

clearances, single and multiple extractions for the relief of toothache, became a thing of the past. In fact, in my final years of practice, extractions were very rarely carried out and the General Anaesthetic machine, together with the old foot engines of fifty to sixty years ago, became museum pieces.

General Anaesthetics are not now permitted to be carried out in general practice, because it is considered safer to have extractions under General Anaesthetic carried out in hospitals and centres where modern means of resuscitation are present.

As a result of the decrease in the number of extractions being carried out, and the improvements in filling materials and conservation techniques, crowns, bridges, veneers and implants have replaced partial and full dentures. Cosmetic dentistry is therefore in great demand. Also, as a result of the speciality of periodontics, fewer teeth are being lost because of gum and other oral tissue problems. Implantology is also a speciality, which is much in demand.

Other improvements during my career include the use of rubber gloves and facemasks to prevent cross-infection, central suction to remove excess saliva, ultrasonic scalers to provide rapid removal of calculus [tartar] deposits, cosmetic dentistry, and more efficient sterilisation of instruments by the use of autoclaves instead of boiling water.

In addition, advances in technology have resulted in the use of lasers, digital radiography, magnification lenses, and even microscope attachments. Eye strain is now a thing of the past, as with the magnification produced, the tiniest pulp canals, root orifices, and margins for fillings and crown and bridge work can now be seen easily, making the finished article unbelievably perfect. Mouth mirrors can also have an extremely tiny camera attached to show the work being carried out on the teeth on a television screen in the surgery, so that the patient can view the whole procedure.

Looking back, I enjoyed my many years in practice, and always attended post-graduate courses to keep up to date with advanced techniques and improved materials. Even after retirement, I have maintained my registration, and such has been my interest, I still attend post-graduate lectures.

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Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to the *Yorkshire Evening Post* Newspapers and the Dental Hospital Reference Library for allowing me to use their photographs and reference documents.

8. DREAM BUILDERS: THE THOMPSONS OF GOLDEN ACRE

by Tony Shelton

There are dream builders as well as brick builders and the dream builders really lay the foundations for the brick builders.

THE STORY OF BLACKPOOL, A Clarke, 1923

AT THE EDGE OF ST JOHN'S CHURCHYARD, Roundhay, under a tall yew, stands a family memorial (Figure 1). It is made of black and grey polished granite and takes the form of a classical temple with a domed roof graced by a stone dove of peace. The black base has space for a whole dynasty of inscriptions but carries only three:

IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR HUSBAND AND
FATHER
HERBERT WRIGHT THOMPSON
FELL ASLEEP SEPTEMBER 8TH 1928 IN HIS 61ST
YEAR
"LIFE'S WORK WELL DONE"

ALSO ANNIE ELIZABETH,
WIFE TO THE AFORESAID
BORN JAN 6TH 1871, PASSED TO A HIGHER LIFE,
FEB 7TH 1943

ALSO FRANK TEMPLE THOMPSON, SON OF THE
ABOVE
PASSED ON 20TH AUG. 1950 AGED 53 YEARS

The Thompsons are not famous but in their hey-day they became well known in Leeds as entrepreneurs who helped make the modern city, reflecting and helping to fashion their changing times. They built several hundred houses, the *Parkway Hotel* and, after creating the first Golden Acre Park, provided, out of necessity, the land for the second. In two short-lived generations they gained and lost wealth and experienced both success and failure. For all this and for the memories they created, the Thompsons deserve to be better remembered.

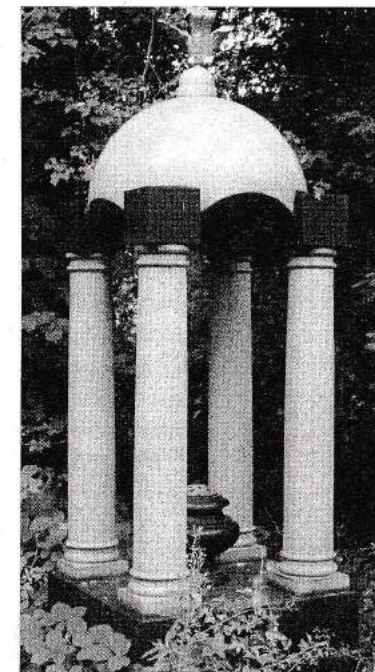


Figure 1. The Thompson family memorial, proud to be different and marking a rise and fall in two generations.

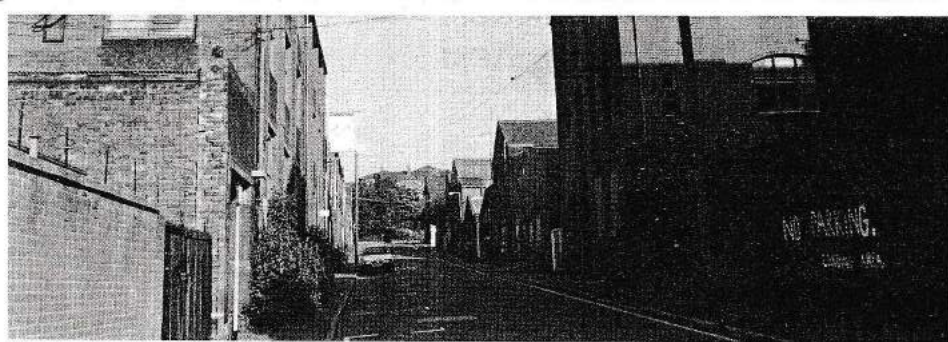


Figure 2. Concord Street, off North Street: the location of Herbert's 1992 joiner's yard (*Slater's Directory*, 1892); the only street in the old Leylands district to survive to the present day with most of its buildings intact.

East Side, West Side, All Around the Town¹

Herbert Wright Thompson was born on 27 June, 1868 in Recovery Street, Burmantofts to Ann (formerly Wright) and Reuben, an illiterate stonemason.² Herbert became a joiner but was evidently ambitious and by the age of twenty-four he was running his own firm which soon expanded into general building (Figure 2).³ His first projects included lock-up shops on Skinner Lane, built in about 1892, and four houses on Sholebroke Avenue, Chapeltown, started in 1893.⁴

On 13 April 1895, Herbert married Annie Eliza Temple at St George's Church, Leeds. Annie was born in 1871 to Annie Jane (formerly Welburn) and Wilson Temple, a boot maker who lived in a back-to-back in Jermyn Street, one of the 'alphabet' streets off Kirkstall Road. The new couple first lived in Sunny Bank Street, a mixed city centre community of shops, tradesman and modest residencies (Figure 3).⁵

Before long, though, Herbert had established a family tradition of occupying, prior to selling, new houses in his own developments: this was clearly an economical way of putting a roof over Thompson heads. By 1896, his firm was erecting large numbers

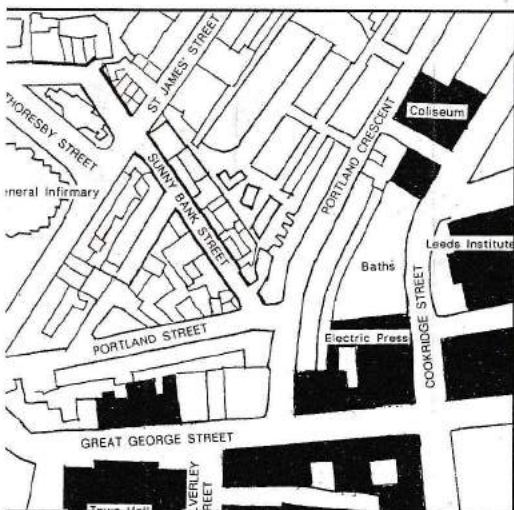


Figure 3. Sunnybank Street, Herbert and Annie Eliza's first address. It was demolished in the early years of the last century to make way for the construction of Calverley Street, Leeds Civic Hall and gardens and the Brotherton Wing of the Leeds General Infirmary. The site of its southern end now lies within the city's new Millennium Square. Buildings from Herbert's time, which still stand, are shown solid. Based on OS 1908 edition.

