

"The Rows"

We enter the main entrance to "The Rows" of which there are five:- named Durham: Smokey: Pump: Close and Newcastle. Dyke Row is the last but is separated.

The entrance is a very wide one with the Post Office at the South side and the Queen's Head on the North side and the high gable ends were used frequently four boys playing handball, and later I shall mention football.

All Rows therefore ran at right angles from the main road stretching out to the west.

Durham Row first house gable end was sited some 30 yards from the roadway, and with Smokey Row on the right side some 20 yards away a very acute turn was necessary to negotiate it by the carts and wagons.

Durham Row line of building was set back one house length, so there were 29 houses in the Row, and was built to the building line at the bottom of the Row where the boundary line was sealed off with a six foot high stone wall.

This meant that the only exit was a three feet footpath; so all vehicles proceeding down the Row to the bottom must return before they could enter any of the other streets.

The houses consisted of a living room and large pantry; a front room also often used as a bedroom; and an attic upstairs, which was usually used as the children's bedroom, entered by a primitive ladder from the front room, it was very narrow with 4" inch steps and open between.

The attic had only a skylight which was some two feet by one foot in size and opened very similar to a greenhouse ventilator, if the family increased before they got a larger house this was partitioned off up to the height of the cross beams. The ceiling was the slating laths, sloping roof and only about four feet at the lowest point, to cover the slating laths, the ceiling was continually papered layer after layer until it became a solid board. Small iron bedsteads upstairs were the only furniture.

But downstairs black and brass furnished bedsteads of a variety of ornamental designs. oilcloth on the floor, with special home made road's formats.

Usually a large round polished table with a beautiful table cover always clean and tidy, and usually the family Bible in the centre. The special chairs, some upholstered, highly polished and greatly taken care of. Many had a piano too; and tallboy sets of drawers: corner what-nots were in abundance which displayed special crockery and ornaments.

Many had secret beds (sometimes pronounced dess beds – desk-bed), these folded open and highly polished door covered the front. Back to the living quarters, and the pantry was of a fair size, as it had to provide space for everyday use to crockery; pans, provisions, pails, washing accommodation, etc.

So there were to be plenty of shelves, there was a stand up pipe water tap the only one in the house it was high enough from the ground to allow a pail to stand under continually.

The special crockery was kept in the press (a set of drawers, with a china cabinet on top, some with glass panels with fancy lace curtains, some with wood panels usually made of mahogany or redwood and highly polished; some with mirror panels).

The large open fireplace sufficiently big enough to hold a couple of pails of very small coals, as there was always a good fire, day and night as the times varied for the workers going out and coming in and children going to and from school, meant there was always to be a fire on.

At one side of the fire was a beehive oven (a round shaped one with a drop forward door halfway) in character, at the other side was a boiler for securing warm water.

Some of the floors were concrete some were twelve inch square red tiles, oilcloth was just beginning to be used on the floor, so I can remember some with and some without; as I do relating to clip in mats for floor cover. Clipping mats with the many patterns were handmade by the mothers and children, and were made of old rags torn into strips about an inch wide and cut into length about three inches in length.

The match frames were usually two pieces of timber six foot six long 4" x 2" and a space cut through 3" from the ends making a hole big enough to receive an inch thick and 3" wide bar to go through, and when the hessian was fixed on the bars it could be stretched and nails put into the holes and formed into an oblong shaped form. The clippings were then put in halfway by the use of a prodder (some used the word "progger"), some were made of steel some made by taking a clothes breaking one side of and rounding off the end to a rough point making the whole - putting the clipping in and having one hand underneath draw the end halfway through and with the other hand at the top side make a hole close to the first one enter the remaining half and pull the two ends together until the clipping is taut at the top, this procedure was continued side by side as close as possible.

The more expert you got the more adventurous one became; and beautiful colours and designs were turned out.

I shall say more, when I describe customs and seasons.

In every house was a square table so as to seat the whole family, for meals, and when clear of meals it was usually covered with some kind of table cover, most usual was a heavy gaily coloured plush with fancy edges.

The only lighting was by paraffin lamps and candles.

And what a variety of standing lamps could be seen in the middle of the tables. Fine coloured glass vessels, some all brass, of various designs and fancy globes to match.

These kind of paraffin lamps were used in the living room and also the front room - sitting cum bedroom.

Only candles were used upstairs and so there was also a great variety of candle sticks, made of china, pot, tin and brass. In almost all houses were tall-boy drawers; with their long wide drawers, they too were in all kinds of designs and were highly polished mahogany or redwood. Six feet high and were packed with changes of underclothes, spare linen of all types - wardrobes were not known at that time; and to find room for overcoats, etc. There was a rail or hooks screwed to the bar behind the door.

On the walls were hung great portraits of some parents, some departed loved one, or a family group, some were painted scenes or flowers on mirrors.

For seating accommodation, there was a form or seat - some five or six feet long some scrubbed spotless, others were covered with fine delays to oilcloth and edged with brass headed nails.

These slats or forms were drawn up to the table at mealtimes, and when not in use could be pushed underneath.