



Bolton's Genies

The Monthly Newsletter of the Bolton Family History Society
Edition 118 – March 2024



Oil painting by Bolton Artist, David Yates

This month's photograph is of an oil painting of the old General Post Office on Deansgate (1995). The Post Office was closed on 14 August 2018. In 2020 it was transformed into 48 flats.

Sourced by Jane Milne

Editorial Musings

If you have competent computer skills, please consider helping us to maintain BFHS pages on the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society website - details on page 2.

Congratulations to all involved in the Rock Hall Project as they progress to the Development Stage of the work on the hall.

A big thank you to Helen Pitt who, every month, records our speaker's words for Bolton's Genies.

Best wishes

Cath Cole

Bolton Family History Society Vacancy

BFHS urgently needs the assistance of a competent computer user to maintain the BFHS's pages on the Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society's website. This is a voluntary task which can be undertaken from anywhere in the world.

The successful volunteer will

- be a confident user of computer programs including word processing and graphics
- have access to either Windows or AppleMac devices - both systems work with the MLFHS website interface
- be able to adapt copy from speakers to create an inviting paragraph about a talk
- to add administrative details to the MLFHS website such as date, time, venue and costs
- create a 2:1 image to illustrate a talk that can be used by others to upload to Eventbrite
- maintain the BFHS part of the MLFHS website by keeping a list of current and upcoming talks and by removing expired talks as required
- future work on the MLFHS website interface will include
- looking at other pages in the Bolton section with a view to updating and making them fresh and engaging
- putting forward ideas for future content by working with the BFHS's Chairman and Committee
- Keeping the meetings up to date is a ten-minute task but a lot of the BFHS's pages on MLFHS's website are out of date and need a serious overhaul which can be addressed over several months. It is envisaged that the task will take initially an hour a week for 10 weeks and thereafter about an hour a month.

The Branch Editor's Rights grant permission to all public pages on the website which includes all the Bolton Branch's and Research pages. Editors shall only work on Bolton Branch's pages of the MLFHS unless specifically asked to assist elsewhere.

In the first instance the appointed volunteer will report to the Chairman of BFHS.

If you believe that you can assist with this voluntary task, please contact the Bolton Family History Society's Secretary at [Bolton@mlfhs.co.uk](mailto:bolton@mlfhs.co.uk) giving details of why you are capable and willing to undertake the task.

Information and Updates for Members

Request for help from Professor Rebecca Probert

Professor Probert specialises in family law. She is undertaking a new study. From 1 January 1926, English law set out clear rules as to who would inherit in the absence of a will. The Inheritance (Family Provision) Act 1938 introduced the possibility of a spouse, unmarried daughter, or infant or incapacitated son, challenging a will on the basis that it did not make reasonable provision for them. Not until 1 April 1976 was it possible for any child of the deceased to bring such a claim. This project aims to investigate disinheritance in this period, with the aims of (1) informing academic research and (2) collating and disseminating the information in a way that will help the wider family history community understand this area.

What information is being collected?

Did any of your ancestors leave a will that was admitted to probate between 1 January 1926 and 31 March 1986 that did not leave anything to a surviving spouse or children?

If so

what date was the will admitted to probate?

who were the other beneficiaries under the will?

were any reasons given on the face of the will for not leaving anything to the surviving spouse or children?

are you aware of any reason (e.g., previous substantial lifetime gifts to that person, the greater need of other beneficiaries, estrangement or disapproval) for not leaving anything to the surviving spouse or children?

If you would like to share this information, please email Professor Probert at R.J.Probert@exeter.ac.uk with these and any further details you would like to share (or if you have any questions about the project).

Further information about the project is available on the LostCousins website:

Link - [4/3/2024 LostCousins Newsletter](#)

Sourced by Jane Milne

ROCK HALL REVIVAL PROJECT – NEWS UPDATE MARCH 2024!

Bolton Family History Society has supported Rock Hall's applications for funding with two letters of support and also helped to research the family trees of Thomas Bonsar Crompton and the subsequent occupants of Rock Hall, as near to the present day as we can, on a timeline.