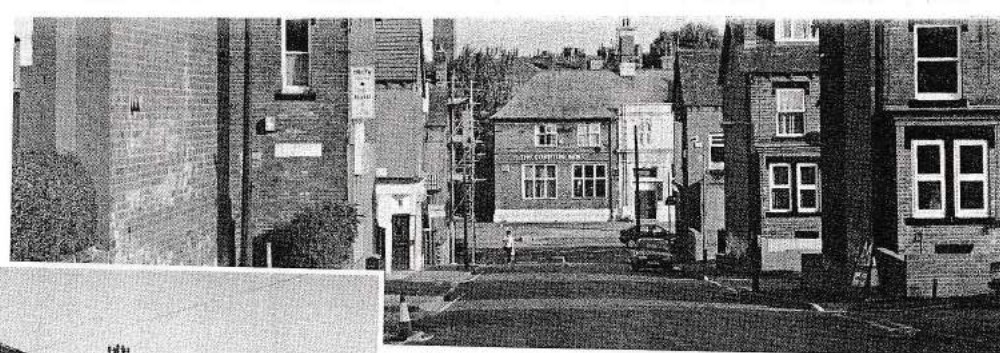


Figure 4. Herbert's houses: a) The Sutherlands and Comptons, Harehills, built in the 1890s; the architect was Charles Dodgson of Roundhay Road; b) The Crossflatts, Beeston Road, built in the 1900s.

of back-to-back and through terraced houses in the expanding Harehills Lane area: the Sutherlands, Stanleys and

Brownhills are all Thompson-built (Figure 4).⁶ It was at 170, Harehills Lane, that Frank Temple, the Thompson's only child and the main character in this story, was born on 6 February 1897.⁷

By the end of the century, Herbert was busy developing on the edge of the city at Beeston: between 1903 and about 1912, he built several hundred houses in the Crossflatts area, off Beeston Road. At the same time, he ventured into the select suburb of Roundhay. There, from 1904 to about 1925, he built a mixed row of shops and houses (including one for the family) now known as Street Lane Parade (Figure 5).⁸

Figure 5. Herbert Thompson's Street Lane Parade; at the end, slightly smaller than their neighbours, are what were originally the four houses of Queen's Terrace, the Thompsons' home for twelve years.

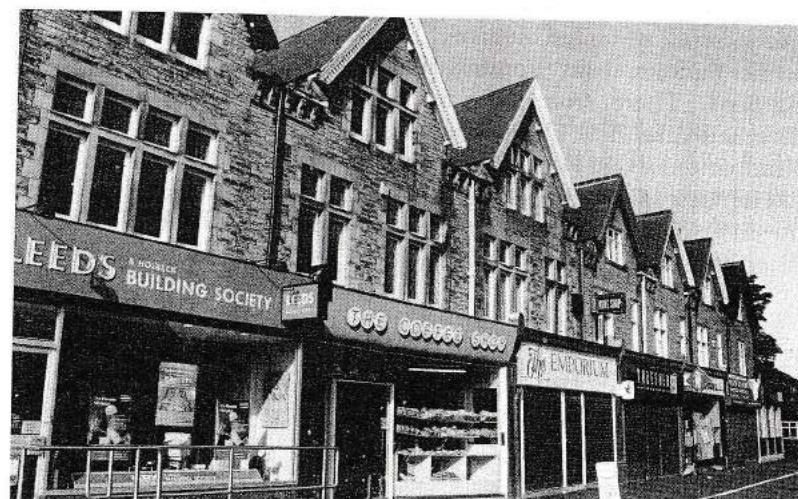




Figure 6. a) Three of the Thompson villas on Old Park Road (with a later infilling); b) Kornah, Old Park Road, the family home until 1930; built in 1916 by Herbert and designed by Luwee Harris, somewhat in the Arts and Crafts vernacular style pioneered in the 1890s by architects such as Voysey and Lutyens. Its generous exterior proportions were matched by its interiors, which boasted wood panelling and imposing fireplaces. Many features have been retained including, in the kitchen, the bells with which the Thompsons would summon their servant(s).



Some twelve years later Herbert provided his family with a permanent home, also in Roundhay, to match their established wealth and status. Shortly before the First World War, Herbert had taken advantage of the sale of the late Charles Ryder's Gledhow Hill estate. As part of a complex deal the Leeds Corporation gained land for Roundhay School (opened in 1926) and a strip for the widening of Gledhow Lane (1915) and Herbert was able, so it was later reported, to offer the mansion and gardens for the use of convalescing wounded soldiers.⁹ For himself he acquired a piece of prime building land fronting on to Old Park Road and Ryder Gardens. There, from 1916 until the early 1920s, he built seven detached villas. The Thompsons soon moved into the corner house, Number One, Old Park Road, and named it Kornah (Figure 6).¹⁰

The 'new look' of Kornah and the other Old Park Road houses is the work of Luwee Harris, an architect closely associated with the Thompsons and their projects (Figure 7). Harris was born in 1866

and Leeds before moving to London in 1887. He returned to Leeds around the turn of the century and built up his own successful architectural and surveying practice. His commission, for the Street Lane development, led to others for the Old Park Road houses, the Hawksnest estate in Alwoodley and, from the late 1920s, the Golden Acre Estate and Golden Acre Park, of which more later.¹⁴ He lived in Bramhope and became a member of Wharfedale Rural District Council and Joint Hospital Board.¹¹ He is best remembered, though, for a family tragedy. In 1932, Luwee junior, his son and partner, drowned in the Golden Acre lake in the park designed by his father.¹²



Figure 7. The Thompsons' favourite architect, Luwee Harris, senior with his wife Elizabeth. Courtesy of Betty Maiden

You Ought to be in Pictures¹³

After the war, Herbert's house building continued, but at a slower pace. Much of his energy was now diverted to his new business, the renting and distribution of silent movies, in association with his brother Charles. He later moved into cinema ownership, too, buying the Harehills Picture House. In those early days the movie business was decidedly risky but there were fortunes to be made and Herbert could now afford to take chances.¹⁴

The films themselves were of dubious quality. An easy-to-follow recipe was laid down, not without tongue in cheek one hopes, in the *Bioscope* magazine in 1922:

*...certain things can always be relied on to please such as romance presented with sincerity. Baby scenes always get over. Even the lowest mental types enjoy peeps into furrin parts...women especially like a good cry. But the end must strike a happy note.*¹⁵

Into this chaotic business entered the young Herbert Wilcox, a one-time journalist and professional billiards player. In 1920 Wilcox founded a distribution company, Astra Films, and, in the same year, came to Leeds. He announced a 'gigantic producing scheme' in partnership with Herbert Thompson, who set up his own production

Breed of the Treshams (1920), starred stage actor Sir John Morton Harvey.¹⁶ However, in 1922, Wilcox moved on to greater things and, in a long career, founded Elstree Studios and the British National Film Company, produced many prominent British films and made a star of Anna Neagle who he eventually married.¹⁷

With director Kenelm Foss, Thompson continued to produce films at the same speed with which he had once built houses. Most were based on sentimental novels and stage melodramas, all, according to film historian Rachael Low, 'tasteless and made with complete contempt for the audience'.¹⁸ They included *The Virgin Queen* with Lady Diana Manners which was partly shot at Temple Newsam, *All Roads Lead to Calvary*, Dicky Monteith and, in 1921, numerous *Wonderful Adventures of Pip, Squeak and Wilfred*. One of Herbert's last films, *The Romance of Old Baghdad* (1927), was not well received though: by then public taste was outgrowing the silent movie formula. The actors were little, if ever, known unless you count illustrious-sounding names like Manora Thew, HV Tollemache and J Nelson Ramsaye. But Thompson films provided early chances for some who would achieve prominence in theatre and film: Miles Malleon (*The Headmaster*), Zena Dare (*No 5 John Street*) and Fay Compton (*House of Peril*).¹⁹

