

Chapter Two: Local Difficulties

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries destitution was an ever-present threat; violently oscillating trade cycles meant that even wealthy manufacturers could end their days in a workhouse. There was no real security during the early industrial period. In response to this situation, Friendly Societies were set up to provide some form of insurance in the event of sickness or unexpected death. One of these was the Kildwick Parish Friendly Society, which had already been established by 1/1/1799. In exchange for 2/- paid in by each member per quarter, each would receive 7/- weekly if unable to work in the case of illness or injury. An entry book recorded the rules of this Society and according to Wood p.56; they indicated that drunkenness was something of a problem.

“KILDWICK PARISH FRIENDLY SOCIETY

January 1st 1799

Rules

1. Every member to pay 2/- quarterly into the box, besides the allowance for a pint of ale.
2. Any members sick or lame or otherwise indisposed so as to render him unfit to work shall receive 7/- weekly.
3. When a member shall depart this life there shall be paid the sum of 5gns (Guineas) out of the box to defray expenses of the funeral
4. After payment for 12 months to any member, his pay will then be only 5/- per week
5. Any member refusing to conform to the rules shall forfeit 6d to the box
6. Any member joining the procession in a state of intoxication or behaving disorderly or absent from Divine Service shall forfeit 1/- to the box
7. The Master and Stewards to lead the procession, the rest of the members to follow two abreast, each furnished with a sprig of green oak.”

(Presumably, these processions took place to celebrate the Annual Feast Day - the carrying of a sprig of oak was a custom that perhaps had its origins in ancient fertility customs.)

In order to ascertain whether any of my likely forbears were connected with this Society I decided to carefully examine and replicate some of its archives during a visit paid to Keighley Library on Thursday, March 1st 2001. As the following extracts will show, these archives provided some intriguing details concerning the Smiths of Sutton and other connected families. An insight was also gained into the type of social life enjoyed by the men when they were away from the ladies! (The word 'do' in the following extract was an old way of saying 'also.')

“Annual Day, October 5th 1826.

Appointments to Offices for part of the year 1826

and part of the year 1827. As follows viz.: -

James Wilkinson President

Stewards

For Farnhill, John Wellock

Do Cowling James Snowden

Do Thos. Bottomley

Do John Riley at Jackfield, Sutton
Committee

Glusburn, Thomas Hopkinson }

Connonley, Hugh Watkinson

for Bradley, Edmund Cockshott

Sutton, Wm. Dickenson and Henry Spencer

Steeton, James Lund, Silsden, Henry Pickles Cowling, John Emmott

Kildwick, William Davihorn,

Farnhill, Michael Brown and Anthony Spencer Junior

Committee Room October 5th 1826

We the Committee have unanimously agreed that the Committee

shall in future have two quarts

of ale on the Annual Feast

Wm. Skinner Joseph Dickinson

Wm. Heaton Wm. Hind

Wm. Green Wm. Wilson

John Longbottom Wm. Stott

Jonathan Green Wm. Laycock

Richard Brigg.”

On the basis of this resolution it was possible to deduce that those involved in the Kildwick Parish Friendly Society liked their ale. This refreshment will have been drunk from pewter tankards - with the participants in this group eating what was likely to have been the very traditional pub fare of roast beef, potatoes and an assortment of vegetables. Conversation at such an event would have revolved around business, and village gossip. “Talking scandal” would have been a popular pastime. Another subject under discussion may well have been some important national event such as the recent Buttershaw banking crash (1825-26), that was reputed to have ruined half the manufacturers in Keighley and almost bankrupted the famous Scottish writer Sir Walter Scott. (Even though the Scottish banking System was far less badly effected than the English one.) The falling price of cotton could also have been a subject of debate. As the ale flowed some of the conversation at the Annual Dinner must have assumed a more bawdy tone. The room in which they met would have been dark, being illumined only by candles and a flickering coal (or log) fire. One interesting name to surface was that of William Wilson, who just might have been John Smith’s father (or brother)-in-law. However, records did show that William Wilson’s signature did not appear on any Friendly Society Records after October 1826. This meant that he may never had any contact with my Great, Great Grandfather.