The latest news is that Bolton Council and Banana Enterprise Network have been given permission to start the Rock Hall Revival project “Development Phase” by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

A press release has been issued on 6 March 2024 - full details are on the link:

https://rockhall1807.co.uk/rock-hall-revival-project-news-update-march-2024/?fbclid=IwAR1Uo-bJkd1YY7b_FR5Gaqs3goZq0FYV5FUHBUZutX-tdH5gWTJS9xdJQFg

Chorley Research Centre

Chorley Research Centre is a Lancashire FH Society asset but it is open to everyone and is based in the Old Farmhouse at Astley Hall. If anyone wishes to join LFHS, application forms are available, or guidance to where, and how, to join online is given. People in the past have expressed their belief that it is for researching only Chorley ancestry, but it is not. No matter where families originated, the volunteers will help as much as possible. Volunteers give their time freely, so the only ask is a donation to the Centre in appreciation of the time taken to help visitors.

Further information is available at the following link: www.cfsrc.com

Sourced by Jane Milne

Sharing Stories of the Fallen

“*Who Do You Think You Are*” have an article in the March edition which encourages everyone to dig out and dust old shoeboxes, bags in the attic and forgotten keepsakes to rediscover stories of loved ones who fought and died in the world wars. To gather information about stories yet to be told, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission has created a website - “*For Evermore: Stories of the Fallen*”. The link is www.cwgc.org/stories

Sourced by Ron Cole

Relatives in the Merchant Navy

Crew List Index Project (CLIP) claims “British seafarers of the late 19th and early 20th century are the best documented workers that there have ever been.” CLIP has a links page: www.crewlist.org.uk/data/external

British Southern Whale Fishery has a database of whaling voyages and crew covering 1775-1861. The link is www.britishwhaling.org

A search can also be made on a database of British Merchant Navy crew lists from 1915. The link is www.1915crewlists.rmg.co.uk

There is also a website created by the Maritime History Archive which contains 376,500 names. www.mha.mun.ca/mha1881crews1881.php

Findmypast also has a database with 2.6 million Merchant Navy records from 1918 to 1941. The link is www.bit.ly/fmp-merch-seamen

Sourced by Ron Cole

BFHS's Regular Venue

Our regular venue is Bolton Golf Club, Chorley New Road, Bolton BL6 4AJ, although this may vary occasionally due to circumstances beyond our control. Any changes will be announced on our Facebook page (link <https://www.facebook.com/BoltonFHS> accessible without subscription) and in this newsletter. It is always advisable to check before leaving home. <https://www.boltongolfclub.co.uk/contact/how-to-find-us/> provides helpful directions.

Talks are usually provided by a visiting speaker, but occasionally speakers may deliver their talks by zoom. This happens when the speaker, who is known to be a first-rate expert in their field, is based some distance from Bolton. Those present at the golf club and zoomers will see our speaker streamed on screen. It is not necessary to book a place to attend the golf club in person, but it is essential to book for a zoom place at <https://www.mlfhs.uk/bolton/events>. The link will be emailed to you several times.

Meetings are on the first Wednesday of most months. The golf club opens for roomers at 7.00 pm for a 7.30 pm start and zoomers can sign in from 7.15 pm. The club has a bar and tea or coffee is available. We have a table with recycled genealogy books and magazines, Godfrey maps of local areas and discounted equipment.

Meetings from other branches of the MLFHS are available and free to all members. These meetings, like ours, may be live, zoomed or hybrid. <https://www.mlfhs.uk/> is the link for events.

Recent Events

March Meeting

**Ray Jefferson from his new book 'The Bolton - Bridgeman Connection'.
Wednesday 6 March 2024 - HYBRID MEETING**

Ray Jefferson who is a documentary photographer, gave a comprehensive talk describing the town's relationship to the Bridgeman family over several centuries. His remarks, accompanied by a number of interesting photos and illustrations were based on his book of the same name and demonstrated the major impact the family had on the development of Bolton.

