

Chapter 20 Langcliffe Co-op

*The Co-operative College,
Holyoake House,
Hanover St.,
Manchester M60 0AS*

*West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford
A hundred years of Settle Co-op 1861-1961. Publ. 1961 ref. 58 D86/1/23/12*

Langcliffe Co-op was one of the many early societies (founded in 1829) but was not the first. Rochdale, where there is a small museum, The Pioneer Museum, was the first to set up a co-operative activity and store in 1844 which was financially successful and led to the full development of the co-operative principle.

By May 1828 there were four co-operative societies, set up in London, Brighton (two) and Worthing. By December 1829 there were 130 societies in the country. They were established on the principle of 'accumulating a common capital, investing it in trade and so making 10% of it instead of investing it in funds giving 4.5% etc.' Many societies including Rochdale collapsed when times became economically difficult because they offered credit and they lacked sufficient capital; Rochdale re-started in 1844 with a set of rules which specifically did not allow credit but did offer good business principles. Most early societies did their business in pubs and other premises which they did not own, which is probably the case in Langcliffe. The Langcliffe Co-op did not make much progress so probably was defunct by 1871 and Settle Co-op took over in the 1880s.

The Settle Co-op was founded in 1861 and was situated in Upper Settle. In 1883 William Marsden was delivering potatoes to Langcliffe. In 1888 the Settle Co-op resolved to enter into negotiations with John Delaney respecting taking over his business in Langcliffe for £160. In 1888 a shop was opened in Langcliffe as the co-op. It was rebuilt in 1949 - it is thought that the shop was sited next to No. 3, Main Street.

See below for picture in Rochdale Toad St. Museum showing typical wares for sale



Going inside the shop we are immediately struck by its basic simplicity. The Pioneers launched their business on a modest capital of £28 and this precluded the provision of elaborate shop furniture and decoration. They traded amid white-washed walls and used only rudimentary shop furniture. The goods they initially sold were pitifully few - sugar, butter, flour, oatmeal and tallow candles. But trade developed rapidly and soon the Pioneers were able to purchase and sell a wider range of commodities including tea and tobacco - note the Victorian tea containers on the counter.