

Chapter Five: Mayhem in Skipton

After discovering the facts mentioned in the previous chapter, the next logical step was to check the identity of the John and Ann Smith who had moved to Skipton. Only then would it be possible to ascertain whether they had characteristics matching those of my Great, Great Grandparents. As Skipton was a large market town with an old Norman Castle at its centre, it was decided to begin with the district nearest the mill bridge, as this was the locality most likely to possess a Corn Mill. Consequently, much of the afternoon of Friday 22nd June 2001 was spent running through reels of microfiche looking at the 1841 and 1851 Census Return for Skipton in Leeds Central Library. Only after examining five districts did the decisive piece of evidence slide into view. The time and trouble had been worthwhile – the characteristics did match - indeed they matched perfectly. After over nine months pursuing the wrong John and Anne Smith, I had at last found the right ones. My own true family roots had been uncovered. The extent to which this had been accomplished was revealed in the following Census information for Skipton-in-Craven: -

1841 Census Return for Greenside, (a yard adjoining the south side of New Market Street, below number 38)

1851 Census Return, (for the twenty third house along the north side of New Market Street)

John Smith aged 36 “Miller”

Samuel Smith aged 24 “Corn Miller” ~ born in Keighley

Ann Smith aged 38

Ann Smith (wife) aged 27 ” ~ born in Skipton

Samuel Smith aged 14

William Smith (son) aged 3 ~ born in Skipton

Susanna Smith aged 12

Daniel Smith (brother) aged 16 “Pupil-Teacher” ~ born in Bingley

Edmund Smith aged 9

Hannah Smith (sister) aged 9 “at home” ~ born in Skipton

Daniel Smith aged 7

John Smith (brother) aged 7 “Scholar” ~ born in Skipton

Ann Smith aged 2

Martha Emmott (sister-in-law) aged 22 ~ born in Skipton

Mary Emmott (niece) aged 9 months

Notes provided by Skipton Reference Library were the source of the bracketed information in the title row - they were not on the original Census Returns. Reference to an 1852 map of Skipton suggested that, when living in one of the five dwellings at Greenside (near the shallow Eller Beck), the Smiths might have inhabited a corner house just behind some outdoor privies. The next house up from there was no 36/38 New Market Street, where a family of Cotton Spinners called the Vines had lived, (possibly along with another family). The smell from the privies in the summer must have been dreadful. The 1851 Census appeared to show a marked decline in living conditions in Greenside because fourteen families were now crowded into one block, whereas a decade previously it had held only five. The occupations followed by members of these households also appeared to be of a lower socio-economic status. A newspaper cutting in Skipton Museum showed that slum conditions had continued until its demolition in 1958 - the wry comment being made that “a more unsuitable name for those squalid houses could hardly have been devised.”

Various Trade Directories showed the only significant Corn Mill being sited at Mill Bridge, near the High Street – about ten minutes brisk walk from Greenside. Known as High Corn Mill, it had been used for corn milling purposes since at least 1310 when tenants of the castle paid had for its use. The actual mill building still stands, (John Smith will have known it) and will be described later in this chapter. During the 1840s a Thomas and then a John King (both listed as Corn Merchants) had first owned it. Whether they were father and son or brothers was not clear.

First hand observation of both photographic and site evidence (during a second visit made to Skipton on a sultry Wednesday, June 27th 2001) confirmed that the move from the crowded conditions at Greenside to the more substantial property at 23 New Market Street represented ‘a step up in the world.’ It was evident that the Smiths had prospered. This dwelling had originally been an armoury in the seventeenth century but the first private owners had already moved in by the 1690s. In 1811 a landlord called John Preston had purchased the property. During the 1850s he or his legal representatives were still renting it out to respectable tradesmen. Notes provided by Skipton Reference Library showed that Samuel Smith lived at No. 23 until 1858. The tenants after him were a Peter and William Smith, (a handyman). Whether they were related to Samuel is unknown.

The 1851 census implied that Edmund’s family was at that time devastated by the loss of both parents John and Ann Smith. When Edmund was still in his teens they appear to have died at a fairly young age, leaving Samuel to shoulder the burden of ‘family head.’ Throughout this period of mourning, and with burial costs to pay there must have been immense financial pressure and Edmund would have had no alternative but to have taken up a trade as soon as he was able. This would account for his absence from Samuel Smith’s crowded household, recorded in the 1851 Census. About three doors down, on the other side of the road, was a Benjamin Smith whom the 1841 Census had recorded as being a “Worsted Manufacturer’s Agent,” living in Crosshills. The 1851 Census revealed the following details about himself and his family.

Benjamin Smith aged 46 “Wool Dealer” ~ born in Sutton

Anne Smith aged 46 (wife) ~ born in Kettlewell

Catherine Smith aged 12 (daughter) ~ born in Glasburn

Sarah Anne Smith aged 11 (daughter) ~ born in Glasburn

Emma Robinson aged 25 (sister-in-law) “Commercial Traveller’s wife” ~ born in Cambridge, Ely

Elizabeth Smith aged 39 (unmarried sister) ~ born in Sutton

Records from the Kildwick Parish Friendly Society suggested that his move to Skipton had occurred in 1844. It seemed apparent that Benjamin was a family relation of Edmund, that he was in the wool trade and that he employed at least one Commercial Traveller – the same occupation Edmund was to follow. When taken in combination with his near next-door location such facts lend substance to the view that Benjamin Smith was Edmund’s first employer and perhaps gave him his first major opportunity in life. Edmund’s involvement in the textile trade perhaps began in about 1845 and was to remain in the family until my father’s own retirement in 1976. (Not a bad ‘innings’ – given the extreme volatility of the textile industry.) Possibly Benjamin Smith’s move to Skipton had been prompted by a desire to help Edmund’s family at a time of crisis. At first this was thought to be the death of Ann whilst giving birth to John in 1843, however John’s birth certificate implied that she had survived this particular ordeal.

Despite its market town appearance Skipton could not avoid the disrupting process of industrialisation. Like other settlements associated with my forbears, Appendix Five showed a dramatic increase in population, over the period of 1801 until 1851. With the aid of information provided by both Skipton Museum and the Museum of Science and Technology at Manchester a simple chronological outline will show the main developments of Skipton's partial industrialisation:

1785: High Mill becomes the first major Cotton Mill in Skipton

1822: The Baines Trade Directory lists five Cotton Manufacturers including:

- William Beesley, Spencer Street
- Isaac Dewhirst, New Market Street
- William Sidgwick, Mill Place
- John Tillotson, Belmont
- Storey Walkinson, New Market Street

1829: Power looms are introduced to Skipton by the firm of Dewhirst

1831: Dewhirst's first mill is rebuilt following a fire. It changes from worsted to cotton manufacturing

1835: Baines ' History of Cotton Manufacture ' records the presence of six mills in Skipton, employing a total of 605 people.

