

# 'e-Owls'



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**Oldham & District Newsletter Archives :** Read or download back copies [HERE](#)

## November 2021

### MLFHS - Oldham & District Branch Newsletter

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## Branch News :

### Branch Officers for 2021 -2022 :

Committee Member : Chairman : Linda Richardson  
Committee Member : Treasurer : Gill Melton  
Committee Member : Secretary : Joan Harrison  
Committee Member : Newsletter : Sheila Goodyear  
Committee Member : Webmistress : Sheila Goodyear



Where to find it

['Where to Find it'](#) Page, on the  
Oldham & District Website Pages



'Everyday Table Book,' Hone, Nov. 1826

## Oldham Branch Meetings :

**For current information on all M&LFHS Meetings, and other public activities,  
Please check with the website for updated information.**

The newsletter will be sent out as usual. Meetings are now in place using the zoom app.  
The Society Journal will go out to members as usual. It relies heavily on Branch reports and what the Society has been doing at events and fairs etc. However, this sort of news is in short supply! To fill the pages with interesting articles, it's hoped that more people will write up family stories and contribute them to the journal. Please refer to the page, '*Notes for Contributors*', in the Journal, for information on how to send articles, etc.

The Society Facebook page [HERE](#) and the Twitter page [HERE](#) will be updated frequently.

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### **Chairman's remarks :**

Hello Again

I hope you are all keeping well and venturing out a bit more. The weather has been quite good recently so no excuses for staying in. I have been doing quite a bit of work in the garden as the grass still needs cutting and the weeds are sprouting everywhere. I have a family of squirrels visiting now looking to store their food for winter. They are quite tame and will come down on to the lawn and take peanuts from me.

The Branch Meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> November will be out last for this year and I hope you can join us and Alan Crosby who is going to tell us about family life in the industrial revolution. This meeting will be via Zoom.

I am still trying to arrange with Oldham Libraries for a venue within the Library itself where we can hold physical meetings, depending on the Covid restrictions at the time. Oldham Council have not yet given permission for social distancing regulations to be eased, so watch this space.

I hope you enjoy reading this month's newsletter.

Best Wishes

Linda Richardson

Chairman, Oldham Branch

email me at < [chairman-oldham@mlfhs.org.uk](mailto:chairman-oldham@mlfhs.org.uk) >

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### **Editor's remarks.**

Hi Everyone,

It's difficult to believe that another Christmas, dictated by pandemic concerns and restrictions, although hopefully not so rigorous as the last, is on the horizon again. This year, apparently, we're going to be faced with shortages. Looking at the past (as family historians tend to do!) we can ask ourselves how lives have changed for the better but, we can also see that, there's, '*no such thing as a free lunch*'; there's always a price to be paid for progress!

Enough soul-searching! Positivity should be our mantra! With this now in mind, we can read that both Saddleworth History Society and Moorside History Society are making plans to open in-person meetings again; details in the 'Societies not part of MLFHS' section. At our own Oldham & District Branch of MLFHS, our first three meetings in 2022 will be on zoom and, from April, we hope to be offering hybrid meetings. However, until we can try it out in the library (not an option at the moment) we can't be sure. As soon as we have any definite news we will share it with you in the newsletter and, of course, on the [What's New](#) page of the Branch website pages. The programme for the first three zoom meetings in 2022 is on our [Programme page](#).

In the Mixed Bag, I've continued our story, '*Autobiography Of A Manchester Cotton Manufacturer : Or Thirty Years' Experience Of Manchester*'. I hope you're finding this as interesting as I did when I first came across it. I felt it helped fill a gap, in our understanding of ancestral lives, between the unenfranchised workers and the truly affluent members of society in the mid 19th century. Similarly, I've continued with selections from '*The Book of English Trades*' in which I find the detail so fascinating.

In the e-postbag you'll find an email from a visitor to our October OHRG meeting, about the 1944 bombing in Oldham. He has sent me details of his own website which contains details of the WW2 bombings, and deaths, in the Greater Manchester area, with names and details.

In the 1921 section, I've included a postcard (front and back) around which there seems to be a story!

Sent in 1921, from Catford to an address in Sunderland, it mentions '*Will sailing last night, two months voyage this time going to Abadan*'. The only Abadan I could find in google maps was in present-day Iran. I couldn't resist trying to find out a little more! I've added my findings with the

postcard.

Also, in the 1921 census, I've been a little self-indulgent again and added my own tenuous link with events in Ireland in 1916 and 1921.

On the Oldham & District pages of the website, a number of pages relating to St. Paul's Methodist Church, in Shaw, have been added since the last newsletter. There are links, from the [Main Article Page](#) to : details of over 400 Burials; Its history and activities; the 150th Anniversary Booklet; a Gallery of Pictures; the 1920 fundraising Autograph Book of WW1 soldiers; and a list of Ministers from 1791.

