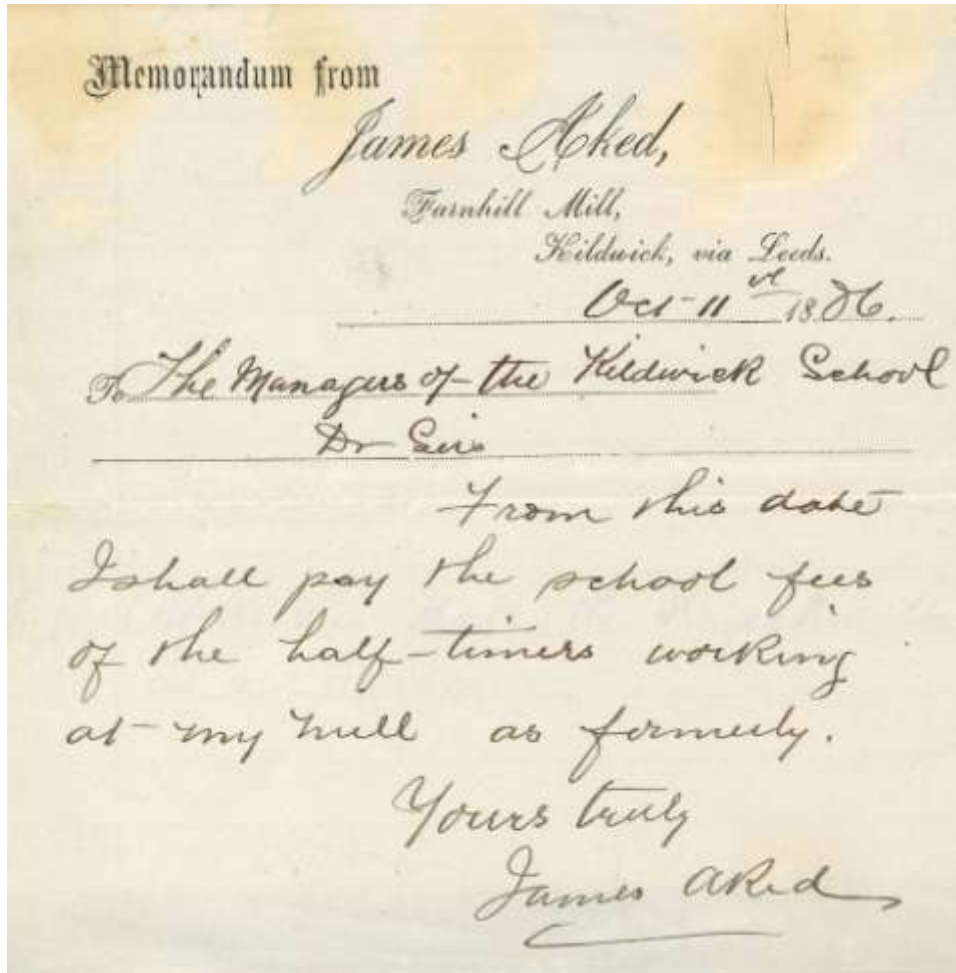


A working life at Woodrow's Mill

Introduction

In the late 19th century and the early years of the 20th, the transition from school to work often involved a pupil, typically from the age of 12 or 13, becoming a "part-timer". This involved spending part of the time at school, and the rest at work. Sometimes an employer would even pay the school fees required for them to complete their education.



Memorandum from
James Aked,
Farnhill Mill,
Kildwick, via Leeds.
Oct-11th 1886.
To The Manager of the Kildwick School
Dr Sir
From this date
I shall pay the school fees
of the half-timers working
at my mill as formerly.
Yours truly
James Aked

From the Kildwick school Log Book
(Scanned by kind permission of Tim Whitehead)

Once a pupil had attended school for the minimum required number of days, and had received a certificate to that effect, they could leave and take up work full-time.

SCHEDULE VI.

Board of Education.
Form 144 (c).

Certificate of School Attendance for the purpose of employment under Section 5, Elementary Education Act, 1876, or for total or partial exemption under the Bye-Laws.

Kildwick L.E. School.

I hereby certify that the following particulars with respect to the Attendances made by the Child named below, at this School after attaining the age of 5 years, are correctly taken from the Registers of the School.