1840: Sidgwicks begin to operate Low Mill in order to weave 'and weft' more cloth

1842: A serious economic downturn provokes mill owners in Manchester to cut the wages of their operatives. This provokes strike action and disturbances, which spread to other areas of Lancashire and then onwards to Skipton. In that year the Chartist Movement is at the peak of its activity, campaigning for the implementation of the following Six Points of "The Peoples Charter:

1. A VOTE for every man twenty-one years of age, of sound mind, and not undergoing punishment for crime.
2. THE BALLOT- To protect the elector in the exercise of his vote.
3. NO PROPERTY QUALIFICATION for Members of Parliament – thus enabling the constituencies to return the man of their choice, be he rich or poor.

4. PAYMENT OF MEMBERS, thus enabling an honest tradesman, working man, or other person, to serve a constituency when taken from his business to attend the interests of the country.
5. EQUAL CONSTITUENCIES, securing the same amount of representation for the same number of electors, instead of allowing small constituencies to swamp the votes of large ones.
6. ANNUAL PARLIAMENTS, thus presenting the most effectual check to bribery and intimidation, since though a constituency might be bought once in seven years (even with the ballot), no purse could buy a constituency (under a system of universal suffrage) in each ensuing twelvemonth; and since members, when elected for a year only, would not be able to defy and betray their constituencies as they do now.”

The Chartist Movement originated from a sense of disillusion with the perceived inadequacies of the 1832 Parliamentary Reform Act whose failure to enfranchise the working classes was deeply resented – as was the much hated Poor Law Act of 1834. Its formal foundation can be dated to January 1837 when the People’s Charter was drawn up – although in reality this charter only drew upon radical political ideas, which had been present since the 1790s. During ‘bad’ years like 1839, 1842 and 1848 the Chartist Movement would tend to draw mass support from those whose grievances were of a more decidedly economic nature – thus disturbances were often labelled Chartist even their cause was more overtly economic than political in nature. (Israel Roberts on pp.13-14 of his highly moving autobiography attributed the Plug Riots, which also affected Leeds, to Chartist agitation.) Over the course of the next several decades the first five demands of the Chartist Movement were eventually met, whilst Chartist leaders themselves quietly abandoned the sixth demand for reasons of practicality. In the short term however, the movement was a failure, being beset by scandal and leadership infighting. With improved trading conditions in the 1850s, support for the Chartist cause ebbed and by 1855 the movement had effectively ceased to exist.

Nevertheless, the agitation sometimes associated with the Chartist Movement did produce its casualties. During my last major archive visit to Colne on Thursday July 26th 2001 I came across the following highly moving inscription inside the municipal cemetery.

“HERE

Lieth all that is mortal, of

Martha, wife of John Halsted,

Of Colne, who departed this

Life the 18th day of December,

1829 Age 60 years.

Also of JOSEPH their Son, who was

Barbarously murdered in the 44th year
Of his age while engaged in his duty as

A special constable, during the Riot,

Which took place in the Town, on the

Evening of the 10th August 1840, leaving
Four orphan children to lament
Their loss

Also the above JOHN

HALSTED who died April 5th 1848.”

Like most tomb inscriptions, the words were in block lettering. However, those I have d had been placed in Italics as if the designer of this inscription wanted to make a point for future generations to ponder upon. After recording this inscription I was left wondering about the fates of the four orphans who were left behind.

On Friday, 11th July 2003 I received the death following death certificate from the Burnley Registrar Office; it threw light on the violent way in which Joseph Halstead died.

Registration District Colne

1840 Death in the sub-district of Colne in the Lancaster

1

2

3

3

4

5

6

7

8

When and where died

Name and Surname

Sex

Age

Occupation

Cause of death

Signature, description, and residence of Informant

When registered

Signature of Registrar

1840

August Tenth Colne

Joseph Halstead

Male

Forty Three

Years

Cotton Spinner and Cotton Manufacturer

A blow from an iron rail wilful murder

R. Hargreaves Coroner Blackburn

Fourteenth August 1840

John Conyers

With incidents like these it's easy how the Chartists discredited what in many ways was a just cause. The above information helped to confirm the presence of a highly violent element within early Victorian society. About two years after the murder of Joseph Halsted my Great, Great Grandparents would be caught up in this violence.

What neither Census Returns, nor the statistical information tabulated in Appendix Five could convey was a feeling what daily life was like in Skipton. What were the sights and sound's to be seen and heard there? (From a review of occupations it could be readily deduced that the wealthier and more respectable families lived in those houses facing the main street, whilst the poorer families would be crowded into the tumbledown backyards of places such as Greenside. Therefore, to move from a yard cottage to a main street house was a sign of rising prosperity.) Fortuitously, making up for this lack was a print of about 1840 made by the local born artist Richard Waller (1811-82), and entitled "A view of Skipton-in-Craven." (Earlier prints of 1830 showed sheep being driven up the High Street in the general direction of Holy Trinity Church.) Copies of the print were found in Rowley (1969) and Hatfield (1991) – the latter source giving a very helpful commentary of the specific names and occupations of the people in the print.

This, along with a picture of High Corn Mill in Walter (1991) p.44 provided a basis for the following historical reconstruction: -

As my Great, Great Grandfather John Smith hurried his way up the heavily rutted High Street to his place of work at the Corn Mill he passed by a mixed assortment of buildings. Some were a grand three stories high, whilst others, of a meaner cottage-like appearance, could muster only two. At the very end of the street was a tollbooth with a 'birdcage' belfry to the left of which and breaking into the horizon was the imposing medieval tower of Holy Trinity Church.

In the foreground John Smith observed a party of half a dozen men working round a covered wagon in the heavily rutted road. They were busy loading up wooden crates. A plump man in a country smock received a tankard of ale from a small boy in a peaked cap. The men had long sideboards and were stripped down to their shirtsleeves. None of them appeared to be suffering from any form of hunger. Standing patiently beside the cart and looking away from one another were two horses – one dark and one white. Further behind the wagon were two carts at right angles to one another. Around these were five other labourers - this time wearing smocks and country caps. It was clear that the commerce of Skipton was heavily dependent upon a rural clientele.

Going on and further to his left John walked by a dark coloured horse tethered to a pavement post. High up and poised steadily on a ladder repairing brickwork to his shop was Sammy Lister, with a man below him on the ground his back turned to John, holding the ladder steady. Further down from another two men in cloth caps and waistcoats was the stout red-faced Cobbler and ex Chartist Jack Hudson. A workman near him was kneeling down evidently trying to pick something up. Still on the left side of the street was a taller building belonging to the stonemason Joshua Crossley. On the adjoining Sheepscar Street side of the building was the beer house, known locally as Hell's Kitchen. Further down the left side of the street John could glimpse steam rising from the flagstone pavement and he guessed that the Cooper, Tubber Scott was at work. His habit of actually working out on the street had caused such public complaints, which had eventually led to court action in 1831. Nevertheless, with true Yorkshire stubbornness Tubber had carried on regardless and as a consequence was not a well-liked man. He gave no thought to the needs of others. Still further up was the saddler's shop run by Frank Wade. Dividing the High Street into two was the tollbooth, with stairs leading up to the courthouse where inquests were held. Sharing the ground floor of the tollbooth were the premises of John Cork the barber and George Hird the umbrella mender. Cells were located in the basement of the building, conveniently near to the Fountain Inn. Hardly surprisingly, the cells were the next port of call for some of its clientele. Near the top of the left side of the street were the premises of another saddler, (named Richard Proctor) and the well-known ironmongers Manby's, which first began to trade in 1817.

