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Number 06

December 2025

# Rastrick Local History Group Newsletter

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*Unearthing the Legacy, Celebrating the Spirit of Rastrick*

## WELCOME NOTE

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Dear Members and History Lovers,

As Christmas approaches, it is worth remembering how the season was marked in Rastrick in years gone by. Parish records from the 19<sup>th</sup> century show that Overseers of the Poor often recognised Christmas as a time for generosity. Families who struggled through the winter months might receive extra relief in the form of coal, bread, or clothing. These small gifts were vital, helping households endure the cold and dark days of December.

The mills, too, played their part. Employers sometimes gave workers a half-day holiday or distributed modest presents, a gesture that brought cheer to families whose lives were otherwise dominated by long hours and hard labour. Churches and chapels organised special services and carol singing, drawing the community together in celebration.

Even in difficult winters, when snow blocked roads and isolated villages, Rastrick's people found ways to mark the season. The spirit of resilience and kindness that shines through these records has a familiar ring today. Just as food banks, charities, and local groups now step forward to support those in need, so too did our predecessors ensure that Christmas was a time of warmth and fellowship.

One of the stories you are about to read in this edition concerns Major Michael Stocks, who made sure that all his employees received a Christmas bonus of one shilling and one penny. The penny had to be brand new and shiny — a small but symbolic gesture that was warmly welcomed by labourers earning only around 22 shillings a week in 1875. It is a reminder that even in the Victorian era, employers recognised the importance of generosity at Christmas, and that such tokens of goodwill carried real meaning for working families.

The Rastrick Local History Group would like to wish everyone a very Merry Christmas with best wishes for the forthcoming year of 2026.

*FEATURED 'STORIES FROM THE PAST' IN THIS NEWSLETTER*

150 YEARS AGO

The Brighthouse News 18<sup>th</sup> December 1875 – Page 3

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We look into some of the adverts in this edition of the Brighthouse News, especially one by Martin Manley, a local photographer and his use of the Lime Light process. We also examine some Victorian party games that were played in family homes of that period.

STORIES FROM THE PAST

19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century postcards – Page 6

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Julian Williams explains his passion for collecting local postcards and asks if anyone can help in tracing some of the missing ones from his collection.

A former owner of the Commercial Inn, Rastrick – Page 11

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Andrew Eccles tells the story of a former owner of this humble establishment who fought in the Crimean War, owned land and property around the UK and left a vast fortune upon his death.

Christmas Trees – From Royalty to Rastrick – Page 16

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A look at the why we have Christmas Trees as part of our festive celebrations.

From Drapers to Doctors – The Arnison Legacy in Rastrick – Page 17

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The Arnison family have had a shop in Penrith for over 200 years but one of the family became a doctor in Rastrick and served our community in extraordinary ways.

Upcoming Events – Page 23

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Meeting dates for early 2026

Closing Thoughts – Page 23

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Reflections on the spirit of generosity in Rastrick

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330 silver coins to the value of £4-10s. People were invited to come and see the cake *'which will be exhibited in the window on Wednesday next.'*

However, I want to concentrate upon two adverts in particular.

The first one is that of **M. Manley – Photographic Artist**



Martin Manley was a professional photographer operating in Brighouse during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. His studio was known for producing formal portraits, often mounted on cabinet cards. In his advert, he offers to give *'photographic entertainments'* by the Oxy-Hydrogen Lime Light process at Christmas or New Year parties.

Oxy-Hydrogen Lime Lights - This lighting method involved heating calcium oxide (quicklime) with a flame fed by oxygen and hydrogen, producing an intense white light. It was known as 'limelight' and was originally used in theatres and later adapted for photography to allow indoor exposures without relying on daylight.

The phrase *'in the limelight'* originates from this technology, as it literally placed subjects under a brilliant spotlight.

There were several reasons why portrait photographs were important to the Victorians at Christmas.

- **Family Portraits:** Victorian families often commissioned studio photographs during the festive season, dressed in their finest attire. These were treasured keepsakes or sent to distant relatives.
- **Memorial Keepsakes:** For families in mourning (a common theme in Victorian life), a photograph could serve as a lasting tribute.
- **Social Status:** Having one's portrait taken was a mark of respectability and modernity. Manley's use of advanced lighting would have impressed clients and justified higher fees.
- **Gift Giving:** Portraits were exchanged as tokens of affection. A photograph of a child, spouse, or parent was a deeply personal Christmas gift.

#### **Local Impact in Rastrick and Brighouse**

- Manley's studio drew clients from across the district, including tradespeople, clergy, and middle-class families.
- His use of limelight positioned him as a technological pioneer, offering superior image clarity and shorter exposure times, especially valuable in winter's dim light.
- The studio would have been decorated seasonally, with props or backdrops to evoke festive scenes.

## A Victorian Studio Experience

Imagine stepping into Manley's studio in December 1875:

Firstly, you would be greeted by the scent of chemicals and the hum of gas burners. You would then be taken to the photograph area where a velvet curtain would be drawn back to reveal a painted backdrop, perhaps a snowy landscape or a parlour scene. You would then be asked to sit stiffly and instructed not to blink, as the limelight flares and the camera clicks. A few days later, you would return to the studio to collect your mounted portrait, ready to wrap in tissue and send to Aunt Eliza in Halifax.

It was not without its hazards though. A naked flame fed by gas jets was an inherent danger and in 1863, a ballerina called Emma Livrey suffered fatal burns when her costume set on fire after coming into contact with the flame and in 1876, the scenery at the Brooklyn Theatre, New York, caught fire and 294 people died in the ensuing fire.

