

The Lancashire Society at Stalybridge Heritage Fair Saturday 3rd October 2009

“But London is out of comparison quite
With Stalybridge market on a Saturday night.”

Meeks/C. Radcliffe
The Fivepenny Piece (1973)



Stalybridge Market Hall, now used as the Civic Centre

Saturday 3rd October and the Society has been offered a free stand at Stalybridge Heritage Fair held in the old market, now the Civic Hall. So Mark Dowding and I set off, bright and early, meet Andy Hindley there and set up a table with a few old books, some Lancashire record sleeves, CDs and general information about the Society. Weather's a bit rough outside, attendance is fewer than hoped for by the organisers, but we begin to meet some interesting people, most of them telling us that the original “Bowton's Yard” was just across the road and the name plate is on the Tesco petrol station wall



So Mark goes off to take a picture of it and finds outside the Hall, a memorial to Jack Judge, writer of “It's a Long Way to Tipperary”, who first performed the song in the local theatre in 1912. So I claim it as a Lancashire song, Andy starts picking out the tune on his concertina and I start singing, we go into “Pack up your Troubles in your Old Kit Bag”



The photos show the statue of Jack Judge and a World War 1 soldier outside the civic centre and a close up of the plaque

An elderly chap, very well Lever, local history expert, that he'd been there, that (No 9, where th'owd cobbler rendition of Sam Laycock's band enthusiast and ex Chris and Mark's recording



presented in morning dress and silver Albert, joins in! He's Harry 86 years old, who tells us not only where “Bowton's Yard” was but they only started knocking it down in the 1930s and the last house lived) was only flattened in the 1950s! So we start a three way poem, all of it, me, Mark and Harry – what a joy!! As a lifelong brass railway worker with a lot to say, Harry will no doubt be introduced to equipment before too long!
Sid and Harry Lever

Later on there's more people in and a well-dressed, well-spoken lady is leafing through Mark's old record sleeves. She gets to The Oldham Tinkers “Best o't Bunch” cover and stops, looks up and says “My late husband drew that map!” A check in the credits gives us his name – Jim Andrew.

“Best o' t' Bunch” – Cover picture by Jim Andrew



Us being from Lancashire starts lots of discussions about that area being at the junction of Lancashire, Yorkshire, Cheshire and Derbyshire (you think Saddleworth's got problems?), but everyone agrees that Tameside and Greater Manchester will never catch on. A local councillor visits, has his own opinions, but is so impressed with what we are doing that he suggests having a full evening in the Hall, singing, dancing, music – the works. Everyone agrees it's a good idea, cards are swapped so we'll sit by the



phone! Most of the local history societies there are interested in singers and speakers to appear at their events so the future's looking decidedly bright.

Mrs Francoise Sullivan, Councillor John Sullivan, Civic Mayor of Tameside MBC and Sid Calderbank



Sid and Andy on the Lancashire Society stand . Finished at 4.00, home for tea, good day.