The first building on the right hand side of the High Street belonged to a shoemaker, a cousin of Edwin Calvert, now buried immediately outside Christ Church. Standing in front of the doorway and ringing a bell was the parish beadle Andrew Parker. His blue robes

and old-fashioned tri-corn hat added to the dignity of this upright silver haired figure. It was easy to imagine him ringing the bell very loudly in order to attract attention to an important notice. He looked the sort of man who would have been very proud of his office. A little further down, wearing a white apron and cap and standing outside the doorway was Jinny Wharton, wife of the landlord of the Wheatsheaf Inn. The next two shops belonged to John Briggs the clockmaker and Mary Buck a linen draper. Waiting outside the drapers was the open carriage and horse of Miss Curren of Eston Hall. Her servant stood alongside the brown horse, waiting for his mistress to finish her shopping. He probably longed for a tippie at the Hole in the Wall Inn, near the drapers. A two-storey building of a particular hue belonged to William Young, the draper and silk merchant. His immediate neighbour was the hatter's shop belonging to Hannah Thompson and next door but one was the imposing financial building of the Craven Bank, facing the Market Cross. Continuing in an unbroken line were other shops including John Hurtle the chandlers and the wine and spirits shop of Birtwhistle and Mitchell.

Just before reaching Holy Trinity, John Smith turned left and walked down toward the Springs Canal. This waterway would often be crowded with barges and other forms of canal transport. He would have seen the three storey tall High Corn Mill standing to the left of the canal, separated from it only by a narrow dirt path. A wooden, hut like structure jutted out from the top of the wall, above the canal side path. This allowed for the lifting of goods directly to and from the waiting barges. Running near this grey and impressive building was a fast flowing stream, which powered the large slowly spinning waterwheel, itself reaching as high as the second storey. Finally, John entered the building at the entrance by the canal side in order to begin yet another hard days work.

My own second visit made to Skipton on Wednesday June 27th 2001, showed that the mill building was still in active use for commercial purposes. It looked very impressive, and although in a decayed condition, the waterwheel was still in place. Who knows, John may, at times have been on hand to repair it whenever the need arose? However, the present water wheel is the second and smaller of the two known to have been run by this mill. Exactly when the first went out of use and was replaced by the smaller one is not known. My wife and I took photographs were taken of this site during a third visit to Skipton made on Saturday, July 14th 2001.

When the Smiths were first settling down at Skipton during the early 1840s, many textile weavers such as the two John Smiths of Sutton were, at this time, being faced with starvation. Wood p.36 showed that during 1820 a handloom weaver could earn 6/- for a 30-yard piece of cloth, representing a week's work. In 1840 the figure was down to the starvation rate of 2/-. Nor could the manufacturers afford to pay any more as they were only making 1d for every piece of cloth sold. Even if a weaver had worked a flat out 90-hour week he would at the most have earned only 3/- half of which will have gone on the rent for a cheap back-to-back house, with very little left over for basic necessities. Larger families were often faced with the choice of starvation or the dreaded workhouse at Keighley.

According to Israel Roberts p.20, wheat bread and bacon in this period were rarely indulged in luxuries whilst the diet of the poor consisted of oat meal in porridge, cake with potatoes and corn bread, which was often hard as stone! Gin and water were often forced to drink out of black earthenware pots because glasses were too expensive to buy. Moreover, the quality of food was often very poor. Roberts p.22 mentioned his mother recalling the time when flour was of so poor quality that when baked it would run thin and drain down the outside facing. This was in spite of the fact that it cost sixpence per pound weight. The adulteration of flour with dust and other, sometimes dangerous, additives was a very common practice – it was one that The High Corn Mill at Skipton may well have followed.

In view of these near starvation conditions it was hardly surprising that serious disturbances broke out. In Leeds the Riot Act was readout and the Mounted Hussars under the command of Prince George the Duke of Cambridge dispersed a hostile crowd. (Earlier on this crowd had been extorting up to several pounds from mill owners by threatening to let off the water from the steam boilers.) According to Roberts, p.14 one agitator in Yeadon, near Leeds boasted, “We shall have levelling some day and when we have I shall have Esholt Hall.” Individual acts of sabotage also occurred. One instance of this occurred in Sutton where one manufacturer called John Preston would later receive compensation of £72-17-0 for the expenses of power loom breaking. By August 1842, Britain was teetering on the brink of all out class war.

In angry reaction to their distress, weavers (some of who had been wondering up and down the region looking for work) produced the following rhyme: -

“What do we want? Our daily bread,

Fair reward for labour done,

All our wants are merged into one.

When the fierce fiend hunger grips us,

Evil fancies clog our brains

Vengeance settles on our hearts

And frenzy gallops through our veins’!

Possibly this or a similar rhyme was chanted by a 3,000 strong mob as they left Colne in Lancashire for Skipton in order to bring the Dewhirst and Sidgwick Textile Factories to a standstill. It must have been a frightening or perhaps exhilarating spectacle for a ten-year-old boy, seeing them in Skipton on a sweltering hot summers day armed with wooden clubs and threatening insurrection. In Edmund’s own heart the sight of these desperate men would have reinforced his conviction that poverty was a curse to be escaped from by whatever means possible. He would have seen for himself how hunger could make animals of even the mildest people. August 16th 1842 was perhaps a day he would remember for the rest of his life.

Meanwhile, Edmunds father John would most likely be helping to guard the High Corn Mill against any risk of looting. Edmund himself would spend at least part of the day at home with his mother Ann who would be in great fear for the safety of her husband. She would also be terrified of receiving unwanted attentions from any intruders. Chartist mobs were known to break into people's houses and steal things.

When combined with modern sociological analysis of crowd behaviour, local historians such as Rowley (1983) make it possible to reconstruct the precise events surrounding this riotous episode in the lives of my ancestors. The first thing to state was that this crowd was not just a spontaneous mob, but rather a well planned protest march – one designed to intimidate and bring to public attention the grievances of those suffering severe hardship after the trade depression of 1842. It was also used as an occasion to extort money and demand much needed food and provisions. A white band tied around the upper arm would distinguish the main leaders from their followers. Their chief spokesman was a William Smith who seemed able to display that 'gift of the gab' common to so many Smiths. Awaiting him in Skipton were the magistrates Matthew Wilson Senior, Matthew Wilson Junior (later Sir Matthew), Cooper Preston, James Braithwaite Garforth, Hastings Ingham and Thomas Birbeck. Forewarned of trouble they had 'sworn in' a large number of special constables in order to assist old Thomas Laycock, the Parish Constable for Skipton.