Down the River of Golden Dreams²⁰

Herbert Thompson's last and most ambitious building project was very much a father and son venture. Frank had spent much of the First World War in Egypt as Private M2 177360 in the Royal Army Service Corps and, on his return to Leeds, had joined his father's businesses, enjoying at the same time the lifestyle of a rich man's only son with the prospect of a substantial inheritance.²¹ He became the

Figure 8. Young man about town Frank Thompson (centre) and friends in the 1920s with his Crossley 25/30 tourer, a large (15 feet long) and expensive (£1375 in 1920) status symbol; the model was also used by royalty. Donated in 1985 by Mrs Smith-Goode, now courtesy of Eric Cope; information from Mike Worthington-Williams, *Classic Car Mart* magazine.



summary well to do friends, some of whom were later to be persuaded to invest in his ventures (Figure 8).²² He acquired a fine car, a wife, Lillian Christine Harling (formerly Vogel) and the first of many fine houses, Dyneley Hall in Bramhope.²³

In 1925 Herbert acquired 300 acres of poor-to-middling farmland between Adel and Bramhope: Blackhill Well Farm and Breary Grange Farm were remnants of the old Cookridge estate, which had been broken up in 1919.²⁴ There were houses to be built and another fortune to be made. The land became, on paper at least, the Golden Acre Estate after, it was said, the colour of the local stone (Figure 9).²⁵ The prospects looked favourable since the market for owner-occupied houses was beginning to grow: the post war economy was improving, building societies were becoming more generous and city dwellers were developing aspirations to a life in the country.²⁶

Luwee Harris was commissioned to draw up plans for three large estates of detached and semi-detached houses with such prestigious road names as King's and Marlborough.²⁷ The inhospitable-sounding Marsh Lane which ran through the middle of two planned estates was given its present name of King's Road.

Something to Remember You By²⁸

All was set for the Golden Acre Estate to become a Yorkshire 'Metroland' but in 1928, before many houses could be built, the 'well known builder... who had made Leeds the great film city it is..' suddenly died.²⁹ The business passed to his widow and son. In 1930, Annie Eliza sold Kornah and moved to Scarborough.³⁰ As for Frank, it was later said by his employee Henry Haigh that he became richer by some £128,000, the equivalent of £4-5 million at today's values.³¹ Opportunity beckoned.

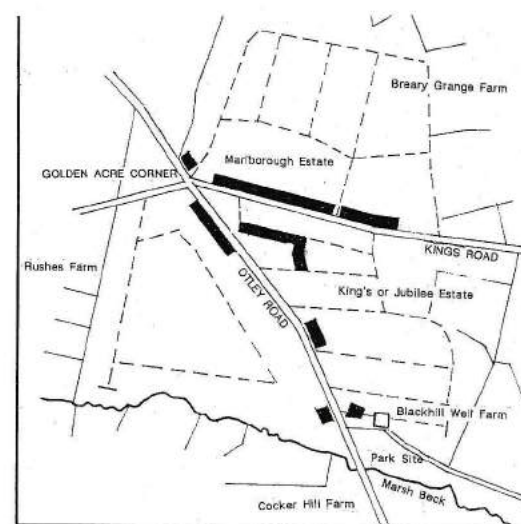


Figure 9. The development of the Golden Acre Estate as planned by the Thompsons. The houses built are shown as solid shapes. Based on building plans held by West Yorkshire Archives Service, Leeds.

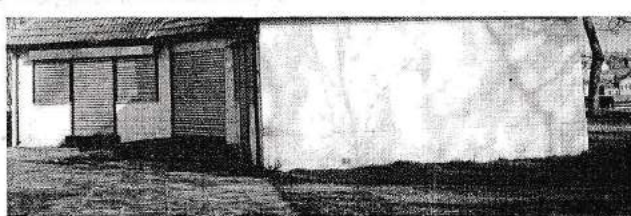


Figure 10. Herbert's memorial: a) Donor Frank Thompson and recipient, probably Mr GH Clapshaw, secretary of the Woodhouse Moor Veterans' Association, inspecting the new Woodhouse Moor shelter in 1935. Courtesy Yorkshire Post Newspapers; b) the building in 2000, converted to a Tandoori take-away after a period as The Pavilion, a women's photography centre.

The son would often pay public tribute to his father, recounting that he had 'built most of Beeston, Cross Flatts, the Compton Road district and a lot of Holbeck' and in 1935 he presented the city with a permanent memorial. In 1933, the Woodhouse Moor Veterans' Association had approached Frank Thompson for an estimate for constructing a veterans' shelter on Woodhouse Moor. 'I quoted them nothing,' said Thompson; 'I thought it was a very worthy cause'. The resulting building was spacious with large windows, a veranda and clock tower, all in 'Old English' style. It was opened on 22 July by the Lord Mayor, Alderman Hemingway, who said that there was no better way for a man to keep the memory of his parents green. The shelter would, said the Lord Mayor, 'be cared about and used forever' but, as with many a politician's oratory, this was hope dressed as prediction.³² The shelter still exists but only after a fashion (Figure 10).

It's the Talk of the Town³³

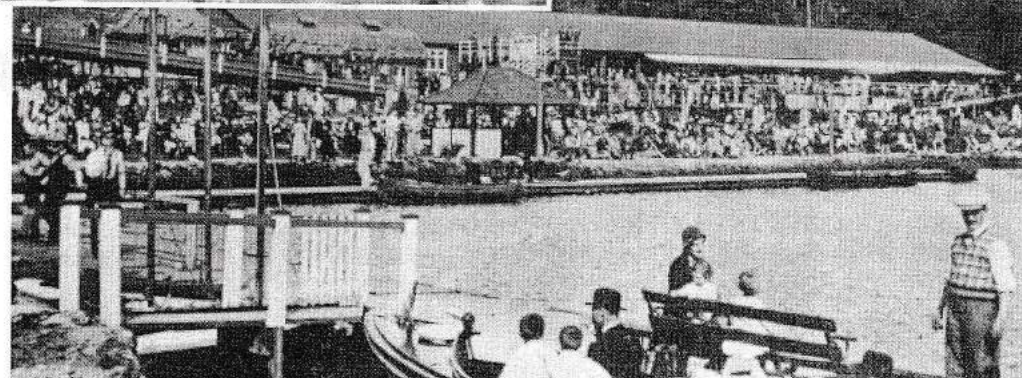
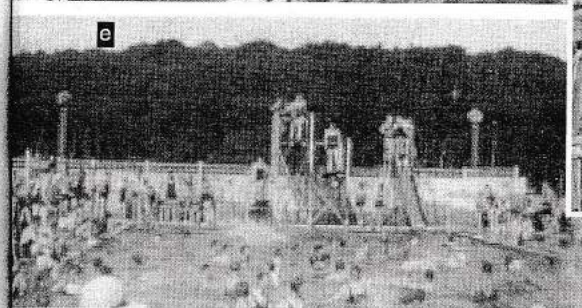
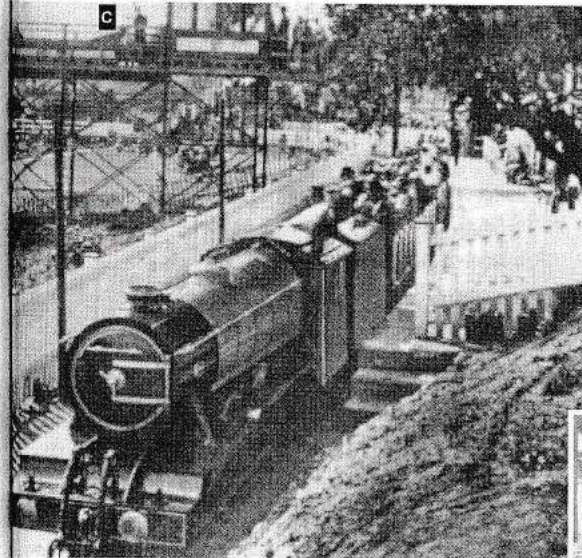
Meanwhile, in 1928, there was also another, more exciting venture, a dream of his late father's, the creation of the Golden Acre amusement park (Figure 11). Frank travelled across the Atlantic to collect ideas from Coney Island, the acme of amusement parks and, after two or more years of planning and construction, the Golden Acre Park was opened just in time for Easter 1932 by the Lord Mayor, assisted by stage star Jack Buchanan, and a grand firework display. Attendances reached up to 30,000 on the first Whitsun holiday weekend and 175,000 in the first season.³⁴ In 1933 Thompson sold the park land and fixtures to the new Golden Acre Park Co Ltd in return for cash, shares and a managing director's salary of £500 a year.³⁵ Success looked assured, though not that of



