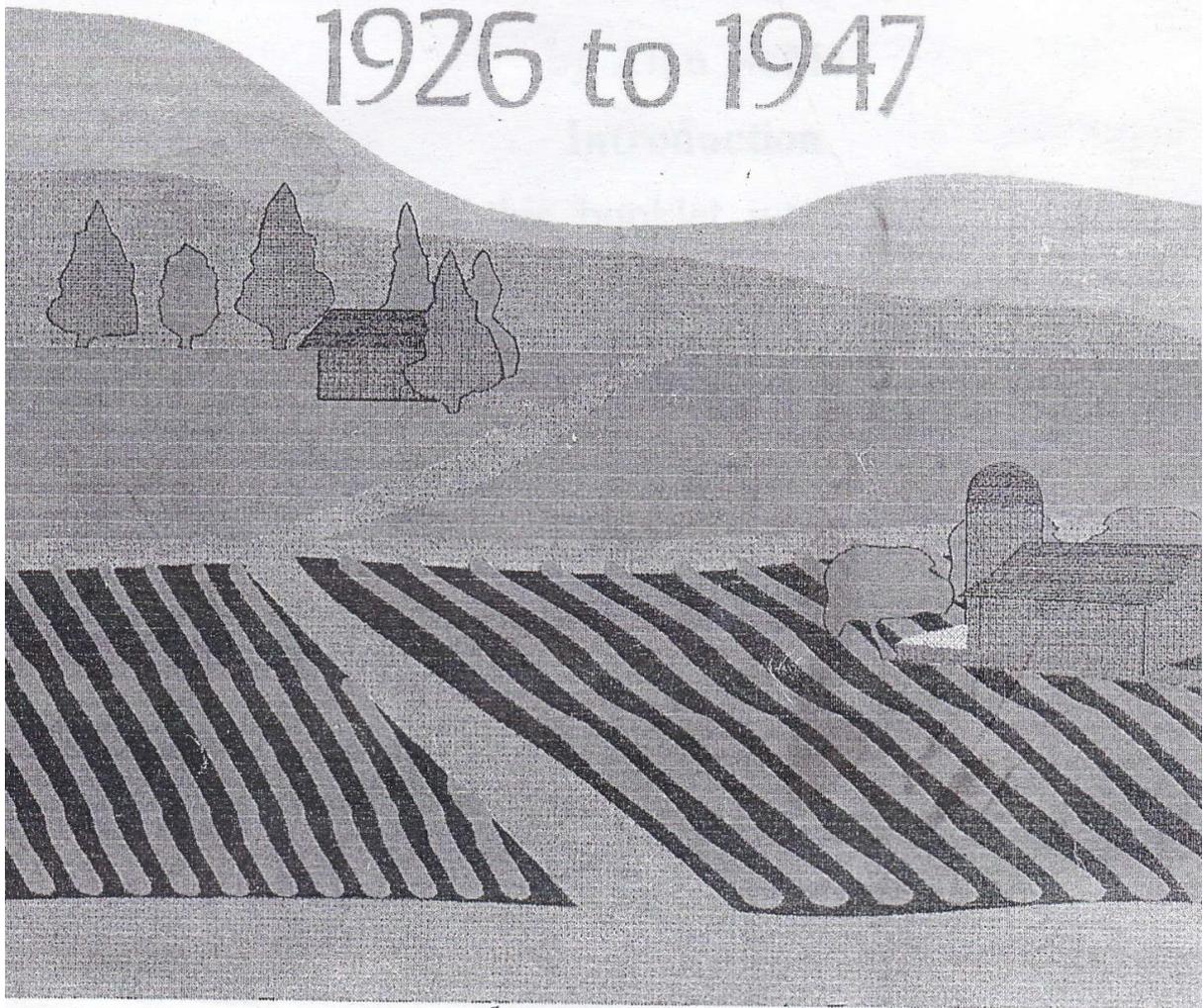
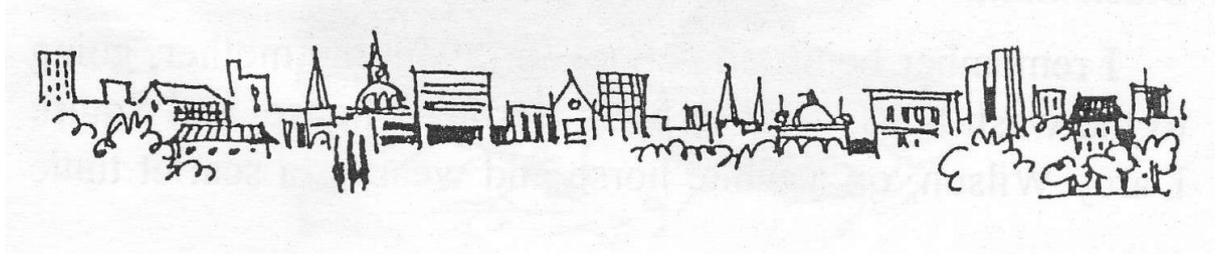


