

John William Jessop and Hatwood © By Gillian Figures

After the purchase by John Barran (wealthy clothing manufacturer and Mayor of Leeds) in 1871 of a large part of the Roundhay Park estate to provide 'an ideal playground for the people of this town', it was intended that the surplus land surrounding the Park itself should be sold off to pay for the purchase. Because of the distance from town the sales were initially slow. The prime areas were Park Avenue and West Avenue, where large plots intended for substantial villas were offered for sale with severe restrictions to ensure the highest quality of development. Roundhay Mount (later Carr Head), Parcmont and Woodbourne in the 1880s were amongst the first houses built. Once the electric trams were running reliably from 1897 the sale of desirable plots took off. By 1906 most of the plots had been developed.

These houses attracted the attention of a number of successful Leeds businessmen of sufficient means to buy and maintain such establishments and it remained the area of choice up until at least the Second World War.



**Formerly Hatwood, now Park Avenue
Nursing Home (Photo © David Figures)**



JW Jessop (Photo by J Bacon and Sons)

Typical of these was John W. Jessop who, with his wife, Clara, lived at Hatwood (No. 8 Park Avenue) from 1916-1938. Mr Jessop was a self-made man whose father had been a railway engine driver and whose mother had run a grocer's shop in Armley. Like many in business at this time he was a Congregationalist and was an important figure in the denomination locally. Mr Jessop was prominent in Leeds public life, and a founder of the Thrift Stores, one of the earliest chains of grocers' shops.

John William Jessop was born on 31 March 1869 at Redshaw Terrace, Armley, the son of John Jessop, from Whitby, and his wife Elizabeth, nee Gray. He was educated at St John's Church School, New Wortley and Doncaster Grammar School, and at the age of 14 he entered the family grocery business run by his mother.

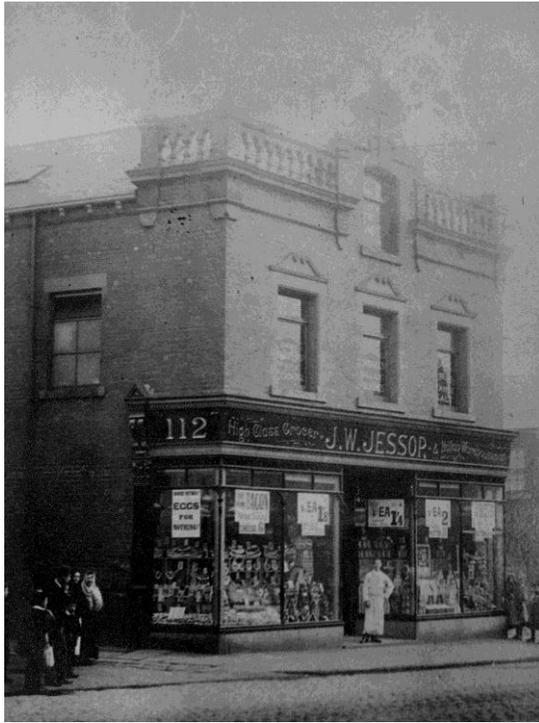
Mr Jessop was clearly an able businessman. By the age of 30, now married with three children, he was a master grocer, with a shop in Wellington Road, (New Wortley) and at least two other shops in the Armley area. He had developed three flourishing provisions businesses with numerous branches throughout the West Riding, known respectively as Ideal Stores, Ltd; RC Hopkinson Ltd, (which catered for the mining villages around Doncaster); and Jessop's Stores. He had also been elected a Conservative member for New Wortley on the Leeds City Council. Among his civic duties Mr Jessop had officially opened the newly laid out gardens of Burley Park in 1899.

The Jessop family moved house several times within the Armley and Wortley area until in 1916 they bought Hatwood in Park Avenue.

The family now consisted of Mr and Mrs Jessop and their three surviving children, John Clifford, Dorothy and Kathleen, and Mrs Jessop's widowed sister in law, Mrs Crowther.

The first mention of Hatwood, only the third house to be built on the south side of Park Avenue, is in the Kelly's Directory of 1901, when it was occupied by George Hatton, a licensed victualler, for whom it had been built. Mr Hatton (formerly a grocer) was the proprietor of The Stamford Arms Hotel in Cross Stamford Street. In 1909 he sold Hatwood to a Mrs Birch who remained there until the Jessops bought the house. The sale particulars describe a residence 'substantially built of stone' with 'beautiful shrubberies which effectually screen it from public observation.' The ground floor has 'an entrance saloon with inglenook fireplace....., a large mullioned stained glass window and a staircase leading to the overhanging gallery from which the principal bedrooms are entered;' also 'a large drawing room with fine bow window ...; a breakfast room; a good dining room, at one end of which is a sweet-toned organ, . and a photographic room.'

On the first floor there was a tower room with beautiful views over the Park; five bedrooms and a bathroom. The second floor accommodation included a large billiard room. There were outbuildings for a carriage and horses and a large kitchen garden as well as the 'Pleasure Garden' at the front. This elegant residence



**Jessop's shop at 112 Wellington Road,
Wortley (Courtesy of D. Jessop)**

provided the base for the Jessops' family, business, civic and philanthropic lives for the following twenty years.

During the First World War Mr Jessop joined the Volunteer Bearer Company, which was formed to take over from the R.A.M.C. the task of conveying wounded soldiers from the railway stations to hospital. He presented a motor ambulance to assist in the work. Later, towards the end of 1917, when food rationing was introduced, Mr Jessop was elected to the Food Control Committee on the nomination of the Leeds and District Grocers and Provision Dealers' Association. At this time the whole ground floor of the Leeds City Art Gallery was converted into a Food Control Office to deal with the daunting task of issuing ration cards, and dealing with thousands of claims for extra allowances.

