"It's always windy up there"

A short history of Cliff Rec

Vivien Aizlewood and Deborah Wyles
Friends of Cliff Recreation Ground

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A Walk on the Cliff
Mildred Holmes, 1915-2001

If you leave Wooldale village by South Street
Turning right at the top by the lane
Walk along to a stile, skirt the field for a while
At the top there's a stile once again

Just a few yards to walk between stone walls
To the Cliff and a breathtaking view
The whole of the valley is waiting
A beautiful picture for you

Far below in Holmfirth throng the tourists
Hoping Nora or Compo to meet
But the beauty we see from the Cliff top
Is not to be found in the street

We see Jubilee Tower on the skyline
Castle Hill as it is usually known
It was built in the year Queen Victoria
Had reigned sixty years on the throne

About Castle Hill and its history
Many stories and legends are told
For artefacts found in a digging
Were more than four thousand years old

The hill once carried a beacon
When the Spanish Armada was feared
But we all know the story how that came to naught
When Drake singed the King of Spain's beard

Since then many fires have been lit there
For many a great celebration
Then in 1960 the Tower was repaired
By the Huddersfield Corporation

The Tower proudly stands as a landmark
For whenever we natives may roam
When we see the old Tower on the sky line
We know we're nearly back home

Let your eyes wander round the horizon
To Wolfstones, Netherthong then round
To Holme Moss standing guard o'er our valley
And the moors where the peat moss is found

Over there lies the boundary of Yorkshire
With Lancashire, once we were foes
There was many a battle between us
In the wars of the red and white rose

But now I believe we're good neighbours
Though we still have a skirmish or two
Whenever two counties meet to play cricket
For we both like to win, that is true

Have you walked on the Cliff in the springtime?
Seen the fields with new carpets of green
Heard larks sing as they rise, in the now smokeless skies
There is no better sight to be seen

Have you walked on the Cliff in the summer?
With the gorse and the heather in bloom
Heard the hum of the bees, felt the sunshine
You'll forget the world's worries and gloom

Have you walked on the Cliff in the autumn?
When the trees are a joy to behold
Nature's palette has painted a beautiful picture
Of scarlet and russet and gold

Have you walked on the Cliff in the winter?
When the valley was a blanket of snow
Felt the health-giving breeze, for the folks used to say
That from Blackpool the ozone did blow

Whatever the time or the season
Whatever the weather may be
Say a prayer that the next generation
Will still see the beauty we see

“It's always windy up there”: a short history of Cliff Rec

by
Vivien Aizlewood and Deborah Wyles
Friends of Cliff Recreation Ground
June 2014

Dedicated to Norman Heeley, 1933 - 2014
Founder member of the Friends of Cliff Rec

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Foreword

This booklet is part of the Cliff Rec Heritage Project, 2013/14.

We had two main reasons for producing a booklet. The amount of information which was gathered during the project, from existing sources and oral history interviews, was far in excess of what is displayed on the local history interpretation board on the Rec itself. We wanted to share this additional information with a wider audience. A far more compelling reason, however, is the great affection which we know is felt for the Rec. Our interviewees and existing written sources reveal intensely fond recollections. This is as true of those whose childhood was in the 1980s, as those who grew up long ago.

The Friends of Cliff Rec is a newcomer. It was established in 2010, to counter the negative publicity which the Rec was attracting at the time, including the demand that the magnificent stone shelter should be demolished to combat anti-social behaviour. There is nothing new about this. Our local history research has revealed that, ever since it was created, in the early years of the last century, the Rec has been a target for vandalism and unacceptable behaviour!

Determined that the demolition of the stone shelter was not the answer to the problems, the Friends set about the far more difficult task of trying to develop a sense of pride and ownership of the Rec by local people. We have tried to balance the need to attract more visitors with the preservation of the natural environment and are all too aware that sometimes these two aims are in conflict.

With our annual Fun Days, we have re-instated a local celebration on the customary first Saturday in July. Royal and national celebrations were revived with the official beacon for the Diamond Jubilee in 2012. In 2013, with funding from Kirklees Council, the Holme Valley Parish

The seating / interpretation structure, with carvings by children from local schools, and the Nature Notes interpretation Board

Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund, a new stone seating and interpretation structure was created on the Rec. This structure, designed and built by master dry stone waller, John Ford, is a thing of beauty, aligned to the points of the compass. Its sloping, sinuous and intersecting lines, deliberately echo those of the surrounding hills.

We are grateful to all those organisations which funded the Cliff Rec Heritage Project and in particular to the main funder – the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Friends of Cliff Recreation Ground
June 2014

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1. Cliff Rec and the local context

Introduction

The Upper Holme Valley is on the eastern side of the Pennines in West Yorkshire, surrounded by the hills of Cartworth Moor, Harden Moss and Holme Moss. The valley is deeply cut by the river Holme and its major tributary, the Ribble, which emanate from different reservoirs, high up their respective valleys. The confluence of these two rivers is the location of the major centre of population, the town of Holmfirth.

An 1861 account of the surrounding area of the Holme Valley by Henry James Morehouse describes it thus:

"The whole of the district is composed of hill and dale, and abounds in fertile spots and romantic scenery ... Notwithstanding the apparent irregularity of its surface, an attentive observer will perceive a great uniformity in the general contour of the hills, as well as of the more open plains, which stretch out and dip towards the east, or nearly so, while the different strata of underlying rocks are seen occasionally breaking out on the more abrupt western side."

Such a 'breaking out' forms a major outcrop of rock to the east of Holme Valley, high above Holmfirth, known as Cliff Edge. The expanse of land on top of and extending beyond Cliff Edge has always been known as the West Field and the southern end of this area constitutes Cliff Recreation Ground or 'Rec' for short.

Readers will note that the spelling of Cliff(e) can vary. Today it is Cliff, but older documents frequently use Cliffe. The modern spelling of Cliff is used throughout this booklet, except where included in quotations.

Cliff Edge from Hill, Holmfirth

The photograph above is of Cliff Edge taken from across the valley, showing the rocky nature of the outcrop. Two landmarks can be seen on the skyline: on the right where the outcrop dips slightly is the Jubilee Beacon, which stands on Cliff Rec, and the structure in the centre is the Rec shelter. The radio mast (centre left), adjacent to the northern boundary of Cliff Rec, is the most easily identified landmark. The settlement of Cliff comprises those houses which can be seen nestling under the outcrop.

Cliff Edge therefore commands extensive views to the north, south and west and this has formed an attraction for local people for generations, but it is a steep climb up from Holmfirth whichever approach is taken.

Below are a few of the comments made about Cliff's position by earlier observers. Former Cliff resident George Sykes, who lived at Cliff from 1838 to 1851, described it thus:

"For a spectator to stand at Cliff on a clear moonless night and lift up his eyes to the firmament, he would see a beautiful sight. The heavens studded with burning luminaries in there several constellations" [sic].

One of today's climbing websites notes that: *"When you are halfway*

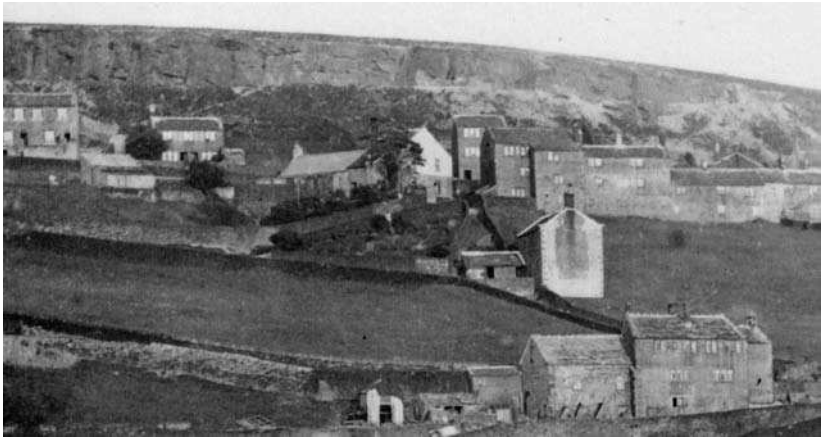
to exhaustion, you are there"; and a 1909 tourist information guide for Holmfirth claimed, "*The best view of the valley may be had from the top of the Cliffe and the panorama spread before the visitor will repay them [sic] for the climb up the hill.*"

Also from that same year: "*The top of the Cliffe has been for a great number of years a most popular place of resort, where the residents of our district could sit or promenade and enjoy themselves in the bracing fresh air ... on some evenings about 200 people are on the recreation ground. It is 10 minutes walk from the centre, 20 minutes for half the population.*"

Looking west over the Upper Holme Valley from Cliff Edge with Cartworth Moor to the left, Holme Moss in the centre and Harden Moss to the right.

In 1938, one Fred Tinker, once a Holmfirth resident but now living in Richmond, Surrey, wrote to the Holmfirth Express with this memory:

"*Mr Andrew Mitchell, son of Henry Mitchell (South Lane, grocer), would deliver groceries from a basket on his arm while on horseback to customers in Cliffe … [the] pedestrian was instructed to grab hold of the tail of the horse … [on the] very steep road ... and [it would] pull them up. Why are there not lifts to the Cliffe?*"



1904 photograph

A photo of Cliff was taken c1904, which allows a comparison with the present day.

Two marked differences are immediately clear in the 1904 photo: the absence of trees and vegetation and the unspoilt face of Cliff Edge itself which implies that most of the quarrying at Cliff has taken place within the last 100 years.

Origins of Cliff Rec

Old maps of Cliff and West Fields on the summit of Cliff Edge show fields shaped in strips as in the medieval system lying both sides of West Field Lane, with Cliff Rec now occupying what would have been the most south-westerly area of fields.

These fields were used on an ad-hoc basis for many public events, which were often recorded in the local newspaper. One such early reference is in the local paper in July 1851:

"EVANGELICAL REFORM – On Sunday last an open air meeting was held on Wooldale Cliff at which about 300 persons were present, when addresses on the above subject were delivered by Messrs J Sutcliff, of Sowerby Bridge; B Gledhill, of Berry Brow; and others."

Also, in August 1873:

"CAMP MEETING AT HOLMFIRTH – On Sunday last the Primitive

An early map of West Field with Cliff Rec shown in green

Methodists at Wooldale Town End, near Holmfirth, held their annual camp meetings on the waste ground at Wooldale Cliff. The meetings took place in the morning and afternoon, and were attended by a vast number of people, as is usually the case at these gatherings."

The increasing use of these fields for events led to the idea that the area be converted to public space. In 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, it was decided by Holmfirth Urban District Council (UDC) to create a recreation ground to take children off the streets when they played. Cliff was seen as ideal because it was *"situate centrally between Wooldale, Underbank and Holmfirth and would serve nearly half the population of the district."*

In 1904, the West Fields were sold at auction and were bought by the council from the trustees of Henry J Wadsworth for £150. At the time, the fields were rented by Albert Brown who obligingly served notice of his intention to quit. All was going well, it seemed, but in 1905 someone else was allowed tenancy of the land. This action led to an outcry from 360 ratepayers, urging the council to *"seriously take into consideration the devotion to that purpose (recreation) of their land at Cliff."*

A council sub-committee was formed and things started to move along. In January 1906, Brown claimed £8 compensation because he had manured the land for potatoes, wallflowers and grass. Another £200 was promised to fund the cost of buildings and improvements to

the Rec. The buildings were to include a *"lean-to shelter and two closets"* and the improvements were the *"making of a new entrance and footpath, taking down the wall between the two fields and using the stone for repair of an outer wall"*.

However, in 1907 Cliff Rec was still being discussed by the council. The loan was still not secured nor the works begun, but things did start to happen by July of that year. By 1908, rules and regulations for park and recreation ground users were drawn up and there was a resolution to *"at once proceed ... with the work of erecting gates and sanitary conveniences"*. These were certainly built by 1909 because they were damaged with graffiti that same year.

The gates were in place by 1914, but were damaged not long after their installation. Also in 1914, we know that the shelter existed, as it was included in the land valuation of Cliff Rec for Inland Revenue Commissioners' purposes. What remains as a mystery is exactly when the shelter was erected. No mention is made of it in the council minutes, nor does there appear to be any newspaper article about it.

Looking north from Cliff Edge over Far Cliff to Castle Hill, Huddersfield

People interviewed today remember that the shelter had wooden seating in it. Most said this was along the back of the shelter but some thought it ran all the way around. We even have a name for the shelter from Joyce Whitworth. She called it the 'cowshed'!

There would have been added excitement when a captured Great War German field gun was placed on the Rec. This happened around 1921 when it was removed from the council's storeyard. Winnie Greaves remembered playing on the gun, clambering all over it and being quite shocked years later when she realised what it was.

Margaret Beaumont with her father and the field gun c1926
(Photo courtesy of the Booth family)

The gates and gun were removed around the time of World War Two in order to be melted down to make rifles and planes – a mostly wasted effort for, as local resident Wilf Battye asked, *"Has anyone seen an iron airplane?"* The gates were said to be about eight feet in height and probably ten feet from side to side and relatively plain in style. All that is left today are the stone bases for the gateposts and a functional gate in its place. The original gates were always locked. Hence there was a lot of climbing over walls in order to get into the Rec.

Holmfirth UDC minute book records a request by the Civilian Training Corps to conduct drill practice on the Rec in 1915 and, during World War Two, the Rec was used as a searchlight facility.