MEMORIES OF  
SEACROFT  
AS A VILLAGE  
1926 to 1947



by  
Alan Noble



## **Memories of Seacroft as a Village**

**1926 -1947**

**by Alan Noble**

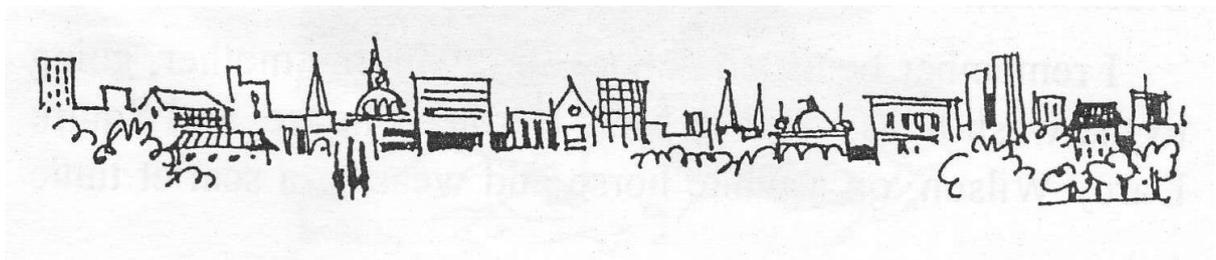
### **Introduction**

The chapters in this booklet were first printed in the 'Seacroft Herald', the Parish Magazine of the Parish of Seacroft, from November 1997 to May 1998

Following various requests for a complete print of the articles this booklet has been produced with the approval and permission of Alan Noble.

All monies raised by the sale of this booklet will be split between the St James' Roof Appeal and the Parochial Church Council of the Parish of Seacroft.

The chapter illustrations are from some old woodcuts produced as clipart for use in Desktop publishing.



## Chapter I

I was born at Leyfield Farm, Aberford, in May 1924. My mother and father moved to Taylors Yard in 1926.

My father was employed at Swarcliffe Farm by Mr Presious, and the cottage in Taylors Yard was a tied house.

I can remember being taken to Seacroft National School by my elder brother Harold. The Headmaster was Mr Hardy and my teacher I think was Miss Lancaster.

Our nature walks were through Foxwood and down to Foundry Mill, to sketch the Old Water Wheel and the cottages alongside.

Seacroft Green was the centre of everything that happened in the village: Gala Days, cricket matches; Saturdays and Sundays were a hive of activity, with coach loads of people from Leeds coming into the country.

As children we were never allowed to go under the ropes that were around the cricket pitch. To keep the grass down in the outfield, Mr Gibbon's horse Tommy was the lawnmower.

My school friends were Raymond Thomson, Arthur Lindley and Ken Maskill of which I have a photograph taken in the Blacksmiths shop dated 1933, with Mr Jim Gibbon as Blacksmith.

I remember being off school and, with my mother, going to the wash-house next to Miss Hardist's house, and Squire Darcy Wilson, on a white horse and wearing a scarlet tunic saying to my mother that your child should not be eating an apple during the day.