Tennis. Pitch and Putt Golf. Aeroflight. Mono-Rail. Mountain Glide. Ponies. Donkeys. Children's Playground and Paddling Pool. DANCING IN THE WINTER GARDENS.
The Ideal Open-Air Entertainment Centre
Free Car Park for Motor Cars and Buses



Figure 11. The hey-days of Golden Acre Park a) all the fun of the Park (from a brochure of 1934); b) the boating lake, a re-creation of the 1825 New Adel Dam and holiday crowds; c) the miniature railway, completed 1933; its two engines are now working at Woburn Safari Park; d) The Galleon Cafe, built 'on continental lines'; e) the (very cold) Blue Lagoon pool, opened in 1934 and finally closed in 1965; f) the 1933 Winter Gardens dance hall, a source of memories and romances. Courtesy of Leeds Leisure Services, Mrs Hodgson and Bill Rowling



Kirkgate Leeds. This opened and closed within the year, having attracted local criminals and police concern.³⁶

Life is Just a Bowl of Cherries³⁷

During the first years of the 1930s, Frank Temple Thompson lived the life of a successful entrepreneur. He had a new wife too, whose tastes matched his own. His first, short-lived, marriage had ended when Lilian divorced him and in 1929 he had married Alice May Campbell. May's first marriage, to Captain John Erwin Campbell, had produced a son, Kenneth, born in 1919, but had also ended in divorce. Frank became a 'good stepfather' to Kenneth whose name was changed to Thompson.³⁸ In about 1931, the new couple moved from Dyneley Hall (always May's favourite house) into Red Roof, a large Thompson-built detached villa on Kings Road which boasted a specially-built small ballroom³⁹ (Figure 12). There, for three or four years, Frank and May lived the life of a wealthy couple of the new age with, thanks to May, a touch of show business.

May had been a keen swimmer but in about 1921 an accident in Leeds baths had seriously damaged her back leaving her with a lifelong and increasingly severe disability. From then on she walked with the aid of a stick but that did not prevent her from treading the boards, appearing in productions by the Leeds Sylvans and Leeds Amateur Operatic Society.⁴⁰ However, it was as a songwriter that she claimed her



Leeds Woman's New Dance Tune

HOW JACK PAYNE
HELPED HER

MISS MAY THOMPSON, of King's Road, Otley Road, Leeds, is having one of her dance tunes featured by Jack Payne's band.

Miss Thompson is better known as the wife of Mr. Frank Thompson, the proprietor of Golden Acre Park and the Harehills Cinema. About a year ago she wrote the words

Figure 13. May Thompson hits the (local) headlines. From the *Yorkshire Evening Post* 29.12.1932.

Courtesy of Yorkshire Post newspapers

Figure 12 a) Red Roof, King's Road, Frank and May's Thompson-built home from 1931 to about 1935 and the frontage flagship of the planned Marlborough estate. Courtesy of Margaret Watson
b) The house in 2000. The ballroom is now a ground floor flat.

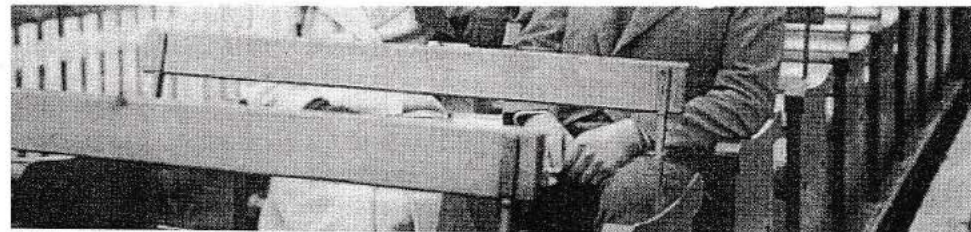
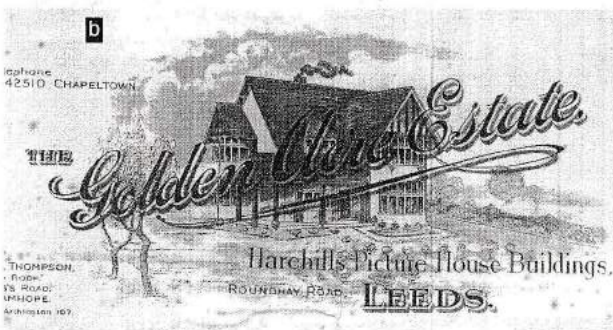


Figure 14. Anna Neagle, the popular British film star, with Frank Thompson aboard the Golden Acre train, probably in May 1933 when she launched *May Thompson*, the miniature railway's second engine. Anna Neagle was, of course, the protegee (and later wife) of film producer Herbert Wilcox, once the partner-in-films of Frank's father Herbert. This photograph was taken by the late Roy Neill, a prominent Leeds amateur film-maker of the day, some of whose movie footage of Golden Acre still survives. Courtesy of Alastair Corson.

moment in the limelight. She was a accomplished pianist and had written songs since childhood. She played her compositions for friends at Red Roof (Figure 13). In 1932, she scored her first success, a ballad fox-trot called *A Four Leaf Clover*:

Only two days later (after writing the song), when dining in London, she was presented with a glass four leaf clover and later was given a four-leaf clover plant. She looked upon these incidents as favourable omens.⁴¹

Her greatest success came in 1934 when she and her latest opus were introduced to none other than Gracie Fields. *I'm a Failure* (a prophetic title, perhaps, in view of later events) was injected into the latest of Our Gracie's films, *Love, Life and Laughter*, a light-hearted treatment of the Nell Gwyn story.⁴² On the strength of this, it was recorded by the bands of Roy Fox, Ray Noble (vocal by no less than Al Bowlly), Jack Payne and Jay Wilbur.⁴³



May and Frank clearly loved show business and show people and May's friendship with stars of stage and screen brought many to Red Roof, including Anna Neagle, Gracie Fields, the film comedian Sidney Howard, Charles Laughton and May's special friend Ivor Novello (Figure 14). Some would be enticed to the park, too, to perform openings, pose for press photographers and mingle with visitors. (Figure 15).⁴⁴

Figure 15. Teddy Brown a renowned xylophonist, vocalist and Café de Paris bandleader, was a popular visitor to Leeds theatres and to Golden Acre and introduced May to Gracie Fields.