In more peaceful times, the Rec was a place for summer picnics for families and groups of children who would disappear up to the Rec for hours on end, having taken their sandwiches and flasks of juice. Linda Aspinall remembers clamouring for her mother to give her some of her brother's welfare orange juice (provided by the welfare state) in her flask because *"the taste of that orange juice was out of this world. If you had some it was a treat!"*

Other people remarked on Cliff's attraction for courting couples, perhaps along the Wooldale Cliff footpath, but also on the Rec. Groups of young people out in the evening were known in the early to mid-twentieth century as doing the "bunny run". No one was confident enough to go on record and talk about those days though!

Nowadays users of the Rec are most likely to be dogs and their walkers.

2. Home life on the Cliff

Early references

The earliest references to life on Cliff are listed in George Redmond's book, 'Holmfirth: Place-names and Settlement':

1274	Adam del Cliff, Holmfirth
1352	William del Cliff, Holmfirth
1515-1516	Clyffege, Clyffend
1690	"a community there"

Cliff has some of the oldest housing in Holmfirth, including buildings dating from the mid-eighteenth century. Building plots were sold when land was released following an Enclosure Act of 1834, but some houses have been demolished, such as those where Cliff Hill Court now is.

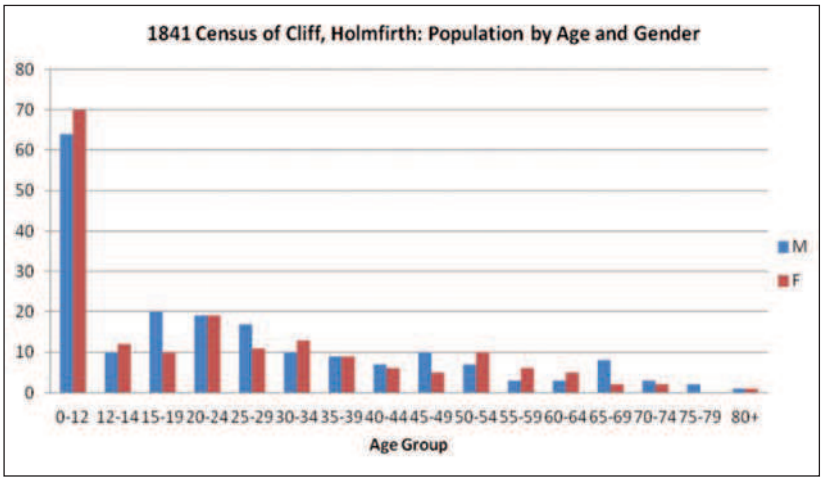
Information on the population surrounding Cliff Rec can be gleaned from the national census data taken every ten years from 1801. Some of the data from the 1841 census has been investigated for this project for the settlements immediately surrounding the Rec, comprising Cliff End, Hey End, Cliff, Far Cliff, Cliff House, Whinney Bank, and West Nelly and Paddock Gate farms.

Life in the 1840s

At this time, the Industrial Revolution was in full swing, characterised by mass migration from the countryside to town, from cottage industry to mills and factories, as well as mass international migration, partly

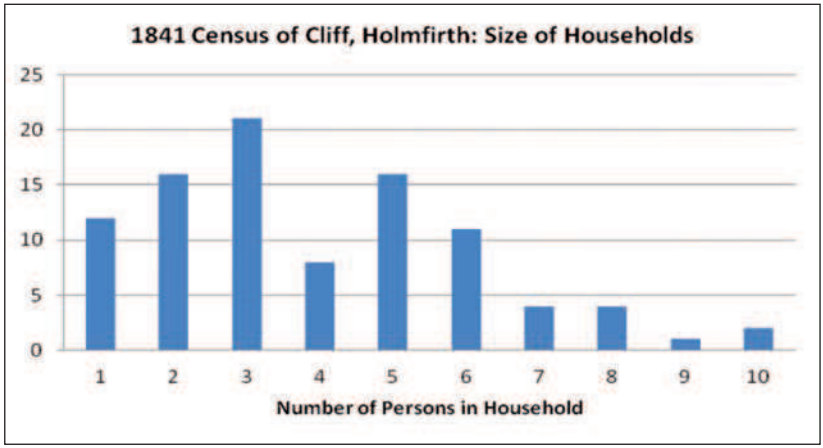
stimulated by increased poverty and insecurity, such as that caused by the potato famine in Ireland. The national mail system was being established around this time and the railways constructed, the latter reaching Holmfirth in 1850. Ideas of free trade and "laissez-faire" were becoming dominant and these changing social, economic and political dynamics encouraged the growth of religious and secular non-conformity and the rise of Chartism. However, life expectancy was low, 40.2 years for men, 42.2 years for women; and 15% of babies died before they were one and 70% of the population nationally were under 30.

The 1841 census showed the population for the settlements surrounding Cliff Rec comprised 374 people in 95 households. Some houses contained more than one family: these 95 households occupied 76 buildings. However, the census did not include the homeless as there was no administrative means to capture their information, although for Cliff it did record that there was one male living in *"barns, sheds or the like"*. The population breakdown was as follows:



This shows the significant proportion of younger people in the population: 42% were aged under 15 and 67% were aged under 30, slightly less than the national average. Despite the level of national life expectancy, nine residents were aged over 70.

The size of individual households can be summarised separately:



These figures seem surprising when the general assumption is that families were large in Victorian society. The low figures might have been due to the high infant mortality rate or to adult children leaving the area to find work.

George Sykes was born in Lane End in Holmfirth in 1838 and moved to Cliff in 1841. Between 1916 and 1919, he wrote his memoirs as a series of "Reminiscences", which appeared in the local paper and have been transcribed by a member of the Holmfirth Local History Group.

Sykes speaks powerfully of life in Cliff in the 1840s:

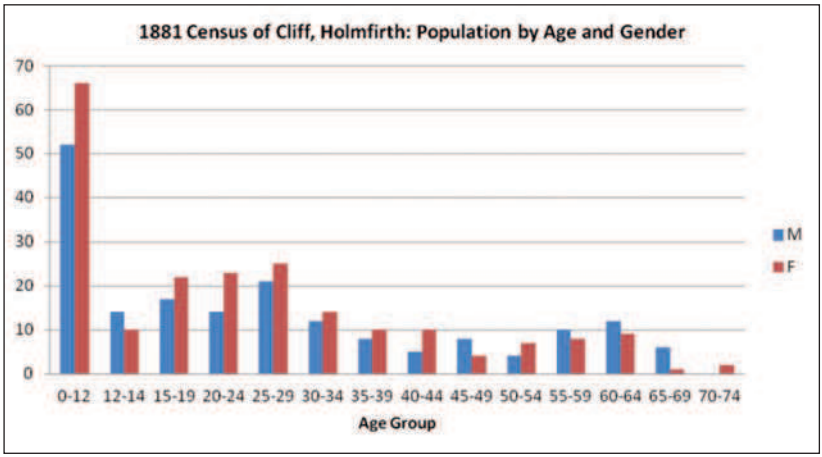
"There was a very bad time in the early 40s. Work was scarce and corn was very dear. These two things taking [sic] together made for much suffering among the poor. ... When times were fairly good the poor were not well off for food, but in hard times when work was scarce and uncertain and corn of a very inferior quality and still at high price, the condition of most of the people may be better imagined than described. I think it was in the year 1845 /1846 when things were at their worst. ... I had to go every week to the grocers and I have distinctly a recall of flour being five shillings a stone". Five shillings in 1845 equates to about £14 in today's money, so the flour was about three times today's price. The situation was relieved by the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846.

Life in the 1880s

The 1880s, sometimes styled a second industrial revolution, featured a large economic boom led by technological developments in areas such as electricity generation and distribution, telephony and transport. The first power station opened at Deptford in south London; telephone exchanges facilitated the spread of telephone communications; the first frozen meat was imported from Australia; the first automobile appeared in Germany; the first steel-framed skyscrapers were being built in the USA and the 'Ashes' Test Matches between England and Australia were inaugurated.

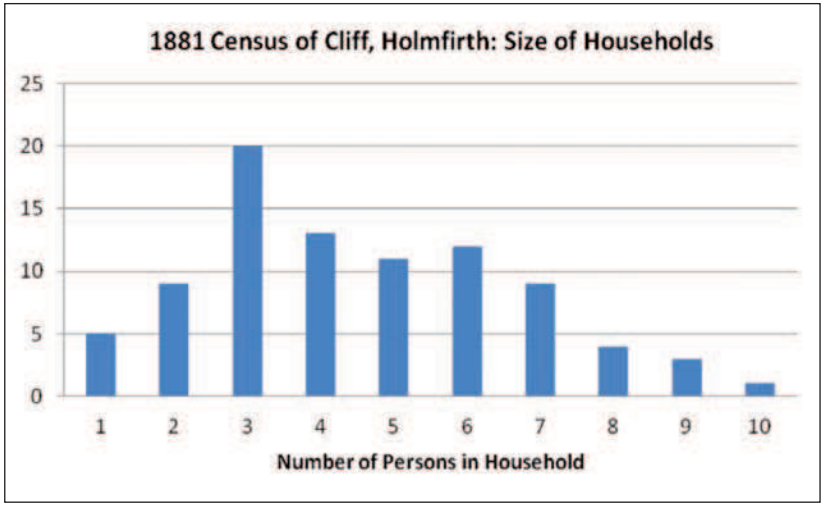
The 1880 Education Act signalled the introduction of compulsory education for all children to the age of ten, primarily as a measure to prevent child labour rather than on strictly altruistic educational grounds. Life expectancy had risen slightly, to about 45 for men and 50 for women.

The 1881 census showed that the population for the settlements surrounding Cliff Rec comprised 394 people in 88 households. The breakdown was:



This shows that 36% of the population were aged under 15, a lower proportion than in 1841; 67% were aged under 30, with only two over the age of 70.

The size of individual households was:



As for 1841, although larger families did exist, the average household size was relatively modest.

The 1881 census also included a more detailed listing of the birthplace of inhabitants, showing how "local" the population was.

Birthplace	Nos.	%
Cliff	7	2
Wooldale	255	65
Holmfirth	53	14
Holme Valley	28	7
Other Yorkshire	44	11
England	7	2

The great majority of the population, 67%, were born very locally, with another 21% hailing from Holmfirth and the Holme Valley. There were no foreign-born residents and only seven from outside Yorkshire.

Life in the early twentieth century

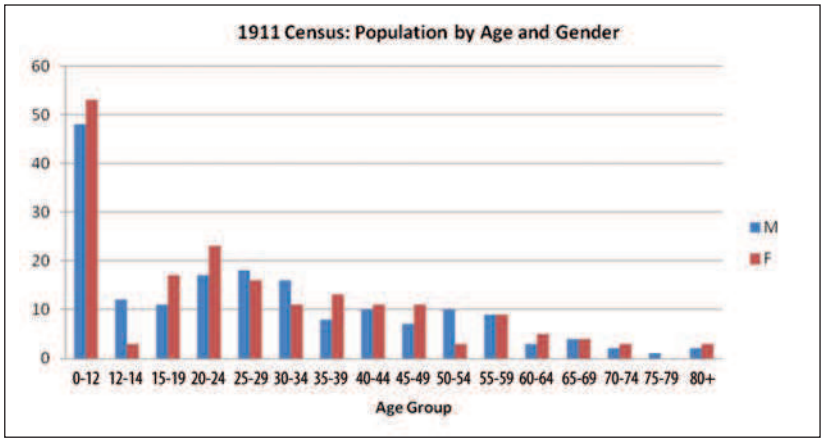
The early years, until World War One, were a time of low unemployment due to an expanding economy. The average working week was 54 hours but wages were low. Consequently, about a quarter of the population were living in poverty: 15% at subsistence level and a further 10% below subsistence level. The usual cause of extreme poverty was the loss of the family breadwinner, as it was unusual for married women to work. Food was expensive and some families sat down to a meal of just porridge, potatoes or bread. Child malnutrition was common amongst the poor.

Matters improved slightly following the election of a Liberal government in 1906. Wages councils, which were introduced to guarantee national wage rates for different occupations, were introduced in 1909. The first school meals were offered in 1906, the first old age pensions in 1909, and sickness benefit in 1911. However, these payments were meagre: the first old age pension was five shillings per week, the equivalent of about £14 today.

A more comprehensive survey of households and housing is available from the 1911 census. The census data for the Cliff settlements showed a total of 83 households with a population of 364 people, demonstrating a remarkably consistent population over the 70 years from 1841.

As in the earlier censuses, the 1911 census asked for details of residents suffering an infirmity. Only one infirmity was recorded: 22-year-old James Barrowclough, employed as a cloth presser, had been totally deaf from birth.