My mother (who was always known never to be short of an answer) said to him, *'How do you know, as you are not married'*. Little did he know that the apple came from his own orchard from his Gardener's wife, Mrs Rounding.



## Chapter 2

Winter and Christmas were very exciting in the 1930's. I can remember the squire, Darcy Wilson, allowing the villagers into the grounds of Seacroft Hall to skate on the lake when it was frozen over and children to sledge in the snow.

We had so many shop windows to gape into, looking for decorations for the tree, chocolate watches, sugar mice, and candles for the little holders we clipped onto the tree. The shops, to mention a few, were Mrs Wilby's on the Green, Mrs Shoemith's off the Church, and down the steps to Mrs Johnson's living room, opposite our school yard'

I spent many happy hours playing in the yard behind the Blacksmith's shop; there was a selection of old cars, logs of wood, ducks, hens and a pond, and not to forget a Hansom Cab which the girls used to play in.

Audrey Ward reminded me of the time she saw old Mr Gibbon searching amongst the sawdust for his thumb which he had just cut off with the circular saw!

Christmas time was time when the pig was killed, along with the chickens and geese, as they all had to be prepared a couple of days before the great day, as we didn't have fridges and freezers.

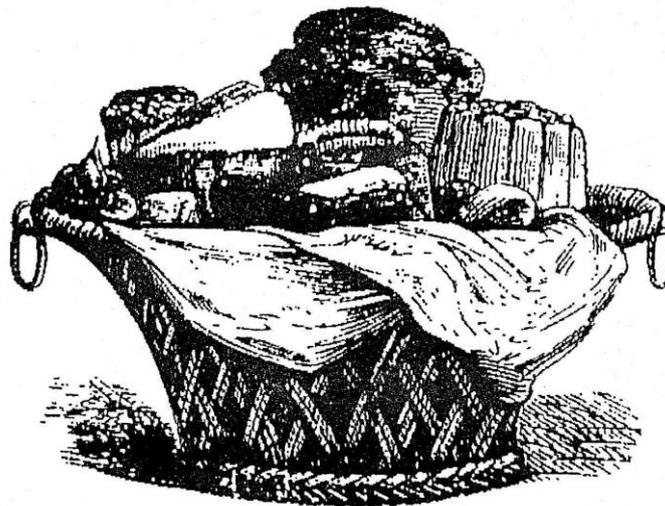
The smells of Seacroft I will never forget; the smell of a horseshoe being burnt onto a hoof; the smell of leather in Mr Hardisty's saddlers shop; my mother boiling hams and chickens in the set pot, and baking Christmas cakes and making Christmas puddings.

'Oh! I must not forget Fred Taylor's midding behind his slaughterhouse.'

Around Christmas time my mother would take ten or twelve children to the 'Theatre Royal' to see the pantomime. We would walk to Cross Gates to get a tram to Leeds, call at the market and get bags of oranges and sweets, then join the queue for the Gods.

That was our annual treat, and my mother always left trays of sausages in gravy in the oven for when we all returned.

'Just another of those smells.'



### Chapter 3

Christmas over and all the trimmings away we had plenty of dark nights to play with our toys. I got a set of a dozen lead soldiers, my sister a set of paints and my younger brother most likely some building blocks. We only ever got one present each from our parents'

In the village we had our share of wonderful people; they all seemed to talk and have time for us children.

Quite a few of us would go into the Blacksmith's shop and watch Don Shires shoeing horses and making rims for cart wheels; older boys would help him blow the bellows for the fire. We would also go to watch Walter Smith, in the joiners shop, making a coffin for some person that had just died and anyone giving cheek would land in the coffin!

Old Tom Gibbon was the undertaker. He measured and made the arrangements for the funerals, and delivered the coffin to the house on his hand cart.

Our local policeman was Bobby Brown who lived in the cottage (now the dentist) at the bottom of the Nookin. He would stand no nonsense, and would take troublemakers down a tree lined Cross Gates Lane to the station at Cross Gates. Many times he would give the offender a clip round the ear and they would never reach the Police station. He said it saved him writing out a report.