On that happy note, we next look at the advert regarding James Powell, who at that time occupied premises on Briggate, Brighthouse in what is now the Daisy Street car park. Powell informed his customers that he had just received a parcel of fancy goods that were suitable for Christmas presents, along with a large stock of '*Yes and No Cosaques*' and '*Parlour Jury Cosaques*', which were suitable for balls, parties, supper tables etc.

But what were Cosaques ?

The word cosaque (French for *Cossack*) was used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to describe early versions of Christmas crackers. This name was inspired by the Cossack soldiers, who were known for their exuberant celebrations and habit of firing guns into the air, mirroring the crack or bang of the cracker when pulled apart.

Early crackers were often called '*Yes and No Cosaques*' or '*Parlour Jury Cosaques*', because they referenced the types of games or novelties they contained.

**'Yes and No'** games involved answering questions without using the words 'yes' or 'no', a test of wit and self-control.

**'Parlour Jury'** games mimicked courtroom drama: one player acted as a judge, others as jury and prisoners. The prisoner would impersonate a famous person, and the jury had to guess their identity after a mock trial.

These games were part of the broader Victorian tradition of parlour amusements, where families and guests entertained themselves with roleplay, riddles, and theatrical antics during festive gatherings.

Over time, the term 'cosaque' faded, replaced by 'cracker'. Today's crackers still echo their origins. They 'bang' and contain jokes or games and they are pulled by two people, just like the dramatic, interactive spirit of the original cosaques.

**The Minister's Cat** was another popular game played at the Christmas dining table. Players take turns describing the minister's cat with an adjective, going alphabetically: 'The minister's cat is an *adorable* cat,' 'a *boisterous* cat,' and so on. Hesitate or repeat an adjective and you're out!

### **Who Am I?**

A name is pinned to each guest's back. They must ask yes/no questions to figure out who they are. The Victorians would use historical or literary figures popular in the 1800s. Dickens characters, monarchs, or explorers were also popular.

### **Charades (Victorian Style)**

Not just acting, Victorian charades often involved spoken riddles or poetic clues before the performance. A person might start with, "*My first is in 'parlour' but not in 'room'...*" leading to a word puzzle before the mime commenced.

So just by glancing at the front page of a local newspaper, you can absorb some of the Christmas spirit of the year 1875 and understand what was going on at a family Christmas Party.

## **STORIES FROM THE PAST**

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### **19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Postcards of Rastrick – Julian Williams**

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I am a recent new member of Rastrick Local History Group. My interest in postcards of Rastrick all started for me when I visited a postcard fair at York racecourse. In and among a West Yorkshire section I came across a colour postcard of Castle Hill House, Rastrick Nr. Brighouse, printed in Saxony, Germany and part of a 'Magalden' Series.

Castle Hill House (next to what was Rastrick Grammar School) was my parents' home from the late 1940's until 2011. I lived there for all my childhood and young adulthood until I married in 1989. It was a surprise to come across this postcard but it sparked an interest that continues to this day.

I started to look for other Rastrick and Brighouse related postcards and now have a collection of approximately 230. Many of them form parts of series each in turn published by various publishers or printers. Some of these are coded and numbered, others simply have location titles in their description. Some are in colour like the 'Magalden' series cards, the majority however are in black and white.

In the Magalden series (possibly a typographical error for Magdalen), Rastrick examples include Castle Hill Wood and Throstle Nest. Many other cards exist by this publisher and I have examples from the surrounding areas like Huddersfield and Lindley.

**Can anyone add to other locations in Rastrick as part of the Magalden series?**

Two major publishers / printers of the black and white cards of Rastrick and Brighouse include Lilywhite Ltd and Aspinall's (Copyright A.F.S) with a series entitled Special Series P.

**Aspinall's** or the A.F.S. Copyright cards in Special Series P, these cards are prefixed with the letters RSK followed by a number in the series and a description of the location.



For example, the above postcard is RSK8 and shows what many Rastrick folk would call 'Top o' Town', looking towards the former Rastrick Grammar School. The card is titled Brighouse Hill, Rastrick - not a name I ever recall being used. The highest RSK number I have in this series is RSK30, an image in the Special Series P range titled Castle Hill, which is shown on the following page.



On the basis that this card is coded RSK 30 and I personally only have 7 cards in this series below that number, this would suggest that there are at least 23 more cards in the Special Series P range.

**Does anyone have copies of other cards in this series?**

**Does anyone have a Special Series P card with an RSK Code higher than 30?**

The cards I am aware of are as follows:-

RSK 6 Huddersfield Rd, Rastrick

RSK 8 Brighthouse Hill (as depicted on the previous page)

RSK15 Gooder Lane Rastrick

RSK20 View of Slade Lane from Fields, Rastrick

RSK22 Church Street, Rastrick

RSK30 Castle Hill, Rastrick (as depicted on the previous page)

The Rastrick Local History Group would love to hear from any readers or local residents that can add to this list and also perhaps throw any light on the A.F.S copyright and knowledge of Aspinall's and dates they were trading?

## Lilywhite Ltd

Arthur Frederick Sergeant (1882-1952), who founded Lilywhite & Company in about 1910 was a keen photographer and had previously set up the Halifax Photographic Company in New Brunswick Street, Halifax, and also took over a photographic business in St Albans.

In 1910 the firm operated from Dunkirk Mills, West End, Halifax, but in about 1921 transferred to Lumb Mills (a former textile mill), Mill Bank, Triangle, Halifax, where 200 people were employed, with a City Office at 40/43 Fleet Street, London EC4.

Mill Bank which grew from an ancient hamlet on the trading route between Yorkshire and Lancashire was the home of Lilywhite, printers of picture postcards and producing photographic paper, until a disastrous fire on 15th January 1931 which destroyed the building and the company's negatives and prints.

