

# HAGLEY MISCELLANEA

John-Homery Folkes



"The name of Hagley excites, in the  
cultivated mind, the conjoined recollections  
of eminent men whose never dying productions  
have attached to it an eternal celebrity"

Thomas Dugdale – 1830

## CONTENTS

	Page
Meadows into Houses	1
The Cottage and the Court	12
Living it up.	17
This Unpleasant Business	23
Letters on Sunday	38
Found Correct	40
Burial of the Dead	46
Backstairs to St. Saviour's	49
Winning a Strip of Land	51
This Nursemaid Question	53
Small Talk	58
Manor House or Villa?	67

## ILLUSTRATIONS

The drawing on the title and last pages was by J.P. Grazebrook from his notebook  
DESIGNS 1882

### Page

- 28 The leaflet distributed for the opening of the new Church Room in 1882 – later to become the Church Hall.
  - 29 The east front of the Church Room. A drawing made before extensions on this side were carried out for the purpose of improving it as a Church Hall in 1933.
  - 30 Toll Gate tickets dating 1859-1867.
  - 31 The Programme for an Entertainment, 1881.
  - 32 The front page of Hagley Gazette, 1887.
  - 33 J.P. Grazebrook's preliminary sketch for the altar at the parish church which he afterwards made substantially as first envisaged.
  - 34 Programme. Coronation Celebration, 1911.
  - 35 A share certificate for The Hagley Bowling and Tennis Club Limited.
  - 36 Rules of the Hagley Clothing Club 1885.
  - 37 Warrant to appear as a Juryman
- Tailpiece. A drawing by J.P. Grazebrook. 1882.

## FOREWORD

The life of the village, a community, a county passes from day to day in a natural-seeming sequence of events. Changes are accepted, or otherwise, but they are all part of the pattern. Men have memories and recollect past things, habits and customs of their day. They talk about them: then they are gone and nothing was recorded. One generation, two or three and the pattern is broken, the everyday picture lost.

The editor of Hagley Village News, writing in the issue for August 1972 on the demolition of the old Church Hall said "Time will be the great healer, they will have forgotten it by next year, no doubt, as we have forgotten, almost, what the village looked like ten years ago".

To reconstruct the picture, to discover the texture of the past, is the self-appointed task of the historian. His materials are often of the slightest; the printed or written ephemera of other times; scraps of paper, letters, bills that survived by chance. The written memories of men will do much for him. Here and there in unexpected places the bits turn up in the never ceasing search for the never quite completed puzzle of what was.

That is why I have brought together these disjointed and unconnected chapters on Hagley. They are no more than the reminiscing of a man beside his fire, or of browsing on quiet evenings through old letters and scrap books. Reading the diary of parents, or one's own, brings accuracy to memory with a wish that we had all been so much more explicit! Old boxes of old papers bring the delights of serendipity to add their tittle to the story.

They will not make a history of the place but they may serve to help the living, and those to come after us, to put together a little more of the past which so elusively runs away like bright water.

Crabtree Close,  
West Hagley

1974

## MEADOWS INTO HOUSES

"Hagley is not now the simple country village it was nine-and-thirty years ago, and much of the old order of things has passed away....."

The writer was the Rev. W.C. Gibbs, rector of Hagley, in the October 1902 Parish Magazine on the occasion of the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday of the Hon. John C. Lyttelton whose father, the then Lord Cobham, had celebrated his own majority 39 years previously in 1863. Seventy years later we may be forgiven for thinking that Hagley in 1902 was still a simple country village when comparing it with the Hagley we now know.

To enquire into the pattern of growth of Hagley, especially Lower Hagley, as it used to be known, leads to a valuable source of information; the sale catalogues of Auctioneers and old estate plans. They are the kind of thing which became rare because they were invariably thrown away when an auction sale was over. If they accumulate in an office the day comes when space is needed and history goes away to the salvage dépôt or to a bonfire. The sale of houses, or of large estates, with their descriptive "particulars", less exaggerated in the past than now, and the sale photographs are invaluable to the searcher. In the earlier part of the last century the "Particulars of Sale" were illustrated with charming lithograph drawings of the property. Such a one I have is of Wollaston Hall, sold in June 1859. Another is of Rockingham Hall when it was offered for sale leasehold in June 1874.<sup>1</sup> The house passed out of the Lyttelton ownership when Lord Cobham sold it in 1950 to the Titford Property Co. Ltd. who in turn sold it to Mr. Eric Burn in 1953 who was responsible for the changes there. If the prices at which houses or land were sold happen to have been written on the particulars a view into values and economics of the past is, sometimes surprisingly, opened up. Another aspect of the old property sales is that we learn the names of the local auctioneers, surveyors and solicitors, usually firms long since departed but sometimes continuing under altered titles.

The name Lower Hagley was always used until 1911. The name West Hagley first appears officially in Kelly's Directory in 1916, but it was spoken of as Lower Hagley for many years after that by the older inhabitants.

To look at the buildings of West Hagley makes it obvious that development began with the coming of the Wolverhampton – Worcester – Oxford Railway in 1852. Miss E.L. Grazebrook recorded that at first there was no station at Hagley, only a long plank on which season ticket holders could stand and pull a signal for the train to stop. Francis Grazebrook, writing of his youth at Hagley, remembered walking from The Court to the station in 1872 "which was then a square wooden box on the west side of the railway, slate roofed, and projecting eaves, and had an open shed only on the east side. The platforms were made of

<sup>1</sup> *The sale was caused by the death of the owner, William Charles Firmstone and his wife in that year, leaving fourteen children.*