Finally, in the Gallery, we have a random mix! Two are of Rochdale; although next door to each other, we rarely seem to overlap. We also include an old 18th century workhouse from Ashton-under-lyne and a long forgotten 'Denton Hall'.

I hope you continue to enjoy reading the newsletter,  
Sheila

Although I am always more than happy to receive articles, pictures etc., for the newsletter, copyright is always a tricky issue so do please make sure that you have the right to use any text or illustrations that you send! It is also helpful if you include mention of your source material.

You will retain copyright of any contributions that you send, whilst allowing MLFHS to re-use the material in an appropriate manner.

Editor reserves the right to edit any contributions before publication.

email me at : < Oldham\_newsletter@mlfhs.org.uk >

**Please note**, regarding using the links to website pages or .pdf documents : if clicking on a link when the newsletter is viewed on the internet, without first downloading it onto the computer, the new page opens in the same window so the 'back button' has to be used to return to the newsletter.

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## Oldham & District Branch

### *Monthly Meetings*

Please continue to try and support the Branch, with your online attendance, whilst we are unable to hold our meetings in Gallery Oldham. The zoom app is free to download and use.

Details, of the full programme of talks, are on the 'Meetings' page of the Branch website [HERE](#) .

**Booking for an online talk is essential** and bookings are on [Eventbrite](#).

**The talks will be free to members and non-members alike.**

**Wherever you live, Welcome!**

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### *Last Month's Meeting ... on zoom*



Saturday,  
9th Oct.  
at  
2 pm



### *The Amazing Mary Higgs*

**'Student, Pioneer, Wife and Mother; Undercover Tramp and Social Reformer.'**

An illustrated, free talk given by Carol Talbot, author of the above book.

To write about our last meeting, I can't really do better than copy Carol's own synopsis of the

book, on which the talk was based, from the Oldham HRG website :

"Mary Higgs arrived in Oldham in 1891 when her husband, the Reverend Thomas Higgs, took up the ministry at Greenacres Congregational Church. But Mary was not a typical Victorian minister's wife and mother. At the age of 18 she gained a scholarship to a new women's college, which later became Girton College, Cambridge, and was the first woman to study science to degree level, completing her studies in 1874.

The year after the family arrived in Oldham there was a serious slump in trade. A dispute between cotton workers and their employers over a reduction in wages resulted in a lengthy lock-out. Mary saw at first hand how some women could lose their homes due to loss of work and she helped those she could. She also started to visit the workhouse and became friendly with Sarah Lees and her daughter Marjory. By the end of the 1890s Sarah's husband Charles Edward Lees, a wealthy mill owner had died, leaving her with enough money to expand her philanthropic ideals. Mary persuaded her to support the setting up of a rescue home to take in homeless women and their children. A terraced house in Esther Street Greenacres was acquired.

When Thomas and Mary arrived in Oldham their four children were aged between 11 and one. As they grew more independent Mary was able to spend more time on activities outside the home and church. Through her contact with homeless women at the rescue home and workhouse she learned of the conditions many had to endure when staying in casual wards and common lodging houses. Workhouses had casual or tramp wards for men and women who needed short term accommodation, often while seeking work. Most towns had common lodging houses. These were run for profit and unregulated. In 1903 Mary took a radical decision; she would dress as a tramp and go undercover to gather information. In spring of that year, Mary and her friend Annie Lee, a cotton worker, travelled by train to West Yorkshire to begin their tramp.

After enduring five nights undercover in tramp wards and common lodging houses, Mary published an anonymous report on her investigations. The report caused uproar and Mary decided to go public. In 1904 she was called to give evidence before a Government Enquiry. She took the opportunity to offer constructive solutions to what she saw as the many inadequacies of the system.

Over the next few years Mary extended her undercover investigation to Manchester and London. Again she recorded her findings and also published a booklet on how to set up a rescue home. It was vital to expand provision in Oldham. Mary persuaded Sarah and Marjory Lees to purchase a 15 room house in West Street. This was converted into a Lodging House for women and also became the hub of social initiatives.

In 1907 Reverend Higgs died and ironically Mary found herself homeless. Sarah and Marjory made the cottage to Bent House available for Mary and two of her children. A year later, Mary became the Northern secretary for the National Association of Women's Lodging Houses.

Mary had grown to love her adopted home, but felt that something should be done to improve the environment. So in 1901 she wrote a letter to the Oldham Chronicle entitled Beautiful Oldham – Why Not? The following year the Beautiful Oldham Society was founded. Through schools, children were encouraged to care for and grow plants. Trees and other plants were bought by the committee and sold to businesses and groups at cost. Individuals were encouraged to plant window boxes and take up flags in their yards. This was a period in which the Garden City Movement was in full swing. Mary wanted to create a garden suburb in Oldham on the lines set out by Ebenezer Howard. Sarah and Marjory Lees sold land in Hollins at cost, and in 1909 Howard came to the official opening of Oldham Garden Suburb.