Like all mobs there was a precipitating factor, and in this case it had been a visit paid to Colne by the distressed textile operatives of Burnley. They in turn may well have been stirred by the example of the operatives in Manchester who had decided to go on strike in protest at a cut in their wages. Once in Colne, they had persuaded their equally distressed compatriots to march on to Skipton with a view to bringing the mills to a standstill. They would achieve this by pulling out the water plugs of the wagon-boilers - needed to power the factory machinery. (Hence these disturbances later became known as the 'Plug Drawing' or 'Plug Riots.')

Once this objective had been accomplished then the hope was to win over the Skipton workers, take nearby Addingham and raise the whole region in revolt. Skipton was a highly strategic location – one able to provide a very useful route from Lancashire into Yorkshire. As the local magistrates knew only too well, its loss to the rioters would cause very severe problems for the governing authorities. They were therefore determined to try and contain the disturbances at Skipton. Much would depend upon the feelings of the local population. If they strongly sympathised with the protest marchers then the town would be lost. However, one factor operating in the magistrates' favour was that Skipton was a very conservative market town with many respectable trades – people. This would deeply resent any disruption created by an outside incursion – especially by a threatening mob that had come over from Lancashire of all places!

Once in Colne, the next stage of convergence would begin with people assembling to march forward to Skipton. Contemporary accounts describe it as a terrifying sight, with men marching four abreast, each holding a club in order to intimidate and bring security against attack. Behind the men came the women and children. As the march continued along the Broughton Road, sympathisers (or those looking for trouble) would join it. On their way to Skipton acts of intimidation took place. At Barnoldswick and Easby they took the shuttles from the handloom weavers, who were almost as poor as they were, and so immobilised their looms. This act could hardly have won them much sympathy. At Aireville Grange they demanded milk from a mother

with a five-year old boy. One party visited Gargrave and stopped the mills there before rejoining the main party. Such acts probably alienated would-be supporters who saw their own livelihoods being endangered. Meanwhile, there was much fear inside Skipton, Such a reaction was understandable, given the fact that as a market town with just under 5,000 inhabitants it was now being faced by an invasion from a hungry and potentially violent 3000 strong mob. Businesses ceased trading, shops were shut, doors securely fastened and the windows of the wealthier people were shuttered up. Such acts hardly testified to a strong sense of local sympathy for the protestors. Trouble was expected. Yet it was at Skipton that this threat would have to be contained. The scene was then set for the next phase of crowd behaviour – confrontation!

In order to ascertain the mob's intentions the two magistrates Ingham and Birbeck parlayed with William Smith who openly declared that their intention was to stop the mills and 'turn out' the operatives. (The fact that they had to be 'turned out' demonstrated a lack of local support – even from those who would have been expected to have sympathised with the protestors' aims.) Ingham stressed that the people of Skipton were much alarmed and he asked the Lancastrians not to resort to violence or enter any shops or houses. Smith's response was to assure the magistrates that no intention existed to injure life or property. It seemed as if both parties wanted to reduce the risk of violence. Whilst the mob marched into the town Ingham rode furiously to Colne in order to call out the military garrison based there. (Why had it not been rallied earlier to halt the trouble there?) In his absence, 300-400 rioters visited first Dewhirst's Mill, and then Sidgwick's newly opened Low Mill, before moving on to Sidgwick's High Mill. At each place they stopped production by drawing water from the machines. In response the magistrates appointed respectable persons including William Paget (Clerk to the Solicitor Thomas Brown) to be present at certain sites, in order to act as witnesses. At High Mill the mob was at first driven back but then returned to 'pull out the plug' and turn out the workers. Following this success the crowd demanded money and warned that further mischief would take place if the mill re-opened without the 'plug-drawers' consent. Smith ordered the mill to be kept idle until delegates at Manchester had determined the rate of wages. Christopher Sidgwick (who had actually retired in 1833) promised to pay a sovereign as a token of submission, and then asked who was their leader and William Smith stepped forward. In what appeared to be an attempt to defuse a tense situation Smith ordered the crowd to disperse and within the next fifteen minutes this is what they did. Christopher Sidgwick then paid his sovereign to William in order to bribe the crowd to move away. Both parties appeared anxious to maintain some control of the situation.

With the leaders away on the outskirts of Skipton attempting to immobilise the outlying mills, discipline among the rest of the protestors in the centre of Skipton began to break down. Crowds took to wandering around the town, breaking into shops and houses, stealing property, seizing food and demanding money. In some cases householders had food already provided in advance – knowing full well that this would be one of the most common demands. Whether John and Anne Smith were ever subjected to the mobs' attentions remains a matter of speculation. However, nothing in family tradition indicated that they were - perhaps Greenside was too poor a locality to be worth their while. There were richer pickings to be had on the High Street. Such scenes of disorder meant that most of the pre-conditions for a major riot had fallen into place. The final pre-condition galloped in with the 11th Hussars, accompanied by the 61st Regiment of Foot. It had taken them three hours marching in sweltering heat to arrive from

Colne. A Captain Jones was their commander.

Backed by military authority the magistrates now felt they could begin to take firmer measures. (They must also by this stage have been fairly sure of local support.) Matthew Wilson read (possibly twice) a copy of the 1716 Riot Act from the Town Hall steps but was ignored. Hastings Ingham, (who appeared to display great presence of mind throughout the day) rode around the town reading the very same Riot Act but he too was ignored. He will have shouted out the following words: -“Our Sovereign Lady the Queen chargeth and commandeth all persons being assembled immediately to disperse themselves, and peaceably to depart to their habitations and to their lawful business, upon pains contained in an Act made in the first year of King George for preventing tumultuous and riotous assemblies. God Save the Queen,” (Quoted in Rowley p.68)

A ruse was then resorted to; the well-respected, elderly timber merchant John Settle offered the rioters one of his fields with the added provision of beer and refreshments. In the exposed location of Anna Fields the crowd could be more easily be dispersed and a nasty street battle in Skipton would be avoided. Somewhat naively the crowd complied, only to find themselves followed by the magistrates who kept on reading the Riot Act. One of magistrates, Cooper Preston of Flasby Hall seems to have panicked and repeatedly called upon the troops to fire onto the protestors. He met with a firm rebuke from Captain Jones who reminded his somewhat fearful men that he was their commander and that they must obey him alone. After regaining control this military man then ordered his troops to fix bayonets and charge the still restless mob that had assembled in Anna Fields. In response one of the mob leaders William Spencer shouted at the mob to remain firm and stand still. However, this was not to be and as the mob fled up the nearby lane, he along with John Spencer and James Dakin, led the rioters in stone throwing. During the melee, one of the magistrates James Braithwaite Garfoth JP was cut off from the troops. Apparently in an attempt to signal his presence he waved his stick in the air. This was interpreted as an aggressive gesture and in response one of the rioters struck him full in the face with a club, smashing his spectacles, blinding one eye and knocking out several teeth. After some more stone throwing the mob dispersed. They left behind one dead soldier.