Sergeant started a new factory at Mearclough, Sowerby Bridge followed by the company's final move to Brighouse. He subsequently sold the business to A.H. Leach. (1871-1938).



The company produced large numbers of black and white picture postcards of Rastrick and Brighouse. Some cards of Rastrick have an RSK reference, but the majority in my collection have a BGS reference relating to Brighouse. An example of an RSK reference would be RSK19 Crow Trees Lane, Rastrick published by Lilywhite Ltd, Triangle, Halifax and pictured above.

The Lilywhite Ltd cards of Brighouse & Rastrick in my collection go from BGS1 to BGS120. Some card numbering duplicates in terms of BGS references with alternative views of the same location, but clearly the company used a referencing system based on their catalogue and negatives in their archives.

**We would love to hear from any readers of other RSK or BGS referenced cards they have featuring views of Rastrick. Does anyone have or know a complete sequence?**

Below I list other cards and titles I'm aware of taken in Rastrick, published by Lilywhite with BGS references, some of which are featured below.

BGS5 View from Toothill Lane, Brighouse

BGS13 View from Knowles Road, Brighouse

BGS40 Rastrick Multiview postcard - 5 Views in Rastrick - Views from Bowling Alley, Knowles Road, Smith Homes, Boothroyd, The Library and Crowtrees Lane

BGS44 Bowling Green, Rastrick

BGS55 Public Library and War Memorial, Rastrick, Brighouse

BGS74 Crowtrees Lane, Rastrick

Many of the Lilywhite scenes of Rastrick locations have not changed radically but some, such as the view from Knowles Road and Toothill Lane have altered considerably with new housing built in the interim. I hope readers enjoy a snapshot of Rastrick in former times and would be delighted to hear from any readers who can help us to populate both the Special P series by Aspinall's and the RSK and BGS referenced Lilywhite cards. The Rastrick Local History Group will be scanning the cards of Rastrick in my collection and they will be able to be viewed at Rastrick Library.

If you can help answer any the questions posed, please contact the history group at [rastrick.history@gmail.com](mailto:rastrick.history@gmail.com)

TO THE OVERSEERS OF THE POOR of the Township of Rastrick, in the West Riding of the County of York, and to the Superintendent of Police of the District of Brighouse, in the West Division of Morley, in the said West Riding, and to the Superintendent Constable of the said West Division of Morley.

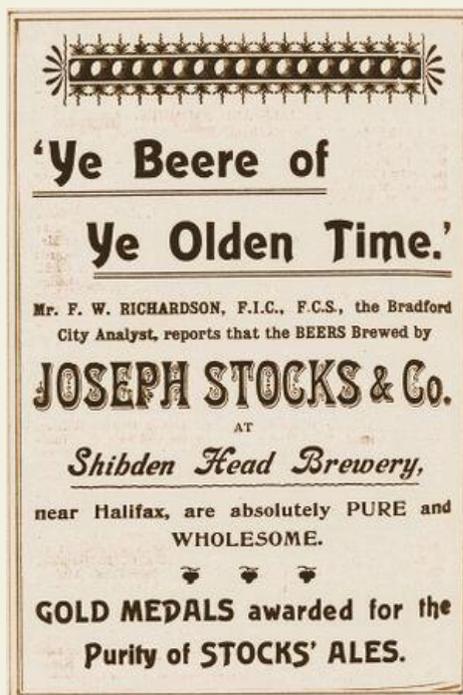
**I, HANNAH BROOMHEAD, of Rastrick,** aforesaid, widow, a Beerseller, do HEREBY GIVE NOTICE THAT IT IS MY INTENTION TO APPLY, at the General Licensing Meeting, to be holden at the West Riding Court House, in Halifax, in and for the said West Division of Morley, in the said West Riding, on the 24th day of August, next, FOR A LICENSE to hold any Excise License or Licenses to sell by retail, under the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Act, 1828, all Intoxicating Liquors, to be consumed either on or off the house or premises thereunto belonging, situate in the said Township of Rastrick, at the junction of the highway known as Gooder Lane, with the turnpike road leading from Huddersfield to Bradford, near to the Brighouse and Rastrick Station of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, of which house and premises Michael Stocks, of Upper Shibden Hall, in the Township of Northowram, in the said Riding, and of Latheronwheel, in the County of Caithness, in Scotland, Esquire, formerly a Major in the Army, is the owner, of whom I rent them, and which said house and premises are now occupied by me as a Beerhouse, under the sign of the Commercial Inn.

Given under my hand this twenty-first day of July, 1875.  
**HANNAH BROOMHEAD.**

On the 7<sup>th</sup> August 1875, a woman by the name of Hannah Broomhead placed a notice in the Brighouse News to the effect that it was her intention to apply for a licence at the forthcoming General Licensing Meeting in Halifax, 'to sell by retail, under the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Act, 1828, all Intoxicating Liquors, to be consumed either on or off the house or premises thereunto belonging, situate in the said Township of Rastrick, at the junction of the highway known as Gooder Lane, with the turnpike road leading from Huddersfield to Bradford, near the Brighouse and Rastrick

Station of the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway, of which house and premises Michael Stocks of Upper Shibden Hall, in the Township of Northowram and of Latheronwheel, in the County Of Caithness, Scotland, Esquire, formerly a Major in the Army, is the owner, of whom I rent them, and which said house and premises are now occupied by me as a beerhouse, under the sign of the Commercial Inn.'

I was intrigued to find out more about this man and how and why a former Army Major, who lived at the Upper Shibden Hall and also in Caithness, came to be the owner of a humble Rastrick pub such as the Commercial Inn.