The first Smith to be found in the records of Kildwick Parish Friendly Society was Robert Smith of Sutton who was listed as serving on the Committee at the Annual Day held on October 4th 1827. However, the find that was of real interest was the simultaneous presence at the Annual Day held on October 7th 1830 of John Smith from Sutton and John Parkinson from Glasburn, (sometimes spelt Glusburn in old documents). The latter name was important because John Parkinson was a witness at my Great Grandfather Edmund’s birth registration at Sutton Baptist Chapel in April 1832. At that event his name also came up in connection with my Great, Great

Grandmother Ann Smith. Throughout this period his name was often associated with the John Smith who appeared to have been my Great, Great Grandfather. Indeed John Parkinson seemed quite an interesting character in his own right for he was a highly active individual who appeared to be 'in on' everything. Such was the extent of his activities that it was easy to develop the impression that where there was a Committee there was John Parkinson! Consequently, his was a name that frequently cropped up during the research undertaken for this family history. It seemed that he had to be 'in on' this enterprise as well!

In order to provide some form of context the appointments for this Annual Day will be recorded in full. One can assume that in order to get onto the Committee both John Smith and John Parkinson will have had to be active participants in the Friendly Society for at least a few years. It therefore seems reasonable to deduce that they were present at the same time William Wilson was around four years previously.

“Annual Day October 7th 1830.

Appointments to offices for part of the year 1830

and 1831 are as follows viz.

President Joseph Wilcock

Stewards

John Clarkson for Silsden

Samuel Gott for Cowling

John Dickinson, Sutton

John Heaton, Farnhill

Committee

John Smith

Sutton

John Shackleton

Sutton

Joseph Right	Silsden
John Parkinson	Glusburn
Thomas Walbank	Glusburn
Roger Couper	Cononley
Roland Harrison	Cowling
Frank Restwick	Farnhill
John Todd	Farnhill
William Hinde	Steeton.”

Unfortunately, a secretary recorded all the relevant names. Consequently, no original signatures (or marks) were made to compare with those belonging in other documents – thus it was not possible to establish for certain whether the John Smith whose name appeared in these documents was my Great, Great Grandfather or instead some other John Smith. (If he were not my forbear it would be necessary to conclude that John Parkinson was closely involved with two John Smith’s from the Sutton locality. Given the extent of his contacts this was not impossible.)

On the Annual Day October 6th 1831, John Smith was re-elected to serve on the Committee. John Parkinson’s signature was one of eleven signatures approving a unanimous, but somewhat obscure motion “that in future the stewards shall have power to stop all deficiencies belonging [to] the sick members of this society the first weekly day the fines go to the benefit of the box.” (Among the signatures was one belonging to Robert Smith who was later to become an influential figure in the Society.) By this juncture my Great Grandfather Edmund Smith was a baby some five and a half months grown in his mother’s womb.

The Kildwick Parish Friendly Society Committee minutes also made it possible to trace developments during the nine and a half months following Edmund’s birth.
“Copy of a notice to committee men

Sir/ A committee meeting is appointed to be held at the
Clubhouse Farnhill at the hour of Seven O Clock
in the evening on Saturday the 19th instant, when

your attendance will be required at the time

and place above mentioned

Sutton, May 16th 1832 yours Wm. Walten

Clerk.”

The reason behind this urgent summons was duly recorded. It showed something of the financial concerns involved in a period of high economic and political uncertainty - where there had been much agitation for parliamentary reform. (1832 was the year in which the Great Parliamentary Reform Act was passed.)

“Clubhouse May 19th 1832

The Committee resolve that the £250 due from the Canal Company to be paid off the 31st day of May shall be lodged in the savings bank at Skipton.”

Whilst the Committee bustled about its business, my Great Grandfather would have been suckling from his mother just before being put to bed. Like many wives in the village she may have been glad that her husband was out for the night. Still only five months old, Edmund will have already begun to raise his head – looking at those objects and people nearest to him – oblivious of any larger affairs of the world. His exhausted mother may have sung him lullabies to send him to sleep. It was easy to imagine Edmund being a highly active if somewhat delicate baby. Ann Smith would not have had the faintest idea that her son was to be the lynch pin on which the future destiny of many Smiths would rest. Not for one second could she have dreamt that the baby she held in her arms would be a source of considerable interest to family members at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Nor could she have foreseen that her own name would be brought from obscurity and published world wide on the Internet.