Six leaders were arrested and conveyed to the Devonshire Hotel where, after a preliminary examination by the magistrates, they spent an uncomfortable night under guard. (This was the Hotel on the south side of New Market Street, about five minutes walk away from John and Anne Smith's home.) Next day they were conveyed by coach to York Summer Assize Court, under the supervision of Hastings Ingham and Captain Jones. At their trial it was already apparent that the judge had already made up his mind what the verdict should be. Sentenced on September 5th 1842, the names of the six arrested leaders were: -

William Smith, aged 46 – received 12 months imprisonment with hard labour.

William Spencer, aged 47 – received 6 months imprisonment with hard labour.

John Spencer, aged 50 – received 6 months imprisonment with hard labour.

John Harland, aged 38 – was discharged for lack of evidence.

Edward Hey, aged 32 – was discharged for lack of evidence.

James Dakin, aged 27 – received 6 months imprisonment with hard labour.

William Spencer's plea for leniency on the grounds that he had a wife and eight children to provide for went unheeded as did the argument of William Smith's Defence Council that he had led a starving mob in a very creditable manner. The mayhem in Skipton had ended with the clanging of prison cell doors.

Beyond causing some temporary disruption, the protestors had failed to achieve what had possibly been over-ambitious goals. This failure could be attributed mainly to poor discipline, and to the presence of mind displayed by some of their opponents such as Hastings Ingham. However, perhaps the chief cause was the unwillingness of most of Skipton's population to join them. Far from conveying the impression of being a victimised people with a just cause, the behaviour of the demonstrators simply confirmed the prejudice that they were outside troublemakers – whose behaviour was a threat to decent law-abiding citizens. The fact that they had come into Yorkshire from Lancashire only discredited their cause still further. (A rivalry had existed between the two counties from time immemorial.) In the end, what was at the time known as 'the turn out riots' failed because no attempt had been made to win over the people of Skipton. All the magistrates did was to exploit this omission. Even so it had been a very nasty business and was to live on in the local memory.

Precisely how my ancestors reacted to the 'Plug Riots' remains lost in history. Undeniably, it would have been a major source of discussion and it seems likely that as a boy of ten Edmund would retain deep impressions of these highly dramatic events for the rest of his life. The fact that he and other members of his family took the 'High Road' to mid-Victorian respectability suggested a marked lack of sympathy with both the actions and underlying attitudes of the rioters. Also the fact that John and Ann Smith moved away from Cullingworth Chapel at precisely the time its Sabbath School had been taken over by Chartists denoted a lack of commitment to radical political causes. John Smith did not stay behind and lead the workers of Cullingworth in action against their employers. In general, the Smiths of this period appeared to have been more concerned with the making of money than with 'putting the world to rights.' They saw that the road to social as well as individual betterment lay through hard work and good business sense rather than through political agitation. Perhaps in the long term, events have proven them right.

Providing firm evidence of my Great, Great Grandparents presence at Skipton during this disturbed period were the following details concerning the births of children Hannah and John:

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

When and where born

Name, if any

Sex

Name and surname of father

Name, surname and maiden name of mother

Occupation of father

Signature, description and residence of Informant

When registered

Signature

of

Registrar

October Third 1841 Skipton

Hannah

Female

John Smith

Ann Smith, formerly Wilson

Miller

John Smith, Father, Skipton

October Twentieth 1841

E. Tindal

July Twenty Seventh 1843 Skipton

John

Male

John Smith

Ann Smith, formerly Wilson

Miller

John Smith, Father, Skipton

August Twenty Third

1843

E. Tindal

Some time between June 1836 and October 1841, my Great, Great Grandfather had learnt to sign his name. This showed a determination to overcome his earlier problem of illiteracy. Unfortunately, copies of his signature were not available from the local register office at Harrogate. This same office was also unable to find details of the marriage of Samuel Smith, even though a number of Parish Registers were looked at including those of Kildwick.

A far more persistent threat to the health of Skipton's population was the one posed by filthy living conditions. These were worsened by a five-fold increase in the number of inhabitants from 2,305 in 1801 to 11,986 in 1901 and by the unwillingness of the Castle Estate to sell off land for building purposes until the 1850s. (This resulted in very serious overcrowding.) A Public Health Act Report of March 26th 1857, cited in Warren (1999) pp.3-5, revealed that after taking into account the 137 infant deaths in this period, the average life expectancy for the good economic years of 1852-1856 was a meagre 35.7 years. Unfiltered drinking water was conveyed in wooden pipes from two reservoirs on the border of Rombalds Moor, and the 22 water closets in the town leaked excrement through their walls and out onto the road or into the local beck. Many families shared the same privies or were thankful to have Holy Trinity churchyard to relieve their natural wants! About 20% of the houses were 'back to back' and consequently suffered from extremely

poor ventilation. One family of ten, with children aged in the 5-21 year range, lived in only one room unfit for human habitation. Another of nine lived in similar circumstances (in this case the children were in the 1-18 age range). The only surprising feature was that there had been so little typhus. One recent sign of progress had been the introduction of gas lighting supplied by a private company. In response to this 1857 report a Local Board of Health was established in 1858 in Skipton. Sadly, its arrival came too late for John and Ann Smith who had already died. Attempts to find their names in any Skipton Graveyard Register or in the Sutton Chapel Burial Book proved unavailing. However, following much detective work their death certificates were eventually traced and received on Friday, 21st September 1841. These documents revealed that tragedy had marred Edmund's life at an early stage. At the age of twelve he had been left an orphan.

Registration District Skipton

1843 Death in the sub-district of Skipton in the County of York

1

2

3

3

4

5

6

7

8

When and where died

Name and Surname

Sex

Age

Occupation

Cause of death

Signature, description, and residence of Informant

When registered

Signature of Registrar

November 14th 1843

John Smith

Skipton

Male

38

Years

Corn Miller

Accidentally Killed

Thomas Brown of Skipton Coroner for Yorkshire

November 18th 1843

E. Tindal

Registrar

Significantly, family tradition mentioned ‘a terrible accident’ through which ‘a relative’ of Edmund was reputed to have lost an arm through falling into some of its machinery. It also added that the family moved to Leeds ‘sometime after the accident.’ This oral tradition had apparently originated from Edmund before being relayed to my Grandfather who in turn had relayed it to two of his children who then passed it on to a certain cousin of mine. It appears likely that it contained is a garbled version of John Smith’s death. As a trained Millwright he would have dealt with machinery and accidents in mills were an all too frequent occurrence.

An e-mail received on Saturday, 29th June 2002 from the newly established Mill Archive, threw some light upon the possible cause of John Smith’s death.

“It is all too easy to become too familiar with the machinery and to forget the incredible momentum the gears and shafts possess. If you get caught there is no chance of the mill stopping quickly (assuming there is someone to help). This was in the days long before safety screens were installed. In the professional journal ‘The Miller,’ even in the 1890’s, the deaths of a number of people each year were reported.”

