

SETTLERS AND HOUSING

Friendship, word of mouth and chance meetings led most people to Hebden Bridge.

How?

The first 'Settlers' - 'Offcumdens' - found their way here in roundabout ways - via among other routes, Old CP connections, a Dad's book on rural depopulation, a teaching job at Calder High, toboggans belonging to Bradford Uni Student Union, an advert in the Hebden Bridge Times, a letter in Communes magazine, the 1969 Durham Surrealist Festival, came to a party and never left.....

Where from?

Manchester, Leeds, Bradford, London, Basingstoke, Doncaster.....

Why Hebden Bridge.

Empty homes, cheap houses - rents were low 10/- pw, £3.20 per month - houses selling for £300, £500, £650 - the district was seriously depopulated, very few young people. Many locals, though not all, were helpful and welcoming.

Hebden Bridge itself was in a bad way, everything black with soot, shops and houses boarded up, in a poor state of repair, but the hills and woods, fields and moorland were just as beautiful then as now.

Hebden Bridge and the hilltops were accessible to populated places - part of South Manchester Commune transferred itself to a hillside above Old Town.



Cottages on Burlees Lane - one of the first

Graham Saville, doing a doctorate at Bradford, heard of cottage at Foster Clough. I moved from London and always wanted to live in the country.. heard about this cottage for £300 .. didn't bother even looking, I thought it'd be no roof and no windows at that sort of price .. later went and saw Frank Scofield who owned it, - the farmer who owns land right down to the Midgley Rd., and he wanted to sell both the end houses, I didn't have the money, so we agreed that I could buy one for £350,

Geoff and Jean who'd been at University in Leeds, put an advert in the Hebden Bridge Times in Spring 1970, they got 3 replies:-

A cottage to rent outside Heptonstall for 10/- a week (Paul Chase moved in there).

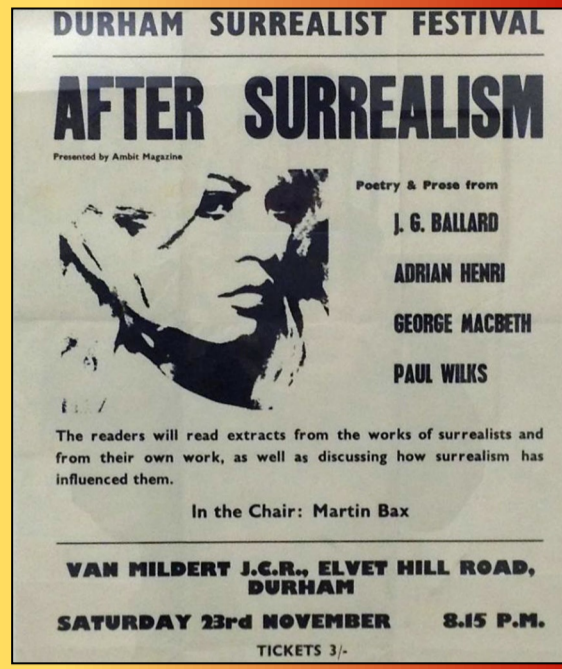
A place for sale on Nursery Nook.

A cottage on Burlees Lane for £650 being sold by Peter Crossley...They bought the cottage in May 1970, it had running water, a range, a bath inside, the toilet was a chemical one in a little shed outside.

I first came to Hebden on a bitterly cold night, one of a group of us who had been at a Libertarian Conference in Leeds and, at the instigation of Julie, had agreed to call into the little town of Hebden Bridge en route back to London, to visit friends of hers who had just squatted Queens Terrace.

The Basingstoke connection of the 1970s.

A complete friendship circle moved up from Basingstoke, rejecting the houses of the new town - Stuart, Tom, Cyn, Mark, Carol, Sandy, Chris...



Housing chief threatens action 200 SQUATTERS IN MASS INVASION

AS UP TO 200 squatters invaded Hebden Bridge this week, Calderdale Housing Committee chairman, Coun Robert Sunderland, last night threatened he would put every effort into clearing the town of "these leeches on society".

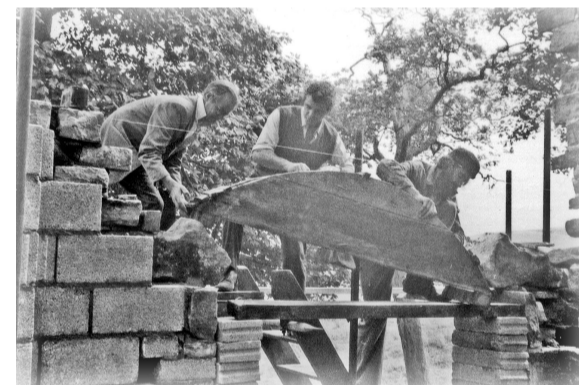
particularly the shopkeepers, to make life hard for these people. They can be given a rough ride if people refuse to serve them and give them supplies," he said. Calderdale Council first agreed to take legal action against the squatters in October last year but, it has taken until nearly the end of September to obtain a legal hearing. "It has been a long drawn out job and it is not surprising that

The Teepee People (not the mass invasion of the headline): "In 1976, at the end of a glorious hot summer, some hippies who'd been living off the free food kitchens at the Festivals like Stonehenge turned up in Hebden Bridge. Some of them - goats in tow - camped in their teepees up the Craggs, the rest of them tried to squat houses with people living in them, stole from the shops and made themselves very unwelcome. They also moved in on those living at Queen's Terrace, and as Dougie said, he felt OK about them until he saw one of them walking down the street wearing his kitchen curtains. Eventually Millie, who had a van took them to a roundabout outside Burnley and left them there."



Balmoral Street
Later a grant improvement area

People who bought old properties, especially on the tops, began a long project - usually self help, with some local expertise - to improve them.



Nick Makepeace, Donald and Dougie Robbins mason, setting new arch former at Lower Field Head.

By 1975 Calderdale had over 4000 empty houses. The Public Health Officer had a further 980 houses in HB listed for demolition: most underdwellings, including those at Bridge Lanes. Owners received compensation often as little as £8 per house. Squatters occupied compulsorily purchased houses on parts of Royd Terrace and Queens Terrace, houses which had been condemned as unfit. Some had been left empty for three years or longer.

Squats created friction. In the press cutting, Councillor Sunderland is recommending that squatters 'could be given a rough time if people refuse to serve them and give them supplies.' Luckily other councillors in Hebden Bridge thought differently. Rather than destroy houses, David Fletcher was willing to help people get improvement grants for properties such as Foster Clough. Councillor Stanley Leach helped rehouse a number of single parent families from Queens Terrace.

The arrival of **the Teepee People** threatened the relationship between hippies and the locals. Luckily the difference was clear to someone at least who was overheard saying - "They're not like our Hippies".

The squatters made it difficult for the council to demolish many properties. Today these are desirable properties as at Royd Terrace.

I moved to Hebden with my five children in August 1972. I'd been living in Cheltenham and desperately needed to get away. I made contact with Foster Clough via a letter in Communes Magazine and received a letter from a woman living there, inviting me to stay there for a few weeks until I found a place of my own to live.