Name in full, and Residence of Child.	Number of Attendances made within the 12 months ending the 31st December	
<i>Harry Hargreaves.</i>	<i>1904</i>	<i>424</i>
	<i>1905</i>	<i>434</i>
<i>17. Strakey Lane</i>	<i>1906</i>	<i>405</i>
	<i>1907</i>	<i>433</i>
<i>Farnhill</i>	<i>1908</i>	<i>372</i>

Signed this *8th* day of *June* 19 *09*

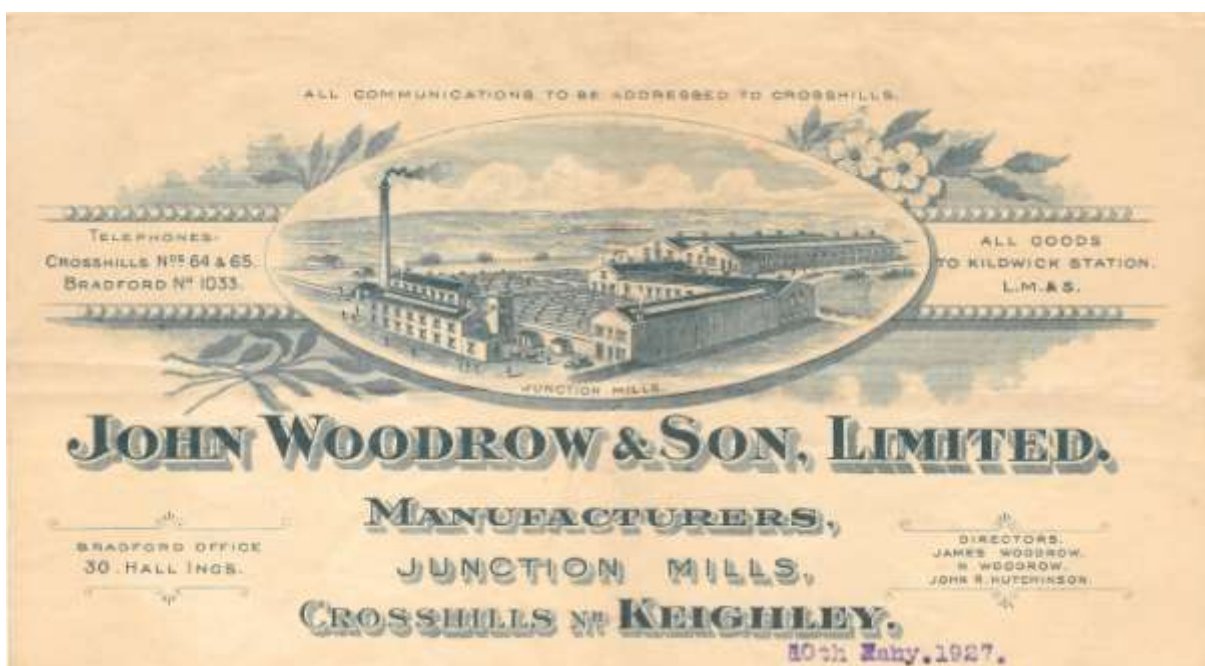
Thos. Appleby
Principal Teacher of the above-named School.

* Enter name in full, and state whether a Public Elementary, or Certified Efficient, School.

An attendance certificate signed by the headmaster of Kildwick school, Thomas Appleby
(Courtesy of Andrew Whittham and Jo Birtwhistle)

A large number of children leaving Kildwick school went to work in one of the local mills. This was certainly true of many of the 68 Farnhill WW1 Volunteers, almost all of whom began their working lives in a mill.

Charles Alexander Hargreaves (known as Alec) completed his education at Kildwick school in 1906 and went to work at Woodrow's Mill, at Junction.



Woodrow's Mill letterhead, 1927
(From the Farnhill and Kildwick Local History Group archive)

He remained there for the rest of his working life – apart from the period 1914 to 1918, when he was serving in the Army in France – beginning on the shop-floor and eventually rising to become assistant company secretary.

As he approached 50 years with the company, Alec wrote a memoir of his time working for them – transcribed below.

Alec Hargreaves' memoir of working at Woodrow's Mill

49 years at John Woodrow and Son Limited

Starting at John Woodrow and Son as a Reacher-In in the Twisting Department in the year 1906 at the age of thirteen, I have seen our firm grow from a very small one, to what is now, one of the most up-to-date in Yorkshire. In those days we were brought up the hard way, we started work at six o'clock in the morning, the first buzzer going at half past five and the next at ten minutes to six. We had half an hour for breakfast, one hour for dinner and work until half past five and on Saturdays we worked from six in the morning until half past twelve noon - all for the sum of nine shillings and six pence per week. No National Insurance or P.A.Y.E. !!

Our main production was Fancy Cotton Stripes and Checks, a big percentage going to F. Butterfield & Co.(Inc)Limited, Bradford, for shipment to South America and the rest to Export Merchants in Bradford and Manchester such as Henry Bronnert & Co., W.Albrecht & Co., and others. We also produced single twist Botany for Nuns Veiling and Wool Taffeta for shirtings.

