

A journey into the past

Treasures in an Idle home

(By ANNE BRUNTON)

TOGETHER we made a journey into the past. My companion and guide was 86-year-old Mr. John Simpson.

Our starting point was his home, Faultice Cottage, Croft Street, Idle, where, on a grey winter day, rain splashed from the bill of the stone pelican in the garden, and a miniature Napoleon in stone reclined in the long, wet grass.

There were no flowers in the garden, no cultivated patches; instead, a miscellany of fossils and ancient stones.

ANCIENT JEWELLERY

Unlocking the door of a glass cabinet, he drew out objects thousands of years old. First came jewellery once worn by a rich Egyptian woman at the time when Moses was a boy.

As Mr. Simpson talked, drawing on his vast knowledge of ancient history, he outlined the woman; ring of bronze through her aristocratic nose, bracelets on her wrists and swinging from her ears the rings with their gleaming pendants of amethyst and cornelian.

From the cabinet Mr. Simpson next took a number of amulets—models of gods worshipped by the Egyptians and carried to ward off evil spirits and bring good luck. There was Anubis, God of Death, Typhon with the all-seeing eye and Orsini, the King God.

STRANGE OBJECTS

Two strange objects—an ushabti and a canopic vase took us to an Egyptian funeral. The first, a model of an Egyptian slave, brought to mind how the Egyptians slaughtered the slaves of an influential man when he died and buried them with him so that they would be able to attend to his needs in the other world.

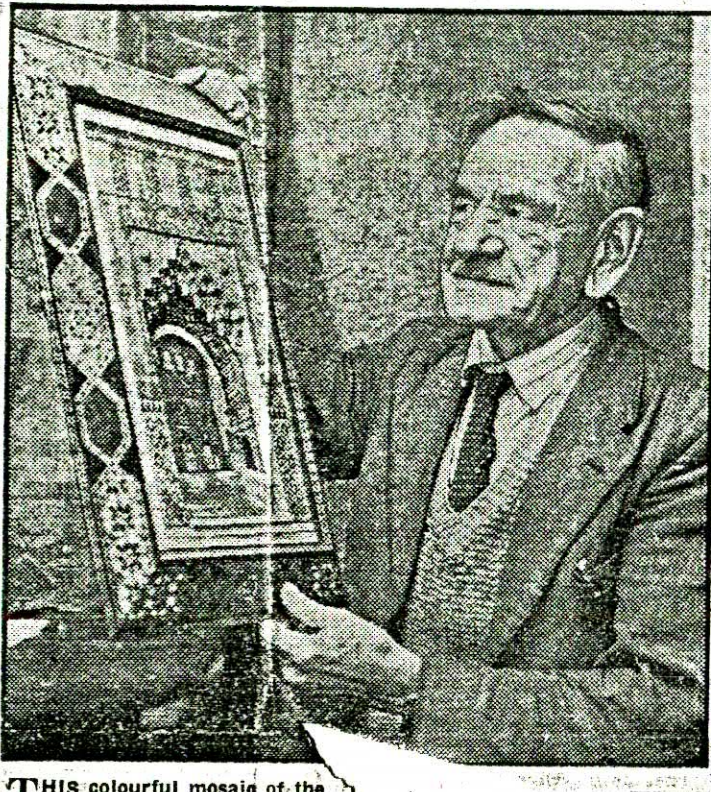
The canopic vase reminded us that the Egyptians preserved their dead. The organs of the body were placed in a vase and at the day of resurrection, so they believed, the parts of the body became one.

A tiny Grecian tear bottle came from the back of the cabinet. Grecian mourners held these bottles to their eyes to catch their tears. When the bottles were full they were placed alongside the body.

LAMP FROM PALESTINE

One by one Mr. Simpson held in his hand the treasures of Faultice Cottage—pottery bowls made in 3721 B.C., a beaker made in Peru before the arrival of the Incas, a Moorish carving from Toledo in Spain.

Marble from the catacombs took us back to the turtive meetings of the early Christians; we held in our



THIS colourful mosaic of the Alhambra at Granada is one of the many ancient treasures owned by Mr. John Simpson, of Faultice Cottage, Idle.

hands a Roman lamp from Palestine.

Mr. John Simpson, painter and decorator for 60 years, was born at Ley Fleaks in Idle. As a young man he became friendly with Mr. Horsfall Turner, who passed on to him an enthusiasm for delving into the past. First, Mr. Simpson traced back his family history 300 years and found his ancestors had given their name to Simpson Green at Idle.

He discovered that in 1629 William Simpson, of Idle, bought half a seat in Calverley Church from a Robert Harper and that in 1686 John Simpson was constable of Idle.

A REGENCY TABLE

Mrs. Simpson died 13 years ago and now Mr. Simpson lives alone immersed in bygone days.

He sits in chairs made in the days of Elizabeth I and Cromwell; he opens a Jacobean door and he works at a Regency table.

His windows are of stained glass and were once in a local church, and the oak cross which leans against a bedroom window was made from wood presented by the Lords of the Manor at Idle to repair the interior of a church.

Delicate Japanese and Chinese paintings hang from the walls. A boomerang and an arrow from Tanganyika decorate the hall.

In a room upstairs, on shelves carved with strange heads, is Mr. Simpson's library of ancient books, their pages faded with age. Among them is a bible printed in 1615 and a Thesaurus printed in 1644.