Almost every Club has its problem member and in the case of Kildwick Parish Friendly Society that member was Thomas Greenwood. Hints of trouble could be seen in the following curt notice:

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“Copy of a notice sent to committee men

July 12th concerning Thomas Greenwood

Sir,

The Committee meeting is appointed
to be held at the Clubhouse Farnhill at the
hour of Eight o' Clock in the evening on
Saturday next the 14th Inst. when your
attendance will be required at the time and
place above mentioned.

Sutton July 12th

1832

Yours

William Walten

Clerk

More will be revealed about Thomas Greenwood later.

After some two years service John Smith was not listed as a being appointed for any office on the Annual Day held on October 4th 1832. A James Ramsden and a William Heaton (both of Sutton) took his place. However one does find a William Smith serving as a steward for Glasburn and Sutton and an Edmund Smith serving as a steward for Cowling, (The 1841 Census showed him to be a farmer by occupation). James Wilkinson acted as President. Yet John Smith would still have been present at this meeting as his one-year term on the Committee was coming to its natural end. This implied that he was voluntarily relinquishing his responsibilities, possibly because he had an impending move in mind. His name was added to the following resolution, which contained some evidence of a financial problem.

“October 4th 1832 club hours

We the undersigned committee

have resolved

unanimously that in future

the 3s 6d pay shall be

2s 6d

Thomas Green

James Laycock David Snowden
William Dickinson John Holmes

John Smith

John Longbottem

Henry Clapham

William Roe

William Smith.”

The other business transacted that day was the direct result of a dispute with the clubhouse landlord. As was often the case in such matters the problem revolved around money.

“Clubhouse Farnhill October 1832

The committee, this evening have unanimously resolved

to have the Club Box moved to another House

in consequence of Mr Palfryman saying to

the committee then sat, that he lost money by

providing Dinners for the members of the club.

The business was immediately carried over, when

put to the vote there was not one dissenting voice.

One of the Committee was immediately sent to

Mr Henry Stirk at the Old White Bear who has agreed

to take in the Club and provide for them at the

same rate now paid to Mr Palfryman, the box

was accordingly removed this evening,

October 4th

1832.”

On a separate headstone was inscribed the name: -

Richard Palfreeman of Bradford late of Farnhill, November 24th 1863, 43 years

A search of the Marriage Registers for Kildwick at Northallerton Archive Centre on Friday, June 15th 2001 showed William Palfryman acting as a witness for quite a large a number of weddings. The frequent presence of his rather cramped signature implied that he was a rather popular figure who seemed good to have around on a joyful family occasion where the ale would be flowing freely. He always spelt his surname Palfreeman. The signature of his wife confirmed that she too was literate. In 1841, Farnhill was a small township with a total population of 459.

The 1834 Pigot's Trade Directory also revealed the presence of a 'boot and shoemaker' called John Parkinson in Glasburn. He may have been the brother of a Robert Parkinson in Crosshills who, during this period, followed the same trade - although by 1841 he was a grocer.

The Census for 1841 also showed John Parkinson to be now living at Eastburn, a village just down the lane from Sutton Mill. He was living alone except for a 15-year old maid servant called Martha Staw! Ten years later he was married to a 54-year old lady called Susanna, (he himself was then aged 50). The 1851 Census also revealed him to be a worsted manufacturer who had been born in Cononley, (which I briefly visited on my way to Skipton on a very wet Thursday, April 5th 2001). Lodging with them was Peter Scott (aged 57) who was Minister at Sutton Baptist Chapel from 1854 until 1857. The fact that John Parkinson did not appear to have any children perhaps freed him to participate in a wide range of community activities. The 1861 Census revealed that he was no longer living at Eastburn.

Significantly, John Smith vanished from the scene at a time when I expected him to have done so. Later cited evidence was to confirm that he had left Sutton to look for employment opportunities elsewhere; his active involvement in the affairs of the Kildwick Parish Friendly Society indicated that at least until October 1832 his life had been free of any traumatic events such as the loss of a wife. Overall, John Smith appears to have been a sociable sort of man who enjoyed his ale. However, the same couldn't be said for Thomas Greenwood who, as the following extracts show, was to cause yet more problems.

"The following is a copy of a notice sent to the

committee on the 12th Novr 1834."

Sir/ A committee meeting is appointed to be held

at the Clubhouse Crosshills at half past seven.