I can remember going to watch Mr Hardisty in his saddlers shop. He had lovely white hair and a little beard and was such a nice gentleman who made such beautiful things out of: his leather skins. He never shouted or told you to get out.

To go and get your hair cut was another experience. Arthur Broughton, quite a character, would fill you full of stories and, half way through your haircut, would break off for his tea and sandwich.

All the village news was reported to George Taylor who worked as a journalist for the S kyrack Express. Mrs Fanny Taylor, his mother, had a sweet shop in a row of cottages next to where Audrey Ward lives. Mrs Taylor always wore Victorian clothes and had a bun in her hair, as did Mrs Stringer who lived in Jenny & Kevin Eastwood's cottage.



### Chapter 4

Monday morning was a busy time in Taylors Yard. My elder brother, Harold, would have to get up early to light the fire under the 'Set Pot' in our wash-house.

The water boiling all the whites, mother rubbing hard soap into the water, and stirring with a stick. Putting the washing into a 'Peggy Tub' and using the Peggy stick to swish the clothes around.

During school holidays my sister Lucy and myself would have to give mother a hand to turn the mangle, to squeeze the clothes dry. They were then hung out in the field behind the Slaughter House.

Often my mother, being a farmer's daughter, would give Fred Taylor (the butcher) a hand with an unruly beast, while he used the pole axe to kill it. I remember during a school holiday, taking my dad his mashings, whilst he was ploughing the field next to the Red Lion; there was a gate by the Turn Pike milestone, and my dad handed me his red spotted handkerchief full of mushrooms, for my mother to cook for his tea.

Saturday was the day my elder brother took me to Cross Gates Picture House (as it was called), to see cowboy Tom Mix and laugh at the antics of Buster Keaton.

Mrs Wilby, who had a shop on the Green, ran a club for people to save the fare for our once-a-year bus trip to the coast, usually Bridlington. I have a photo of myself and Eleanor Johnson sat on the wooden breaker at Brid, taken about 1929.

I can just remember Squire Darcy Wilson dying; the older children went to church and gathered round the Crypt to watch his coffin being placed in a vault. After his death everything changed in the village, and I remember the building of the Village Hall in his memory.



## Chapter 5

Everyone in the village knew each other; any children giving cheek and their mothers and fathers would be informed straight away.

Where we lived in Taylors Yard, the big house, (which later became the Post Office) was Mr Driff Taylor's. Our house joined his, and next door to us lived Mr Jim, and Elsie Gibbon with Betty and Brian. In later years Brian made their house into a Hairdresser's shop.

Mr & Mrs Fred Taylor lived at the top of the row of cottages, with Johnsons, Atack, Guest & Mrs Mitchell next to the water pump. Mr Tom Gibbon lived in a house on the main road, and I can remember those pears hanging over the fence, in Autumn, just asking to be picked.

Down the village lived Corketts, Roundings, Stringers, Streets, Lumbs, Browns, Fred Isles, Turnpenny and Mr & Mrs Kitchen who had a joiners shop.

We would walk over the field to Roundhay Park, passing down Bailey's Lane to see the Old Pigeon Cote on our left hand side. On the right would be Pigeon Cote Farm, at which my brother's friend Jack Hopwood lived, as his dad worked on the farm.

A full day would be spent at Roundhay Park, sailing our boats on the little lake. We would take a bottle of water and a block of lemonade crystals to make our lemonade, and eat banana sandwiches. Mother would never worry about us.

Another day out would be to walk down the village, to the beck that ran out of Seacroft Hall. It was a smashing playground: tree lined steep woodland running down to where Moresdale Lane is now. Where the Inglewoods are now there was a rugby field.

The older girls and boys would walk on what was called 'The Duck Walk' which went from the Town End to Killingbeck, trying to meet their intended.

My mother used to collect for the Nurses Association in Crossgates, and I think for about one shilling [5p] a month. This was to pay for the District Nurse to come if a baby was due, or any illness in the family, as it cost 2/6d [12.5p] for a doctor's visit, and people couldn't afford so much.