Courtesy of Bill Rowling.

may have seen the world, too. Much of her first marriage had been spent farming in Kenya and she had travelled to India. It was her idea to combine her wanderlust with Frank's interest in the movies by making a travel film of a trip to Palestine and Egypt.⁴⁶ Its motives were scientific, patriotic and, no doubt, commercial. Thompson's motto was 'Keep the British film flag flying' and his aim to outdo the best that Hollywood could produce. Moreover, the whole enterprise was underpinned by a moral purpose. 'People are getting tired of so much slapstick, dope drama and sex plays,' he pronounced in 1931. The thousands of feet of film were edited into a three-part talkie, said to be the first to be made by a Leeds man. There were shots of Marseilles, Cairo, Luxor, the Garden of Gethsemane, Jericho and a Jerusalem sunset scene of shepherds and their flocks which might, according to a breathless reviewer, 'have been composed by an artist who wished to convey to the spectator that time had stood still for centuries...' There were also 'human, amusing or charming incidents' and May's commentary contained, according to Frank, 'what the Americans call wisecracks', possibly helping to compensate for the lack of sex. *There and Back* received a trade showing in 1932 at the Leeds Rialto but, to date, no trace can be found of what would now be a fascinating glimpse of the Near East of seventy years ago. There was talk of another filmic journey, to the Rocky Mountains, but it is doubtful if this ever came about.⁴⁷

You Can't Have Everything⁴⁸

From his father Frank had inherited the Harehills Picture House, which served for a while as his business address, and an interest in buying more cinemas including, it is said, the Capitol, Meanwood.⁴⁹ In 1937 he acquired the Cottage Road cinema in Far Headingley, intending to replace it with a new cinema on the nearby St Anne's Road allotments. Plans were submitted for a prestigious building in half-timbered style, supposedly in keeping with the neighbourhood, and with parking for 140 cars. The owners of the Lounge cinema, just around the corner, felt threatened. Louis Mannix, who worked there, suspected Thompson, a 'spectre on the horizon', of being well in with the city fathers, of oiling the wheels by providing the Woodhouse Moor Shelter.⁵⁰ Opposition to the cinema development was mounted

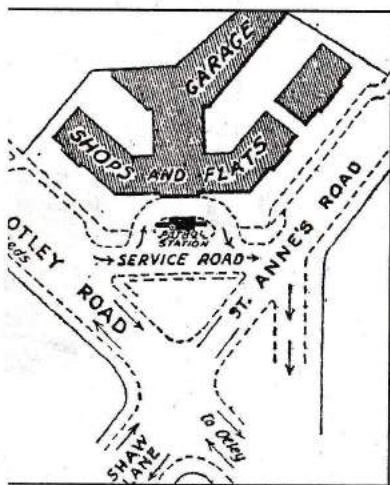


Figure 16. Thompson's fall back plan for the St Anne's allotments, Headingley, 1938. From *Yorkshire Evening Post* 10.6.1938.

Courtesy Yorkshire Post Newspapers

traffic grounds. In 1938, needing to make a return on the cost of the land, Thompson put in a new plan for shops and flats with a garage (Figure 16). Ingenious to the last and no doubt taking heed of the news from Munich, he offered to add an underground bomb and gas proof shelter. The council's Air Raid Precautions Committee welcomed this and the plan was approved in principle but never built. The Cottage Road cinema was soon sold to today's owners, Associated Tower Cinemas.⁵¹ During the war, Thompson was to make one final attempt to gain permission for a new cinema but this proposal, for a site at Golden Acre Corner, had no chance of success.⁵²

You're a Builder Upper⁵³

Much of what we know about Frank Temple Thompson comes from the local press. He used the local papers in a very modern way to promote his preferred image, that of a successful businessman, patriot and benefactor (Figure 17). He dressed the part, too, never being photographed in anything but an immaculate suit with well-trimmed and brilliantined hair. He is said to have been a flamboyant figure with a 'John Wayne' swagger, a big man, especially to those, like Gracie Dring who remember him from their childhood. When she was six years old, Thompson chose her as his dancing partner to inaugurate the Cocoonut Grove dance floor at his *Parkway Hotel*.⁵⁴

Those close to Frank Thompson witnessed his kindness but as an employer he was a shrewd, hard taskmaster, capable of sharp mood swings and, according to some of his workers, not over-generous. General staff at Golden Acre Park received no more than £3 a week for six days (including Sunday) with plenty of unpaid overtime.⁵⁵ Henry Haigh, son of William, the last tenant of Blackhill Well Farm,



Introduction

In publishing this new Brochure giving some particulars of the attractions to be found at Golden Acre Park, I wish to thank all previous visitors for their patronage, and to express the hope that they have always enjoyed themselves to the full.

To others who have not yet spent any time in the Park, my colleagues and myself extend a hearty welcome and assure them that they will have "The Time of Their Lives."

In past seasons we have been successful in giving thousands upon thousands of people many a happy hour; we have laid ourselves out to provide amusements and entertainment cheaply and healthily and intend to continue this policy.

During the coming season old friends will find new pleasures awaiting them. Newcomers will marvel at the variety and completeness of our plans for their entertainment, and this Brochure has been prepared to give them just a few details of the wonderful times they may expect.

We look forward to seeing you all this season. Don't fail to pay a visit to Yorkshire's Premier Pleasure Park... your first visit will not be your last!

Frank Thompson

Managing Director.

Figure 17. The Frank Thompson presence: the characteristic powerful glare for the camera (his smile was never captured in his middle years) together with a sample of his publicity. From a 1935 Park Brochure. Courtesy Bill Rowling.

maintenance, manning the entry kiosks and driving the miniature train. At the age of ninety-one, he recalled an example of Thompson's attitude to workers and to expenditure. The versatile Henry had been instructed to service one of the railway engines, manufactured by Hudswell Clarke's of Hunslet, a job which took the whole of one Sunday:

*Then Thompson rolls up about five o'clock...he opens his wallet and n'owt but five pound notes. He says 'I can't give you 'owt now, I haven't any change'. [Later] he gave us ten bob apiece - and it would have cost him a guinea an hour at Hudswell Clarke's.*⁵⁶

Thompson was, however, capable of generous and friendly gestures. When the Winter Gardens ballroom had been completed in only 6 weeks he treated all the 180 workers involved to a slap-up dinner.⁵⁷ The Mawson family of neighbouring Cocker Hill Farm instance his presenting the Parkway's first pint to Joe Mawson as he ploughed in the fields across the road and a congratulatory telegram sent to Tom and Sybil on their wedding day in 1943.⁵⁸

Henry Haigh observed the convivial side of Thompson, as he liked to be called by intimates, and his fondness for drinking with his business associates:

*Well it used to be laughable on a night - about six o'clock you'd see them all come out of the office, Thompson, Beevers [his head clerk], Scott [Arthur Scott the company secretary] and one or two more and then off to the Three Horseshoes at Headingley.*⁵⁹

There were evenings, too, spent in the company of architect Luwee Harris, sampling his home-made beer. Others invited to these sessions would run the risk of arriving home in the small hours very much the worse for wear.⁶⁰

Business, family and friendship all tended to become mixed. Thompson-built houses provided homes for May's mother and for the Lennard family. Bob Lennard, a skilled joiner and foreman, had begun his career working for Herbert and went on to help build houses on the Golden Acre Estate and create the park and to manage maintenance at the *Parkway Hotel*. He and his wife, Florence were also friends of Frank and May and they built up a fine collection of souvenir gifts from the Thompsons travels: Margaret Watson, the Lennards' daughter remembers 'a miniature Empire State Building, a ten-gallon hat, a picture of Nice and a mini-camel from Egypt'. In 1930, when Bob and Florence married Thompson not only sent

by the park entrance, and lent them the necessary £900.⁶¹

Darn That Dream⁶²

In about 1935 the Thompsons moved house again to Ladywell House in Oakwood, but, by now, signs were appearing that all was not well with Frank's business affairs.⁶³ The Golden Acre estate had proved a failure with slow sales and only a handful houses to show for all the planning (Figure 18). Evidently the market was not there for relatively expensive houses in such an isolated location. By the mid-thirties, development had virtually come to a stop.⁶⁴

As for the Golden Acre Park, it had probably never made a useful profit and it might well have been a drain on the company's resources. It may have attracted large crowds but only at holidays and sunny weekends. The park was difficult and expensive to get to and many of those who managed to visit had little, if any, money left to spend there.⁶⁵ Golden Acre may have given pleasure to thousands but no company can survive on happy memories alone.⁶⁶

More ominously, there were questions about Thompson's health. These became public in 1936 with an advertisement inviting tenders for the management of facilities at the Park while he rested and went abroad on medical advice.⁶⁷ He was, it announced, seriously ill and his condition would not have been helped by the stress and strain of progressing yet another project. At least as far back as 1933, he had hatched a scheme for a hotel at Golden Acre but had repeatedly been refused a licence, thanks to sustained opposition from religious and temperance groups. However, in 1936 the justices at last granted a provisional approval, allowing building to commence. By 1937

Figure 18. A development too far: some of the Kings Road houses, still set in empty fields. These together with a few houses on Otley Road (now Leeds Road) are all that materialised from the ambitious plans for the Golden Acre estate.



