occupation of Test Pilot as a career because he wished for the excitement that flying commercial aircraft could not provide for him.



Cliff flew many different types of aircraft during his time as a test pilot, including Wyverns, Spitfires, Lincolns and the Avro Vulcan, all of which were used as test-beds for engines that were ultimately intended for use with other aircraft. A strange looking framework would be fitted to each aircraft to carry prototype engines or equipment for testing endurance in different weather conditions. Sometimes those weather conditions were artificially produced.

Perhaps the strangest thing that Cliff flew though was the Thrust Measuring Rig – that was its official title, but it was more commonly known as the Flying Bedstead. It was a strange looking contraption that Cliff said was never really intended to fly – but he did manage to get it off the ground. It was a test device to study the practicality of a vertical take-off and landing aircraft (VTOL) that would be powered by jet engines. It ultimately led to the development of jet aircraft like the VTOL Harrier Jump Jet.



It was clear that Cliff had certainly found the excitement he sought from the job as he recounted some of his experiences and near misses, including close encounters with the towers of Lincoln and Lichfield Cathedrals and landings made on games fields. He spoke of breaking the sound barrier and flying back to base with no fuel to spare. He also mentioned the inevitable fatalities which occurred during test flying and exhibition displays.

By good fortune Cliff managed to avoid one such disaster. On the 20th September 1958 he was scheduled to fly an Avro Vulcan, registration VX770 from Hucknall to carry out performance tests on new Rolls-Royce Conway engines that had been fitted in place of the original engines. Cliff was forced to withdraw from the test as he had an important dental appointment on the same day and his place was taken by another pilot. The tests were successfully completed and on the return journey the pilot was instructed to divert the aircraft to RAF Syerston to participate in a 'Battle of Britain Day' air show by making a fly past.

The Vulcan flew in low along the runway then started a rolling climb to starboard. As it was making the manoeuvre part of its starboard wing disintegrated, resulting in a collapse of the wing structure. The Vulcan went into a dive with the starboard wing on fire and struck the ground. All four of the Vulcan crew were killed along with three people on the ground who were hit by flying

debris. Following the accident, a request went out to members of the public who had been filming the event for them to submit their films to aid with the accident enquiry. They did so and there is graphic footage recorded of the crash that Cliff so fortuitously avoided.

Cliff remained as Chief Test Pilot at Hucknall until aircraft testing at the airfield ceased in 1971. He did, however, remain working for Rolls-Royce becoming the Chief Communications Pilot for the company, flying its Gulfstream II jet aircraft. It was a role that took him all over the world.

Even after retiring, Cliff continued to fly, piloting the Rolls-Royce company's Mk XIV Spitfire, G-ALGT, until 1987.

Cliff Rogers died on the 5th February 2003 at the age of 80. His funeral took place at the St John the Baptist Church, in Smalley followed by cremation at Markeaton Crematorium.



The Mk XIV Spitfire, G-ALGT, flown by Cliff Rogers

Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines

(Contributed by Clive Booth)

Many of you, like me, will remember watching the Avro Vulcan aircraft from Hucknall airfield (mentioned in the preceding article), wheeling across the sky above Heanor. That was an awe-inspiring sight for those of us looking up - but just think back to those people in Heanor who were looking up the very first time, ever, that an aeroplane flew over Heanor. How must they have felt?

It happened on the 13th July 1912 and below is a newspaper report of the event from the **Heanor Observer**.

For the first time in history, Heanor people had the pleasure on Saturday morning of seeing an aeroplane flying over the town. The aviator was Mr. B.C. Hucks who with his 75 h.p. monoplane was on his way from Derby to Mansfield.

On leaving Derby he followed the road until between Smalley and Heanor, he deviated to the left for a short distance and then wheeled sharply to the right.

The noise of the engine brought the people, out with a rush and in Market Street a good view was obtained. Residents in Fletcher Street and Gladstone Street had, however, a still better view. The aviator passed over them at a low altitude, the words "Daily Mail" painted on the aeroplane being easily read.

The spectators were able to watch him steer his course, over to the left of Dunstead until he was finally lost to view in the vicinity of Underwood.

The plane being flown by Captain Hucks was a Bleriot XI-2, named 'The Firefly', which was a later version of the Bleriot XI that, three years earlier, had made the first successful flight across the English Channel piloted by French aviator Louis Bleriot. Hucks was using the plane to participate in the 1912 Daily Mail Aerial Tour.