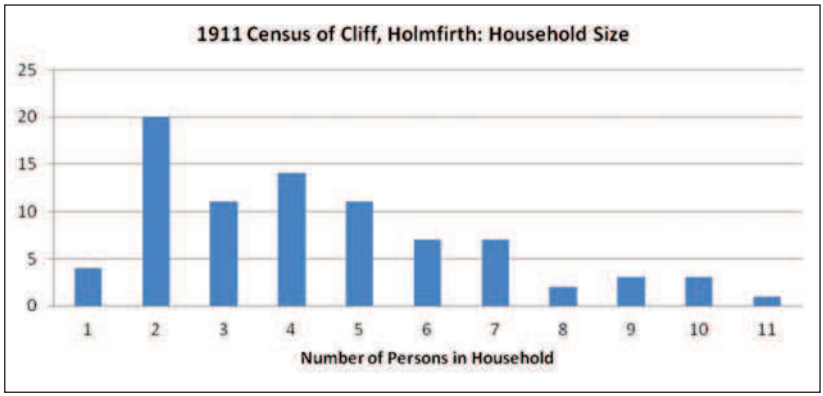
In addition to the usual population information, the 1911 census also asked for the country of birth for non-British residents (of whom there were none in Cliff), and required that for married women, the length of the present marriage be recorded together with how many children had been born, how many children were still alive and how many had died. These questions were included because the government was concerned to ensure that, despite a falling birth rate and significant emigration, the country was producing the healthy workforce needed for an industrialised nation. The data does not provide a complete picture as it excludes data for previous marriages, widows and unmarried mothers. Of the 217 children recorded in the Cliff settlements, 36 had died (16.6%), a higher mortality than the national figure for 1841.

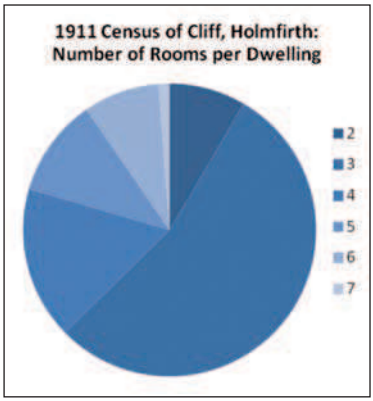


This 1911 data shows a more even spread of adult age groups with 32% aged under 15 and 60% aged under 30. There were 11 residents above the age of 70, the eldest being Harriet Fallas, aged 90.

By 1911, the school-leaving age had risen to 12. Of the 101 children aged under 12 in the census, only 39 were formally recorded as scholars, one of whom was half-time at school, half-time at work as a bobbin setter, as was allowed in the final school year.

For the first time, the census also recorded the number of rooms in each dwelling. The kitchen was counted as a room but the count was not to include *"scullery, landing, lobby, closet, bathroom; nor warehouse, office, shop"*.





In terms of the size of each dwelling, the 1911 census shows that the majority of households were living in just three rooms, generally a kitchen and parlour downstairs and a single bedroom upstairs. The largest household living in such a dwelling comprised husband and wife, three sons and six daughters. The largest house, with seven rooms, was West Nelly Farm.

As with the 1881 census, the birthplace of the inhabitants reveals how "local" the population was.

Birthplace	Nos.	%
Cliff	41	11
Wooldale	14	4
Holmfirth	235	65
Holme Valley	35	10
Other Yorkshire	20	5
England	15	4
Other UK	4	0.1

Once again, the majority of inhabitants were very local, having been born in Cliff, Wooldale or Holmfirth. The numbers hailing from outside Yorkshire had increased slightly and four had come from elsewhere in the UK outside England.

Domestic life

Attitudes to those who found life hard were different then. In 1902, a mother with a large family was accused at Holmfirth Police Court of neglecting four of her children aged between one and ten years (there were older children and a working father). The children were found to

be dirty, poorly nourished, vermin-bitten and the house was littered and untidy. There was evidence of flies, bugs and lice. The smell was so intolerable that one of the inspectors had to go outside to vomit. The mother was found to be drunk as well. She was sent to prison for four months, taking the youngest, who was still being breastfed, with her. The following week the local newspaper carrying the story printed a letter from a concerned reader arguing that the sentence was too severe and also pointless.

Following a fourth national cholera epidemic, bringing the human cost to 51,000 lives in total over the preceding 30 years, a second Public Health Act (The Sanitary Act) was passed in 1866, compelling health boards to improve local conditions and remove health hazards. The Act laid down a definition of 'overcrowding' in housing and limited the use of cellars as living accommodation. Local boards became responsible for water and waste disposal, sewers and streets. Between 1861 and 1884, Cliff came under the Wooldale Local Board, which merged with Upperthong and Cartworth Local Boards to become Holmfirth Local Board from 1884. In 1894, the Local Government Act created Holmfirth Urban District Council (UDC), which took in the local boards of Netherthong and Austonley, as well as Holmfirth.

The impact of the 1866 Sanitary Act in Cliff can be seen in the minute books of Holmfirth UDC in the very early twentieth century, giving an insight into the poor sanitation at Cliff.

Any seepage of sewage or other contamination of the water supply was termed a 'nuisance'. Holmfirth UDC would report the findings at their meetings and order the owners to carry out repairs, but the owners rarely inhabited the properties concerned as most of them were rented out to tenants. Nuisances at Cliff were mentioned many times. In addition, there were problems with the water supply from nearby wells. One of these was called the Flacketer, a name deriving from the Old French word, *flacket*, which simply meant a vessel for holding water. The name appeared for the first time in print in 1320.

In 1873, the Wooldale Local Board proposed that *"the spring of water at Flacketer be obtained for supplying the township"*. Pipes were laid to connect the Flacketer to South Lane via Ing Head, mid-way between the two. All went well until in 1894 the farmer at Ing Head diverted the water for his use alone. This meant both the neighbouring

Flacketer Well on Cliff Road

residents and their cattle were deprived of an easy and free source of water. This farmer wasn't the first to do this. John Ramsden of Cliff and a Mr Crowther of South House had also diverted water by pipeline for their own use, but without completely depriving their neighbours. It would seem they merely took some of the water, whereas the Ing Head farmer diverted the whole supply.

A special sitting at the County Court in Holmfirth was convened, employing barristers, and the judge found against the farmer. However, the farmer was unhappy with the verdict and did all he could to prevent others from, as he believed, coming onto his land and taking the water. In the end he had no choice but to comply since *"the people in the vicinity had right of use, the right being vested by the Act of Parliament in the Local Board"*. Eventually, all was restored, although the farmer did try to get the council to pay for the work!

Today the Flacketer is dry, presumably as the water has been diverted. It was condemned as an unsafe supply many years later, due to cattle grazing on land above the well, causing the likelihood of contamination. This serves as a reminder of how hard it would be to provide water for everyone's needs. In 1934 newspaper articles reminded residents on Cliff to be aware that a drought meant that the Greave Reser-

voir near Hade Edge, which supplied Cliff, was nearly dry, and extreme care should be taken with water. Those with long memories remember the well being whitewashed (or at least treated to appear white) and cleaned out once a week. It was said to provide beautifully clean and sweet-tasting water.

Accounts of drainage and sewage problems continued into the early twentieth century as houses began to have improved sewer connections with privies and closets.

Meetings were held at Cliff Sunday School to discuss the installation of electricity in 1911. At the time many asked if Holmfirth UDC could become the supplier rather than householders pay profits to an outside company.

Gas came to Cliff Road in 1913 and the contractors left the road uneven and defective and were made to fix it or pay the council costs to do the same. After the work was completed, the majority of ratepayers in Cliff had the benefit of gas lamps.

Overcrowding and houses in a dilapidated condition were noted in the Holmfirth UDC minutes from 1915 and the council had the power to issue a 'closing order'. One house had *"no sink and drainage was deficient and untrapped. Very unsound woodwork in the stairs to upper floors. Want of proper eaves, troughs and fall pipes and cement pointing to the roof"*. This is the house in the 1911 census with a family of 11 living in it, two of the sons subsequently being lost in World War One. The house is now fully restored.

Around this time, there were requests to Holmfirth UDC to use the Rec as grazing ground for pigs or for pasture. These requests were turned down in 1917 and again in 1920. The promise to protect the land as a space for children to play was honoured for the time being at least. However, one of Joyce Whitworth's memories was of her grandfather driving cattle from Muslin Hall up to Cliff and back again. She mentioned counting 23 wells en route, many now filled in, lost to development or covered by undergrowth.

Cliff never seems to have had a pub, inn or beer house, whereas Holmfirth was reputed to have 18 pubs in 1907. Cliff did have a Working Men's Club, situated more or less where the entrance to Cliff Hill Court (furthest away from Cliff End) is today and Winnie Greaves remembers her father going there, though not whether they sold alcohol.

The club did some fund-raising in 1955 for Cliff Sunday School, as well as running whist drives and dances in the 1930s, but is now long gone.

Holmfirth might be a mere stroll away but it is a steep climb back to Cliff and therefore the presence of shops would have been very welcome. Cynthia Armitage's mother set up the biggest shop in the front room of her house. She began by stocking a packet of biscuits and a jar of sweets and installing a counter to sell them from. Needless to say, the shop took off and was in operation until 1968. There were other houses on Cliff Road also acting as little sweet shops. Those belonging to Herman Platt and Harry Cameron were also mentioned during the oral history interviews carried out for this project.

3. Working life

Introduction

THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE source for information about individuals' occupations in any community is once again the national census. As in the previous section, this investigation is restricted to those settlements shown in the map in section 1.

Agriculture

Although the land surrounding Cliff Rec appears 'green and pleasant', its use for agriculture has been limited. The 1933 Geological Survey of Holmfirth and Glossop described the underlying geology of the valley as various series of Millstone Grit. These rocks are so named because people found them ideally suited to the manufacture of millstones and, indeed, H J Morehouse records in 1861 that such a millstone or 'quern' had been found at Wooldale Cliff in about 1840, whilst breaking up a piece of common land there. He described the stone as consisting *"of a flat circular grit stone, about three inches in thickness, and of about twenty inches in diameter, somewhat concave on the under surface; in the centre of the stone is a circular hole, of about two inches and a half in diameter, which is surrounded on the upper surface at a distance of about three inches, by a circular ridge. At the outer rim of the stone, is a small hole through which a cord had been attached, and by which it was turned about."*

The Geological Survey also describes the soils and vegetation which arise from the underlying geology, explaining that, since the soils are significantly lacking in lime, the resulting acidic soil is unsuitable for the usual arable crops, although hay and oats can be grown. Consequently,

the land is mainly used for grazing animals, sheep in particular, although dairy cattle, pigs and poultry have also been raised.

Joe Hirst's family threshing corn at Cliff End

In the 1911 census, Joseph Hirst, aged 83, was living at 5 Cliff End (background right) with the family of his son Fred, who listed himself as a Dairy Farmer. The word 'corn' was used generically for grain crops at this time and on this occasion was probably oats.

The census returns illustrate these activities in various ways. The 1841 census identifies one farmer and five *'Ag Labs'* – the ubiquitous label for agricultural labourers. The 1881 census identifies six farmers with farms from four to 21 acres, six men in agricultural labouring roles, two oat bread bakers and one corn miller. The 1911 census identifies only two farmers and three farm labourers, but also lists six men in nursery/gardening work. Some or all of these six men would have been employed at Broadhead's Nursery at Pear Tree House in the centre of Wooldale. This was listed in White's Trade Directory for 1881, and became a sizeable operation over the following years, continuing to trade until well into the second half of the twentieth century. The foundations of the eight glasshouses can still be seen today.

Business, trade and commerce

George Sykes commented on the role of these occupations within the context of the greater Holmfirth area: *"Holmfirth never was or could be a great centre of business because of its insularity. There was no room for any great extension in any line of business. Many of these tradesmen did fairly well, as long as they were able to attend to their trade themselves and relied upon a modest competence. No great fortunes were built up by any of these men. They were in a limited sense successful tradesmen from a village standard. The chief of these were the draperies, the grocery or provision dealers, the clothiers and the boot makers!"*

In 1841, the census revealed three men working in apparel trades, with a cloth draper, a tailor and a shoemaker. Others in business and trade included a joiner, an 'attorney at law' and a 'mechanick'.

The 1881 census apparel trades comprised a tailor, a dressmaker, two boot and shoemakers and a 'clogger' – a maker of wooden-soled shoes with wooden or leather uppers. In addition, there was a broader range of other commercial occupations, indicating the development of a wider commercial environment since the 1841 census. These included agents for insurance, and for oil and soap; a corn miller, two oat bread bakers and a grocer's assistant; a joiner, a carpenter and two 'teamers' – men who led packhorses for transporting goods; a warehouseman, four general labourers and an errand boy. Following the arrival of the railway in Holmfirth in 1850, there was also a railway clerk.

By 1911, these occupations had become even more varied and specialised as occupations and work processes became generally more differentiated. The apparel trades included a tailor and tailor's cutter, two dressmakers, a milliner and a draper's apprentice but no shoemakers. Craft occupations included a self-employed joiner, a journeyman joiner, a house painter, an iron moulder and an iron turner. Commercial occupations included a stove and file merchant, a tripe salesman, a shopkeeper, a confectioner, a butcher's apprentice, an assurance agent, a clerk and a self-employed music teacher. Railway employees comprised two porters and a carter. A number of occupations represent the emergence of new technologies: one gas stoker working for the Holmfirth Gas Light Company; a print compositor, a printer's machineman, the photographer Harry Platt and a lantern slide colourist, presumably em-

ployed by Bamforth's in Holmfirth, who had been making lantern slides since 1883.

Domestic service

In 1841, 13 of the inhabitants of Cliff recorded an occupation in domestic service, two as charwomen and eleven as 'servant'. The youngest servants were aged ten and, with two exceptions, were all aged under 21. Two were male, the rest female. In 1881, there were eight people in domestic service but we have more information on their duties. Two were housekeepers, one a nursemaid (aged just 11) and one a groom. In 1911, there were three: a housekeeper, a gardener and just one servant.