The Bridgeman family originated in Devon but were for 13 generations (350 years) the lords of the manor for much of the area of Bolton. They were baronets in the 17th Century, rising to Barons in the 18th and finally Earls of Bradford in 1815, and were landlords of much of Bolton into the 20th Century. Ray showed a photo taken from the tower at the top of Bolton Town Hall that included: Holy Trinity Church, Trinity St. Railway Station, railway warehouses and the west side of Newport Street. All this land at one time belonged to the Earl. As major landowners, the family has had a large impact on Bolton's development.

The first Bolton Bridgeman, Bishop John Bridgeman, was born in Exeter in 1577, went to Cambridge and held various church positions before becoming chaplain to King James I and Rector of Wigan in 1615. In 1619, he was consecrated Bishop of Chester and made Rector of Bangor in 1621. He bought the Great Lever estate, on land between Bolton and Farnworth in 1629 and began rebuilding Great Lever Hall in 1631. Unfortunately, he was loyal to King Charles I and suffered in the Civil War, retiring to his home near Oswestry where he died in 1652. Subsequent descendants lived at Weston Park on the Staffordshire/Shropshire border. Great Lever Hall housed numerous tenants over the years, including estate workers, the rectors of the nearby St Michael's church, and the Great Lever Conservative Association in its later years. It was used as an air raid shelter during WW2. It was demolished in 1939 and is today under the site of St. Peter's Way.

Ray related a story of the bishop investigating witchcraft. In 1633, a young boy went missing for the day from watching the cattle and claimed he had been abducted by witches, spending the day at a witch's feast. He named eighteen people (mostly women) from the community as participants. This led to the arrest of many people, seventeen of whom were found guilty at a subsequent trial. The jury was uncertain about sentencing and Bishop Bridgeman was appointed to further investigate. He was apparently satisfied by their explanations and considered them innocent, probably saving their lives. The boy eventually confessed to inventing the story and both he and his father were imprisoned.

The family's fortunes continued to rise:

- Bishop Bridgeman was succeeded by his son Orlando who rose to become Lord Keeper of the Seal of government and first baronet of Great Lever.
- Henry, the 5th baronet served in Parliament for over 40 years and became Baron Bradford in 1725.
-
- Henry's son, Orlando the 2nd Baron Bradford was made Earl of Bradford in 1815. Management - Since the family didn't live in Bolton, they employed local managers to run the estate. Their interest in developing the land throughout the Industrial Revolution led to expansion in Bolton and Farnworth because as landowners they largely controlled what was built and how it was managed. Bishop Bridgeman's record book is a treasure trove of detail on holdings and management of the estate.

This and other documents and maps can be found in the Bolton archives and track the conversion of the land from agricultural to urban uses. Some farms continued into the 1980s and some farm buildings still survive, many converted to other purposes. The Bridgeman Buildings in Bolton were the site of the Estate office until the early 20th century.

Coal Mining – although Bolton is not known for coal, it did have major reserves. But because industries of the town, used so much coal, it ended up being a net importer. In the mid-18th century, some coal was extracted under the estate and brought to the surface outside the town and the 4th Baronet leased coal rights out to the Duke of Bridgewater and later others. Coal was shipped to Worsley underground by the canal system developed by the duke. It was the 5th Baron and his son, the 1st Earl who really exploited this resource. They decided to mine their own coal starting in 1839. By the 1880s, there were several shafts, some as deep as 760 yards. Much of the coal was worked out by the 1890s, however, and the colliery closed in 1922.

Initial development - Enclosure of Bolton Moor – By 1792, the town on Bolton needed land to expand and the Bolton Moor was enclosed by an Act of Parliament. This little used piece of land was divided into 126 building lots. The owners, including the Baron of Bradford and the Earl of Derby, among others, promoted enclosure as they would benefit from the development of the town. It was administered by Trustees who were to use the rents from the houses built to improve streets, sanitation, lighting, water supplies, fire services and to regulate markets and fairs. There were also two acres set aside for the construction of a reservoir which eventually provided water to the town.