Captain Bentfield Charles Hucks, to give him his full name, as well as being the first person to fly over Heanor, was also the first Englishman to loop the loop, the first person to use an aeroplane for political purposes, (using one on the eve of the 1911 General Election to drop pamphlets over Midlothian), and one of the first exhibition flyers.

But of course, the people on the ground in Heanor were unaware of any of this – they were just stunned to see a flying machine in the skies above them. It must have been an amazing experience for them!

(Below) A Bleriot XI-2 aircraft similar to that flown over Heanor by Capt. Hucks (right)



LITERARY DERBYSHIRE

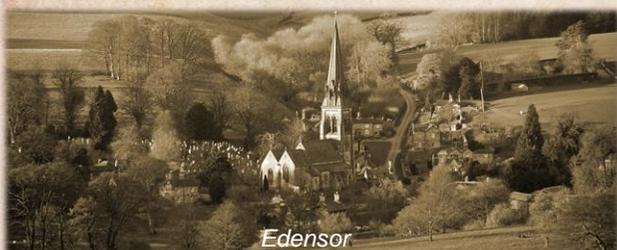
(Contributed by Clive Booth)



Although here in Heanor we may not (yet) have produced a 'great' writer of our own to rank with the Shakespeares, Austens and Dickens of this world, we did come close with D.H. Lawrence – if only his parents, instead of settling at Victoria Street, Eastwood had come a couple of miles further west and settled at Victoria Street, Langley Mill, then we could have claimed him as a Derbyshire lad. But it wasn't to be – however, as pointed out in the news-cutting (*below left*) taken from the Derbyshire Times of 1904, we do, as a county, have plenty of literary associations . . .

Derbyshire Times and Chesterfield Herald Saturday 30 January 1904

Derbyshire has many literary associations. Some of these were briefly summarised in an interesting article in the "Westminster Gazette," in which the writer points out that, taking Chatsworth as a centre, close at hand is Edensor, which Boswell said he had "gone a considerable way out of my road to Scotland" to visit in order to "survey the magnificence" of Chatsworth.



Edensor

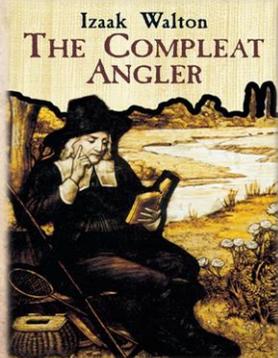
A few miles along the Derwent is Hathersage, the "Morton" of Jane Eyre, where Charlotte Bronte herself stayed at the hall described as "Moor House," now known "Moorseats."



Moorseats Hall (last on the market for £3,000,000)

At Castleton is Scott's "Peveril of the Peak"; "Eyam," the famous Plague village, is the "Milton" of Mr Murray Gilchrist's vignettes of Peakland folk.

Probably several additions ought to be made to this list. Wirksworth, where is the "Adam Bede" country, is within motoring distance of Chatsworth; Beresford Dale, with its memories of the "Complete Angler," is only about ten miles away; Ben Jonson's masque, "Love's Welcome," was performed before King Charles I. and his Queen at Bolsover; at Wootton Hall, Dovedale. Rousseau wrote his "Botanical Dictionary" and his "Confessions."



WRITE ON

(Contributed by Clive Booth)

The musings to the left were, of course, made over a century ago and there has been plenty of time since then for further Derbyshire literary associations to be forged or discovered. Here are a few more to consider:

Between 1724 and 1726, Daniel Defoe, author of Robinson Crusoe made 'a Tour through the whole island of Great Britain' during which he went out of his way to see the River Dove in Derbyshire – unfortunately he went on a wet day and witnessed 'the river drowning the lowlands with a most outrageous stream'.

Richmal Crompton, author of the Just William books got part of her education in Darley Dale. Roald Dahl lived on the High Street in Repton. Agatha Christie loved walking around the Kinder Scout area and even set one of her stories, 'The Mystery of the Hunter's Lodge', in Edale (called Elmer's Dale in the book). In 1826 George Eliot stayed with relatives living in Wirksworth and may have used the area as the backdrop for her novel, Adam Bede, referring to it as Snowfield in Stoneyshire.

The father of Samuel Johnson was born at Great Cubley in Derbyshire - OK, I admit I'm stretching it a bit there, so I'd better mention that Samuel himself did also visit Derbyshire many times in later life, staying with a friend on Church Street in Ashbourne.