Thompson was back in harness and the new hotel, named in succession the *Lakeside*, the *Fairway* and, finally, the *Parkway* opened on 25 November 1938.⁶⁸

As one Thompson venture opened, though, another closed. The 1938 season was Golden Acre's last (Figure 19). The official announcement made in January 1939 cited, as the reason, the preservation of the rural amenities of the new hotel, amenities which, it turned out, were to include a 'garden city' in the abandoned park, a select estate of villas round the lake.⁶⁹ To promote this new development, the company's name changed to The Golden Acre Estate Co Ltd but the war intervened before any plans could move off the drawing board. The site was requisitioned by the War Office and the 'garden city' was never heard of again.⁷⁰ The war years set the seal on Frank Thompson's decline. By 1941, his position was bleak

enough for bankruptcy to be mooted and for him to have to call in the loan to Bob Lennard and re-possess the house.⁷¹

Since 1937 Thompson had been turning to his only other source of income, the sale of undeveloped Golden Acre estate land which was still in his, as opposed to the company's ownership. Parcels were offered to other builders but with only partial success. The prospect of war was doing little for market confidence and its outbreak put a stop to all private building.⁷² It would, therefore, have been as a last resort that, in 1943, Thompson offered to Leeds city council his own unsold

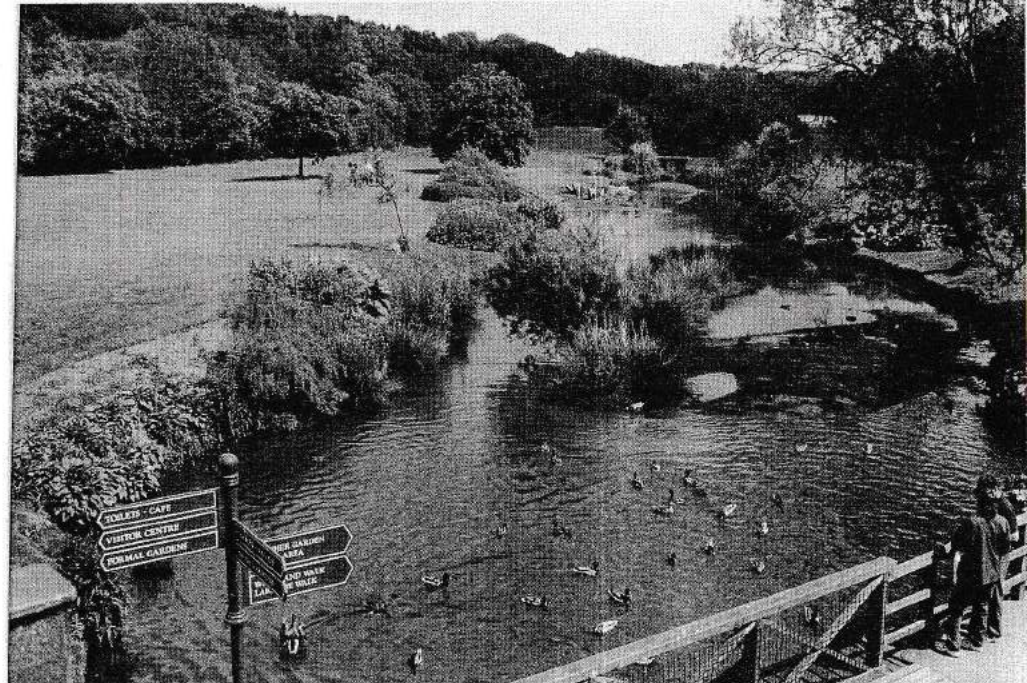


Figure 20. Out of adversity: part of today's Golden Acre Park, sold in straitened circumstances by Frank Thompson to Leeds city council. The site, virtually derelict in 1946 after six years of wartime neglect and military use, has since been developed and expanded to become one of the city's finest parks.

land and, on behalf of the company, the site of the park, all for £18,000. The council took possession in 1946 (Figure 20)⁷³.

Somebody Else is Taking My Place⁷⁴

By 1943, when his mother, Annie Eliza died, still optimistically hoping for an early peace, the company was largely in the control of a syndicate of local businessmen. In December of that year, in a letter to his fellow directors, Thompson formerly surrendered his sword:

*In consideration of having been permitted to remain as the acting managing director of the Parkway Hotel and for the requirements of the debenture holders...I hereby undertake to observe the following conditions...*⁷⁵

Under those conditions, he was now but an employee of the company with a salary of £10 a week and, to add to his humiliation, all cheques, catering instructions and expenditure over £2 had to be approved by the accountants, Messrs Whitfield and Co. He was, though, allowed the free use of two rooms for himself and May and another for his son Kenneth when he returned from Navy leave and there was free food too but not drink which had to be paid for weekly

Lot No.				
403.	6 Tarpaulin Waterproof Sheets.	2	12	6
404.	Spare parts of miniature Railway Engine.		6	0
405.	Approx. 25 cwt. of Electric Cable Wire.	35	0	0
406.	450ft. long x 15ft. Wooden Structure Bridge with an extension of 100ft. x 8ft. including side railings and 9 Electric Role Standards fitted with Electric Lamps and Shades.	60	0	6
BRIDGE WEST SIDE				
407.	Steel Girders under Bridge West Side.			
408.	16ft. x 12ft.			
	18ft. x 12ft.			
	20ft. x 12ft.			
	20ft. 6in. x 12ft.			
	20ft. 6in. x 12ft.			
	14ft. 6in. x 12ft.			
	14ft. 6in. x 12ft.			
	14ft. 6in. x 12ft.			
	17ft. 6in. x 12ft.			
	17ft. 6in. x 12ft.			
	20ft. x 12ft.			
	20ft. x 12ft.			
	20ft. x 12ft.			
	16ft. 6in. x 12ft.			
	14ft. 6in. x 12ft.			
409.	1,117ft. of 4in. Wire Fencing with 114 Angle Iron Posts.	27		
410.	A Set of 6 Looping the Loop Amusement.	2		
411.	A Ball Globe of the World in the Paddle Pool.	32		
BRIDGE WEST SIDE				
412.	2 Wooden Shelter Structures 12ft. x 7ft. with open front and flat Wooden Top 7ft. x 3in. high.	1	17	6
413.	do do do do 12ft. x 7ft. 7ft. 3in. high.	1	5	
GENTS. AND LADIES LAVATORIES WOOD VIEW				
414.	4 Glazed Wash Basins and 6 Lavatory Pans.	18		
415.	15ft. x 15ft. Wooden "Kiosk" with Span Roof 11ft. high.	18	10	0
416.	36ft. x 17ft. wide partly built Wooden Structure with no roof.	6	10	
417.	6ft. 3in. x 6ft. 3in., 10ft. 6in. high Wooden Pay Box with red tile roof.			

Figure 19. A catalogue of failure: soon after Golden Acre Park closed, its fixtures and fittings were auctioned, realising just over £3,000.