It was a Family concern at this time, the Directors being James Woodrow and Steven Woodrow, both very hardy Scotsmen. Unfortunately, Mr. Stevy (as he was always called) had a serious illness a few years later and died at an early age. The other Principals were - Manager Mr. C.C.Barker, Designers, Mr. Wishart (another Scot) and Mr. C.Hanson, Warp Production and Dyeing, Mr. G.K.Carr (one of our great characters; it would take too long to describe him - just one hobby he had - Horse Racing and from 11 a.m. to 11.30 a.m. you could always find GKC on the "throne" behind the "Sporting Pink.") Mr. David Hanson was our Market Man for Bradford and Manchester, a quiet unassuming little fellow. Mr. J.Green was the Cashier and Mr. J.R.Hutchinson his Assistant. Mr. J.Laycock was chief of staff in the Piece Room Office and Order Department (what is now called in the modern conditions "Sales"). Mr. Bob Redman was our Shed Manager - a thorough bred "Cowenheader", Mr. Alf Smith (Ebenezer Alf) and Jim Brown were Assistants. Both Bob Redman and J.Laycock were God Fearing men and Local Preachers. Mr. Tom Mallinson was Warp Dressing Foreman and Mr. Ben Hutchinson, Twisting Foreman.

We employed about twelve loomers and twisters and at one time we had over thirty warp dressers. What characters we had - one remembers most Pete Smith, Ted Ogden, Tom Spencer (Long Tom as he was always called). It was a joy to Reach-In for Pete. He could earn much more than the others and have Monday off on the "Rant", which was quite a regular occurrence. He must have had an eye like a hawk to pin point the Nail Eye as he did. Of the Warp Dressers Smith Hindle and George Smith were the most outstanding. We had about 100 to 150 looms, 2 and 3 looms to a weaver.

I should be a Reacher-in for 1 or 2 years - at last becoming the Head Reacher-in of which I was very proud, then I was promoted to look after the Warp Department taking in warps from the Dyers and giving them out to the Warp Dressers. Most of the warps which were in a ball, came from Aykroyd & Grandage Ltd., Bradford - Members of the B.D.A. Ltd., and were brought by horse and waggon - calling at the Junction Hotel to water and feed their horses then forward to Skipton and on through Lancashire, returning through the night where the drivers often went to sleep the horses bringing them home they knew the road so well.

At this time, for better or worse I graduated to the Offices - doing various jobs a lad does on entering an office, working in the Designing, then the Sales and finally to the Counting House.

Mentioning horses above reminds me that Mr. James Woodrow came to the Office every morning in a carriage and pair, driving up to the front steps, his coachman being old Ben Craven who later became the Gardner when the first Daimler car arrived.

The mill kept working on Cotton for a few more years when Artificial Silk came on the market and I think that we were the first Manufacturers in the District to weave it; a specialist from Courtaulds Limited, Coventry coming to instruct us how to weave it. Since then we have been on Rayon Acetate and man made fibre yarns. We continued to be fairly busy and extended our plant with new buildings and improvements in machinery until the First World War. At this stage, although not a big concern as manufacturers go, we sent 72 of our workpeople to the H.M.Forces, eight of which paid the Supreme Sacrifice. Grant unto them Eternal Rest and may Light Perpetual shine upon them.

[Alec himself served throughout the war as a Private in the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding) Regiment.]



Alec Hargreaves, centre, with his sister Mary and brother Tom
(Photograph courtesy of Rosemary and Susan Hargreaves)

The few years following the war were very bad - trade being at a very low ebb and we had hard work to keep going. In 1922 Mr. C.C.Barker, Mr. C.Hanson and Mr. J.R.Hutchinson were appointed Directors along with Mr. J.Woodrow as the Governing Director and carried on until the death of Mr. J.Woodrow in 1927.

In 1924 we had a new Horizontal Steam Engine installed by Pollitt & Wignall Ltd., and in August 1924 it was christened in the usual manner named "NELLIE" after Mrs. Woodrow.

In 1931 another change was made a private Limited Company being formed, the Directors being - Sir J.D.Horsfall, C.C.Barker, T.W.Spaul and E.G.Dennison, Secretary - J.R.Hutchinson. For the next ten years or so under the leadership of E.G.D. we began to make progress again and new looms were installed, a new shed built and we also rented a mill at Blackburn and bought a weaving shed at Bradford which we later sold. In 1936 we bought the business of Philip Pariser & Son, Manchester, Merchants and Converters, which later changed its name to Parison Fabrics Limited who now have offices in Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. During this time we commenced to do our own converting and making-up and a portion of our grey warehouse was converted for this purpose, Mr. P.Jennings being in charge of this department. In 1945 we bought the Aire St. Works, Junction and transferred our making-up department thereto. Prior to this we had bought the Standard Shed which was again sold during the 1920/1921 depression, which incidentally was sold to our aforementioned Managers - Robert Redman and Alf Smith. In 1931 we installed a Generator for making our own Electricity.