## Chapter 6

Every Thursday my mother would take my brother and myself along the Coal Road to visit her mother and father at Bay Horse Farm, Shadwell, of which my Grandad was a tenant farmer under Lord Harewood.

Granma and Grandad had sixteen children, thirteen girls lived and one son. They had their own pew in Shadwell Church and were all very religious. Every evening one had to read a passage of the Bible. Part of Grandad's tenancy was when harvest was finished he had to cart so many loads of coal from Barnbow Pit to Harewood House. Hence 'The Coal Road'. Passing in to York Road, he had a toll of 1/2d a wheel to pay at the Toll House [which as a lot of people may remember, is where Mrs Ibbotson (who is still around at 93 and often talks to me about my mother) lived].

I was told Darcy Wilson never charged more than 1/6d [7<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>p in new money] a week for his cottages, but would never allow baths to be fitted in them. He is reputed to have said, 'I haven't a fixed one in my Hall, so why should you!' When the Hall was auctioned and all the furniture arranged for sale, there were quite a number of sit-up baths of all different sizes.

My dad gave up farming and bought two shire horses with flat carts to hire. He had contracts with the council to repair the roads. A council man would go with my dad, with a pile of tarmac and a couple of shovels and bumpers, to flatten the holes.

Dad would dress up Peggy and Prince every Whitsuntide, put forms [for seats] on the back of the flat carts and take the children of the Village Sunday Schools to Aberford, usually Leyfield Farm where I was born. What an honour it was to sit beside my dad! Dad would stable the two horses at Dixon's farm which stood at what is now the entrance to the Hansbys.

As you can imagine Seacroft had many farms; Stocks Farm, 'Laburnam Farm on the Green'; Park Farm [where the Lion and Lamb pub is]. Hawthorn, White Laithe and Providence which I think was 'Carters' at the point where the Ring Road and Coal Road now meet.

As the estates of Crossgates, The Oval and Hawkhill started to be built, everybody seemed to be milkmen. Dennis Osborne, Mr Lumb and Jim Gibbon - who was my first boss when I left school, seven days a week, 7/6d a week. We had two daily deliveries, except Sundays, and I enjoyed every minute that I worked.

I had always wanted to be a farmer, but my mother and father discouraged me; getting soaking wet and tied houses were not all it seemed.

Jim Gibbon bought his milk from Mr Leake at Grimes Dyke Farm where Sidney Webb worked [brother of Ronnie].

They were all such lovely people, as everyone that I knew in Seacroft were!

## Chapter 7

We always had plenty of entertainment during summer. Shows, cricket matches, feasts and Roundhay Tattoo, held every year or two. The cricket matches were always well supported, both home and away, as dozens of supporters would travel to Garforth, Micklefield and Kippax to cheer our team.

Crossgates Feast held in the field where the old Regal Cinema [now Mayfair Bingo] was built. Chris Johnson, the owner, was a big fat man who sat on a chair at the entrance. Dad always supplied him with a giant Dahlia twice a week for his buttonhole and received 2/6d for his efforts. The Feast was powered by a gleaming steam engine called 'Yorkshire Man', made by Fowler's of Leeds, and had a plaque with the words **'Who'd have thought it'** on the side.

Dad and Fred Taylor went to Scholes Show one Saturday afternoon in a pony and trap. Later that day the pony arrived home with Dad and Fred asleep in the trap. My mother, horrified at seeing Dad, put his head under the pump in the corner of the yard. I never saw my Dad with drink after that!

In 1935 we moved to Crossgates, but my sister Lucy and brothers Harold and Dennis were always back in Seacroft to dance in the Village Hall. Mrs Kitchen taught me to dance; she was the wife of the local joiner and the life and soul of the village.

Seacroft has always been a lovely place to live in. I have never been ashamed to admit that I have lived in it. I remember going into Leeds, passing down York Road, and seeing children with no shoes on and rows of houses so close together.