Michael Stocks was a member of a prominent business owning family in Halifax, having made their fortune from coal mining in the Shibden Valley. His elder brother, Joseph Stocks, formed a brewing company known as the Shibden Head Brewery at Ambler Thorn, Queensbury, later to become Joseph Stocks & Co Ltd. The company had extensive assets including a 15 acre brewery site, malt and hop stores, stables and many public house and residences. In one inventory, it shows that the company owned 111 public houses in the Halifax, Elland, and Bradford areas including the Anchor Inn in Brighouse and the Duke of York, the Globe and the Commercial Inn in Rastrick.

Joseph Stocks also invested in several new railway companies that had been created as 'railway mania' swept the country. He was on the provisional committee of the Wolverhampton, Chester &

Birkenhead Railway Co. and was a director of the East & West Yorkshire Railway, the Leeds & Carlisle Railway

and the Manchester & Leeds Railway, which came through Rastrick and Brighouse when it opened in 1840. Vast profits were made by early investors such as the Stocks family. Joseph had founded the company with his father but he never married and when he died in 1875, the business was inherited by his brother, Michael Stocks, along with all the public houses, including the Commercial Inn.

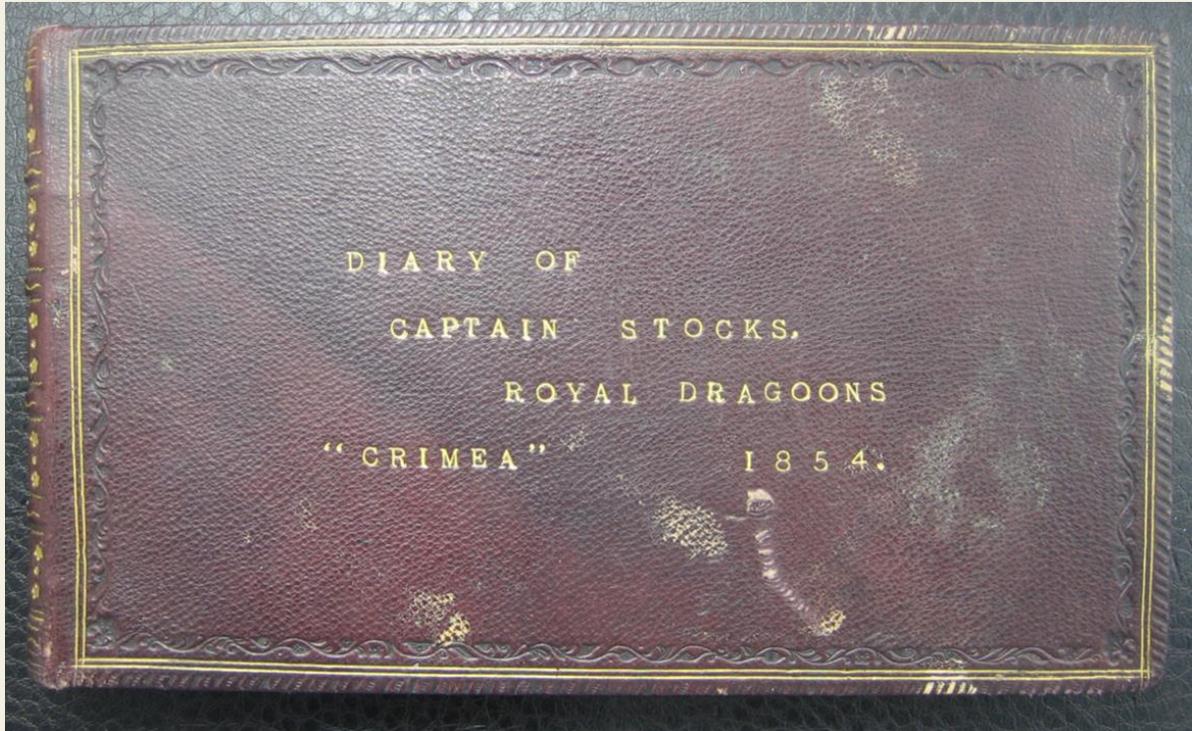
Michael Stocks led a remarkably interesting life. Born at Northowram in 1824, he was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge before embarking on a military career. He was commissioned into the 1<sup>st</sup> Royal Dragoons as a Cornet in December 1846 and rose to the rank of Captain in February 1853.

From May 1854 to June 1856 he served in Turkey and the Crimea, taking part in the major battles of the Eastern campaign of 1854–55. At the Battle of Balaclava on 25<sup>th</sup> October 1854, Captain Stocks commanded a troop in the celebrated Charge of the Heavy Brigade, which successfully routed a much larger Russian cavalry force. He was the only senior officer of his regiment not wounded in that action. The Heavy Brigade's charge was a separate engagement from the disastrous Charge of the Light Brigade, which Stocks witnessed and later described in his diary as *"the greatest trap that ever was made."*



For his service he received the British Crimea Medal with three clasps for Balaclava, Inkerman, and Sebastopol, together with the Turkish Crimea Medal and the 5<sup>th</sup> Class Order of Medjidie. He was promoted to Major in October 1857 and retired from the army in October 1860.

Stocks kept a diary between 1854 and 1855, recording both the horrors of battle and the routines of everyday military life. This diary, along with his medals and other relics of his service, was preserved at a family home in Hilgay, Norfolk. Hidden away and largely forgotten, they were rediscovered in 2022 and subsequently sold at auction.



The diary provides a vivid, first-hand account of the Crimean War, beginning with the voyage to Turkey and continuing through the battles of Balaclava, Inkerman, and Sebastopol, as well as the daily grind of camp life. His entry for Balaclava is especially striking. He begins: *'Thank God I am here to write this'*, before describing the clash of the Heavy Brigade against overwhelming Russian cavalry and his horror at the fate of the Light Brigade. He recalls how the Light Brigade galloped ahead in their ill-fated charge, only for survivors to return *'by ones and twos... such a smash never was seen, they were murdered.'* Stocks' own regiment advanced three-quarters of the way up the valley under a hail of shot and shell before being ordered to halt, a decision that spared them the same fate.