Woodrow's Aire Street works, photographed c.1962
(Photograph courtesy of Keighley and District Digital Archive)

In 1935 the Company was floated into a Public Company, the Directors being Sir N.S.Seddon-Brown, E.G.Dennison (Managing Director) and Charles Sweeney. The Second World War came and we again sent 42 of our employees to H.M.Forces, 3 who paid the Supreme Sacrifice - Grant unto them Eternal Rest and may Perpetual Light Shine upon them. Still we continue to prosper and in 1949 our Mr. E.G.Dennison left us but still continued in the Textile Trade with mills at Haworth and Oxenhope.

Mr. Ben Lund succeeded Mr. Dennison as Managing Director and Mr. H.Lupton was appointed Secretary. At this period when we were running and had been running to full capacity for a long time and making quite a lot of money, we were looked upon like so many others have been by big combines and eventually taken over by The Great Universal Stores Limited and are today a subsidiary of G.U.S. Ltd. During this time we have completely modernised building a new shed holding 280 looms and reconstructed three old sheds to one up to date one holding another 200 or more looms and modern new offices.

Unfortunately, there is now another depression in the Textile Trade and we are only running half our looms but as in years gone by we are hoping for better times to come and know that with a plant like ours we shall once more be running to full capacity.



Woodrow's Universal Limited, with the old mill chimney behind; c.1987
(Photograph courtesy of Keighley and District Digital Archive)

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Looking back on the years spent at Junction Mills, one cannot forget the characters we had. Our old "boss" (as he was called) - "Jimmy Woodrow" - a fine fellow in his younger days, always a big cigar in his mouth but later owing to a liking for the bottle he became very moody and was very bad to work with. How well one remembers the rows he had with G.K.C. who was ever as stubborn as a mule when he wanted to be. Mr. Stevey another fine gentleman, in those early days always smoked 555 State Express, many's the time we Reachers-In have watched him walk round the yard, throw half a cig away then a rush to rescue it. Mr. C.C.Barker - another fine fellow but unfortunately could never say "No" to anyone and got himself into one or two tight corners and had to be helped out by Mr. Woodrow and Sir J.D.Horsfall. John Green - our crusty old cashier - wo' betide anybody who went for a pencil and did not produce a stub less than 1/4" long, or a Cross-legged Pen Nib.

J.R.Hutchinson later cashier and Secretary, a gentleman we were all sorry for, being affected with deafness for a number of years, got into a lot of trouble from some of the more impatient members of the staff. And I must'nt forget to mention "Little Johnny" J.W.Parkinson our Shed Manager - "They seek him here, they seek him there, those Damned (Tacklers) seek him everywhere." In answer to their requests for him to look at a loom he'd reply - "See T.Tempest or H.Greenwood - I haven't time - Mr. Dennison wants me" then he would say "My God - be quick - follow me....". What can one say of E.G.D. our Managing Director: When he came to us we were not in good circumstances but through his inspiration and guidance he brought us to the top again; a hard driver, tireless worker but for all his shortcomings a man you could admire and look up to. If he had'nt made a success in Textiles I'm sure he would have made a good S.M. in the Army - the way he used to shout - "Booth" - "Jennings" and "Alec - I can't make Robert understand a word" poor Robert. I must'nt forget to mention our Lady of the Lamp "Myra" who has been with us for so long and I am pleased to say after a few set-backs is still going strong. May she continue in good health until her retirement ... One must not forget Miss Florrie Tillotson who retired last year after 50 years faithful service as a weaver, better know'n by Tom Tempest as "Old Florrie", one of the best weavers we had and Tom would have more hairs on his head now if he had a few more like her. Another who is still working here after 50 years service - Harry Mallinson - who was recently presented with a Gold Watch.

One must not forget the two old Piece Lookers - E.Peel and T.Firth - "Flint Jack" as he was called; in cold weather he always had a dew drop on the end of his nose. There are several more employees with 30 to 40 years service - J. Hargreaves, A.D. Hargreaves, W. Dawson, J. Bottomley, W. Shuttleworth, T. Tillotson, Hy. Fearnley and maybe others I forget and of course - myself.

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We had several excursions to various places when funds permitted, namely - Wembley Exhibition , Blackpool several times and Southport and Appletreewick in the Old Waggonette drawn by a pair of fine horses.

C.A.H.

Postscript

Charles Alexander Hargreaves died 27/10/1979, in Airedale Hospital. He was aged 86.

Since 1887

the House of

WOODROW

has been producing

FINE FABRICS

★

John Woodrow & Son Ltd.

JUNCTION MILLS, CROSS HILLS
KEIGHLEY, YORKS.

An undated advertisement for Woodrow's
(Photograph courtesy of Keighley and District Digital Archive)