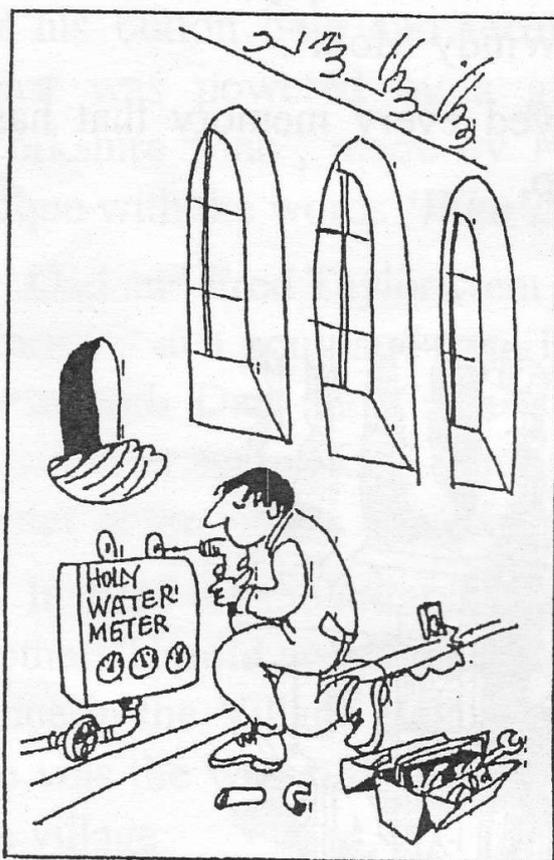
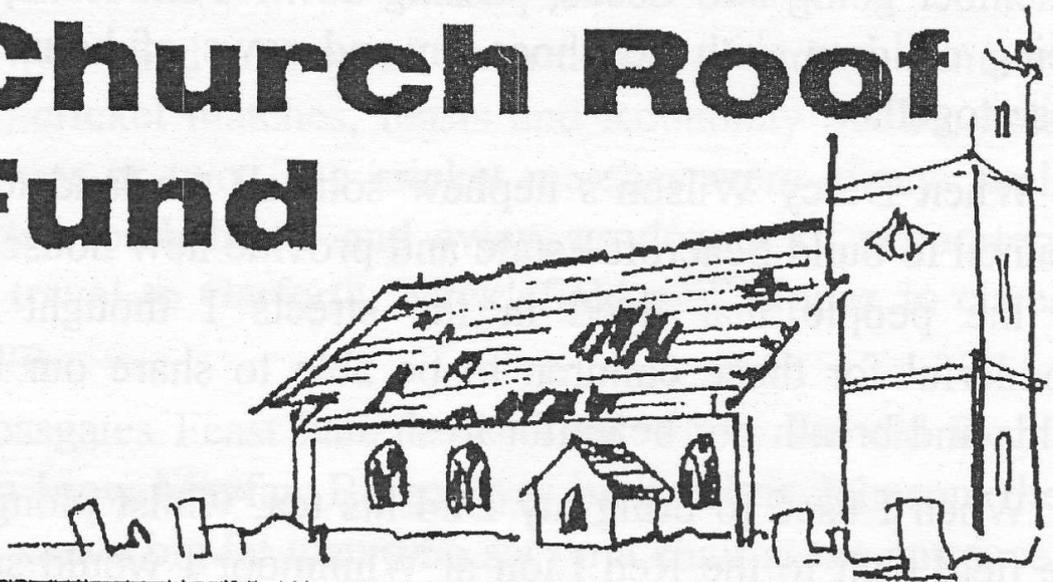
When Darcy Wilson's nephew sold all the land to the Council to build Seacroft Estate and provide new houses for all the people that lived in the streets I thought how wonderful for those children to be able to share our open fields and breathe our beautiful fresh air.

When I used to bring my Dad his tea, whilst ploughing the field next to the Red Lion at Whinmoor I would say to him 'Why is it always windy up here?' His reply was that was why they call it Whinmoor or 'Windy Moor'

'That's all folks'. I've enjoyed every memory that has been written. Hope you have too.



# Church Roof Fund



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