O Clock in the evening on Saturday next

The 15th Novr when your attendance will be required

At the time & place mentioned.

Sutton Novr 12th

Yours

1834

Wm. Walten

Clerk

The reason for this urgent request was explained in the following notice.

“The above meeting was convened on account of

Thos Greenwood’s irregular conduct when paying

On the club who agree to pay the fine

Of ten shillings & 6d specified in the

17th article, which fine he promised to pay

at the Annual Feast Day next ensuring.”

The conduct of this Thomas Greenwood must have been very irregular as the fine of 10/6 almost amounted to the weekly wage of a skilled worker. Something far more serious than turning up drunk at a meeting had been involved; however, what the precise nature of his irregular conduct was cannot be guessed at. However, it must have been fairly longstanding and seemed to involve the misuse of money. Perhaps there had been some arrears in his contributions? At the time of this confrontation my Great Grandfather Edmund had entered the third year of his life and was living away from Sutton in Cullingworth with his parents John and Anne. By then he had a younger brother called Daniel.

The minutes of Kildwick Parish Friendly Society ended in September 1855. They consisted of the usual list of names and committee resolutions on mundane administrative matters. Certain key individuals had displayed a long lasting commitment right to the end. Robert Smith served as ‘Clerk’ from 1839 until 1846 whilst Benjamin Smith acted as ‘steward’ for Sutton from 7/10/1841

until late 1844. At the Annual Feast Day on October 4th 1849 “the following persons were appointed to the following offices” John Cockshott was President, Roland Smith acted as steward for Sutton, Robert Smith (also of Sutton) served on the committee, and the ubiquitous John Parkinson acted as steward for Steeton. Records connected to Sutton Chapel show Roland Smith to have been a devout Baptist; yet despite his evident religious convictions he still felt free to hold a responsible position in a society that met in a public house and consumed generous quantities of ale! Apparently absent during the late 1840s was any rigid demarcation between Chapel and Public House. Evidence provided by Wood confirmed that the Temperance Movement did not begin to influence Sutton Chapel until the late 1860s. An earlier generation of Chapel members didn’t appear to have seen any conflict between their faith and any attendance at the White Bear Inn. Their attitude was more akin to that of today than the late Victorian era, when to be a member of the Chapel was to be identified with teetotalism. The following extract, written in neat script writing provides confirmation of this point.

“Committee Room October 5th 1854

In consequence of the members not attending
to put in and nominate officers according to the

rules of the society the officers now acting

were obliged to hold office for this year

when it was unanimously agreed

to have the box and society removed to.

The Old White Bear Inn, Crosshills

When the landlord agreed to furnish

Each member with a dinner in the

Next Annual Feast Day.

The box was removed accordingly.

Robert Smith, Secretary.”

It seemed that following several decades of honourable service to its members, the Kildwick Parish Friendly Society was in decline – having been replaced by other forms of insurance provision. Most of its records do appear to peter out in the late 1850s. Incidentally, the 1841 Census revealed only two Robert Smiths living in Sutton. One an agricultural labourer born in about 1810 (too young to have had an active part in the Society in the 1820s) and the other a worsted manufacturer, who would have been of the same generation as my Great, Great Grandfather John Smith. (This Particular Robert Smith had lived at Low End on the North Side of

the Turnpike Road.) The high degree of literacy displayed in his role as secretary strongly implied that the Robert Smith of the Friendly Society could be identified with the worsted manufacturer of the same name.

My Great, Great Grandfather's probable connections with John Parkinson, Benjamin Smith, and Robert Smith have one common feature; all of these associations were with men engaged in worsted manufacturing. The influence of such connections may have persuaded John Smith that work in this growing area of industry would be a good option for his son Edmund to follow. Almost of equal significance is the fact that his best friends were businessmen and the fact that they were his friends (or at least close associates) powerfully suggested that during the 1830s his own commercial reputation as a Millwright must have been respectable. In those days businessmen did not usually associate with losers or cheats. They would have risked ruin in doing so.