After the war Mr Jessop became even more active in public life. In 1921 he was elected to the City Council, this time as a Liberal councillor for Wortley. In 1925 he was made a JP, in 1926 he was elected President of the National Federation of Grocers' Associations and he was twice chairman of the Leeds Grocers' Association.

Mr and Mrs Jessop retained their membership of Oak Road Congregational Church in Armley, where they were leading figures, even after the move to Oakwood. This was a sacrificial decision as by 1906 the New Wortley area was designated as by far the poorest part of Leeds with a large population resettled there due to slum clearance elsewhere. Mr Jessop was a deacon and also Church Secretary for several years. He was a keen supporter of the Brotherhood Movement and dramatically revived the flagging Oak Road P.S.A. (Pleasant Sunday Afternoon Men's Meeting). His commitment to this work continued for many years and in 1923 he was made Chairman of the National Conference Council of the Brotherhood (as the P.S.A. was also known).

Mr Jessop played a leading part in the wider life of Congregationalism, serving as Secretary and Treasurer for 25 years of the Leeds District of the Yorkshire Congregational Union. He was a member of the Leeds Congregational Council and was elected as its President for 1918.

Also typical of this inter wars period Mrs Jessop, free from the constraints of housekeeping, was able to turn her considerable organising abilities to philanthropic works, mainly within Congregationalism. She was for 23 years the secretary of the Oak Road Sisterhood, which had a membership of over one thousand during this time. For 25 years she was the secretary of the Oak Road branch of the Women's Guild of Christian Service and was President of the Leeds Branch in 1922 and 1924. Also in 1922 Mrs Jessop was elected one of the first two women deacons at Oak Road.

Both Mr and Mrs Jessop took a practical interest in church development in Leeds and were instrumental in founding the Stainbeck Congregational Church in 1930, which they supported generously. Mrs Jessop laid one of the foundation stones of the

church where she was held in high esteem by the members. Everyone who knew her was greatly distressed by her sudden death on 7 January 1931, only a few weeks after the ceremony. The address at her funeral was given by the Rev Harry Turner, chairman of the Leeds Congregational Council, who paid great tribute to Mrs Jessop's kind and gracious nature, capable organising ability and genuine concern for the welfare of others.

On Mr Jessop's retirement in 1927 the three businesses he had founded amalgamated with the grocery businesses of Mr Wright Poplewell to form the Thrift Stores. A new purpose-built headquarters was erected at Kirkstall on Bridge Road (later Clover, then Allders, now BHS).

The Jessops' grandsons, Douglas and Kenneth, remember Hatwood well in the late 1920s. By then it also had tennis courts, and Mr Jessop, always keen on innovations, had replaced the earlier pipe organ with a newer model. Mr Jessop was also one of the first men in Leeds to own a motor car (a Vauxhall at first) and had a cine-projector on which Kenneth recalls seeing Charlie Chaplin films. He is remembered as a somewhat strict grandfather and a staunch teetotaler, while their grandmother, 'a true lady,' was by contrast warm and caring. The household was run by a team of servants consisting of a maid, a cook, a gardener (Mr Fryer), and a chauffeur for the Rolls Royce (Mr Norton), all under the supervision of Dorothy, at that time the unmarried daughter of the house. The Jessops entertained frequently and also hosted numerous church gatherings at Hatwood. Family photographs show groups on the front lawn around the fountain. The house was also the Sunday lunch venue for many visiting ministers and leading members of Congregationalism.

As well as Hatwood, Mr Jessop owned a bungalow at Primrose Valley, Filey, in what was then a secluded position right on the cliff. He spent an increasing amount of time there following his retirement when he became increasingly infirm following a stroke. Two years after the death of his wife, Clara, Mr Jessop married Frances Gwendoline Forster at St Chad's Church, Headingley, on 1 June 1933.

Mr Jessop died at Filey on 31 July 1938. The account of his funeral in the Yorkshire Post of 4 August took up nearly ten column inches. Oak Road Congregational Church was crowded for the service, which was conducted by three senior Congregational ministers. The many mourners included the Lord Mayor of Leeds and the Chief Constable. Mr Jessop is buried at New Wortley Cemetery. According to The Times, bequests from his estate of £95,017 included £1,000 to the Leeds Congregational Council to pay the income to the Oak Road church, £500 to the Leeds General Infirmary and £500 to the Leeds Hospital for Women and Children. The organ from Hatwood was presented by his son to the Congregational Church at Stainbeck.

It was impossible to sell Hatwood in the prelude to the Second World War. It was requisitioned and occupied by soldiers for the duration after which the executors put in a claim for dilapidation and in 1954 sold it. It remained a family home until 1986, when it became a nursing home. It is first referred to as Oakcrest Nursing home in 1992 and became the Park Avenue Nursing Home in 1999. It remains to be seen today. Sympathetically extended, the appearance of the house continues to be substantially as the Jessops knew it.

Sources

Mr Douglas Jessop of Adel, grandson.

Mr Kenneth Armitage of Harrogate, grandson.

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Newspaper cuttings in the archives of Stainbeck

Congregational Church. (Now Stainbeck United Reformed Church.)

Kelly's Street Directories.

Civil Registration documents.

1881, 1891 and 1901 Census returns.

The Times and The Yorkshire Post newspapers

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Sales particulars at the West Yorkshire Archive Service

Illustrated history of Roundhay Park by Steven Burt