Ray profiled one of the estate managers, George Piggott who was in charge from 1817 to 1867. He was responsible for mapping, managing tenants and buying and selling land. He was also a prominent member of the community, and served as a volunteer trustee, alderman, and Poor Law guardian. His regular reports to the Earl in Weston Park are informative of life and attitudes – for instance, he did not approve of Henry Hunt who spoke in favour of parliamentary reform and repeal of the Corn Laws at what became the Peterloo massacre, describing him as a great pest to society. Clearly landowners were not in favour of disrupting the status quo.

Transportation and building - good transport for goods was necessary in the Industrial Revolution and in 1830 the Earl was approached by the Manchester, Bolton, and Bury Canal Company to support the conversion of their canal into a railway. This idea was attractive to him as the route was near his collieries, bleaching and vitriol works. Although his preferred route was not the one chosen, the railway was built close by. A passenger station was opened in 1838 on Trinity Street connecting Bolton to Salford.

With the railways came a period of civic building. The Earl of Bradford provided significant support in terms of land and in some cases funding to realize these development projects. The Bolton Town Hall suffered from cost overruns but was finally opened in 1873 by the Prince and Princess of Wales. It was on land partially owned by the Earl. There was an impressive banquet of seven courses and speeches, although the prince didn't stay long and apparently pocketed the ceremonial silver key! The Bridgeman family were also strong supporters of the Church of England and included two bishops, and two rectors. They were concerned about the spread of non-conformist religions and made several donations of land and funding to build new C of E churches.

Ray showed several photographs of these churches including:

Trinity Church (1823), now luxury flats

St Stephens at Lever Bridge (1845), the first three terracotta church in the world, built from stone from the nearby Ladyshore Colliery. It still exists minus its spire and tower.

St Michael's Church (1851) - George Piggott, the estate manager, provided money for the church and is buried here.

St James's Church (1862) in New Bury, west of Farnworth.

Sports and Recreation - The Earl also provided land and money in 1854 for the first recreational area, now Bradford Park. The 15 acres contained gardens, walks and cricket, football, and other sports facilities. The area is now a nature preserve. In 1866, the Earl opened Bolton (now Queens) Park on what was partly his land. The Council paid the cost of the work although cheap labour as the result of the Cotton famine probably kept costs down. The Park is still enjoyed today.

Team games came about because of the movement of the population to towns to work in factories, mills and mines. People were now working together in larger numbers. Cricket was becoming popular and in 1839 the first county teams were established. In Bolton, public parks, on land donated or sold by the Earl generally had space for a cricket club. Bolton Cricket Club in Great Lever, (1876) is still used for cricket, bowls, and rounders on land leased from the Earl.

Royal Lancashire Agricultural Show, one of the oldest in the UK, was started in 1767 and in 1907 was held in Bolton on land owned by the Earl who was also on the organizing committee. The showground was equipped with running water and gas, a grandstand that seated 3,500, and a livestock hospital. The four-day event ran over the August Bank weekend. Catering included mainly local food and accommodated 1150 people per sitting served by 325 waiters. Unfortunately, the Sunday church service, during which offerings were donated to charity, did not happen due to the inability to find a clergyman to officiate. It was otherwise a great success. The Show returned in 1927 but this time sought charitable donations beforehand.

In 1629, when Bishop Bridgeman bought the Great Lever estate, most medical treatment was provided by self-taught practitioners. Doctors were few and costly. By the 19th Century, when hospitals were first built, they were not known for a good standard of care; in 1891, victims of a mining accident were sent home rather than to the hospital. The general health of the population did improve during the 19th century due to the provision clean water, effective sewerage, parks and more sanitary public spaces around homes. For the sick, hospitals were generally built and outfitted through donations and the Earls of Bradford was prominent in this.

The Earl also supported public health. After the Bolton reservoir was built, 27 standpipes were installed to provide free water. Public Baths also opened in 1846 (on land leased from the Earl for nominal rent and using water provided free by the Waterworks Company). The baths provided facilities for washing and exercise and were available to both men and women in separate areas. Tepid, warm and cold water was available. The same year, the committee voted to add assembly rooms on the second floor for charity balls, exhibitions and fund-raising events. The building remains as the Bolton Business Centre. In 1876, a hospital was built next to Queens Park to replace the infirmary which dated to 1813, on land partially owned by the Earl. An art exhibition was held in 1886 in the new building to help with fundraising and over 1600 works of art were borrowed from various institutions and individuals. Fundraising eventually totalled more than £34,000. The Earl opened the building with a golden key embellished with the Bradford crest.