Local administrative and public roles

Modern society is familiar with the concept of 'public service' jobs but such distinctions were tenuous at the start of the nineteenth century. Public needs were generally managed at parish level through parish councils, known as 'vestries', comprising local citizens elected by the ratepayers or occasionally self-selecting individuals from *'the great and the good'*. From the 1830s however, national government began a series of reforms to meet some of the needs of the developing industrial society, with national legislation to create new social and political structures. For example, the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 removed the responsibilities of parishes for the local poor from vestries and established 600 locally elected Boards of Guardians covering wider districts, each with its own workhouse. The national registration of Births, Marriages and Deaths from 1837 used these new administrative areas as the basis for the appointment of Superintendent Registrars of Births, Marriages and Deaths and their teams of deputy registrars.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, there was a growing awareness of the plight of children employed in jobs such as chimney sweeps or in the Lancashire cotton mills, many of them orphans apprenticed by local Overseers of the Poor. The 1833 Factories Act established limits for children's working hours and an inspectorate of factory superintendents to enforce them. The Act prohibited factory work for children under the age of nine; set a maximum working day of eight hours, or

48 hours per week for those aged nine to 13; and a maximum working day of 12 hours for children aged between 13 and 18. The Act also required children under 13 to receive elementary schooling for two hours each day.

Further developments in child welfare were contained in education legislation. In the early nineteenth century, most children worked in order to supplement meagre household income and basic education was provided through 'dame schools', endowed schools (for worthy candidates) or Sunday schools. However, a report on the Poor Law in 1834 advised that the Government had a duty to *"promote the moral and religious education of the laboring classes"*, which it enabled through funding 'voluntary' church schools. This was developed further in 1870 by allowing the establishment of secular school boards in areas of inadequate provision, generally in the towns. In 1876, the Elementary Education Act placed a duty on parents to ensure their children received instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic, with Poor Law Guardians given the responsibility of paying the fees for poor children. Although this resulted in a significant expansion, it was not until 1880 that schooling was made compulsory for all children aged five to ten and it was not until 1891 that primary education became free. The school-leaving age was raised to eleven in 1893, to twelve in 1899 and to fourteen in 1918.

These national legislative developments can be traced through the occupations of Cliff residents. In 1841, James Bates of Whinney Bank was the local Superintendent of Factories. In 1881, the resident at the School House was the school board clerk and Superintendent of the School, Enoch Pearson, mentioned elsewhere in this book, together with an *"assistant teacher in a Board School."* By 1911, national legislation had established county and urban district councils, which introduced new types of municipal employee. Those in Cliff included a secondary school teacher; two elementary school teachers and a superannuated teacher employed by the county council; and two labourers employed by Holmfirth UDC.

Quarrying and construction

The 1854 map shows a number of quarries in the Holme Valley area but none in the immediate vicinity of Cliff, even though some personal testimony in section 8 confirms the existence of stone pits. This fits

with the comparison pictures in section 1, which indicate that major quarrying of the Cliff has probably taken place only in the last 100 years.

In terms of the numbers of the population working in quarrying, the 1841 census lists four individuals: three stonemasons and one quarryman. In 1881, there were seven stonemasons and three stone 'delvers' (stone quarry labourers). In the 1911 census, there were four stonemasons, together with one stonemason's labourer and one quarry delivery man. However, there was also one 'mason builder' and one 'mason contractor', both self-employed.

George Sykes in his 'Reminiscences' describes the masonry industry as *'small-scale'* and associated mainly with the building of mills. We have already seen that the population of Cliff varied little throughout the period from 1841 to 1911 and, although there is evidence in the local paper of building plots being offered for sale in Cliff, this happened only occasionally, so house building was not a focus of the mason's trade at this time.

The woollen industry

In the census analyses for 1841, 1881 and 1911, the majority of occupations are related to the woollen industry and all three reflect the development of that industry through Victorian times.

During the eighteenth century, wool manufacture was a cottage industry undertaken by families in their own homes. In the simplest terms, the children 'carded' the wool, straightening the fibres of the fleece to facilitate the spinning of the wool by the mother with her distaff and spindle. The spun yarn would then be used by the husband for weaving into cloth on a handloom, more often than not located in the bedroom at the top of the house, to garner every last ray of daylight. Times were hard and as George Sykes recalls, the *"weaver would have his candle, which was the only light then available, and he would ply his trade unto a late hour."*

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Lancashire cotton trade was mechanizing cotton processes at a rapid rate and the mill system was developing rapidly. In due course, these processes were transferred to the woollen trade but generally not until the middle years of the nineteenth century. The mechanical spinning of wool required slightly dif-

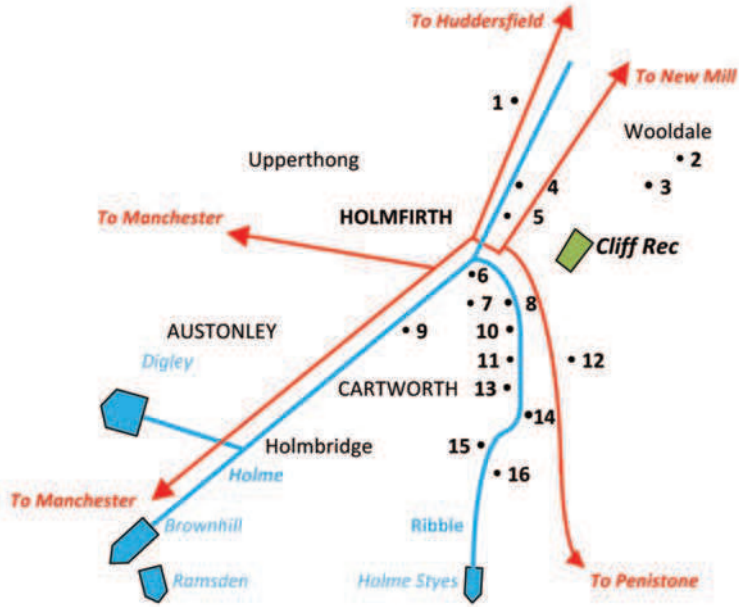
ferent considerations due to the nature of the yarn and also there was some initial reluctance by local woollen workers to accept these new developments. Nonetheless, many woollen mills were established in the district during the early years of the nineteenth century, focusing initially on the fulling and/or scribbling, carding and slubbing processes to prepare raw wool for spinning.

Scribbling	Initial process to separate thicker fibres from thinner
Carding	Subsequent process to straighten fibres into 'slivers or 'rovings'
Slubbing	To give slivers or rovings an initial twist to create a continuous yarn ready for spinning, using a 'slubbing billy' machine
Fulling	Shrinking and felting the cloth by washing and pounding

Sources: Day, M and Blanck, M

The development of spinning processes meant that there was not just more, but also better quality yarn more easily available, leading to changing practices for weavers. Rather than weaving their own yarn, they could now obtain yarn for weaving, either on their own account, or as a 'subcontractor' to a clothier who might have several weavers working for him in the locality, or, indeed, using yarn from the spinners, whilst remaining a self-employed weaver, in a process known as 'country work'. A side effect of these developments was to free wives and children from their traditional roles in the cottage industry and so they simply found alternative employment in the mills. In the early 1850s, according to George Sykes, *"the manufacturers began to introduce machinery into their mills - mules, looms and condensers"*. Condensers combined the scribbling and carding processes into one operation, mules were used for spinning and the looms referred to would be powered, and possibly broadlooms.

In 1841, 67% of the working population in Cliff were employed in the woollen industry. There were 20 clothiers and 33 weavers, eight slubbers, a heald knitter, one carder, a bobbin winder and three piecers. Last but not least, there was James Bates, residing at Whinney Bank, who gave his occupation as *'Suprt of Factories'* – a role established under the 1833 Factories Act to enforce the law in respect of working hours for children, a role he pursued assiduously according to many reports



1	Bridge Mills, Holmfirth	9	Battye/Farrars Upper Mill
2	Wooldale Mill	10	Swan Bank Mill
3	Whinney Bank Mill	11	Lower Dover Mill
4	Tom Mill, Holmfirth	12	Underbank Mill
5	Holmfirth Mill	13	Dover Mill
6	Battye/Farrars Lower Mill	14	Green Lane Mill
7	New Fold Mill, Holmfirth	15	Washpit Mill
8	Ribbleden Mill	16	Choppards Mill

Other mills upstream on the Holme
and on Holme tributaries not shown

Source: Day, M

Sketch map of woollen mills local to Cliff

in the local papers of cases he brought against mill-owners for breaches in the regulations.

The youngest person giving an occupation was Sam Swallow aged nine, working as a 'piecer' or spinner's assistant. Three other children, all teenagers, also quoted the same occupation. Generally, piecers were the children of millworkers and their earnings helped to bolster the family income.

In 1832, the government established a Factory Commission to investigate conditions in the mills, including the employment of children and their welfare. Michael Day presents the outcome of many of these enquiries: for mills in the environs of Cliff lying on the river Ribble, children under ten received an average of about four shillings per week, rising to about six shillings per week at age 16 and about sixteen shillings per week at age 21. The hours of work were generally 6am to 8pm daily, with two hours for mealtimes – a 72-hour week.

Henry James Morehouse provides some information on mills in Wooldale, which shows their growth as mechanization progressed. His data was collated for 1835 and 1858 by Alexander Redgrave, who was Superintendent of Factories, and the previously mentioned James Bates who was then sub-Inspector. This data is reproduced below.

Date	1835	1858
Number of Mills in Wooldale	12: all wool	24: 23 wool, 1 worsted
Total Horsepower (Water)	109	119
Total Horsepower (Steam)	147	229
Total Horsepower employed	256	348
Employees aged 9-12	84	172
Employees aged 13-18 (Male)	64	97
Female Employees aged above 13	21	162
Employees aged above 18 (Male)	78	218
Total employees	247	649

Such developments may well have wreaked havoc on social and industrial life but George Sykes' view was unequivocal: *"The introduction of machinery into the district had been a great boon and in this way work has become more plentiful and far more regular. The vast expense of the new machinery was a stimulus to the manufacturers to keep their mills in full working order and to increase and extend their business and their premises. The manufacturers were not slow to see this and act upon it!"*

Both the 1881 and 1911 censuses demonstrate the dominance of mills in terms of local occupations in the woollen industry and the differentiation and specialization of occupations within the industry. The full list is given in the table below.

The proportion of the local population engaged in the woollen industry was 66% in 1881 and 58% in 1911.

1881	Bobbin winder, Burler, Cloth finisher, Cloth dresser, Cotton mill operator, Cotton winder, Cotton worker, Dyer, Feeder of condenser, Finisher, Fulling miller, Handloom weaver, Healder, Heald knitter, Heald knitter cot(ton), Inker, Labourer at bone work, Lab(ourer) in dye house, Machine feeder, Manufacturer of worsteds, Mender, Millhand, Mill operative, Power loom tuner, Rope spinner, Stoker, Warper, Weaver, Winder, Woollen operative, Woollen worker, Worsted mender, Worsted weaver, Worsted winder, Yarn spinner
1911	Bobbin setter, Bobbin winder, Burler, Clerk, Cloth presser, Commercial traveller (Cloth hearth rugs), Doffer, Dresser, Fettler, Finisher, Fuller, Hanker, Healder, Jerry, Knotter, Labourer, Mender, Miller, Millhand feeder, Millhand scourer, Millhand teazer, Millwright, Pattern warper, Piece mender, Piece tenter, Piecener, Piecer, Presser, Scourer's labourer, Slubber, Spinner, Stoker, Teamer, Tenter, Tenterer, Weaver, Winder, Wool sorter, Woollen twister, Woollen warper, Worsted drawer

Summary of textile industry occupations recorded for Cliff inhabitants

4. Local celebrations

Cliff Rec was originally privately owned but was taken over by Holmfirth Urban District Council in the last years of the nineteenth century. We know from newspaper articles that feasts and galas had been held regularly before this and the newly named Recreation Ground hosted games and entertainment. Previously, fields in the locality, owned by local farmers, provided a venue for similar activities such as:

- 1873 field in Cinderhills
- 1876 field at Cross
- 1879 field at Cliffe lent by James Roberts
- 1884 field lent by John Wood
- 1904 field lent by S. Tinsdeall
- 1905 field lent by W. Bradley

The very first newspaper article about feasts and the use of fields in Cliff was in 1850 in the very first issue of the Huddersfield Chronicle in April of that year. The combined Sunday schools feast was held on Easter Monday in fine weather when 900 children and 500 teachers processed through Holmfirth and *"afterwards assembled in a body on the Cliff."*

In 1906 the Recreation Ground was actually named. From this year the Rec was booked for the Sunday School Feast year on year. This was always granted, on condition the ground was made good after the event.

Two Sunday schools (Cliff and Underbank Wesleyan) would use the Rec or nearby fields for celebrations and it would also be used for "rants" and "camp meetings" by Wooldale Town End Primitive Methodist Church. The Sunday school feasts were popular in the Holme Valley, and some feasts still continue, often in different guises.

Cliffe Sunday School Feast 1908

Stopping for a hymn during the Sunday School Feast in the 1950s
(Photo courtesy of Bray Photographers)

Cliff was said to be the oldest Sunday school in the parish, having been established in 1802, and as a consequence, it would usually take the lead position in the procession. Other Sunday schools taking part and following behind were Upperbridge, National, Choppards and Burnlee. They all gathered at Lane End and processed through the town, up past Nabb, to Horsefield House, Marble Hall and Longley, where they stopped to sing a hymn. They then moved on to their respective schools for tea and buns.