Courtesy Margaret Watson

Parkway Hotel (Leeds) Ltd and, not long after, Frank Thompson severed all connection with his creation, never to benefit from its profitable post-war years.⁷⁶

The Show is Over⁷⁷

Frank Thompson's health was now poor and he and May faded from view. They were still living in some style, though, buoyed up by rental income from many of the houses built by Herbert. Frank employed Lockwood, a chauffeur for May, whose disability was taking its toll, and a secretary, Arthur Scott, once the secretary of the Thompson company.⁷⁸ There were fine addresses, too: in 1941 The Grange, Old Park Road, in 1943, the Parkway then The Croft, Bramhope and, in 1945, The Gables, Boston Spa and the *Savoy Hotel*, where the Thompsons stayed during visits to London.⁷⁹

His last address was also a hotel, the *Granby* in Harrogate. There on 20 August 1950, he died of the long term heart condition which had probably led to his departure abroad in 1936; a 'long distressing illness, borne with the utmost fortitude,' said the death notice. In the papers his demise rated but a column inch or two, a brief account,

culled from the files, of the life of a man with 'the Hollywood touch...whose business activities have always held a passing interest for the man in the street' but now a forgotten man, a relic of a vanished pre-war world.⁸⁰ The funeral of the 'adored husband of May' took place at St John's church, Roundhay on 24 August. Attendance was 'by gentlemen only, at the request of his widow, whose pride prevented her from being seen in a wheelchair and whose attendance would have been doubly painful. Within a year Ivor Novello died too, a second devastating blow for May.⁸¹ A year later the will of the 'late proprietor of the Parkway Hotel' was published. The inheritor of a builder's fortune left but £10,078 net.⁸²

May survived Frank by some ten years, living alone in a flat in Horsforth.



Figure 21. With an independent air...Frank Thompson promenading at Cannes in the late 1930s. Courtesy of Dorothy Thompson

In style, Frank Thompson was very much a creature of his time, the restless, uncertain thirties. In his *English Journey* of 1934, J B Priestley identified three Englands existing side by side.⁸³ The old rural England was to be found, perhaps, in the old Cookridge estate whose decline was exploited by the Thompsons. The nineteenth century industrial England, of little houses, mills and grim cities, was epitomised by Leeds, whose masses provided the customers for Golden Acre Park. Thompson inhabited Priestley's third England, born in America, that of arterial roads, bungalows, cinemas, dance halls and swimming pools. Had it not been for economic depression, war, ill health and the vagaries of the market, he might have been one of the great, as opposed to merely interesting, figures in the history of Leeds.

There will, though, always be Thompsons, people with the energy and ideas to change the world and make our lives richer. The successful, perhaps the lucky, ones become rich and famous; the others are quickly forgotten, their works soon anonymous but then, as Max Beerbohm wrote: 'There is much to be said for failure. It is much more interesting than success'.⁸⁶

Notes and References

Abbreviations used: CEBP - building plans submitted to the City Engineer in West Yorkshire Archives, Leeds; DLC Dibb Lupton Collection (Miscellaneous) in WYASL; DPOPR - deed papers relating to 1, Old Park Road, courtesy Glen and Elizabeth Eltringham; LCCDGAP - deed papers for Golden Acre Park held by Leeds City Council; LLIS - Leeds Libraries and Information Service (Local Studies, Central Library); RIBAL - Royal Institute of British Architects Library Information Service; WYASL - West Yorkshire Archives Service: Leeds (Sheepscar); YEN - Yorkshire Evening News; YEP - Yorkshire Evening Post; YP - Yorkshire Post.

1. Song by Charles Lawler and JW Blake, 1894.
2. Birth certificate; the site of the back-to-backs of Recovery Street is now part of the 1950s Lincoln Green housing estate, near St James' Hospital. Later the press would report that Herbert (his son too) was a native of the village of Shadwell: whether the family moved there or merely attempted to disguise humble origins is not known.
3. *Slater's Directory*, 1892.
4. CEBP, WYASL.
5. Marriage certificate; We Remember the Alphabets, Doreen M Wood, 2000 and *Robinson's Directory*, 1897. Other neighbours in Sunny Bank Street included Jane Robinson, a draper, wardrobe director, cycle maker, whitesmith, cashier, newsagent, chapel and Thomas Thompson (perhaps a relative).
6. CEBP, WYASL.
7. Birth certificate.
8. CEBP, WYASL and DPOPR.
9. DPOPR and YEP, 29.8.1933.
10. DPOPR; electoral rolls, LLIS; LCCDGAP. That part of Gledhow Hill estate, which included the site of the Old Park Road houses, was originally part of the Nicholsons' Roundhay Park estate, which was sold in 1863 to ironmaster James Whitham and acquired by Ryder in 1887. Thompson also sold plots on the north side of the newly widened Gledhow Lane.
11. CEBP, WYASL, RIBAL. Harris had offices in Boar Lane.
12. There are many newspaper reports on the accident, inquest and funeral, eg: YEP 20.5.32, 27.5.32, *Leeds Mercury* 19.5.32; also recollections in *YEP, Old Yorkshire Diary*, 1980s.

- 10.2.32.
15. Rachael Low *op cit*.
16. *Ibid*.
17. Brewer's Cinema, Cassell, 1995. Wilcox retired in bankruptcy in 1964 and died in 1977.
18. Rachael Low *op cit*.
19. *Ibid* and National Film Archive who hold several Astra films in their collection. Kelly's Directory, 1920 shows Astra Films with offices in Queen Victoria Street, Leeds (now part of the Victoria Quarter) and, in 1925, Astra Films (Yorkshire) at King Charles Croft; Charles Thompson had offices in Albion Street. Pip, Squeak and Wilfred also featured, if the author's post-war childhood memories serve him correctly, in a Daily Mirror strip cartoon.
20. Song by Nat Shilkret and John Klener, 1930.
21. YEP 13.2.32; electoral rolls (absentee voters list), LLIS; YEP 31.8.31.
22. Conversation with Minnie Bradley whose brother was a fringe member of the Thompson set despite being warned by his father that he wouldn't be able to 'keep up', a prophecy proved correct when Clifford had to decline an invitation to invest in Golden Acre Park.
23. LCCDGAP; Thompson's second marriage certificate, 1929; conversation with Tom Mawson; telephone directories, LLIS; WF Seals, *A History of the Township of Bramhope*, 1976. Dyneley Hall was built in 1865 and previously owned by a pram manufacturer. Thompson appears to have owned the Hall up to at least 1937 but not to have lived there after about 1931.
24. Don Cole, Cookridge, *The History of a Yorkshire Township*, 1980 and other books on the local history; Cookridge Estate papers in WYASL and courtesy of Richard Perkin. Tony Shelton Golden Acre Estate Breary Grange farm - notes on property history in WYASL & LLIS (information from Philip Redfearn)
25. Letter from Margaret Watson to author, 1999.
26. E Robinson and L Keeble, *The Development of Building Estates*, Estates Gazette, 1952 contains a useful near-contemporary description of inter-war private housing market conditions and development methods.
27. CEBP, WYASL.
28. Song by Arthur Schwartz and Howard Dietz, 1930.
29. YEP 5.9.1931.
30. LCCDGAP
31. Conversation with Henry Haigh recorded in c 1985 by Eric Cope and Ron Redman, as part of their research into Golden Acre and its miniature railway.
32. YEP 29.8.33, 16.3.35, 22.7.35, 25.7.35.
33. Song by Jerry Lewison, Al Neiburg and Mary Symes, 1934.
34. YP 26.3.32; Yorkshire Observer 26.3.32; YEN 17.5.32, YEP 9.2.33 and conversations with Joan Duffield and Richard Perkin; letter from Margaret Watson. The Park occupied part of Golden Acre estate land (a small area of Blackhill Well Farm) and part of nearby Cocker Hill Farm, which Thompson bought from the Leeds Industrial Co-operative Society.
35. LCCDGAP and company documents held by WYASL. Thompson's fellow company directors were his mother, Annie Eliza, and Arthur Scott, the company secretary. The Golden Acre Thompsons are not, as has been suggested, related to the family of the same name who own the Blackpool Pleasure Beach (letter to author from Geoffrey Thompson, BPB managing director).
36. Conversation, 2001 with Cecil Foster who worked at the 'Happy Hour' and at the Park.
37. Song by Ray Henderson and Lew Brown, 1931.
38. Marriage certificate, Frank and May Thompson, 9.2.29. and conversation with Dorothy Thompson. John Erwin Campbell was a captain in the Royal Warwick regiment and during his marriage to May, a farmer in Kenya. Public attitudes were softening but it was not until the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1937 that slightly easier procedures were brought in. David Thompson, *England in the Twentieth Century*, Penguin, 1965.
39. LCCDGAP and Thompson letterhead (see Fig 12) Red Roof was sold to the managing director of Schofield's department store and changed hands again in 1972 when it was converted into three large flats. Information from Philip Redfearn.
40. Conversation with Dorothy Thompson and YEP 15.2.34.
41. YEP 29.12.32.
42. YEP 10.2.32, 29.12.32 and 15.2.34.
43. Brian Rust, *British Dance Bands on Record*, 1911-45, 1989.
44. From a variety of press items and pictures (eg YEN 10.5.33) and conversations with Dorothy Thompson, Joan Duffield, Sybil Mawson and others (1999). Ivor Novello's own house, bought in 1927 was called Red Roofs.
45. Song by Ray Henderson, BG De Sylva and Lew Brown, 1929.

