

Oakwood a Hundred Years Ago: Some Newspaper Notes.

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2012 marks the centenary of the incorporation of Oakwood and district into Leeds.

To mark the occasion in 1912 a local weekly newspaper, the New Leeds News, came into being in the September. It was later to change its name to the North Leeds News. This article relates some of the items reported in this paper, news and articles which are both serious and trivial - in other words the stuff of interesting journalism. The newspaper is on microfilm in Leeds Local Studies Library.

The Sept 20th issue reports that a year or two previously plans and a prospectus for a zoo at Roundhay fell through. It reports that there is currently a proposal to move Halifax Zoo to a park near Leeds. A reader or readers is asking if it is true that negotiations have been opened for the transfer of the Halifax Zoo to Gipton Wood??!! Another reader in the next week's issue asks, however, whether the Gipton Zoo proposal is a case of kite flying.

The excessive speed of tramcars is a complaint at this time. There is an article in the Sept 27th issue complaining that they often exceed the 20 m.p.h. limit on Street Lane. The Oct 4th issue has a graphic account of how ... "only the other week a well-known Street Lane resident, when descending from the top of a car to the platform in preparation for alighting, was flung violently into the roadway by the terrifying oscillation of the car as it travelled at a rate easily exceeding the speed limit of motorists. He was very severely cut about the knees and face and ... his clothes suffered not a little." He was compensated.

Still on the subject of trams, business people complained that rush hour trams ran at 20 minute intervals; later in the day at 10 minute intervals!

The October 4th issue has a historical article about Harehills in 1892. It relates how Harehills School, then just opened,

on the outskirts of the town, and beyond that, with the exception of a few scattered houses, and the row near the Gipton Inn, nothing but fields lay between the school mentioned and Roundhay Park. The article describes Shepherds Lane at that time as a "sylvan country lane", leading to the farms and pond, and barred at each end by a gate. The pond was a popular rendezvous for skaters in winter. Harehills Avenue is described as being then an exceedingly rough and dirty cart-track, very lonely at nights and with not too good a reputation! A few houses were being erected in 1892 at the east end of Harehills Avenue, and the article reports that the young lads of the families who had come from the smoke of the town to reside there entered into a "very Paradise". Back in 1892 many happy hours had been spent in the fields now covered by the Markham Avenue estate, Avenue Hill, Hilton Road, the "Roundhays" and Harehills Lane east. The writer reports that 1892 was many years before The [Harehills] Parade was built, and the Bar House, at the junction of Harehills Lane and Roundhay Road, was where children went for sweets. The old Bar House, once containing the only postbox in the vicinity, was still there in 1912.

The Nov 8th issue reports the final meeting of the Roundhay Parish Council (which covered Oakwood) on Nov 2nd. They discussed changes which had occurred during the previous 18 years or so, listing the introduction of street lighting, sewage disposal improvement, the introduction of electricity for household purposes, and the coming of the tram service. The next issue reports that Roundhay Parish Council joined up with Leeds on Nov 9th, and it describes how Roundhay Mansion had what we would describe as a Teresa May moment by applying for three "extensions" for charitable functions a day early.

The Nov 22nd issue describes a fox hunt which ended in a kill opposite the Gipton Wood Inn, the fox having been pursued through the gardens of the Oakwood estate until it crossed the Harehills Colliery railway and returned to Gipton Wood, where it jumped the wall into Roundhay Road and was so upset by a passing tram that it hesitated and was caught.

The Dec 6th issue describes the new Harehills Picture House in glowing terms, listing its splendid frontage, entrance in white Ceramo with a dome of the same material, a loggia of palatial conception with marble tilings, handsomely carpeted staircases, rich tapestry panels in oak framings, ceiling artistically decorated in white relief. It had a lounge and tea rooms, which had a clear view of the screen.

These issues also contain brief biographies of local people, such as Lord Allerton, Lord Airedale, R H Barran, Baron Nicholson and John Gordon, together with other items of local interest, such as the story of the prosecution of a farmer of Oak Tree farm for having a cow with tuberculosis, and a proposal to move Queen Victoria's statue from the Town Hall to Roundhay Road to stop it corroding.