According to reminiscences printed in the Holmfirth Express, in the early years there was alcohol for the adults, then a *"meat tea or knife and fork tea for the superintendents and other adults"*. In 1909, there were as many as 270 children having tea in Cliff Sunday School, compared with about 180 in the 1850s. They would have sat on benches used at other times for services and classes. Some of these benches still exist today and can be seen in gardens. On the feast day itself the children would carry a few of the benches up to the Rec for the band to sit on.

The highlight of the food was the "school cake" and each child was given one to take home. Imagine a large currant teacake with a glazed,

Cliff Sunday School bench

shiny top and you have a "school cake", which was then wrapped in a paper bag. Even the 1850 article describes this item, but calls it a spiced bun.

There is evidence that the local bakers, Dawson and Birch, supplied these "school cakes" and they continued to be baked until the latter part of the twentieth century.

Wrapping the school cakes: Eric Richardson, Rev A T Dangerfield, William Barrowclough, Hubert Haigh, Herbert Haigh
(Photo courtesy of Bray Photographers)

In 1854 the feast was again at Easter and the weather that April was said to be beautiful. The pupils were all *"clean and neatly attired."* By the mid-nineteenth century the feasts were extremely popular and eagerly awaited by scholars, with 1230 children attending in 1854 and 1800 in 1857. Cliff Sunday School always provided a strong contingent – 180 were recorded as present at the feast in 1854. The schools gathered at Hey Gap, at the junction of Cliff Lane and Back Lane and processed down Back Lane and along the main roads to Upperbridge. From there they circled back, passing the parish church to Horsegate Hill, off Station Road, then up Town End Road, along Cliff Road to Cliff and back to their respective Sunday schools. Cliff scholars got the easiest walk that day!

The weather was not so kind the following Easter, so the route was shortened. By 1873, the date for the combined Sunday school feast was changed to June and by 1884, Cliff had adopted the first Saturday in July, whilst other Sunday schools had their feasts on different Saturdays. The tradition of the first Saturday in July continued into the twentieth century, indeed up to the 1960s. It was only at this point that declining attendance at Sunday school brought Cliff's traditional feasts to an end in 1962.

Bands always took part. The first band mentioned for Cliff's feast was Beaumonts Sax Horn band in 1854. The following year it was the Temperance Brass and Quadrille Band; in 1876 it was Hade Edge Brass Band and in both 1879 and 1884 it was the Wooldale Brass Band. In the twentieth century it was almost invariably Hinchliffe Mill Prize Brass Band. The bands, along with the banners, would always be at the very head of the procession. Of all of these bands, only Hade Edge is still in existence.

The banner shown below is that of Cliff Sunday School, still in existence today, though now unused.

July 1910 witnessed a major celebration for the Wesleyan centenary of the Holmfirth Circuit. Some 2000–2500 children were expected to take part, firstly in a procession through Holmfirth starting at Victoria Park and heading for Cliff Rec via South Lane. In the event, well over 2500 children turned up on a lovely summer's day. The procession of wagons and waggonettes, all decorated for the event, took over half an hour to pass, which gives some idea of the scale of the event.

Cliffe Sunday School Banner

Once at the Rec (and it is not clear whether they walked or were driven in the vehicles up South Lane's steep incline), they were met by a large group of workers supplying hot tea and provisions. There was a large marquee in the centre of the Rec and the schools were arranged in places

Cliffe Sunday School Banner gets an outing in the 1950s
(Photo courtesy of Bray Photographers)

allocated to them. It took so long for the procession to arrive that the first comers had already eaten by the time the last school group arrived. Each child was presented with a commemorative beaker filled with tea, which was theirs to keep afterwards. Made of pottery it is possible that some of these beakers may not have arrived home in one piece.

Views of the 1910 Wesleyan Centenary Mug

Cliff Sunday School Feast Procession on New Laithe Lane in the 1950s
(Photo courtesy of Bray Photographers)

In an adjoining field there were swings, a merry-go-round and other attractions. The size of the Rec was seen to be ample for all requirements and until dusk descended, the evening was enjoyably spent on games, watching an exhibition by Underbank physical culture class and listening to the two brass bands, Holme Prize and Crow Edge. The streets had been thronged with visitors for what was described as a red-letter day for Holmfirth.

Also in 1910, and just two weeks earlier, an unfortunate incident halted the start of the Cliff Sunday School feast celebration. One of the bandsmen, while on his way to Cliff, was hit by wreckage from Dr Edward Trotter's trap, which had hit a stone post. The mare had escaped from the cart and bolted in Upperthong Lane. The bandsman, who was not named, suffered a fractured skull and was taken by ambulance to Huddersfield Infirmary. Consequently, the parade was an hour late in getting started.

Cynthia Armitage was a Sunday school teacher at Cliff and has carefully kept the administration books dating from 1924 until the school's closure in the 1960s. One of these is the logbook showing how much money was collected from house to house before each feast, in order to fund the festivities. She has also safeguarded the banner and the large tea urn used at the party.

In 2010, the tradition of a gala on the Rec was revived by the Friends of Cliff Rec, although at the time none of the committee was aware of how close they got to replicating the original feast. By sheer coincidence, the 'Fun Day' as it is now called, was scheduled for the evening of the first Friday in July and the following year for the first Saturday of that month. The event no longer has any religious significance but does feature fun and games and music from the Hade Edge Band. Sometimes it rains and spoils the party, and other times it is glorious and the best recommendation anyone can hear (as we have) is *"it's just like it used to be, when we were kids"*.

5. National and royal celebrations

The first mention of any national or royal celebration is in 1897, for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, when there was a very large bonfire on Cliff in the evening of a day full of events. The bonfire itself measured five yards by eight yards at its base and was 30 feet high. It was made with 20 tons of material and would have been visible for miles around.

In June 1902, the coronation of King Edward VII was delayed due to the King's illness but the bonfire stack at Cliff was burnt anyway. The coronation was re-scheduled for later in the year but there is no account as to whether another bonfire was built and lit.

King Edward died in 1910 and was succeeded by King George V. His coronation celebrations were marked at Cliff in 1911 with the now traditional bonfire in the evening. The weather was described as "*very boisterous and rain falling at intervals*". This didn't stop an entertainment programme of gymnastic displays, sports events (over 400 entries), music from several bands and the grand finale of the lighting of the bonfire. Cliff's bonfire was only lit when the Castle Hill bonfire was clearly seen. As previously, Cliff's bonfire was one in a chain running the entire length of the country. It was said that, from Lindley Moor, as many as forty bonfires could be counted. The actual site for the bonfire was "*on the top of Cliffe Rocks*". We cannot be certain where this actually was in relation to the Rec or the footpath called Wooldale Cliff Road. However, the rain had turned heavy by 9pm and not many people remained at Cliff for the 10pm lighting.

In 1919 it was not a royal event that saw great celebrations on the Rec but the peace celebrations after the end of World War One. This took place in July of that year and a four-hour programme of sports and

entertainment was held. There were Punch and Judy, comedians, conjuring, dance displays and the Hade Edge Band, plus 600 entrants for the sports programme, which included the traditional running races, tug of war, with boys and girls events, and a needle threading race for girls. At dusk, Admiralty flares were lit at Cliff, Hill, Ward Place and Berry Banks. This could have been a signalling flare fired from a Webley Verey Pistol, then in use in the navy. Cliff bonfire was lit and later on, at about 11 o' clock, the spectators were able to count 19 bonfires on the horizon. Unfortunately, rain in the evening meant many people had already gone home.

Walter Sanderson of Cliff Road had apparently stayed up all night before the event to make sure no one tried to light the fire prematurely.

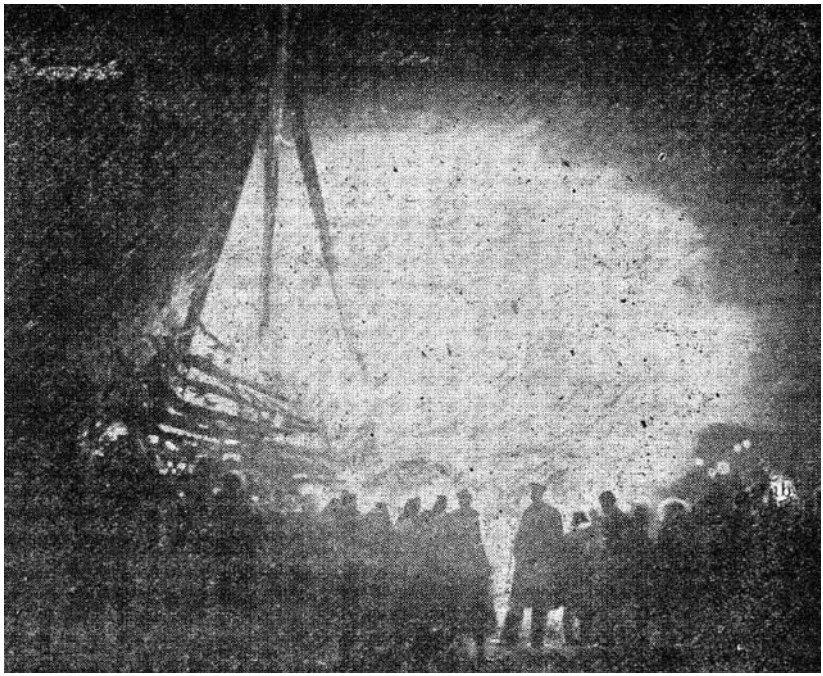
The Silver Jubilee of King George V in May 1935 was celebrated in terrific style. The Holmfirth Express reports that Holmfirth was *"beflagged and festooned"*. The parish church bells rang from 7am and the day was spent in special events, including a free cinema visit for children and a trip to the moors for old people, culminating in the evening with events on Cliff Rec. Amusements included a ventriloquist, marionettes, Punch and Judy by Professor Chris Lano, music by Hinchliffe Mill Band, country dancing, a scout display featuring skill, smartness and agility, and community singing. The King's speech over the public address system was made clearly audible thanks to the expertise of Mr H G Heaton, a local electrical goods dealer.

The best was kept to last with a spectacular firework display, featuring rockets, Niagara Falls, Prince of Wales feathers, revolving suns, Roman Candles, Chinese Flyers and crackers, funded to the tune of £20 by the Holmfirth Jubilee Committee. Finally, a set piece in huge letters spelled "GOOD NIGHT" in brilliant prismatic lights. There is no photograph of this as far as we know. If that wasn't good enough, there was the traditional bonfire as well, the scouts collecting the wood. First, a rocket was launched and then the fire was lit, with the flames reaching 30 feet high and being visible for miles around. Many stayed until the early hours.

As many as 4000 people were reported to have been up on Cliff that night, helped no doubt by the warm and dry weather. Apparently it snowed the following week!

Just two years later there was the coronation of King George VI,

also in May, but this time the weather was not so kind. "Leaden skies and showers of rain", according to the Holmfirth Express, did not exactly spoil the day but caused some last-minute changes of plan. The entertainment, mostly reminiscent of the music, dancing and acts enjoyed two years earlier, was held in the Drill Hall in Holmfirth and fireworks were set off in Victoria Park. Only the bonfire remained at Cliff, probably because it was far too big to move.



1937 Coronation Bonfire
(Photo courtesy of The Huddersfield Daily Examiner)

The bonfire was enormous – 30 feet high, made up of 60 tons of material, including 50 gallons of oil and 30 gallons of tar. When lit, it was blown by the wind and the flames rose fiercely. A comment from a fire-fighter today was that the fire could have been very hazardous. Some 500 people made their way to Cliff to enjoy the sight. For once there is a photograph of the fire, albeit not of the best quality, but it does give an impression of the size and ferocity of the blaze.

In 1953, there is evidence in a commemorative booklet of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, that the scouts were building a bonfire on Cliff. On the day of the coronation, bad weather swept through the whole country and most bonfire and firework displays had to be postponed. Most frustratingly, there is no mention of what actually happened on Cliff.

The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II was celebrated in 2012. That year was not a good year weather-wise, but the day itself in early June did stay dry. Instead of a bonfire there was a splendid beacon, one of the official Jubilee beacons constructed throughout the country. Hade Edge Band played and about 200 people enjoyed a very sociable evening. A film of the event was shown at the Holmfirth Film Festival in May 2013.

6. Sport, leisure and play

Cliff Quarry and climbing

Several of the contributors to the oral history of the Rec mention that as children they delighted in playing among the rocks, climbing over them and also naming them in accordance with their individual shapes. So we have the 'ship rock', 'step rock' and 'aeroplane rock' etc.

Nowadays the quarry face is a popular spot for climbers who refer to it as Holmfirth Edge. John Jagger, who climbed there in his student days in the 1960s, remembers that the rocks had numbers painted on in whitewash. These are no longer there.

Cliff Quarry rocks

The effects of quarrying have caused the formation of 'aretes' and 'bays' with different levels of difficulty depending on whether the climb is at the left (hardest) or right (easiest) side as one looks at the Cliff. Novice climbers can be seen with mattresses thoughtfully placed at the foot of their climb. Especially useful is the climbing site's proximity to Holmfirth and even a bus route, something rather rare for climbers. It is promoted and used by as many as six different climbing groups.