Whilst visiting the locality on Monday, 19th March 2001, I managed to find 'The Old White Bear Inn, Crosshills.' An inscription in a somewhat eroded capstone above the doorway showed that the building had first been constructed in 1735. One interesting feature was a flight of stone steps leading to an upper room, which most likely would have been the dining area where the Friendly Society to held their Annual Dinners. The regular clientele would have partaken their refreshment downstairs. The Inn was only about twenty-five minute's walk from Sutton. For most of the members it was perhaps at a far more convenient location than Mr Palfrymans Inn 'The Ship' at Farnhill. (Incidentally, the 'White Bear' Pub at nearby Eastburn, should not be confused with this particular Public House. In 1834, this second 'White Bear' pub was under the proprietorship of a John Wilkinson.)

A less exciting but still highly informative document was the Kildwick Parish Friendly Society Sick Book dating from 1782 until 1853. It consisted mainly of a list of names and payments. The earliest Smith on record was a Benjamin Smith who was paid 4/- for one week's sickness on July 4th 1782. Next in turn was a John Smith who received 5/- for one week's sickness on February 10th 1783. However, perhaps the most interesting entry was that of John Smith Senior of Sutton whose sick pay evidently amounted to an old age pension. The length of time he received this form of payment suggested that he had suffered an old age characterised by a great deal of infirmity. He first appeared on the records on July 7th 1831, along with a John Smith of Glasburn. His payment at that stage was 6/- per week. By January 1832, weekly payment was 5/-, by August 16th of that year it was down to 3/6, by 9/9/1833 it had been reduced to 2/6 and to a paltry 1/6 in April 1838. It remained at that level until the final payments in late 1838. My own estimation - based on these records - was that his death occurred in late November 1838. His case showed that the Friendly Society could only meet needs for a rather limited time-period. His last income from this source would barely have paid the rent.

Complementing the above source were the official Parish Records of Sutton Township. These

contained the same names, which featured in the Friendly Society and in the records of Sutton Baptist Chapel. When used in conjunction all three sources of information offered a very coherent picture of the kind of lifestyle led by the Smiths and the social position they enjoyed in their local community. They also highlighted many of the local difficulties facing a community like Sutton. The following extracts from the official Parish Records highlighted such problems. As with the documents from the Kildwick Parish Friendly Society I have only extracted material pertaining either directly to my own (or closely connected) family lines or offering useful background information about everyday life at Sutton. Nevertheless, this material was still highly representative of the wider documentation.

The endless capacity of small communities like Sutton to almost literally ‘make mountains out of molehills’ can be seen in the following extract taken from The Township Accounts Book, (which covers the period from 1834 until early 1839).

“1836

An agreement this 9th day of February 1836

between the inhabitants of Sutton and John

Shackleton of Sutton that he the said John

Shackleton engages to take the moles and

To spread all the mole hills in the said

Township for 7 years at 4 pounds per year.

If any complaint be made that he has

Not done his duty, he shall be discharged

From his employ by the consent or

Majority of two thirds of the occupiers

Present at a meeting convened on

The occasion by giving three months

Notice from the aforesaid meeting.

I John Shackleton engage and

Enter into the above agreement as

Witnessed my hand the day and

Year above written.

X (John Shackleton)

Witness J. D. Heaton.”

It appeared that the services of the illiterate John Shackleton were not satisfactory because a year later another illiterate worker George Hudson had replaced him. He received one third extra for doing the same work as his predecessor.

“1837

An agreement made this 5th day
Of May 1837 between the inhabitants of Sutton and
George Hudson of Sutton that he the said

George Hudson engages to

take the moles and to spread

all the mole hills in the said

Township for 7 years at

£6. 0s per year. If any

complaint be made that

he has not done his duty, he

shall be discharged from his

employ by the consent or

majority of two thirds of the

occupiers present at

a meeting convened on the
occasion by giving one month notice
from the aforesaid meeting

I George Hudson engage and enter

into the above agreement

as Witnessed my hand the day and

Year above written.

X (George Hudson)

Witness John Jackson.”

The change (which I d) from three to one months notice indicated that the inhabitants of Sutton wanted to speed up the procedure whereby an incompetent mole catcher could be discharged. The existence of such a post showed that industrialisation had not yet completely severed this community from its rural roots. Parochial politics were very much on display. In some ways, my ancestors lived in a very small world. Appointing a mole catcher would not have been one of the most exciting of activities and somewhat frustratingly it failed provide a long-term solution to the problem. During my visit made to Ellers on Monday, 19th March 2001, I could see that some of the surrounding fields were still full of molehills!