Clearly, my Great, Great Grandfather’s death had been a terrible one. It would have left his family in a profound state of shock. In addition, it will have made striking impression upon Edmund who, at the time of his father’s death, was at a very formative age. He would still have been only eleven years old.

Unfortunately, around the time of John Smith’s death Skipton had no newspaper, and any contacts made with various archive offices only confirmed that the Coroner’s report would have long since been destroyed. (This will have been due to the fact that the report belonged to the Coroner rather than to any governing authority.) All that could in 1847.) Consequently, the exact cause or location of my Great, Great Grandfather’s death remains unknown. However, John’s death did seem to precipitate the rapid decline of his wife Ann Smith as validated by evidence

provided in her Death Certificate.

Registration District Skipton

1844 Death in the sub-district of Skipton in the County of York

1

2

3

3

4

5

6

7

8

When and where died

Name and Surname

Sex

Age

Occupation

Cause of death

Signature, description, and residence of Informant

When registered

Signature of Registrar

October 7th 1844

Ann Smith

Skipton

Female

41

Years

Widow of John Smith Miller

Consumption

Wm. Smith present at the Death, Skipton

October 9th 1844

E. Tindal

Registrar

The William Smith who had acted as informant may well have been Ann's father-in-law. If this were so, then his presence showed that members of John Smith's family had been rallying around his orphaned children – possibly in an attempt to save them from the workhouse. John's eldest son Samuel will have shouldered a particularly heavy burden through becoming the new head of the family whilst still in his teenage years. The fact that he and his brothers came to hold respectable positions in Victorian society showed that the Smiths were not destroyed by this double bereavement. They avoided sinking into either destitution or alcohol abuse. The fact that Samuel and his brothers survived what appears to have been the worst crisis recorded in this family history showed that their lives (and those of the relatives who came to them) were based upon sound moral values – standing them in good stead throughout these most difficult years. One final interesting possibility is that it was actually this John Smith, Edmund's own father who was the relation who had lost an arm in a machine accident – and had died as a consequence. The timing was right and family tradition could have become garbled in the transmission. However, this point could not be proven. What the tradition did state was that the accident had been a terrible one and that sometime after it the family moved to Leeds.

The precise burial place of my Great, Great Grandparents has remained unknown. A previous review of the Burial book for Sutton Baptist Chapel has eliminated that location; whilst information provided by the Northallerton Archive Centre confirmed that they were not interred at Holy Trinity, Skipton or at Kildwick, Saint Andrews. This only left the nearby Congregational Church, which had been opened in 1839. (The large Raikes Road Cemetery was not opened until 1846.) The fact that this Chapel had links with the British School attended by Daniel increased the likelihood that it was here that John and Ann Smith had been buried. Moreover, it would only have taken several minutes to carry their coffins from their home at Greenside just off Market Street. Unfortunately, their names were not in the Monument Lists held by Skipton Library. This would suggest that they were either too poor to have afforded a headstone – or as was very possible, the headstone itself had worn away when the remaining inscriptions had been listed a century and a half later. In the end, repeated attempts to locate their burial site proved abortive. Complicating this research was the fact that the burial book for this chapel proved impossible to trace. However, following the above process of elimination the Congregational Cemetery seems to have been their most likely resting place.

Throughout this traumatic period Edmund would have lived in a household mourning the loss of the main breadwinner and housekeeper. From the early age of eleven, he will have been familiar with the presence of death. This perhaps explained why he would later acquire such a dour nature and the reputation for being 'a martinet.' The atmosphere at that time would have been thick with gloom and worry about the future. Following his parents' demise Edmund's most immediate priority will have been to look for work and help rescue the family from penury. Any education he may have enjoyed would have been cut short and this could well have created a feeling that he had

missed out on life. In the longer term and largely because of this tragedy, my Great Grandfather may have been given the motivation and dogged determination to begin his long climb up to social respectability. He would have known all too well that he lived in a world, which showed only little compassion to widows and orphans. He may also have actively looked for a job, which did not place him near any machinery.

One fascinating detail in the 1851 Census Return was Daniel Smith's connection with education as a "Pupil-Teacher." One hundred and fifty years further on, this link with the teaching profession is still very much alive in the Smith family. (Since October 1990, I have taught a wide range of subjects to mainly adult students on a private basis. These subjects have included Economics, History, Politics, Psychology, Sociology, Theology, and Business Studies. It appears that my role in the family saga has been to combine the business side - as represented by Edmund - with the education side - as represented by Daniel. All the while unaware, I have spent much of my life building upon the heritage first laid down by these two men.)

According to Warren (1999) p. 15-17 the Pupil-Teacher system was established by Sir James Kay Shuttleworth, the Secretary of the Committee of the Council of Education, formed in 1839. It was this august body, which was to begin the School Inspection System in 1846. Part of the system's mode of operation allowed for the payment of government grants dependent upon the meeting of certain criteria set forth by the School Inspectors. The Pupil-Teacher system represented a major reform, in the sense that cheap and untrained monitors were replaced by fully apprenticed Pupil-Teachers, (minimum age 13). (One Monitor, Frederick Manby, left the British School at Skipton in 1849 because he lacked the capacity to accomplish his tasks.) Pupil-Teachers were eligible to sit for qualifying examinations called Queen's Scholarships held at a Training College - and all paid out of government expense. Two key concepts underpinned this measure; firstly that this apprenticeship system could, using the Pupil-Teacher model, be successfully introduced into the area of education - and secondly, that this represented the best method of teaching classes of up to 60 pupils. At the same time the Master taught varying age ranges and different subjects at set times of the day, the Pupil-Teacher would instruct smaller groups in the very same hall. Superficially, this was a very bad way to teach, as the Master's voice would have been in the background, but it was the method used at the time. The three main occupations of oral instruction, reading aloud and silent occupation largely dominated the lessons; rote learning still prevailed although there was beginning to be some attempt to break with the idea that the Master was merely a 'Drill Sergeant' of young children. Scripture study and learning a Church Catechism by heart ranked in importance alongside the three Rs of reading, writing, and arithmetic; indeed, it could be argued that Religion could be included as a fourth 'R' because the Victorians valued it so highly. By today's standards the education children received throughout this period was terribly narrow, but nevertheless it did help instil moral values and lead to an improvement of memorising skills. In a period of scarce educational resources boys were given greater priority over girls, who were sometimes placed in the charge of lowly, untrained female assistants. Unless they were inebriates, the Schoolmasters themselves were often to be feared, with the swish of a cane a frequently heard sound in many a Victorian School. However, some Schoolmasters could also become well respected and almost revered by their class pupils. A faded old Victorian photograph of the British School at Skipton Museum showed the Master Samuel Farey to have been a plump grey haired man, with 'large