Football

The first reference to football is in 1902 when Cliff played New Mill at Cliff and scored eight goals without reply. It does prove that the ground was playable although it has always been stony and uneven. There are references to football being played in 1910 but we have to wait until the 1930s for stories of who played football and when. These stories belong to people who have been recorded for this project.

It was the practice of Nabb School that the boys played football on the Rec in the 1930s. One former Nabb pupil, Wilf Battye, remembers, *"Two classes went there at about 2pm, weather permitting. Rules were ignored. There was a ball and you kicked it and you kicked other people and you had a whale of a time. The teacher would let us play on the roundabout for the first ten minutes then he would go and sit in the shelter and smoke his pipe".*

Colin Braithwaite recalls playing football there as a child and also after he had done his National Service. Enough players to create two full teams would turn up from as far apart as Holmbridge and New Mill and would enjoy a kick-about on Sunday afternoons.

Those who were children in the 1940s and 1950s remember the goal posts on the Rec. Wooldale Wanderers played there very briefly in the 1966/7 season. The club's view was that the Rec was too remote from Wooldale but it served the purpose for the under-16s that season.

A recent aerial map of the Rec shows that football was played in the corner close to where the new seating structure has been built.

Cricket

The first accounts of cricket at Cliff are from 1905 with a match between Cliff and the charmingly named 'Back of Church'. In a low scoring

game, Cliff were beaten by 39 runs. The next report was in 1909 and was of a garden party in association with Cliff Sunday School, with a cricket match played on the Rec. Cliff scored 17 runs to Choppards' 34. The garden party was barely six weeks after the annual Sunday school feast.

In that same year there is mention of

"all cricket records broken in Cliffe Recreation ground in a single match one evening this week. The batsman had scored 15 runs before the fieldsman cried 'lost'. That made 18 runs for one hit. This may be taken as a hint to the Parks Committee that the grass needs cutting".

It seems to have been a close thing that the Rec was used at all as there was a letter from Herbert Haigh to the council complaining of

"the uneven and dangerous state of the ground for cricket. I am requested by a few ratepayers and young men who spend most of their leisure time in the (Rec), to ask the Council if they [would] kindly send the roller up which is stored in the yard at Holmfirth. The Cliff Sunday School cricket team have arranged to play Choppards at Cliff on Saturday but I am afraid if they can't get a roller they will have to get another field".

The council resolved to send the roller.

Also in 1909 there was an article in the paper in praise of Cliff Rec:

"Cliffe rec is a monument of good work by Holmfirth UDC. On Thursday evening there were five cricket pitches in use. The teams were Cliffe, Wooldale and Holmfirth. In a spare corner juveniles were having an enjoyable game all on their own. There would be quite 100 at play. A good feature was NO BAD LANGUAGE was heard".

Winnie Greaves remembered games of cricket between the different mills, it being women's teams who played against each other. This contradicted other memories recalled for the project, which claimed that cricket had never been played there as it was too rocky for it to have been possible.

Stoolball

The strange-sounding game of stoolball was played by the children from Wooldale Junior School in the 1960s. We know about this from the interview with John Jagger, a former teacher at the school. It was the sport of choice because West Riding County Council Education Authority

supplied the equipment for the game. The Rec was ideal because there was plenty of space to hit the ball without it getting lost. It is a game that is similar to both rounders and cricket. There is a board behind the batsman who attempts to hit the ball and run around the bases, as in the game of rounders. Stoolball appears to have died out locally but is still played by women's teams on the English south coast. The game is said to have been highly competitive and vigorous.

BMX and other bikes

Winnie Greaves remembers playing on a bicycle with no brakes in the 1930s. Riding along Westfield just beyond the Rec, she *"would run the bike into the long grass"* to stop it. The boys would drag bikes up from Holmfirth (they were heavy in those days), ride around the Rec and have great fun riding back down.

The worn cycle track on the Rec is in all probability the track marked out as footpaths today, forming a figure of eight with a ring around the edge. There was also a little loop on the far side of the Rec, away from the shelter, ideal for small children. These tracks are visible on aerial photographs.

Riders on the BMX track in the 1980s
(Photo courtesy of Victory Garden)

BMX was very popular in the 1980s. The Rec eventually got its own track when local youth club leader Colin Boniface managed to get a JCB onto the Rec. This created the necessary humps and mounds and the youth club members themselves did a lot of the finishing work with spades and shovels.

Kirklees Council initially wanted to support the facility as this was the time of BMX leagues and competitions, but they decided that Cliff Rec did not have the necessary amount of safe parking for visiting teams. Eventually the course was levelled and it is difficult now to see where it used to be.

Other bikes on the Rec were two-stroke motorbikes. These were fine if they had silencers but there were some lads who brought less sophisticated machines. Anyone living near the Rec in the 1980s would probably have heard the racket made on fine summer evenings caused by at most eight young people.

Kites

The most common remark made about the Rec is that it is always windy up there – ideal kite-flying conditions, although there can be unhelpful up-draughts which can play havoc.

Kite-Flying on the Rec
(Photo Courtesy of Don Parnell and family)

Wilf Battye remembers making a box kite with his friends one summer holiday. The intention was to build one big enough to enable a boy to fly inside it. So they made sure the build was substantial and then spent three weeks dragging it along *"the top of Cliff AND along the Rec and it never came up off the ground at all, because we had made it too substantially."*

Although a kite cannot be seen in the photograph on page 53, at last there is a picture of people enjoying kite flying on the Rec. Taken in the year 2000, it is a rare record of this activity on the Rec.

Playing in general

This is what almost everyone with memories of Cliff Rec spoke about. A comment made by John Jagger, who grew up in Yeadon, near Leeds, was that the Rec represented everything he would have loved as a play space as a child and did not have – in other words, a wild space to run about in. Leeds parks were more formal with officials to tell you what not to do.

A roundabout gave children playing in the 1930s great fun. It was called the 'Ocean Wave' roundabout and was thought to be more of a 'girlie' game, though the lads enjoyed winding it up into a dangerous frenzy. There was great disgust expressed when it was moved to Cinderhills for the housing estate that was established there. Nevertheless, children will make their own entertainment and the Rec certainly lent itself to that. The shelter was the place to play 'house' (and so were the rocks below where some had shapes sufficient to allow the imagination to believe they were rooms within a house). The boundary walls were ideal for hide and seek and also another game called Tally Ho, a form of 'tig'. This involved chalking directional arrows on the walls, with teams taking it in turns to be finders or hiders.

Above everything else, the rocks, walls, shelter and conveniences were made for climbing on. Nearly everyone had a go at that and some may have found they climbed beyond their ability, having to wait for their mothers to come looking for them and help get them down. Best of all was the climb on the shelter roof, where one of the best views of the Holme Valley could be enjoyed. It was slightly easier in those days because the wall which abutted the shelter acted as a 'leg up'.

Those who were children in the early to mid-twentieth century, used to play on the Rec for hours at a time. It was while listening to stories of play that a chanting rhyme came to light. It goes *"Far Cliffe, Nar Cliffe, Cliffe, Cliffe End, Paddock, West Nelly, Oodle, T'ahn End"*. Oodle is Wooldale and T'ahn End is Town End. All these are the names of places which effectively form a ring around Cliff Rec and the rhyme was sung as children played. The rhyme is now preserved, carved in the stone seat erected on the Rec in 2013.

The initial aim for the Rec, to take the children of Wooldale, Cartworth and Holmfirth off the streets, certainly worked in the early days. It is hard to believe that Holmfirth UDC had seen fit to ban the playing of cricket and football in Victoria Park in 1908.

Golf

Only one account of golf was recalled as a memory of childhood. This was of the 1970s when one group of children fashioned a golf course with holes in three corners of the Rec.

Slam

Cliff Rec was apparently the location of the world championship Slam contest. Slam requires two people, one ball and a wall shaped like a squash court. It is all you can play if just two people turn up for a football kick about. Young people today and those just young at heart have heard of Slam, but it wasn't conducive to the health of the shelter where it was played.

Cross country

Cliff Rec was used by pupils from Holmfirth High School as part of their cross-country route in recent years. Going back to 1912 and 1913 it was used by the Holmfirth Harriers for winter training purposes on Saturday afternoons.

Rounders and school sports days

Wooldale Junior School used the Rec at Sycamore for these events in

the 1960s until the school grew to such a size that a larger space was needed. John Jagger remembered that Cliff Rec was much drier although rather rugged. It served its purpose though.

Welly wanging and other Fun Day games

This dates back to 2010, when it proved to be a great hit at the first Friends of Cliff Rec Fun Day and it has remained a firm favourite. Three categories, kids, teens and grown-ups, are fiercely competed for. Those who have taken part admit there is something very satisfying in hurling a Wellington boot as far as possible into the long grass. It can also be hot, hard work for the measurer and retriever of the boot.

Other games played at the Fun Day are the self-explanatory 'beat the goalie' and 'sponge splat', which allows children to hurl dripping sponges at their friends' faces, poking through a Dennis the Menace cut-out board.

Tennis

There used to be a tennis court on Cliff, not on the Rec but near the Working Men's Club, just below the entrance to what is now Cliff Hill Court. Cliff Sunday School seemed to be the owners of the land, or perhaps they just collected the rent, which was £1 per year in 1955. Perhaps the court had high fences or the players had lots of balls. Either way it would not have been a good idea to hit too many smashes, as the chances are the ball would have been in Holmfirth centre shortly afterwards.

7. Cliff's musical talent

A merry band of musicians

THERE ARE MANY musicians linked to Cliff, of whom the most noteworthy was Joe Perkin. He was born around 1809 in Honley but lived at Cliff for many years until his death in 1868. He is the man who arranged the words and music for 'Pratty Flowers', otherwise known as the Holmfirth anthem. His other compositions include 'Merry Mountain Child', 'Hope, Brothers, Hope', and 'The Holmfirth Flood'.

Joe had considerable musical ability, having an excellent singing voice. He was a resident tenor soloist at Carlisle Cathedral in his younger days but, when that failed him, he concentrated on his violin playing and composing skills. However, this did not put bread on the table and he also had to work as a wool sorter. In the 1851 census, Joe, his wife Eliza and three children under ten years of age, are all listed as paupers but ten years later the family was more secure. As well as obtaining jobs in the woollen industry, Joe was also the conductor of the Holmfirth Choral Society and choirmaster at Meltham Parish Church.

He was said to be a tall man with black hair and a disability, which meant he walked with a stick. He was also said to be short-tempered, disliking the invasion of his privacy, which tended to occur when children sneaked up on him when he was working in his shed.

'Pratty Flowers' was published in 1857. He combined the words and music of two separate but well-known pieces of the time. Eighty years later at the Holmfirth celebrations for the coronation of King George VI, national trade union leader Ben Turner, born at Liphill Bank, Holmfirth, and later MP for Batley, refused to give a speech at the Victoria Park event, preferring instead to request that the crowd

sing 'Pratty Flowers'. The crowd in turn probably thanked him for a chance to sing rather than listen to speeches.

John Bailey (1811-1864), sometimes called Jack, was a celebrated violinist and organist at Holmfirth Parish Church for a short period. George Sykes opines that *"he was spoiled by his love of drink and his love of drinking company"*. There is one story about John and his drinking when one evening, arriving home the worse for drink, he demanded his wife Sarah make him something to eat. Sarah promptly made him some porridge and John sat by the fireplace with his porridge in front of him but he fell asleep. Meanwhile, his neighbour, George Haigh, looked in and, seeing John asleep, ate the porridge. Afterwards, he smeared some porridge all down John's vest and then left the house. Presently Mrs Bailey returned to the house and John said *"Where's mi porridge?"*, to which his wife replied, *"Wha, tha's eaten it. Look ha tha's sluppered thisen."* John replied *"Oh, ah."*

John was a friend and musical companion of Joe Perkin and Henry Pogson. Henry was the trainer of Holmfirth Handbell Ringers, who won prizes at major competitions, and was himself a player of an in-

(L to R) John Bailey, Joe Perkin and Henry Pogson, date unknown
(Photo courtesy of The Huddersfield Daily Examiner)

strument called the ophicleide, which resembled a tuba. The ophicleide has fallen out of favour in the musical world and now only exists in museums. These three men played well together and especially enjoyed playing in local inns.

Singers

Then there were those who specialised in singing, either as soloists or trainers of choirs. Matthew Bailey or 'Oud Maff', as he was known, had a good knowledge of music and trained a large number of people to sing. He found a room to rehearse and took no money from his pupils, but did insist they bring candles to light the room.

Benjamin Wood and his son Joseph were both good musicians, especially the latter, who was an organist and took up music as a profession. George Sykes records that Benjamin had a bass voice which was *"rough"*. In 1851, they lived two doors away from Joe Perkin.

Individual singers of note from Cliff included soprano Lavinia Charlesworth, contralto Martha Pogson and tenor Hugh Ramsden. Again according to George Sykes, Martha Pogson was principal contralto at the parish church for some time; Hugh Ramsden had a *"splendid"* voice and was *"a most tasteful and accomplished artist. But his voice failed him in middle life and he had to give up public work as an artist"*. Hugh Ramsden and his brother John had both been pupils of Matthew Bailey and Hugh married the latter's daughter.

However, it was the children who were famed for their singing voices. John Ramsden dedicated over 50 years of his life to Cliffe Sunday School and by all accounts, he coached the singers to exceptional standards.