One especially fascinating document was the ‘Disbursements to the Poor Book’ for Sutton. It covered the period from 1785 until 1809, naming those who were in receipt of poor relief. A review of those listed revealed plenty of Craven’s and Wilson’s but not one Smith! Even if I had overlooked out a few names the fact remained that in proportion to their numbers the Smiths were highly underrepresented in the ‘Poor Book.’ This absence provided decisive evidence that the Smiths in a social sense were located above the poorest section of the community. They were neither wealthy landowner’s like the Spencer’s nor were they ‘up and coming’ industrialists like the Bairstow’s Nevertheless, they were clearly ‘a middling sort of people’ who knew how to be self-sufficient. Their signatures as witnesses to the fact that the poor relief accounts had been properly examined provided telling evidence of their respectable position within their local community.

An examination will be made of the poor relief distribution for 1805 - the year in which Admiral Nelson won his famous sea battle against the French and Spanish navies at Trafalgar. For ease of clarity, these figures were placed in table form. It can be seen that, whilst being under the authority of the local overseer, a certain John Smith had taken a hand in the administration of this form of welfare. The money will have released into his care, and then he will have distributed it to those most in need.

“Disbursements by Joseph Craven, overseer [& Constable]

for John Smith at [Firtops] or Spencer’s Farm

1st May 1804 until 1st May 1805

Payments

£

s

d

h/f

Monthly Pay

7

19

4

Weekly do...

123

13

5

Funeral Expenses

2

14

6

Clothing

2

7

10

1/2

House Rents

16

11

6

Necessities

18

0

7

1/2

Overseer Expenses

30

7

7

1/2

Constable

60

8

2

Mole Catching

4

8

4

To serving the office

8

[9]

[1]

Vestry Coals – 4 Loads 15 and a half

5

2

275

4

2

1/2

Due to Old Offices 1803

73

18

1

1/2

349

2

4

N.B. h/f = 'Half Pennies and Farthings'

Following a brief record of collections made to pay for the poor rates, the balance for this period closed with the following statement.

“June 13th 1805 –

These accts (accounts) have been examined

& allowed errors excepted

by us W. Dixon

Wm. Spencer

John Clough

David McCroben

Robert Clough

John Spencer

Richard Smith

James Lister

Benj. Smith

John Parkinson

Wm. Brigg

Thos. Bottomley.”

A particularly fascinating feature about the names I d was how the Smiths were already enjoying close ties with other families such as the Cloughs, McCrobens and Parkinsons at the beginning of the nineteenth century. This was at a time when my Great, Great Grandfather John Smith would have been only a three month old baby. Subsequent evidence would show that these ties were also present at the time of my Great Grandfather’s birth in January 1832 and continued well into the second half of the nineteenth century. It seems that these same respectable families had all known one another from the late eighteenth century, before industrialisation had really taken hold of Sutton. In the main their chief sources of income will have been from farming, milling and weaving.

By mid 1807 Napoleon was the master of Europe, but in Sutton the routine distribution of parish poor relief continued unaffected – although the higher amount spent on weekly relief suggested the presence of economic hardship. This in part could have been a symptom of the disruption caused by the troubled political and military situation at the time.

“Disbursements by Joseph Craven overseer [& Constable]

for Peter Barritt at

Hill Farms 1st May 1805

Until 1st May 1806

Payments

£

s

d

h/f

Monthly Pay

5

7

Weekly do...

163

16

Necessities

14

19

4

House Rents

15

16

9

Funerals

3

15

10

Mole Catching

5

3

Clothing

6

16

9

Overseer Expenses

6

12

3

Constable Do...

51

1

7

To serving the Office

8

8

Paid to old officer

35

14

11

1/2

317

11

5

1/2

& charging journey to Huddersfield

8

317

19

5

1/2

Following a brief record of collections received in order to pay for the poor rates, the balance for this period closed with this statement: -

“July 2nd 1807 –

The above accts examined

And allowed errors excepted

By us -----

Wm. Spencer

John Clough

David McCroben

John Spencer

James Lister---

Joshua Cropley

John Smith

John Spencer, Farmer

John Walton

Hiram Butterfield.”

N.B. John Walton was possibly the Pastor at Sutton Baptist Church.