mutton chop' styled side whiskers (fashionable in the 1840s) and a ferocious, scowling expression. He was a figure to be respected rather than liked. The nonconformist links of Daniel and my Great Grandfather Edmund suggested they would have attended this British School rather than the Anglican based Parish School. Constructed in 1844, the British School had adjoined the Zion Independent Congregational Chapel, which itself was a large imposing building of Neo-Gothic design sited on Market Street. Built in 1839 it had a bell tower shaped rather like a birdcage, which protruded upward from the centre of its long slanted roof. Perched on top stood a cockerel weather vane. In contrast to this towering building, direct observation made with my wife on Saturday July 15th 2001, showed that the British School was a much lower and long barn-like building which seemed to cast a perpetual shadow over the small school yard and its two outside privies. (The school building has now been converted for private business use.) The 1852 map for Skipton confirmed that the schools location was on the South side of Otley Street, adjacent to what is now Saint Andrew's Church (built in 1914) and just behind the graveyard on the north side of New Market Street. (In 1851 it would have been adjacent to the Congregational Church built in 1839.) Daniel and his elder brother Edmund could easily have walked to this school within several minutes. Perhaps both lads knew what it was like to have been caned by 'old mutton chops.' His photograph had revealed a rather formidable figure – one likely to inspire terror in small boys.

Part 2 of the 1848 Slater's Trade Directory showed Samuel Farey to have been Master of the British School, with Ann Robinson as Mistress - both residing in New Market Street. A thesis by J. Foster (1974) held by the Brotherton Library of Leeds University, revealed some interesting details about this man. According to Chapter Six, Section, (a) Samuel Farey had been in charge from its foundation in 1844 (the School had been established under the patronage of the wealthy mill owner John Dewhirst who had opened the New School Room at a personal cost of £350) until 1866. He was the first teacher in Skipton to have obtained a Government Certificate, which he had gained at an examination held in Manchester during the spring of 1849. An Annual Report of 1850 had praised him for his industry, devotion to work, intelligence and spirit in creating a useful, improving school. He seemed to have been a positive role model for anyone wishing to enter the teaching profession. His annual salary had been £60.00 – which compared very favourably to that of the School Mistress Miss Robinson who was paid a meagre £15.00, despite being praised by the Management Committee for her diligence. By 1855, the success of the school had attracted extra government grants and each annual wage had risen to £143.00 and £36.00 respectively. In the following year Miss Robinson was to resign giving ill health as a reason. Although nominally Inter-Denominational, the school had been closely connected to the Congregational Chapel next door. In April 1854 Samuel Farey persuaded his Pupil-Teachers to attend this Chapel supposedly for congregational singing. When a new Infant Mistress, Elizabeth Smith was appointed in 1857 – one condition of her acceptance was that she would attend the Congregational Chapel. Church members largely supported the School's Management Committee while the Pastor of the Congregational Chapel acted as Secretary - his deacons filling other positions. The Dewhirst family, who were also influential Congregationalists, traditionally provided the position of Chairman and Treasurer. In effect, the School Committee was a 'closed shop' run by the same narrow circle of people. Over the period of 1844-1859 more than half the Pupil Teachers appointed were Congregationalists. An extremely vague tradition in my family mentions that some of the early Smiths had been "Baptists or Congregationalists." The

evidence gathered to date in this 'History' would suggest they had been both. They had followed different denominational allegiances over different periods of time.

Pupil-Teachers were usually 'hand picked' from those considered to have intelligence and a good, preferably religious moral character. (In his conclusion to chapter six Foster showed that their social background was mainly lower middle class or respectable working class – with a high proportion of small businessmen such as Coal Merchants, Drapers, Innkeepers, Joiners and Grocers. The lower working classes were largely bypassed.) Another consideration was whether the Pupil-Teacher had the ability to encourage others to learn and to pass the government tests, which provided 'objective criteria' as to whether the school was succeeding. The fact that Daniel evidently fitted this model provided a very good testimony to his character and was also indicative of him having received sound parenting. In those days a boy's family background was normally taken into account when he was considered for such a position. The son of the town drunkard or irreligious sceptic would never have been chosen.

Upon entering the schoolroom Daniel would have found a rather cavernous, church-like interior, with long benches seating up to six pupils apiece, and walls festooned with pictures, maps and scripture texts - adding a note of colour to the otherwise dull and austere surroundings. The Master himself will have sat down on a large throne of a chair behind a heavy wooden desk, elevated on a slightly raised platform. Equipment will have been sparse, consisting mainly of slate tablets and chalks. Only when a pupil's work had been substantially corrected would it be placed into a copybook. As examples given in Chapter Three show, the reading material was often of a highly moralistic tone, pointing out the many dire consequences, which would invariably result from naughty behaviour. What was regarded, as higher forms of culture would be mediated through the rote learning of poetry and comprehension tests - all based upon edifying pieces of literature. Mathematical problems were geared to preparing children (boys especially) for the world of trade. Needlework was a skill taught only to the girls.

Throughout his apprenticeship Daniel will have given "model lessons" and to have had his teaching critically observed by either Samuel Farey or a Government Inspector. In return he will have received before or after school personal tuition. He would have benefited from the school's Management Committee's decision of 1848 to lend money for the books the Pupil-Teachers had to use. As Pupil-Teachers usually commenced their work around the age of 13 or 14 this would have been the most likely year that Daniel had begun his own apprenticeship. As the days were taken up with teaching activities any studying on his part will have had to be done by candlelight, which wouldn't have done much for his eyes. If certified, my Great Grand Uncle may have expected to receive £10.00 in his first year and £20.00 in his second. The government could augment this modest salary by £20-£30.00 per year depending upon his class of 'Teaching Certificate' and the length of his College Course. By the 1860s a trend had begun toward teaching in individual classes rather than in large open halls and this led to a desire for improved accommodation with partitioned-off areas. All too often Pupil-Teachers acted as unofficial Caretakers and Servants. In 1854 four Pupil-Teachers at the British School in Skipton had complained in a written letter to the government that they had been forced to undertake such menial tasks as lighting fires and sweeping floors. Their names were M. Ackernley, Barnes, Calvert and T. Holmes. A somewhat embarrassed Management Committee admonished these

boys before relieving them of the weekly task of cleaning the stove! In the last year of their Apprenticeship they were relieved of all menial tasks in order to have the time to prepare for the Queen's Scholarship, which would give them entrance to College and a formal teaching qualification. In 1856 classrooms were made available at 6 a.m. and until 9 p.m. for private study. Despite such concessions a degree of ambiguity still surrounded the status of the Pupil-Teacher because in practice many of them were neither quite a pupil nor quite a teacher! The retention rate was poor in that following the completion of their training many dropped out of education altogether and became Clerks instead. They had used their position as a stepping-stone to something better. In Skipton the easy availability of alternative work ensured that the retention rate was poorer than in other localities. Out of the 38 Pupil Teachers identified by Foster and covering the period from 1846-1870, a total of 14 failed to finish their apprenticeship - a failure rate of nearly 40%.