In 1868, Samuel Chadwick, a respected doctor in Bolton donated £22 000 to fund the construction of model houses as well as an orphanage for girls in The Haulgh. The rental income from the houses paid for the operation of the orphanage. The land for the orphanage was donated by the Earl of Bradford and it stood on Chadwick Street.

By the early 20th century, most of the Bolton property had been developed as the town of Bolton grew and new projects were subject to far more regulation. By the 1960s, most farms had been converted to urban uses and in 1983, after the death of the 6th Earl, most of the assets of the Bridgeman family in Bolton were sold. Today the Bridgeman family fulfil a largely ceremonial role. But the contribution of the family to local life remains in public buildings, parks and street names. The family retains significant holdings on the Staffordshire/Shropshire border. The current Earl, Richard Bridgeman, the 7th Earl, lives in Chiswick, West London.

There were two comments/questions:

Q: What are copyright issues with the National Library of Scotland, source of some of the maps shown? A: They are online and free to download.

Mr. Nuttall noted that he remembered German PoWs farming land in Great Lever.

Ray's book can be purchased at [Shop \(boltondocumentary.co.uk\)](http://Shop(boltondocumentary.co.uk))

Upcoming Events

Henry Dawson's presentation album and T Taylor Ltd of Bolton Wednesday 3 April 2024 - HYBRID MEETING

Maggy Simm - Maggy is a retired teacher who has been involved in local history for many years, latterly as a member of the u3a. She will explain how she became interested in Henry Dawson's album.



- O -

Advance Notice of 2024 BFHS Speakers

Catholic Research in Lancashire Wednesday 1 May 2024 - HYBRID MEETING

Kate Hurst - Kate will tell us that she has passionately studied family history since her late teens. She spent endless hours at the Lancashire Archives in Preston and is now familiar with some of the records there. She is keen to help those researching in the north-west of England.



How the American Civil War affected the Lancashire Cotton Famine 5 JUNE 2024 - HYBRID MEETING

Stephen Irwin - Stephen, a historian, recently retired after more than 17 years as the Education Officer for Blackburn Museum. His talk will explore the impact of the American Civil War on the people of Lancashire.



Speakers for the remainder of 2024 will be published each month in this newsletter. Speakers have been invited for all months up to November 2024 and are available to view on the following website: <https://mlfhs.uk/Bolton/events/meetings>

Bolton History Centre and Bolton Records

Bolton History Centre is now open in the Central Library. The Centre has informed us that “It will be located in the far right hand corner of the main library; in one of its original positions!”

The telephone number for any local history and archive queries and requests for material is 01204 332185 or send an email request to archives@bolton.gov.uk Requests take seven days to turn around and will either be looked at in the lab at or the museum at Crompton Place. References to some of the websites:
<https://boltonremembers.org/> has some of the WW1 & WW2 records we have found for Bolton military personnel either born, resided, or enlisted in Bolton.
<https://bolton.spydus.co.uk/cgi-bin/spydus.exe/MSGTRN/WPAC/HOME> Spydus catalogue for local studies search.

<https://www.boltonlams.co.uk/history-centre-1> This link is the History Centre page for the services that are offered to researchers. It gives some information about archives and the records that are held.