The diary also reveals the hardships of the campaign. On picket duty in the Crimean winter, he wrote: *'My whiskers actually froze to the chin strap of my helmet. We do indeed earn our pay out here.'* Earlier, during the voyage from Varna, his transport broke loose in a storm and nearly all the regiment's horses were lost at sea: *'Horses that had cost hundreds lying with broken backs, legs... never saw such a wreck of fine troop horses as were in the service.'* Disease, poor planning, and shortages were constant themes, with Stocks lamenting the *'waste of lives in both men and horses.'*

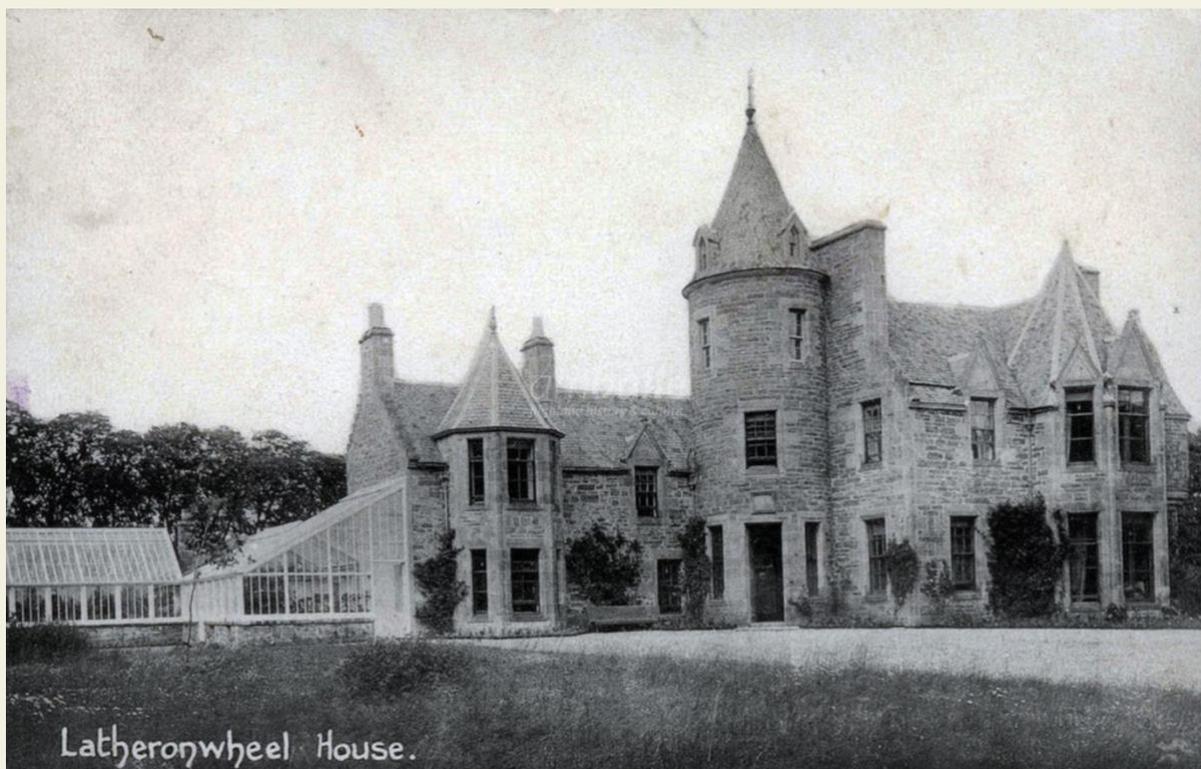
Yet there are lighter touches too. He describes building a wooden hut to escape the weather-beaten tents, hunting for parsley near camp, and enjoying the camaraderie of fellow officers. These glimpses of ordinary life sit alongside his accounts of Inkermann and Sebastopol, giving the diary a human balance between horror and humour.



In October 1860, Michael Stocks left the army, selling his commission which was a common practice at the time. On 9<sup>th</sup> November 1863 he married Jane Mary MacEachran at St Paul's Chapel, Edinburgh. The MacEachrans were a family deeply rooted in the Scottish Highlands, particularly in Caithness, where they held land, owned crofts, and enjoyed herring fishing rights from the harbour at Latheronwheel.

Following their marriage, Michael and Jane acquired land at Latheronwheel and are recorded in the 1871 census as living there, most likely at Latheronwheel House. By then they employed a governess and six servants, reflecting their status. They had two children at the time, Michael junior, aged six, and Mary Evelyn Hilda, aged five, both born in Edinburgh. Two further daughters were later born in London, showing that the family did not remain in one place for long.

In the *Scotland Owners of Lands and Heritages* for 1872–73, Michael Stocks is listed as residing at Latheronwheel House, with an estate estimated at 13,600 acres. In addition to his properties at Upper Shibden



Hall and Latheronwheel, he also owned houses in Hilgay, Norfolk and in the City of London. When he died on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1895 at Latheronwheel, his probate record detailed the full extent of his holdings:

*“STOCKS, Michael, of 26 Rutland Gate, Hyde Park, County of Middlesex, of Woodhall, Parish of Hilgay, County of Norfolk, of Shibden Hall near Halifax, County of York, and of Latheronwheel, County of Caithness, died 30 September 1895, at Latheronwheel, testate. Probate of the Will and Codicil granted at London on 23 November 1895 to Jane Mary Stocks, the widow, the relict, and Michael Stocks, the son, the Executors. Value of Estate, £349,546 2s 1d.”*

This fortune in 1895 equates to just over £40 million in 2025, of which the Commercial Inn at Rastrick represented a very tiny fraction.