Virtually all of the signatures appended to the 1805 and 1807 accounts were neatly written - not one ‘mark’ was present. This confirmed the high degree of literacy existing among this circle of men. Somewhere in or around the township a reasonable amount of basic teaching had been or was still taking place. Not only could these men write their names but they could also understand accounts as well. This was an attribute that some of my own Business Studies students do not have today – even with the benefit of the modern education system!

From 1810 until 1827, no records of poor relief were available. When they do re-appear as the “Kildwick Payments Book for Sutton Township” John Smith was ‘overseer.’ He held this post until April 1833 when Peter Laycock replaced him. This particular John Smith wrote in beautiful script style, which was to contrast markedly with the far messier style of his successor. His signature, with its decorative curls around the ‘J’ and the ‘S,’ and its bold crossing of the ‘t’ was identical to that of the John Smith whose signature appeared in the 1807 audit. He was clearly too old to have been my Great, Great Grandfather of the same name. (Also my Great, Great Grandfather was illiterate.) Equally apparent was the fact that he was a man of some standing in the local community. The writing gave the impression of a good administrator who knew his own mind on matters. In addition, the length of his involvement in the depressing area of poor relief displayed a high level of commitment to the surrounding community. This present history owes much to that Smith for the meticulous way in which he kept his documents – extracts of which are now given. (For ease of clarity, most of the information will again, be presented in table form.)

“John Smith, Overseer 1827

Payments

£

s

d

h/f

Disbursts in April

100

1

4

Do in May

86

1

5

Do in June

111

4

4

Do in July

96

17

4

1/2

Do in August

107

15

3

1/2

Do in September

89

6

[0]

1/2

Do in October

50

1

4

1/2

Do in November

53

1

1

Do in December

59

18

2

1/2

Do in January

46

5

10

Do in February

50

13

[0]

Do in March

174

7

5

1/2

1055

12

9

Lost in Bastardy

13

8

5

1069

1

2

John Smith, Overseer to Town"

8

8

9

A review of these figures appeared to show no seasonal fluctuations. During high summer a plentiful supply of outdoor work should have been available, yet this period showed a higher level of payments than the cold winter months of January and February when such employment would have been of limited supply. The amount spent on poor relief would have represented a sizeable proportion of the township budget. There was only a little left to spare for improvements to the roads and other local facilities. Much of the local labour appears to have been of a casual kind, which could easily be laid-off at the first hint of an economic downturn. Consequently, the amount spent on poor relief could suddenly escalate as demonstrated in figures for the December 1831 until March 1832 period.

Year

Date

Payments

£

s

d

h/f

1831

December

Weekly Payments

27

3

2

1/2

Casual relief

30

8

8

1/2

Rents

7

8

-

Journeys

8

6

Total £

65

8

5

1832

January

Weekly Payments

15

18

4

Casual relief

17

15

6

Rents

6

11

-

Journeys

-

11

-

Total

40

15

10

1832

February

Weekly Payments

20

-

6

Casual relief

22

1

3

$\frac{1}{2}$

Rents

3

10

-

Journeys

-

11

-

Total £

45

19

8

½

1832

March

Weekly Payments

47

9

-

Casual relief

100

4

3

1/2

Rents

30

9

6

Bills

63

10

3

Journeys

-

12

6

Total £

242

5

6

1/2

The almost five fold increase in ‘casual relief’ strongly supported the view that in this period there had been a sudden and major laying off of casual labour. This problem may have arisen because of the economic and political uncertainty involved with the passing of the great Reform Bill in June 1832. This was not to exclude the influence of more localised factors, but these will have taken place within the context of an agitated national political environment, which will have discouraged a wider business confidence. My Great Grandfather Edmund Smith’s birth on January 21st 1832 took place amidst some very troubled times; when his own father John Smith will have had plenty of incentive to look for work elsewhere.

Total payments in the financial year covering the period from 1/4/1831 until 31/3/1832 was £902 3s 8 1/2d. Of this amount £6 11s 1/2d went “by balance of bastardy;” the rest into various forms of poor relief. The last month accounted for over 25% of the total. As can be seen from the extract below, respectable witnesses had to sign to the fact that the annual totals had been properly worked out: -

“Seen and allowed by us this

6th day of April 1832

James Laycock

Edmund Smith (Possibly an Uncle of my Great Grandfather of the same name?)