An interesting website sourced by Bolton News – “Unclaimed estates in Bolton revealed by HM’s Treasury Department for June and July”

<https://www.theboltonnews.co.uk/news/23622610.unclaimed-estates-bolton-revealed-treasury-june/>

<https://www.theboltonnews.co.uk/news/23688759.unclaimed-estates-bolton-revealed-treasury-july/>

Lancashire Records

News from The Archives

UK BMD Summary www.freebmd.org.uk



Lancs OPC www.lan.opc.org.uk



Lancashire Archives News and Events - their latest newsletter and more - <https://sway.cloud.microsoft/7mSlCj789vgwTDac?ref=Link>

Lancashire Archives Facebook page - <https://www.facebook.com/lancsarchives>

Lancashire Parish Register Society link - www.lprs.org.uk

Lancashire Infantry Museum link - www.tinyurl.com/lancs-inf-mus

Activities and Events from MLFHS Branches



Please note these events are all free to subscribed MLFHS members, £3 to guests.



Manchester branch –

Next meeting – Saturday 13 April 2024 - 11.00 am - 2.30 pm

MLFHS Spring Fair - Manchester Central Library - Free to everyone.



Oldham and District Branch

Next meeting: Saturday 13 April 2024 at 2 pm

Annual Members' Meeting followed by "Memorial Records of Chadderton: Foxdenton Hall" - an illustrated presentation by Michael Lawson. A hybrid meeting on Zoom and in the Performance Space at Oldham Library - MLFHS members are free and visitors £5.00
Booking for Zoom attendance is on Eventbrite. Free to everyone - All are most welcome.



Anglo Scottish Branch

Next meeting: Saturday 6 April 2024 at 2.00 pm

"Homes Fit for Heroes - in the Scottish 1921 Census" by Dr Kay Williams
An online meeting via Zoom
Booking via Eventbrite - Free to members Non-members £5.00

Other Local History Societies' Meetings

WE ADVISE CHECKING THEIR RESPECTIVE WEBSITES PERIODICALLY FOR UPDATES AND DATES OF MEETINGS.



Halliwell Local History Society <http://goo.gl8erYyr>

Email: enquiries@halliwell-lhs.co.uk

Next meeting – Tuesday 30 April 2024 at 7.30 pm - "Lost Businesses of Bolton" by David Lloyd at St Luke's Church, Chorley Old Road, Bolton BL1 4JE. Members £1.00 and Guests £2.50



Turton Local History Society <https://goo.gl/adx4GM>

Next meeting - Thursday 28 March 2024 at 7.00 pm - "Civil Wars in Lancashire 1642 - 1651" by David Casserly. To be held in the old building, across the road from the usual venue.

Email: mlandypublishing@yahoo.co.uk

Westhoughton Local History Group – <http://goo.gl/XNugI5>

Next event - Thursday 18 April 2024 at 10.30 am - "Worsley Delph and Green Industrial Complex" A talk by Judith Atkinson in Westhoughton Library, Market St, Westhoughton BL5 3AU.

Horwich Heritage Centre - <http://goo.gl/fSPsij>



Next event – Tuesday 9 April 2024 at 7.30 pm - “Toasted Cheese and Arsenic” - A talk by Lyndsay Smith

This event will be held at Horwich Community Centre, Beaumont Road, Horwich BL6 7BG. It is free to members. Non-members are welcome with a £2.00 admission fee payable at the door.

Open Days, Admission Free, are held most months on Saturdays between 10.00 am - 1.00 pm

New Exhibition: “Centenary of Horwich Harriers” On now till 31 May 2024 at Horwich Heritage Centre with free admission.

Key Information about Bolton Family History Society

<https://www.mlfhs.uk/bolton>

•Speaker Bookings: [Boltonprog@mlfhs.org.uk](mailto:boltonprog@mlfhs.org.uk)

•Bolton helpdesk: boltonfhishelp@gmail.com

•Newsletter Archives since July 2014:

<https://www.mlfhs.uk/bolton/newsletter/archives>

•General Society enquiries to the BFHS Secretary, Christine M Ellis

bolton@mlfhs.org.uk

•Manchester Research - email a brief enquiry to <https://www.mlfhs.uk/virtual-help-desk>

or visit us at

•Bolton Facebook page <https://goo.gl/n99qtW> 976 Likes and 1K people following on Facebook

•Bolton Research Collection on the MLFHS website: (For members only)

<https://www.mlfhs.uk/bolton/research>

•Join the MLFHS/BFHS at: <https://www.mlfhs.uk/join>