During his lifetime, Michael Stocks was the Deputy Lieutenant of Caithness and Norfolk and also served as the High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1888. He was buried at St John the Baptist churchyard, Coley. A newspaper report of the funeral stated that the family wanted a quiet affair but ***‘the tenantry from various estates, along with personal friends, attended in large numbers. The route was three and a half miles in length, by way of Queensbury and Stone Chair to Coley Church. At Stone Chair, about 200 of the tenantry joined the procession and the church was crowded.’*** Staff from the family-owned brewery, collieries and from the estates and houses in Scotland, Norfolk, Halifax and London were also in attendance.

Michael’s son, also named Michael, lived out his days at Hilgay, Norfolk. In 1933, the family’s brewing company, Joseph Stocks & Sons Ltd, was sold to Samuel Webster & Sons of Halifax. At the time of the sale, Stocks

still owned 79 public houses, including the Commercial Inn, which then passed into Webster's ownership. It remained in their hands until comparatively recent times.



What began with a modest newspaper notice placed by Hannah Broomhead in 1875 has gradually unfolded into the remarkable life story of Major Michael Stocks. From his roots in Halifax to his marriage into the MacEachran family of Caithness, his military service in the Crimea, and his later estates stretching from Yorkshire to Norfolk and the Scottish Highlands, we see not just a local connection but the portrait of a man whose experiences and fortune epitomised the ambitions and

achievements of the Victorian era. His rediscovered diary and legacy remind us how even the smallest archival clue can grow into the narrative of a truly noteworthy figure.

### Christmas Trees – From Royalty to Rastrick – Andrew Eccles



When we think of Christmas trees in Britain, many assume they arrived with Prince Albert, who famously decorated one at Windsor Castle in the 1840s. In fact, the tradition had already taken root decades earlier. Queen Charlotte, wife of George III, is recorded as having a Christmas tree at Windsor in 1800, delighting children with its candles, sweets, and gifts.

By the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the custom was spreading beyond royal households and into communities across the country. Local newspapers provide fascinating glimpses of how Rastrick and Brighthouse embraced the idea. The

earliest references show that churches were among the first to adopt Christmas trees, not simply as decoration but as a means of charity.

Reports from the 1860s and 1870s describe festive gatherings where parishioners donated small presents to hang upon the branches. These gifts were later sold or raffled, with proceeds going to good causes such as Sunday schools, missionary funds, or relief for the poor. The tree thus became both a symbol of celebration and a practical tool for community support.

One Brighthouse notice tells of a “handsome tree, laden with toys and trinkets,” standing in the chapel, while children and adults alike contributed items to be displayed. In Rastrick, similar events were reported, with the Christmas tree acting as a centrepiece for concerts, bazaars, and seasonal entertainments. The excitement of seeing the tree lit and decorated was matched by the satisfaction of knowing that the proceeds would help neighbours in need.

From Queen Charlotte’s Windsor tree to the charitable evergreens of our local chapels, the story of the Christmas tree in Britain is one of adaptation and generosity. What began as a royal novelty became a familiar sight in local churches and homes, entwining festive joy with community spirit, a tradition that continues to resonate today.

### From Drapers to Doctors: The Arnison Legacy in Rastrick – Andrew Eccles

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**WE ARE AN ANCIENT FIRM**  
BUT OUR ESTABLISHMENT IS  
**Conducted on Modern Lines.**



Residents  
and  
Visitors

Will always find  
an excellent  
stock of

**Drapery,  
Hosiery  
and  
Gloves,**

ESTABLISHED 1742.  
At Competitive London Prices.

We make a speciality of

**HIGH-CLASS  
DRESSMAKING AND  
MILLINERY  
UNDER SUCCESSFUL  
MANAGEMENT.**

**BORDERED CARPETS AND  
FURNISHING GOODS,  
BED AND TABLE LINEN,**  
In qualities only that will give satisfaction.

Patterns Free. Parcels over 20/- CARRIAGE PAID.

**N. ARNISON & SONS,**  
18, DEVONSHIRE ST., PENRITH.

This is a story about a family by the name of Arnison who come from the town of Penrith, Cumbria. In 1742, the family opened a drapers shop in the centre of the town, which has clothed the local men and women for 283 years but N. Arnison and Sons, Penrith, decided to close its doors. As I write this article, the shop is open but by the time you read this, it will have closed on the 6<sup>th</sup> December. It is probably the oldest shop in Cumbria and one of the oldest in the United Kingdom. The business moved into the present shop on Devonshire Street in 1850. Prior to the Arnison family taking over the shop, it was home to the poet, William Wordsworth’s grandfather, William, who was a linen draper. The inside of the Grade 2 listed building

has hardly changed in decades and is described as an architectural gem. Step inside and you will find a treasure trove. Oak and glass counters along with floor to ceiling drawers contain an array of menswear items, shoes, shirts, and suits to ladies' fashion, lingerie, accessories, and even an



underground “bunker” filled with linens, sheets, and more. The shop has weathered recessions, depressions, plagues, world wars, and yet, here it still stands. For the time being...

So what has this got to do with Rastrick you may ask. To answer this question, we go

back to the 29<sup>th</sup> October 1872 when Thomas Wright Arnison was born in Penrith. He was the second son of Charles Nathan Arnison and his wife, Fanny. They family lived at a house called Ravenstone on Wordsworth Street, Penrith. Charles Nathan Avison was the son of Nathan Arnison, the founder of the



Penrith drapery store.

Thomas was the second son but his father had chosen not to work in the drapery trade and became a reputable local solicitor. Thomas was educated at Penrith Grammar School and Manchester University where he obtained the qualification of Bachelor of Medicine (MB) and Bachelor of Surgery (ChB). In

1891, Thomas was shown on the census as a medical student, living with his parents at the above address.