Ferdinand Scarborough

Peter Laycock

Richard Gill

John Teal

Samuel Whitaker

Saml. Gott

West Riding

Yorkshire} Passed and allowed by us two of his

Majesty's justices of this place for the said

Riding, the same being verified upon the oath

Of John Smith this 7th April 1832.

M. Coulthurst

A. Marsden"

Obviously, the overseer John Smith was a man who could be entrusted with a major responsibility in running community affairs and whose oath could be relied upon by visiting magistrates and as well as by the wider community. His position of respectability strongly reinforced, the impression that the Smiths were 'a middling sort of people.' They were not wealthy, but they were not poor either.

Over the next financial year, total payments were £895 19s 61/2d, of which £3 1s was spent on 'Bastering.' Verifying these accounts on May 17th 1833 was: -

James Laycock

John Davy

Edmund Smith

John Parkinson (whose signature differed from that of the John Parkinson in 1805)

Joseph Brown

Ferdinand Scarborough (an unusually splendid sounding name)

Richard Gill

William Smith

- The two examining magistrates being Matthew Wilson and H. H. Bramley.

By 1836, administration had, become much more stringent, with the accounts now being examined every quarter rather than once a year. Peter Laycock appeared to find it difficult to do his job. On July 4th 1836 the witnesses to the figures for the first quarter of the financial year, which began on April 1st were: -

James Laycock

John Smith (whose signature was not that of John Smith the overseer)

The mark of Richard Gill

Henry Overton

John Binns

These were the usual number of witnesses one would expect, even though the total payments were £180 3s 7d (of which £3.15 went on the Overseer's salary and £1 3s 3d in 'bastardy.') However, the following quarter was quite a different story. Virtually everyone wanted to sign as a witness, which powerfully suggested that there had been some form of serious dispute about payments. Respectable members in the community of Sutton did not seem to possess much confidence in Peter Laycock's ability to properly discharge his role as overseer. By this period anyway the 1834 Poor Law Act was putting an end to the old traditional system of parish relief and replacing it with the much-feared threat of the workhouse.

“1836

July

Paid-----			
26 18 10	Aug.		
Paid-----			2
8 16 1			
Sept. Paid			
-----			66 7
--	Paid in		
Bastardy-----			3
0 1			

125 2 --

Overseer on Hand

5 3 3h

130 5 3h

seen and allowed by us

this 3 day Oct 1836

for the last 3 months before

Jonas Laycock Church Warden

John Parkinson (whose signature was identical to that of the John Parkinson in 1833)

James Laycock

Richard Gill X

Henry Overton

Joseph [Becanan]

John Whitaker

Edmund Smith

John Smith (A handloom weaver of Sutton whose untidy signature appeared on his wedding certificate at the time of his marriage to Mary Overend on March 30th 1834.)

John Smith (Another handloom weaver of Sutton whose tidy signature appeared as a witness to the above wedding)

Richard Green X

John Woollen X

Ths. Laycock

James Gott

Peter Watson

Joseph Smith

William Watson

Roger Shackleton (was shown to be a 'Slater' by trade in the 1841 Census)

Wm. Watson Junior

Henry Shuttleworth X

Joshua Wilson

James Hargreaves X

Nicolas Smith X

John Binns X

William Whitaker X

Benjamin Lambert X

John Teal X

Michael Emott X

Robert Hutchinson X

Isaac Berry

James Emmott X

George Scarborough

William Thompson X

James Whitaker X

John Smith

William Shuttleworth

John Wilson

Peter Walton

James Snowden X

West Riding

of

Yorkshire } Passed and allowed by us two

of hisMajesty's justices of this

place for the said Riding the same being

duly verified upon the decaration of

Peter Laycock this 4th day of Oct 1804

Matt Wilson

L. Prestow.”

None of the three John Smith's who had signed this document could have been my Great, Great Grandfather. Nor do any of them appear to have been of John Smith Senior who was in failing health and dependent upon the relief provided by the Kildwick Parish Friendly Society. Although reasonably clear - these signatures did not match the very neat hand of John Smith the overseer. In spite of blotches caused by what was a very scratchy fountain pen, it was still clearly apparent that the Smiths enjoyed a high level of literacy for the time. The only mark was for Nicolas Smith who appeared to have been a fairly elderly man. He was gone by the time the 1841 Census took place. One highly unsurprising feature was the signature of John Parkinson who of course had to be in on this business as he was in every other business.