Sometimes there were personnel misdemeanours too. In 1857, Ackernley and Holmes caused a minor scandal by appearing in a theatrical exhibition held in the large room of the Devonshire Hotel on Market Street. An exasperated Management Committee warned them not to repeat this type of conduct and urged their parents to prevent any risk of it ever happening again. In 1860, the Pupil Teacher Thomas Peacock was dismissed from the British School for repeated acts of theft.

Due to the factors mentioned above, the government concluded they were getting only a poor return for their initial expenditure. In 1861 direct payments to teachers ceased and a new 'Payment by Results' scheme was introduced. Grants were paid to schools on condition they obtained certain results in the areas of attendance and attainment. Nevertheless, despite its problems the Pupil-Teacher Scheme had been a courageous attempt to respond to the pitiful lack of public education in the early Victorian era. Through it Daniel had provided the first concrete evidence of what would later become a family passion for education. His brother Edmund would also demonstrate the value he placed upon education. Perhaps both boys had been ashamed of their parents' inability to 'master their letters.' Both alike seemed to share a passion to 'get on in the world.'

Daniel Smith was one of three Pupil-Teachers from the British School who was to make teaching his vocation. The other two were John Grayston (who became Second Master of the British School at Halifax) and William Porrit (who became Head of the Smyth Academy at Wakefield). Although the College, which Daniel at one time must have attended, could not itself be discovered it was found that by 1860 my Great Grand Uncle had become the Master of the British School at 13-15 Kay Street, in the borough of Stalybridge, near Manchester, having succeeded Frederick Hutchins, the previous Master. (Tameside Local Studies & Archives Unit at Stalybridge having kindly provided these details.) His school had taught 400 boys and girls. In 1874 he was living at 18 New Spring Bank Street in the Township of Duckinfield, which was also part of the borough. (An old photograph showed those terraced houses situated on a steeply sloping street. They possessed a small front yard and belonged to people who were slightly above the norm in terms of social class.) By 1878, Daniel had been replaced by a Henry Tinker who lived in Stamford Street. (My Great Grand Uncle appears to have moved away from the area rather than having died. No Death Certificate covering the relevant period has been found.) The name Daniel Smith did not

appear in the Index for the 1881 Census. His place of abode for the 1861 and 1871 Census Returns could also not be traced. A visit to Stalybridge made on Tuesday, October 16th 2001 confirmed that the whole area around the old British School had been demolished in about 1966 to make way for a trim new housing estate. In many cases even the old street names had gone, so that pinpointing the school's former location was not an easy task.

A final visit made to a rain-sodden Stalybridge on Monday, July 1st 2002 only uncovered a few extra items of information about Daniel Smith. From Trade Directories provided by the Local History Section of Stalybridge Library it was found that in 1864 his address was given as Eastwood View, which a map revealed as being located on Chapel Walk. In 1874 his address was Hough (pronounced 'Huff') Hill. Reference to another map revealed that New Spring Bank Street lay at the bottom of this hill. However, a careful search of the relevant areas in the 1871 Census showed that he had not yet moved to this address. Daniel Smith remained untraceable. Thankfully, greater progress was made with the 1861 Census where Daniel and one of his Pupil Teachers were traced despite the awful handwriting of the Census Enumerator!

1861 Census Return for Chapel Walk, just outside the boundary of Stalybridge

1861 Census Return, for 35 Leach Street, Duckinfield, Stalybridge

Daniel Smith aged 26 "British School Teacher" ~ born in Cullingworth, Yorkshire

Elizabeth Wood aged 51 "widow" ~ born in [Cumbria]

Elizabeth Smith (wife) aged 24 ~ born in Scotland

Joshua Wood (son) aged 21 "Cotton Spinner" ~ born in Doncaster, Yorkshire

John Smith (brother or brother in law) aged 18 "Gentleman's Domestic" ~ born in Mansfield, Yorkshire

Ralph Wood (son) aged 19 "Pupil Teacher at the British School" ~ born in Doncaster, Yorkshire

It appears that Daniel had recently married near the beginning of his teaching career at Staleybridge. His brother (or brother-in-law) John was keen to emphasise that he was a "Gentleman's Domestic" rather than a mere servant. Was this an early manifestation of the old Smith vice of snobbery? One can only wonder! By the time of the 1871 Census Daniel had moved

from this address.

What could be established was that Daniel appears to have made a success of running a school - many of whose pupils came from working families employed in the surrounding 19 cotton mills. (According to Haynes p.8 various mills employed a total of 10,400 people in 1861. The total population of the Borough at that time was 24,921.) The Craven Weekly Pioneer, dated Saturday, March 25th 1865 had the following news insert: -

“A SUCCESSFUL TEACHER – Mr D. Smith, formerly a pupil teacher in the Skipton British School, now master of the Stalybridge British School, received this year from E. H. Brodie, Esq. Her Majesty’s Inspector of Schools the following entry in his certificate: - “This is a very well managed School, excellently taught, and in good order.” It was found that 97 and one-third per cent had passed in reading, writing and arithmetic. The number presented for examination was 275, all of whom passed in writing and dictation; 269 in reading, and 258 in arithmetic.” (Information kindly provided by Skipton Library on Thursday, October 18th 2001.) his excellent results reflected the hard work shown both by himself and his fellow teachers.

Daniel must have had enormous dedication to produce results like that, in what in many ways was a socially blighted mill town. In 1863 Stalybridge had suffered badly from disturbances caused by mill workers being thrown out of work because of the ‘Cotton Famine,’ which had arisen from the disruption in trade caused by the American Civil War. (According to Haynes pp.8-9, only three mills were working full time and eight had stopped. The result was that over 50% of operatives were unemployed and 40% were working on ‘short time.’ By 1871, the number of mill workers was 7,785 out of a total Borough population of just over 21,000 – the reduced figures being due mainly to emigration.) Like many local teachers Daniel may have been obliged to teach literacy skills to resentful, unemployed workers forced to attend classes in order to gain entitlement to relief. In 1870, he would have been legally bound to implement the changes brought about by the Education Act of that year, which made school attendance compulsory. Contemporary photographs showed that the local School Board was one of those awful bodies dominated by pompous looking ex-army officers, opinionated mill owners and feline looking clerics. Somehow, one feels that Daniel Smith had not enjoyed an easy time in Stalybridge. Yet one could not help respecting his singular dedication as a teacher.

I had actually began discovering the details concerning my Great Grand Uncle’s teaching career in Stalybridge, just as I was beginning some teaching in the Manchester area! (My first teaching engagement there was on Monday, September 3rd 2001.) I first discovered the teaching connection whilst looking through a copy of Foster’s Thesis at the Family History Section of the Yorkshire Archaeological Society on Tuesday afternoon, September 25th 2001. Unbeknown to myself, I had to some extent already been retracing Daniel’s own footsteps. It was inspiring to find that I was renewing an old family connection by doing something I felt thoroughly at home with. Equally, it was exhilarating to be in the vicinity where Daniel Smith had once taught with such dedication.

undefined