George Sykes recalled that it was *"a common thing on a fine summer's evening for young people to go among the rocks to a particular place called 'The Singing Hole,' and there sing the hymns learnt at the Sunday school, thus making the "welkin ring."* The rocks will be at the foot of the Cliffe quarry. Making the welkin ring is a phrase now fallen out of use but which means 'to make the sky resound', as in a loud celebration.

The local paper, the Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser, reported on a soirée of the Wooldale Mutual Improvement Society, held on the evening of Monday, 13 October, 1851.

"The third annual festival of the Wooldale Mutual Improvement Society was celebrated on the evening of Monday last ... together with a party of glee singers from the Cliff Philharmonic Society, consisting of Messrs Perkins (author of the music to the song 'O where is the land of the brave and the free'), H Ramsden, J Ramsden and Miss Pogson. Mr Joshua Mellor presided at the pianoforte."

During this event, the third annual report was read which indicated a membership of 33 in the summer months, rising to 50 in the winter, plus a library of 180 volumes and classes in operation in vocal music as well as in the three R's.

Music presented to the meeting included renditions of 'There's a good time coming' by Hugh Ramsden; 'The chough and the crow to roost are gone' by Hugh Ramsden and Miss Pogson; 'The white squall' by J Ramsden and 'The rural elves' by all three singers. The article noted that the meeting ended after *"the musical party had favoured the company with several select pieces"*. Another report recorded a similar performance at the Holmbridge Literary and Scientific Society the following week.

8. Incidents on Cliff

Incidents

The earliest incident is that recorded by Arthur Jessop in 1744. He was an apothecary and Presbyterian, but is best known for his diaries. These detailed the life and times of the locality over a number of years. In December 1744 he lost his way in the Westfield at the rear of the Rec, and fell into a stone pit at about six o'clock in the evening. He was so hurt that he could not stir but was forced to *"lye there."* He was not found until the following afternoon after the church service, at which his absence had been noticed. Some 200 people set off to look for him. When found he was carried home, in his own words, *"very much hurt, and almost frozen to death"*. He was 63 years old. Nine months later he looked at where he had fallen *"down a rock full six yards and wonder and mercy that I was not broken to pieces."*

The footpath along Cliff is now partly fenced for safety reasons. There are warning signs as well, one of which was customised a few years ago but has since been removed.

At the beginning of November 1852, at about noon, a chimney on West Nelly farm was struck by lightning. There was one flash of lightning followed by a single clap of thunder. The farm was occupied by tenant Robert Bower, he and his family being seated round the fire at the time. The lightning strike passed through the wall of the chimney just above the fireplace, knocking off the cornice and a considerable quantity of plaster. Fortunately, no one was injured. The account stated that the property had apparently been struck by lightning once before. It was owned by James Bates who was then Superintendent of Factories and living in Whinney Bank House. The newspaper wryly observed,

"The cost of erecting a lightning conductor is now so very trifling, that it is a matter of wonder such a precaution is not more generally practised."

In 1853, there was the sad story of Mary Exley of Cliff who had sailed to America with her five children to join her husband. The ship developed a fault and the journey took nine weeks, during which time the food supply ran short. Mary died of starvation on 6 August 1853, leaving her children in a deplorable state. They did survive, and were met by their father when they arrived in America. In 1908, one of these children, now a grown man, returned to Holmfirth and had fond memories of the first eleven years of his childhood spent there. This included a half-day holiday granted when the first railway train came to Holmfirth in 1850.

The year 1884 saw the only recorded suicide attempt. The young, depressed and un-named woman did not die although she had thrown herself off the Cliff top.

Newspapers of the nineteenth century have many accounts of suicides, mostly by drowning in the millponds of the textile mills. Suicide was at that time a criminal offence.

Crime

On the whole, Cliff was a peaceful place although there have been a number of crimes reported in the local papers.

In January 1852, one Joseph Bower was charged with assaulting Sarah Swires on the footpath between the top of Cliff and Wooldale. Sarah's father was most understanding, applying to the court *"for the matter to be settled amicably; he said the family of the defendant were badly off and he did not wish to throw them to any expense"*. On promising not to repeat the offence, Joseph was discharged with seven shillings costs.

In 1853 John Hall was tried for the crime of offering illicit spirits, some brandy, for sale in Cliffe. When the constable arrived *"he immediately burst the bladder with his teeth and let the spirits fall to the ground."* As this was Hall's second offence of the same crime, he was fined £25 or in default, three months in Wakefield jail. The outcome is not recorded.

In 1859 there was a case of unprovoked assault on one, John Bailey. This is probably the same John Bailey who was an accomplished musician.

Illegal gambling in 1895 at Cliff Top had plain clothes policemen chase after four young men who were playing pitch and toss for money. The culprits ran off but were caught by PC Wood at Little Cliffe, at the Town End Road end of Cliff Road. The lads received a fine each at the next Holmfirth Petty Sessions.

Vandalism

In 1906 there was a letter of apology in the Holmfirth Express from nine men who admitted that they had knocked down coping stones from a wall at Cliff belonging to farmer Sam Tinsdeall. They promised not to repeat the offence. Later on that year the newspaper had an account of the *"dangerous state of the road on top of Cliffe"*. This could just be the very same dangerous state that caused Arthur Jessop to fall some 160 years previously.

In 1908 local residents were appointed *"to better observe Council bye-laws and assist in maintaining order"*. This was no doubt as a consequence of damage caused earlier that year at the Rec, when *"serious wilful damage had been done by the breaking of dressed large stones and planks used for the gate posts and walls, and the damage had evidently been done by grown men"*. For this, the council were offering a £1 reward for information leading to prosecution.

In February 1909 the damage turned to the public conveniences recently built on the Rec, which were *"disfigured by indecent, offensive writing"*. The council responded by erasing the offensive words and affixing a copy of the relevant bye-laws on the closet walls.

Damage to the walls as a consequence of a game of cricket was reported in July 1914 when Mr John Burgess asked the council to remedy the removal of *"about one and a half yards of topping stones taken off the wall to make wickets to play cricket"*. The surveyor for the council agreed to comply with this request. Worse still, and in the same year, there was more damage through *"breaking the new gates, a lock and iron plate which had been fixed with screws. Resolved that the Police Inspector be asked to send constables to visit Cliff Ground and Victoria Park periodically and that when any case of wilful damage is reported this Council will undertake to prosecute the offenders"*. Again, this is taken from the council minutes.

In 1934 was the occasion when the newly installed playground equipment was abused. This would have been the "Ocean Wave" roundabout at the least. Cliff Rec was chosen as a pilot site for play equipment and, if successful, other recreation grounds would be similarly equipped. But the Holmfirth Express reported *"grown-ups spoil kiddies fun by playing on recently installed sports and play equipment intended for children under the age of fourteen"*.

Mention was made in the same article of damage to public seats. It seems that the caretaker of the Rec had tried to *"appeal to the people who ought to know better, but they took no notice"*. The council recommended that the caretaker inform those who disobeyed the instructions of an officer of the council that they could face prosecution.

Seen in this light it is therefore nothing new to hear of damage to the walls and shelter on the Rec today. The newspapers of the early to mid-twentieth century, which have been searched for this book, record more incidents, notably at Victoria Park in Holmfirth and by *"grown men who ought to know better"*.

9. Some local characters

William Barrowclough

William was the musical conductor for the Cliff Sunday School. As well as the feast hymns, many performances of concerts and pantomimes were led by him.

Jimmy Fitton

A true eccentric, Jimmy was born in 1807 and died in 1872. In his younger days he was a woollen weaver living at Cliff. He lived alone in his later years, possibly due to his eccentricity. His manner of dress would arouse attention because he would defy the weather of the day. For example, he might be overdressed in hot weather, sometimes barefoot, then at times dressed in women's clothing, especially a shawl and frilled cap. Other accounts have him dressed *"in costume similar to a Spanish muleteer"*.

He made his living by selling ashes, which he collected with his five donkeys, two of which had names, Bobby and Jenny. These donkeys would forage for food, often in private gardens and Jimmy would 'chastise' them, but everyone was aware that Jimmy was not in the least bothered by the pranks of his animals.

Although Jimmy had a house at Cliff End, he did not sleep in it, preferring to put his head down in a field. The enumerator for the 1861 census records Jimmy at Cliff End but *"not in the house"*.

The Holmfirth Express of 1872 has a lengthy obituary for Jimmy, so although he was an eccentric he seemed to have touched the hearts of many.

It is recorded that Bamforths, the photographers, produced a picture of Jimmy along with his five donkeys, with a small child sitting on each one. Such were the production standards of newspapers in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century that photographs never or very rarely featured. Does this photograph or postcard still exist?

Wylbert Kemp and George Taylor

Neither of these two men lived in Cliff. Wylbert lived in Waterloo House on South Lane, now called Yorkshire House, and George lived at Cinderhills but they were connected through their creative writing talents as amateur playwrights. They helped to start the Cliff Players whose aim was *"building up a native drama"*.

Wylbert was a local hairdresser whose stories were remembered by people going for a haircut. Besides writing, he was a talented amateur filmmaker and artist.

George was a writer of dialect plays whose talent in that field was recognised through his plays being performed far and wide. He was the more serious of the two.

Enoch Pearson

Enoch Pearson was the schoolmaster at Cliff School, on Cliff Road, almost exactly beneath the shelter on the Rec. The school was built around 1800 and Enoch arrived in 1846, at the age of 24, after satisfying the trustees that he was, amongst other attributes, *"a person of good life and conversation"*.

Enoch was about the fifth teacher to live at the adjacent schoolhouse and teach both through the week and on Sundays. He remained in post for almost forty years and was the last teacher the school had. The school was only open to children of the labouring, manufacturing and other poor classes. Two legacies, from Lawrence Lockwood in 1761 and John Collier in 1835, had secured the building of the school and schoolhouse and also four free places for deserving children. Everyone else paid for their education until the 1891 Education Act introduced free education.

Enoch was regarded as a good teacher and firm disciplinarian and was fondly remembered. George Sykes recalled him as *"a good man*

and true churchman … a really good schoolmaster". He was of necessity a staunch member of the Holmfirth Parish Church, as Cliff School was administered by the church and the Charity Commission, through the enduring Collier legacy. He was removed from the school after the 1880 Act at a time when schools like Cliff were shut down. Eventually he moved to Leeds to live with one of his daughters, but at his death in 1906 his ashes were scattered at Holmfirth cemetery.

Eliza Perkin

Eliza, who was born in 1814, was the wife of Joe Perkin, the musician. Her claim to fame rests on the existence of a photograph of her smoking a pipe. She smoked in public, which was a rare practice for a woman and, despite smoking, lived to the age of 89, dying in 1903.

Eliza Perk*in with her pipe*

(Photo courtesy of The Huddersfield Daily Examiner)

Eliza spent her last few years in the Holmfirth almshouses, living with her granddaughter, Everelder. Perhaps it is worth mentioning that Everelder's father was named Mendelssohn, a great name for a musician's son. Although not as talented as his father, Mendelssohn did claim to be a 'professor of music' in the 1901 census. Both Eliza and Mendelssohn died in the Deanhouse Workhouse.

John Ramsden

John was born in 1817 in Holmfirth and educated at Cliff and at Holmfirth National School. Like his father Robert, he worked in the woollen trade. His 1851 census entry gives his occupation as woollen manufac-

turer, indicating that he was a relatively prosperous man, working until past his 80th year.

As a member of an Oddfellow Lodge, he instituted financial reform for the monies distributed by the Holmfirth Oddfellows.

He was a Parochial Constable in 1862, 1865 and 1872 and, apart from a gap between 1870 and 1873, he was an Overseer of the Parish from 1866 to 1895.

He was a Superintendent of Cliff School for 30 years and a considerable benefactor to the school over many years. Indeed, he was largely responsible for the renovations that were needed for the school to become the successful Sunday school it was.

He was a member of Holmfirth parish choir for over 50 years, and trained the scholars of Cliff Sunday School who were often observed as having wonderful voices. In addition, in 1878, he trained the Sunday school pupils of nearby Hepworth for their festival.

He lived on Cliff at Rose Cottage, which is yet to be located, and died in 1906, just days short of his 89th birthday.

Arthur Sanderson

Arthur's Sanderson's dates, born in 1898 and living until 2000, are the reason for his inclusion here. Not only did he live to be over 100 years old, but he also lived through three centuries. He spent all his life at Cliff and was once asked if he had travelled far in his lifetime. *"Ah once went tae Meltham"* he replied.

Wright Sanderson aka Wright Shink

Wright Sanderson was another man famed for having a donkey and trap, then later an old bike and finally a pram, because he was a rag and bone man. Originally he lived on South Lane but moved to Cliff House Lane. He also had distinctive dress, wearing the same shiny suit and battered hat every day. His wife and daughters were quite the opposite, always beautifully turned out.

George Sykes

The serial name-dropper, George Sykes, was born in 1838 and came to live at Cliff in 1850. Through his memoirs we know lots about George and about many other people, not only in Cliff but also in Holmfirth. The memoirs are not really diaries but essay pieces and so good that the Holmfirth Express printed a series of his articles in 1914.

We know that George lived at Cliff Bottom, which is situated in the hollow off Cliff Road next to the former school. Indeed, he recounts that he lived a few yards from the school. As George was a Wesleyan he did not go to the Sunday school, but he admitted to having been taught by the schoolmaster Edward Hoyle who taught there between 1843 and 1846. George lived the first few years of his life at Lane End, at the junction of Back Lane and Station Road, so it would have been a short but steep climb up to the school. He died in 1923 in Linthwaite, where he had lived for many years, but he referred to Holmfirth as *"my native town, I love thee still"*.