Whilst at the university he worked on the staff of the Salford Royal Hospital where he quickly learned his future trade. In 1898, he gave evidence at the trial of a man who kicked another man to death in Manchester, with a severe fatal blow to the head. Dr Arnison carried out the post-mortem and gave details to the court of the injuries sustained by the deceased person. After obtaining his qualifications, he came to Rastrick in 1901 and entered a general medical practitioner partnership with Dr. Carter of The Poplars, Rastrick Common. Dr. Arnison attended to patients in the Brighthouse portion of the Borough until the partnership was dissolved in 1903. The practise was continued by Dr Arnison at The Poplars, along with Dr Roberts. He married Alice Barber of Savile Park, Halifax on the 30<sup>th</sup> August 1905

1905. Marriage solemnized at *The Parish Church* in the *Parish* of *King Cross* in the Counties of *Halifax & Ry* and *York (W. R.)*

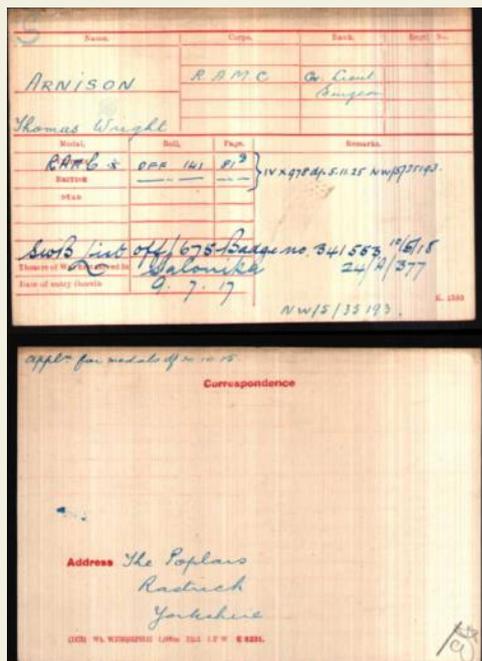
Column No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
37	<i>August 30 1905</i>	<i>Thomas Wright Arnison</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>Bachelor</i>	<i>General Practitioner</i>	<i>Poplars Rastrick</i>	<i>Charles Nathan Arnison</i>	<i>Lawyer</i>
		<i>Alice Barber</i>	<i>31</i>	<i>Spinster</i>	<i>—</i>	<i>55 Savile Park Halifax</i>	<i>Charles Barber (deceased)</i>	<i>Manufacturer</i>

Married in the *Parish Church* according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Established Church* by *John Atherington* or after Banns by me *George A. Pipinall*

This Marriage was solemnized between us, *Thomas Wright Arnison* and *Alice Barber* in the Presence of us, *Nathan Henry Arnison* and *John Atherington* *Minister*

at Halifax. Her father was dead and she had been living with her uncle, John Atherton of Woodhouse Hall, Rastrick, an affluent gentleman who had married into the local landowning Armitage family. One of his public engagements concerned the suicide of Olive Elgood Eastwood of Toothill Grove, Rastrick who was found with her throat cut in the summer house of their home in June 1910.

Upon discovery of the body, Dr Arnison was called to the scene and had to give evidence regarding the condition of the body at the inquest into her death. In addition to his practise, Dr Arnison was also connected with ambulance work for which the genial doctor was best known. He was a member of the Royal Corps of the St John Ambulance Brigade for over 25 years and he conducted classes at Rastrick Common School and subsequently at the Ambulance Hall on Bramston Street and was awarded the long service medal around 1920. In 1922, Dr Arnison had the title of 'Associate of the Grand Priory of the Order of St John of Jerusalem' conferred upon him in consideration of services rendered.



During the First World War, he served as Honorary Medical Officer at Boothroyd and Longroyd military hospitals in Rastrick, where wounded soldiers were treated after being brought back from the front lines. In 1917, he was eventually called up for military service and was commissioned as a Lieutenant with the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was posted to Salonika on 9<sup>th</sup> July 1917 where he would have been responsible for the health and evacuation of sick and wounded troops. He would also have had to deal with diseases, especially Malaria which was responsible for more casualties than those wounded on the battlefield. Dr. Arnison returned to Rastrick following the armistice in 1918 and continued his work there.

He was a staunch Conservative, serving on the Brighouse Town Council and was chairman of the Rastrick Constitutional Club for over 35 years. He had been a member of the Brighouse Borough Club since arriving in Brighouse and was chairman of that organisation for about nine years. He was a member of the local Druids' Lodge and Unity Lodge (Royal Ancient Order of Buffaloes) at Rastrick and was a governor of the Rastrick Grammar School (representing the West Riding County Council). He was also a vice president of the Brighouse branch of the British Legion.

When the National Insurance Act came into force in 1911, Dr. Arnison was a representative for Brighouse and District on the Panel Committee for the West Riding of Yorkshire. These committees were created to manage the new social insurance system which aimed to provide benefits for sickness, unemployment and other welfare needs at local level. He had also been president for one year of the Halifax Medical Society and served on Medical and Pensions Boards and for some time and was a medical referee for the Brighouse district. In this role, he served as a medical expert to resolve disputes between approved societies who administered benefits and claimants who declared that were unable to work through illness.

Always interested in sport, Dr. Arnison gave his support to athletics of various kinds, while he took a keen active part in the management of several organisations. For over 20 years he was actively identified with the Brighouse Tennis Club and for many years was one of the prominent players in the district. He occupied the presidential chair of this organisation for almost 20 years. He was also a former president of the Rastrick Football Club and the club prospered by his advice and influence. In

1922, Dr. Arnison played a significant role in reviving the Brighouse Rangers Football Club, which had ceased operations in 1906 and of which he had long been a dedicated supporter. Additionally, he served as a patron of the Rastrick Cricket Club and held the position of president of the Brighouse and District Billiard League for three years.