Jane Austen, maybe wrote part of Pride and Prejudice whilst staying at the Rutland Arms in Bakewell. And whilst we're on the subject of maybes, maybe Charlotte Bronte wrote some of Jane Eyre in Hathersage when she stayed at the vicarage home of a friend there in 1845, a couple of years before the book's 1847 publication. It could well be that the Morton in her book is Hathersage as there are many similarities with the town in her Morton description.

But what of our own corner of Derbyshire? Well, we can of course, lay claim to both William and Mary Howitt who lived, for a time, at The Dene on Mansfield Road.

And then there's Cathy Grindrod who, in 2005, was appointed the first Derbyshire Poet Laureate. She once lived in Heanor. So did B. J. Holmes, prolific author of numerous books set in the Wild West.

Neal James, now up to his 10th published book still lives in the town (and in Langley Mill before that), and has been known to include people from this area, like you and I, as bit players in some of his stories – you therefore might one day become a future literary link yourself!

JUST ALF

PART TWO : DOCTORS AND SCHOOL

(Contributed by Robert Mee)

The memoirs of Alf Bestwick, who was born in 1910, contain a wealth of local information. In this second article, we are staying with his early years, as Alf tells us about an accident which affected him for his whole life, along with his first day at school. Be warned – he is not always polite, and he is very candid about his father George (and his school teachers!)

My dad would come home about 11 p.m. the worse for drink, shouting and singing but he was not too bad in the week. It was the weekends we had to fear for it was then that he got violent and would come home raving drunk and shout and swear at the top of his voice, turn the table over and break all the pots, and we would lay in bed with the pillow over our heads to deaden the sound of what was happening downstairs. When things got very bad we would creep downstairs and go out by the front door in only our shirts and run to our grandma until the morning. Then my granddad would take us back home when my father would be sleeping his drunkenness off. Mother would be preparing dinner as if nothing had happened, but when my father sat down for his dinner she would have her own back, she would put his dinner on the table in front of him without a plate and say, "that's how thee'll get it until thi giz mi some money for some more pots". I think he was ashamed of what he did for he would not argue when he was sober and gave my mother money to buy some more pots with. One good thing came out of it; we never drank out of cracked cups.

When I was four years old, while my mother was doing the washing in the kitchen, I was playing at jumping off the sofa arm and catching hold of the coats hanging on the door, when I fell and broke my left arm. My mother had to rush me to the Doctor who lived by the side of Heanor market. The Doctor's name was Turton and he was getting on in years, but he was a kindly old man who said the arm was badly smashed and he thought it could not be mended and he would take my mother and me to Ilkeston Hospital for X-rays. So we got in his car, which I will never forget as it was one of the first cars in Heanor with the number R100 on the front. When we

got to the Hospital I was taken into a darkened room and my arm placed on an X-ray table, and the electric was turned on. There were blue sparks flashing overhead and the table glowed, and there were the bones of my arm showing. I heard the two doctors say "Good God what a mess!". Then the light was put on and I was taken back to my mother. I heard Doctor Turton say to my mother, "It will have to come off". But my mother said, "Oh no it wonner, if it hangs by his side for the rest of his dees he'll still ay two arms that he wor born wee". At that we got back in his car and returned to Heanor. Doctor Turton said he would do the best he could with setting the bones, but could not promise anything. He would come round every day to our house and I would be lain on the table and fastened down with pit belts to stop me moving, then he would set one of the bones in my arm. I did not have anything to deaden the pain and would lay there cursing and swearing at him, but never crying. He would do what he had to then splint my arm up and undo the belts and laughingly say, "learn some more swear words for tomorrow for I'll be back".

When the time came to see if I could move the arm, the splints were removed and the Doctor bent my arm and said "straighten it out again", which I managed to do. The doctor turned to my mother and said, "Thank God you did not let them take it off, we've done it but it will take a long time to get it working properly". From then on I had to go to his home every day for exercises. First I had to carry an empty bucket, then he would put a brick in it and let me go into his orchard and put apples in it, and all the apples I could carry with my left arm I could keep, but my right hand had to be kept in my pocket at all times. This meant I did everything with my left arm. In time it became as strong as my right arm so I did not have to go to see him again and when no bill came from the doctor my mother went to see him about it. The doctor told my mother there would be no bill as he had got more satisfaction than any money could by seeing me with two good arms which he never would have thought possible, and besides that he had learned a lot of new swear words he had never heard of before, so here I was nearly as good as new and a good range of swear words to boot.