Recently, his handwritten memories of Cliff and Holmfirth have been re-discovered. This has resulted in richer descriptions of some of the characters in this book.

James Woodcock

James had connections with Wooldale Town End Primitive Methodist church on Cliff Road near Town End Road and, when he died in 1934, there was a long and detailed obituary to him in the Holmfirth Express. This seems to be something of a tradition in Cliff, with several people acting as both staunch church members and helping with funding for improvements to their buildings.

10. World War One

Introduction

There is no community in the land which remained untouched by World War One (WWI). In the UK, the final casualty figures for the British Army, released by the War Office in 1921, gave a figure of 573,507 killed in action or dying from wounds and other causes, 99,868 missing in action and 1,643,469 wounded. Not surprisingly, men of Cliff were part of that terrible toll.

In the initial stages of the war, the country relied on its standing army and volunteers. By January 1915, about one million men had volunteered, many enlisting in "Pals Battalions". This figure rose to 2.25 million in late September, with 1.5 million in reserved occupations. Unfortunately, it was found that about two men in every five were unsuited to military service on the grounds of health, which, amongst the many physical infirmities one could reasonably imagine, also included malnourishment. Consequently, the government passed a National Registration Act in 1915 to maintain oversight of the population of men of military age and to enable them to be targeted to volunteer for enlistment in various ways.

Successful as this initial effort was, the demand for men to replace the heavy casualties in France was enormous. In January 1916, the government passed a Military Service Bill to allow the conscription of single men between the ages of 19 and 41. In May that year, the legislation was extended to include 18-year-olds and married men. In the last months of the war, further legislation raised the conscription age to 51. Conscripts could apply to have their conscription reviewed on the grounds of work of national importance, domestic hardship, medical

unfitness or conscientious objection. By the end of June 1916, about 750,000 appeals had been submitted but contrary to current public perception, only about 2% were on the grounds of conscientious objection.

About two-thirds of the service records of WWI soldiers were destroyed during WWII as a result of enemy bombing. Consequently, there are only about two million service records left, known as the "burnt papers". This has severely compromised our research of the service of Cliff men in WWI.

Those who fell

A total of eight men from Cliff are known to have been casualties of WWI, including two pairs of brothers. Their records are given below in alphabetical order.

R/19769 Rifleman Harry Aspinall
King's Royal Rifle Corps 2nd Battalion
Died of Wounds 9 September 1916 aged 23
Buried: Grave II F 8 Caterpillar Valley Cemetery, Longueval

Reports in the local paper suggest that Harry was initially reported as missing in July 1916 before his death was confirmed. In his youth, he had been closely connected with Lane Congregational Sunday School.

71465 Private Frederick Aspinall
Sherwood Foresters (Notts and Derby Regiment) 17th Battalion
Killed in Action 4 August 1918 aged 19
Commemorated: Panel 39 and 41 Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial

Freddie, as he was known, had been reported missing and was presumed killed. The circumstances of his death highlight the "fog of war" which often existed. The local paper reported that enquiries made initially through the Red Cross indicated that a fellow soldier had seen him wounded in a shell-hole but no further information came to light.

Private Freddie Aspinall

The local paper recorded that Freddie enlisted at the age of 18 at the beginning of November 1916. Freddie had been closely connected with

Lane Congregational Sunday School and had been a scholar of Mr J D Brown and it was reported that he had been extremely popular amongst the boys. Before enlisting, he had worked for Mr Fred Lawton at Bridge Mills who, according to Michael Day, *"were making 'fancy cloths'"*.

Harry and Freddie were brothers who were living at 59 Cliff Road at the time of the 1911 census.

Private Freddie Aspinall

(Photo courtesy of The Huddersfield Daily Examiner)

The family census record is

William Aspinall	Head	45	Wollen Weaver
Ellen Aspinall	Wife	46	
Alice Emma Aspinall	Daughter	21	Wollen Weaver
Herbert Aspinall	Son	19	Piece Tenter
Harry Aspinall	**Son**	**17**	**Healder**
Lela Evelyn Aspinall	Daughter	15	Twister
Frederick Aspinall	**Son**	**13**	**Nursery Gardener**
Mona Ellen Aspinall	Daughter	10	School
Winifred Aspinall	Daughter	8	School
Rena Aspinall	Daughter	6	School
Mildred Amy Aspinall	Daughter	4	

15210 Private Irvin Barrowclough
Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) 10th Battalion
Killed in Action 30 July 1916 aged 21
Commemorated: Pier and Face 6A and 6B Thiepval Memorial

Irvin Barraclough is another example of the 'fog of war', his story again recounted in the Holmfirth Express. Irvin was initially posted as 'missing in action' on 30 July 1916. His mother contacted the newspaper to request any news of her son, being aware that the paper was known to circulate amongst local men in the trenches. She was also

concerned because he would write home regularly, in particular to acknowledge parcels sent out to him. His last letter was dated 27 July 1916 and he had not acknowledged the most recent parcel she had sent.

Private Irvin Barraclough

(Photo courtesy of The Huddersfield Daily Examiner)

Surprisingly her efforts bore fruit when a fellow soldier, one Ernest A Crookes, discovered a small book belonging to Irvin and eventually wrote to his mother, his letter being reproduced in the paper as follows: *"You will, no doubt, be a bit surprised to have a letter from me, but I thought I would write and let you know all I know of Irvin's death. I dare not write before, as I was not sure what had happened to him. I made many enquiries in his Co. about him, and from what I can make out he was one of the many lads who went over the top one night – when we were in that terrible fighting – and failed to return. But the strange part of it is that I had made inquiries about him the night after we came out, and they told me he was wounded. Then we were ordered back into the line again in a bit of a hurry, and I happened to be walking in a trench which I had never been in before. And what should I pick up but his small book, which I enclose? I was dumb-struck when I saw the name, and it seems a man in another Regt. which we relieved had found his body somewhere in the line and had taken his letters, etc., out to forward on to you. That was what one of our fellows told me who had seen the letters in the man's possession, and I think he must have dropped this book out while he was showing these letters to this fellow. It seemed very strange that the book should be there for me to find, and after that I made sure Irvin was killed.*

It was a blow to me and I hope you will accept my deepest sympathy in your sad bereavement. He was the only friend I had who came from up our way, and when we saw one another we always used to ask each other if we had anything fresh from home and talk over old times. I have thought since what lucky beggars we were who came through those few weeks we were there, as it was too terrible for words. The sights we saw were awful, and I don't think words can describe them. I suppose it was

God's will that he should go under. I must apologise for not writing sooner, but I was in some doubts about him."

It would appear that Private Crookes survived the war.

The little book contained biographical details of Irvin's life which were recounted by the paper. As a boy, he attended Netherthong School where he was a pupil of Mr Jackson. As a young man, he was variously employed as a 'piecer' and mill-hand before working as a spinner at Washpit Mills. He enlisted at Huddersfield on 18 January 1915 into The West Riding Regiment and was only 5'3" tall.

Irvin's brothers, Willie and Dennis, are also known to have served in WWI but their service records have not survived. The Express, however, does report that at the time of Irvin's disappearance, the elder son Willie, was in a military hospital in England recovering from wounds which meant he was *"able to write home occasionally with his left hand ...".* His younger brother Dennis had also been wounded but had returned to France shortly before.

At the time of the 1911 census, the family were living in Thongsbridge but later moved to 41 Cliff, where they were living in 1916. The 1911 census entry is shown below.

John Heppenstall	Head	62	Wollen Cloth Weaver
Christiana Heppenstall	Wife	55	
Harold Barrowclough	Step-Son	25	Fulling Miller (Cloth)
Willie Barrowclough	Step-Son	19	Yarn Weigher
Irvin Barrowclough	**Step-Son**	**16**	**Wollen Peicer [sic]**
Dennis Barrowclough	Step-Son	14	Wollen Twister

202166 Private Ben Cartwright
Northumberland Fusiliers 1st/4th Battalion
Killed in Action 15 November 1916 aged about 25
Buried: Grave VIII C 30 Warlencourt British Cemetery

40761 Private James William Cartwright
South Staffordshire Regiment 2nd/5th Battalion
Killed in Action 23 September 1917 aged 33
Commemorated: Panel 90-92 and 162-162A Tyne Cot Memorial

Ben and James were also brothers. James had married Annie Bailey in 1915 but she subsequently remarried in 1922. No information has yet been discovered about the brothers' service. They were living at 27 Cliff at the time of the 1911 census.

Walker Cartwright	Head	50	Iron Moulder
Grace Cartwright	Wife	46	
James Cartwright	**Son**	**26**	**Millhand Scourer**
Florence Cartwright	Daughter	25	Cloth Weaver
Edith E Cartwright	Daughter	22	Cotton Winder
Ben Cartwright	**Son**	**20**	**Millhand Feeder**
Alice Cartwright	Daughter	17	Cloth Weaver

35714 Private Nelson Mosley
King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry 8th Battalion
Killed in Action 16 October 1917 aged 21
Commemorated: Panel 108-111 Tyne Cot Memorial

The local paper reported that in Nelson's final letter to his mother Ellen, posted on 1 October 1917, he had expressed his hope that he would be home for Christmas. Unfortunately, that was not to be.

Nelson had experienced his fair share of danger. He had been wounded in France and invalided back to England for two months' recuperation before returning to the line. He also recounted an incident in his letter where a shell had fallen nearby as his group walked along a road. His officer was wounded, along with Nelson's friend and another soldier, and three others were killed. On that occasion, Nelson escaped unscathed.

Private Nelson Mosley

(Photo courtesy of The Huddersfield Daily Examiner)

Nelson enlisted on 29 March 1916 and departed for France after training at Clipstone, near Mansfield. This facility was a base set up to provide initial training for newly conscripted and enlisted men as the volume of new recruits was such that training could no longer be provided by their regiments as had previously been the case. Before enlisting, he had worked for Messrs J Lancaster & Son at Mytholmbridge and had been connected to Cliff Sunday School.

On the night of the 1911 census, he was recorded at the home of an aunt and uncle at 47 Cliff Road, his own family living in Sheffield at the time.

28433 Private Harry Roebuck MM
Northumberland Fusiliers 25th (Service) Battalion
(2nd Tyneside Irish)
Killed in Action 17 April 1918 aged 24
Buried: Grave I C 6 Mont Noir Military Cemetery St Jans-Cappel

Harry Roebuck enlisted on 18 April 1916 at the age of 22. In common with many local men, he had worked in the woollen industry at a number of local mills, most recently to his enlistment at Bank Bottom Mills in Marsden.

As a boy, Harry attended the National Day School and Cliff Sunday School where he was known as a gymnast. He was also a member of Underbank Football Club where his natural speed served him well playing at centre or wing-threequarter.

Harry was awarded the Military Medal not long before his death. The award appeared in the London Gazette, dated 6 August 1918, p9249, and can be found without citation in their online archive. However, the local paper published the content of a letter written by his superior officer to Harry's father:

"I cannot tell you how much I regret to have to inform you that your son ... was killed in action on the 17th inst. He was killed outright along with four other men of the Company by a heavy shell. He had acted as my servant since the beginning of January, and I found in him such a fine character that I looked upon him more as a true friend than anything else, and we were scarcely ever separate. He was one of the bravest fellows I ever met, and, no matter how dangerous the patrol I at times had to do,

he always insisted on going with me. By his bravery and utter disregard of danger during the heavy fighting from the 21st to the 23rd of March, he was responsible for saving over fifty men of his Company from being completely surrounded by the enemy. It was with more than usual pleasure I put his name forward, asking for some recognition for the splendid work he had done during this time. I assure you that you have the deepest sympathy not only of myself but of every officer and man in the Company in the loss of such a brave son."

Private Harry Roebuck

(Photo courtesy of The Huddersfield Daily Examiner)

On the night of the 1911 census, Harry was living with his family at 28 Cliff Road. Harry's younger brother Herbert also served in WWI and is believed to have survived.

William Roebuck	Head	57	Weaver
Clara Roebuck	Wife	55	
Harry Roebuck	**Son**	**17**	**Weaver**
Herbert Roebuck	Son	15	Finishing Department

77893 Private Ernest Sanderson
Durham Light Infantry 15th (Service) Battalion
Killed in Action 31 March 1918 aged 20
Commemorated: Panel 68-72 Pozières Memorial

No information has yet been discovered about Ernest's service. He was living at 78 Far Cliff at the time of the 1911 census.

Fred Sanderson	Head	51	Teamer
Sarah Sanderson	Wife	50	Housekeeper
Ellen Sanderson	Daughter	27	Knotter
Ada Sanderson	Daughter	23	Hanker
Annie Sanderson	Daughter	20	Weaver
Ernest Sanderson	**Son**	**12**	**School**

Postscript

We are aware that this is not an academic, balanced and dispassionate account of the history of Cliff and the Rec. The material included in the booklet reflects the enthusiasms and particular interests of the writers and of those who shared their memories with us.

There will be more to come, as work on the history of the Rec and the surrounding area continues. If you have memories of time spent on the Rec, in the recent or far-distant past, and are happy to share your story, please contact us by e-mail.

As you will have seen, we are still very short of photographs of the Rec. If you have a photograph, of whatever vintage, please let us know.

It is remarkable that a small, windswept piece of land, which is now reverting to natural heathland, should have inspired so much affection.

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