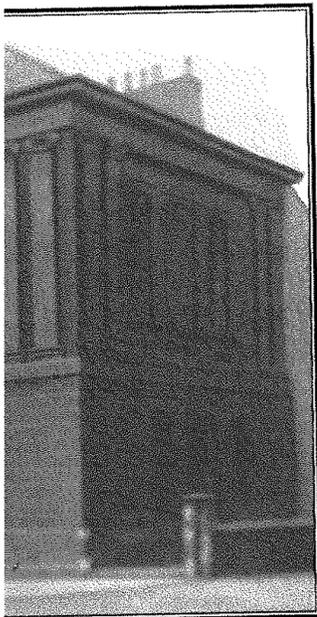


CHAPTER 3

THE FORMATION OF THE FEDERATION

The Music Saloon, Wood Street, Wakefield, (now known as The Institute of Literature and Science) on Easter Monday, 1897, was the time and setting for the historic first ever meeting of up to 90 subpostmasters and subpostmistresses who were to form the National Federation of Sub-Postmasters.



Wakefield

The Wakefield Express of April 24th, 1897, reported: "There was an unostentatious but by no means unimportant gathering at the Music Saloon on Easter Monday. Representatives of the subpostmasters and subpostmistresses of the United Kingdom assembled to consider the desirability of forming a National Association to "improve the conditions under which subpostmasters labour and to undertake the advancement of our interests by all legitimate and honourable means.

"The reason for this general movement is the dissatisfaction felt as to the result of Lord Tweedmouth's Committee on the Post Office Establishment, whereby the grievances of subpostmasters were referred to the Postal Department, although, it is alleged, that Department has long known of their just claims, and has hitherto totally disregarded them.

"Seeing there are over 20,000 sub offices in the United Kingdom, there is evidently ample scope for a general organisation in place of the few local Associations which have existed in various districts. There were upwards of 80 subpostmasters and subpostmistresses from a wide area present at the conference, and over 300 wrote cordially approving of the project.

"After a very harmonious discussion it was unanimously decided to form a National Association, with Wakefield as its headquarters, pro tem, and in recognition of their efforts in initiating the movement, Mr Ranns, of Wakefield, and Mr Cussons, of Ossett, were chosen as President and Honorary Secretary respectively."

Joseph Ranns, the driving force behind the Federation's formation, was to hold the title of National President for seven years, though not in succession.

He was born in Brigg in Lincolnshire in 1856, and was educated at the town's Grammar School before serving an apprenticeship in stationery and printing at the age of 14. He spent many years in Lincolnshire, Shropshire, Surrey, Kent and London before starting his business in Wakefield in 1888.

There is no better description of Joseph Ranns than that given by Mr Benjamin Verity, who took over as National President in 1909, and wrote, in *The Subpostmaster* of May 1909, a glowing appreciation of everything the founder had achieved.