As if that wasn't enough, he became a Justice of the Peace in 1923, becoming the first medical man to be so appointed, this being reported in the Penrith Observer on the 14<sup>th</sup> August 1923. Dr Arnison's wife died on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May 1932 at the Crichton Royal Institution, Dumfries which was a specialist psychiatric hospital at the time but now forms part of the campus for two universities and a college in the Dumfries region. On the 26<sup>th</sup> February 1936, the Yorkshire Post reported that Thomas Wright Arnison had retired after being in practice for 35 years.

Upon his retirement, he took up residence at 14 Lyndhurst Grove Road, Rastrick, in a house he named Ravenstone, which if you recall, was the same name as the home where he spent his childhood in Penrith but the following year, Dr. Arnison experienced health problems and spent a year in a Bradford



hospital. While there, a woman called Hannah Jones cared for him as his nurse. After his release, he invited her to become a full-time nurse at his home, where she also took on the roles of housekeeper and even as his chauffeur.

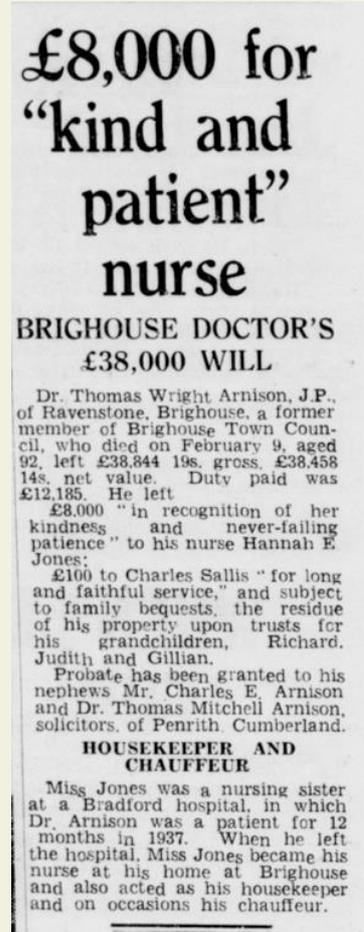
In May 1940, Dr. Arnison was presented with an illuminated portrait by the Committee of the Rastrick Constitutional Club in recognition of his valuable services, shown to the left.

Dr. Arnison died on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 1965 at his Ravenstone home, at the grand age of 92 years. Nurse Hannah Jones remained with Dr. Arnison from 1937 until his death. In

recognition of her kindness and never-failing patience, he left her £8,000 in his will, which was more than enough for her to buy her own house.

Dr Thomas Wright Arnison's life was one of extraordinary public service, professional dedication, and quiet generosity. From his early days in Penrith to his long career in Rastrick, he embodied the values of care, leadership, and civic responsibility. Whether healing the sick, mentoring ambulance volunteers, chairing local clubs, or supporting sport and education, he left an indelible mark on the community he served.

His legacy lives on not only in the institutions he shaped, but in the lives of those who knew him and in the house he named 'Ravenstone', a symbol of continuity between past and present.



## PHOTO ARCHIVES & HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Discover More at [www.MyRastrick.com](http://www.MyRastrick.com)

Immerse yourself in the visual splendour of Rastrick's history with our photo collection and stories. From virtual walks to historic buildings, including churches, mills, schools and houses.

If any of these stories have sparked your curiosity about Rastrick's past, you'll find much more to explore at [www.MyRastrick.com](http://www.MyRastrick.com). The website is a growing archive of local history, packed with old maps, photographs, newspaper clippings, and personal recollections that bring our township's heritage to life. There is also a free search facility for almost 8,500 burials at St. Matthews Church and many more at the former Bridge End chapel.

Whether you're tracing family roots, revisiting familiar streets, or uncovering forgotten landmarks, *MyRastrick.com* offers a rich and accessible window into the stories that shaped our community. And with over 450,000 people already logging in, they can't all be wrong — join them and see what you might discover.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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Monthly meetings held at Rastrick Library, 5-00pm – 6-30pm

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2026

Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2026 – Guest speaker (to be arranged)

## GET INVOLVED

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Contribute to Rastrick's Legacy

Your voice matters in preserving the legacy of Rastrick. Do you have old photographs, fascinating anecdotes, or hidden artefacts? Share them with us and become a custodian of our community's history. Email your contributions to [history.rastrick@gmail.com](mailto:history.rastrick@gmail.com). Together, we can ensure our heritage continues to inspire future generations.

Alternatively, come and join our friendly group at Rastrick Library. Meetings are held every second Tuesday in the month at 5.00pm

## CLOSING THOUGHTS – Carrying Forward Rastrick's Spirit of Generosity

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As we turn the final page of this year's newsletter, it is worth pausing to reflect on how Christmas has always been a season of continuity as well as change. In Rastrick's past, the smallest gestures, a loaf of bread, a half-day holiday, a shiny penny, carried immense meaning for families who faced the winter with limited means but abundant resilience.

Today, our community marks the season differently, yet the thread of generosity remains unbroken. Food banks, local charities, and neighbourhood groups echo the spirit of those earlier benefactors, ensuring that kindness is never absent from our streets.

History reminds us that festive traditions are not only about decoration or celebration, but about connection. Each carol sung, each tree lit, each gift shared is part of a long story of fellowship. As we step into the new year, may we carry forward that same spirit of goodwill, mindful that the bonds we nurture now will one day be the history remembered by future generations.

***The Rastrick Local History Group***