OOPS! WE GOT IT WRONG ...

In the first part of the Just Alf series, we published a photograph of 40 Burnthouse Road as being the home of Alf. What we didn't know is that the houses on the street were renumbered during the 1950s or '60s and the present number 40 isn't where Alf was born. The house where Alf was born is nowadays number 90.

Our apologies for the error.



The correct house

With all that behind me it was time to start school and one Monday morning I was taken to Commonsides Infants School by my mother, and left in the hands of Miss Purchase, the Head Teacher. She was to me a sour old spinster who no man would take to, for that is what older boys had said of her. I sat on a chair in front of her while she was looking through some papers before taking me into my new classroom. She looked up from her papers and said, "Do you think we will get on with one another?", and I said, "I don't know, no man will have you will they? She looked at me, took off her glasses then burst out laughing. I could not see what there was to laugh

about, but she laughed for a long time then said, "Come along with me I'll take you to your classroom."



Alf (arrowed) at Commonsides School

When we got to the classroom I was handed over to the teacher who said her name was Miss Benson, and again I made the same mistake by saying, "Can't thee get a man eether? She was a big fat woman and her face went very red and she started to splutter something, but Miss Purchase started to laugh again which made Miss Benson laugh too, but I don't think she ever forgave me.

In this first class you sat boy and a girl together at the desks, and I was put by the side of a girl who had a long nose and long pigtails to match. Unlike me she was well dressed, for I had started school with a jersey belonging to my brother Charlie, a pair of trousers of brother Jim which my mother cut down for me, and a pair of boots with the toes out. The girl pulled her dress away from me and moved to the far end of the seat so I would not touch her, cocking her big nose in the air at the same time. This was the first time anyone had shown disapproval of me, for where I lived everyone was friendly to me. I said to her, "Thi needna move becos a mi, ar dunna mind if thi nose gets stuck in mi tab". I had made my reply to her for what she had done to me and was satisfied, but not her. Up went her hand in the air and Miss Benson saw it and said, "Yes Marie?" She said, "He as swore at me". Miss Benson came up to me and getting hold of my ear jerked me up from my seat and pulled me to the front of the class. "But I'll cure you; stand in that corner until I tell you to move". So I was in disgrace to start with and I'd only been at school about 10 minutes.

MISS PURCHASE

(Contributed by Robert Mee)

Surprisingly, Miss Purchase, the head mistress of Commonsides Infants (above), has only been mentioned in the Society's newsletter once in the last 50 years, and that was only a passing comment. So, a quick bit of research shows that she was Ellen E. Purchase, born in 1879 in Kings Lynn, Norfolk. She was already recorded as a Head Teacher in the 1911 Census, at which time she was lodging on Loscoe Road at Heanor. She was still working in Heanor in 1939, at which time she was living at 10 Stainsby Avenue; as well as her day job, the 1939 Register records that she was a "Clerk and First Medical Worker at the Heanor First Medical Post". From the previous mention in our newsletters, we also know that she was a local councillor. Miss Purchase died in 1959, aged 79 years. Can anyone tell us more?)

CRICH TRAMWAY MUSEUM DECEMBER MEETING REPORT

In 1955 the National Tramway Museum had 16 trams and was in need of a larger permanent site to store them. After a prolonged four-year search of the UK for such a site it settled, in 1959, on a site in Crich – just eight miles down the road from us. Situated near the Crich Stand war memorial, the highest point of the southern Peak District and visible from all directions from miles around (you can even see it from Heanor), I'm surprised it took so long to spot it.

Since then the Museum has grown into a major tourist attraction and our December speakers, Roger West and Frank Bagshaw, told us the fascinating story of it from its 1948 birth in Southampton, where it bought its first tram for £10, right through to the present day, when the cost of trams is talked about in hundreds of thousands of pounds when refurbishment is taken into account.

In their well-illustrated talk, Frank and Roger showed us photographs of many of the 70 plus trams now owned by the museum, most of them from the UK, but also a few from overseas. They also told us about the museum itself which has developed into a recreated village using buildings imported from other sites which serve as working offices, a sweet shop, a public house, workshops and so on.

An enjoyable evening and I think Frank and Roger will have whetted a few appetites for a visit, maybe a Society one, to this local attraction.

PLEASE SIR, I WANT SOME MORE



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