- technology of the novel 'synchronised talkie accompaniment': By means of a fluctuating beam of light...tiny marks are transformed into small electric currents. These...are increased by means of electrode valves until they have the power to operate the loudspeaker.
48. Song by Harry Revel and Mack Gordon, 1937.
 49. YEP 10.2.32; conversations (1999) with Tom Mawson and Gracie Dring who heard that the Thompsons had a regular box at the City Varieties. The Harehills Picture House, opened in 1912, closed in 1963 and was redeveloped as shops and a rooftop car park. Thompson sold the cinema in or before 1938.
 50. YEP 12.5.37; Louis Mannix, *Memories of a Cinema Man*, Associated Tower Cinemas, 1988; Robert Preedy, *Leeds Cinemas Remembered*, 1980; conversation with Gracie Dring, 1999.
 51. CEBP WYASL and YEP 3.5.37, 12.5.37, 24.1.38, 10.6.38; letter from Chris Ure, Associated Tower Cinemas. When his cinema application was refused, Thompson appealed to the Minister of Health (then the arbiter of planning appeals) but the refusal was upheld.
 52. CEBP, WYASL.
 53. Song by Harold Arlen, Ira Gershwin and EY Harburg, 1934.
 54. Conversation with Cecil Foster, 2001, and Gracie Dring, 1999.
 55. Conversation with Cecil Foster and letters from Albert Paylor, Brian Holmes to Leeds Leisure Services and the author.
 56. Henry Haigh's conversation, c 1985, with Eric Cope and Ron Redman.
 57. YEP *Old Yorkshire Diary*, 1980s.
 58. Conversation with Tom, Sybil and Ted Mawson, 1999.
 59. Henry Haigh's conversation c 1985, with Eric Cope and Ron Redman.
 60. Conversation with Joan Duffield, whose father once attended one of Harris's 'tastings', 1999.
 61. Letter from Margaret Watson, 1999.
 62. Song by Jimmy Van Heusen and Eddie de Lange, 1939.
 63. YEP 9.8.35 and electoral rolls, LLIS conversation with Cecil Foster.
 64. Information from Ken Horn and from CEBP, WYASL. The last building plans for Kings Road were submitted in 1937; some houses remained unsold when war broke out and one was offered for as little as £400, less than half the original price.
 65. Many witnesses stress the problems caused for visitors by travel and expense of admission charges.
 66. Golden Acre was not alone in its fate: during the 1930s, many American amusement parks failed, maimed by the Depression, and, nearer to home, two prominent West Riding examples at Honley and Hipperholme closed just before the war. Peter Bennet, *Blackpool Pleasure Beach, A Hundred Years of Fun*, Blackpool Pleasure Beach, 1996; Douglas Taylor, *West Yorkshire Amusement Parks*, Yorkshire Archaeological Journal Vol 58, 1986.
 67. YEN 16.10.36.
 68. YEP 9.2.33, 8.2.34, 7.2.35, 2.36 and 26.11.38; CEBP, WYASL. The hotel's architect was not the usual Luwee Harris but Hayward and Maynard of London.
 69. YEP 24.1.39, YP 27.1.39.
 70. Correspondence in LCCDGAP; company papers, WYASL.
 71. Letter from Margaret Watson, 1999.
 72. YEP 26.11.41 and 6.9.46; correspondence in LCCDGAP; conversation with Michael and Susan Pierce; CEBP, WYASL. One parcel of land was sold to Smith's, builders of Otley: just before the outbreak of war, they laid footings and, soon after the war, completed the houses of King's Drive. These were the only builders to buy land from the Golden Acre estate and succeed in developing it. During the war, Thompson submitted revised plans for his unsold land on each side of Otley Road, possibly to help boost its value, but these came to nothing.
 73. LCCDGAP; Several witnesses have described the park as it was in 1946: ruined buildings, overgrown gardens and the lake reduced to a marsh.
 74. Song by Russ Morgan, Dick Howard and Bob Ellsworth, 1937.
 75. Letter from Annie Eliza Thompson to Bob Lennard, 1943, courtesy of Margaret Watson; company papers, OLC WYASL; conversations with Paul Steele (*Jarvis Parkway Hotel*) and Richard Perkin.
 76. Company papers, OLC WYASL.
 77. Song by Al Dubin, Sam Cosland and Con Conrad, 1934.
 78. Conversation with Dorothy Thompson.
 79. Directories and LCCDGAP; *The Grange*, a Victorian house, was demolished after the war to make way for flats.

80. YEP 21.8.50, death certificate and conversation with Alison Evans.
 81. Funeral notice in YEP 21.8.50. and Conversation with Dorothy Thompson.
 82. Unidentified cutting from 1951, courtesy Margaret Watson.
 83. Conversation with Dorothy Thompson.
 84. *Ibid.* After the war, Ken and Dorothy Thompson lived in Sutton Coldfield; Ken worked in Birmingham, buying advertising space, initially for the Rank Organisation (a link albeit a tenuous one, with Frank and Herbert's movie activities) and later for WH Smith. In retirement Ken became a volunteer with the Embury Bolton Abbey railway. In 1986 he was guest of honour at the topping out of the Parkway extension and in 1987 a commemorative tree was planted. In 1992 his ashes were scattered under that tree, witnessed by Dorothy, her niece, the manager of the Parkway and Joe Maiden, who developed the Golden Acre Park demonstration garden and became a noted radio and TV gardening expert.
 85. Song by Leo Robin and Ralph Rainger, 1937.
 86. J B Priestley, *English Journey*, 1934; Penguin edition 1977.
 87. Max Beerbohm, *Mainly on the Air*, 1946.

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 Tony Shelton, Episodes in the History of Golden Acre, Thoresby Society 2nd Series Vol. 11, 2001.
 Grace Horseman, *Growing Up in the Thirties*, Cottage, 1994.
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9. ARTHUR RANSOME: BORN IN A ROMANTIC TOWN LIKE LEEDS

by Margaret Ratcliffe

THE COMMEMORATIVE BLUE PLAQUE on the house in Ash Grove where Arthur Ransome, the author of the *Swallows & Amazons* series of children's books was born in 1884, gives little indication of the origin and background of the author whose books are still in print but whose life and work embraced so much more than the series of twelve novels for which he is justly famous (Figure 1).

Ransome lived in Leeds as a child, studied at the Yorkshire College as a young man; visited his mother's home in Leeds in her later years and received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Leeds where his papers are now housed in Special Collections at the Brotherton Library.

But he was not the first Ransome to be distinguished in Leeds life. On 27 June 1878 his father, Cyril Ransome was interviewed by the Literature Committee of the Yorkshire College (which became Leeds University in 1904) and on 17 July was appointed Professor of Modern Literature and History. Student numbers were small at this time and the Arts subjects were in their infancy at the College then renowned for its more scientific and practical specialties. Professor Ransome was appointed at a stipend of £300 per annum plus two thirds of fees.¹ When interviewed, he had been required to present a 'test' lecture, his subject being 'The Campaign of Waterloo.' In fact, lecturing was one his

Figure 1. Arthur Ransome (aged 21) caricatured by his teenage brother, Geoffrey, 1905. Courtesy: the Lupton family