After many years of pioneering and reform work, Mary was presented with the OBE in 1937. Following the ceremony she was unwell and stayed with her eldest daughter in



London. Only days after receiving official recognition of her years of service to the people of Oldham, Mary Higgs died at the age of 83."

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### NOVEMBER MEETING ... on zoom



Saturday,  
13th Nov.  
at  
2 pm



#### ***Family Life in the Industrial Revolution ... the autobiography of Benjamin Shaw, 1772-1841***

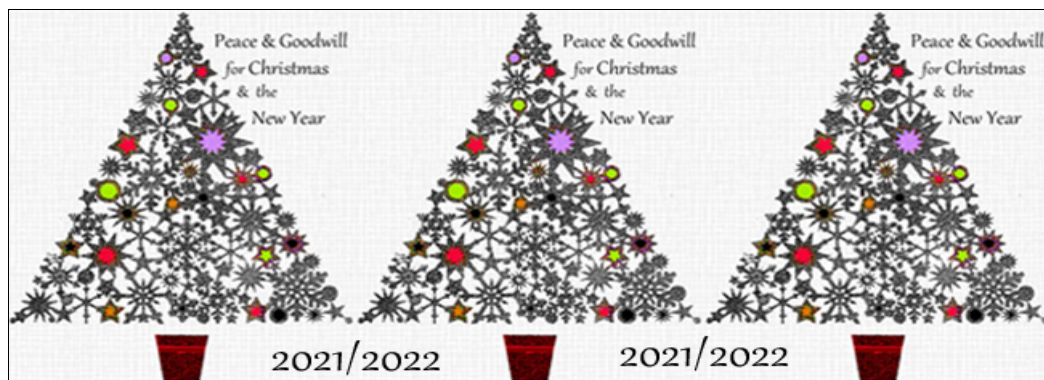
A free talk given by Dr Alan Crosby, on zoom

The talk covers everything from child labour, via bastardy and terrible working conditions, to problem teenagers and early death; the world of your Lancashire ancestors, 200 years ago.

Booking, and more details of the talk, are on Eventbrite [HERE](#)

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### NO MEETING IN DECEMBER



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### JANUARY 2022 MEETING... on zoom



Saturday,  
8th Jan.  
at  
2 pm



#### ***Hanging the Pacifist: Margaret Ashton (1856-1937) Manchester's first woman councillor***

A short introduction to the life and times of Margaret Ashton. The talk will look at Ashton's extraordinary life, her political career, her involvement in the suffrage movement and, during

WW1, her work in the anti-war and pacifist movement. It will look at the story of her lost portrait, rediscovered in 2006, and rehung in the Town Hall - hence the title of this talk ... *'Hanging the Pacifist.'*

A free, online talk, given by Dr Alison Ronan

Booking and more details will be on Eventbrite

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### **MLFHS Branches delivering their monthly meetings and talks on-line**

#### **Anglo - Scots ... November Meeting**

MLFHS, ANGLO-SCOTTISH BRANCH ONLINE MEETING	Saturday, 20th November at 2:00 pm	<i>Kirk Sessions: Different Aspects and Palaeography given by Robin Urquhart</i>
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**Anglo-Scottish Website Pages** [HERE](#) for more information and booking details

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#### **Bolton ... November Meeting**

|                                              |                                                |                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MLFHS<br>Bolton Branch<br>online<br>Meetings | Wednesday,<br>3rd<br>November<br>at<br>7:30 pm | <i>'Researching<br/>Welsh<br/>Ancestors'<br/>given by<br/>Dr. Penny Walters</i> |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**Bolton Website Pages** [HERE](#) for more information and booking details.

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### **MLFHS updates**

**The MLFHS Family History Help Desk ...**

**is now open again**

**As the situation can still change, there is no certainty of anything!**

**For updated information, please check the website** [HERE](#)

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### **MLFHS, Manchester Ancestors, on-line talks :**

#### **Manchester ... November Meeting**

|                                         |                                               |                                                                       |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MLFHS<br>aka<br>Manchester<br>Ancestors | Saturday,<br>6th<br>November<br>at<br>2:00 pm | <i>'Irish<br/>Family History'<br/>A talk given by<br/>Carol Wells</i> |
|-----------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|

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**MLFHS Online Bookshop: Is OPEN for business again [HERE](#).**

with CDs, Downloads, Maps, Registers, Local Interest Books, More General Publications, Miscellaneous Items with MLFHS Logo etc., and Offers.

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### **MLFHS & Branch e-Newsletters**

MLFHS Manchester, and each of the MLFHS branches, publishes a monthly e-newsletter which provides useful news items and articles etc. The e-newsletters are free and available to both members and non-members of MLFHS Society. Members receive the MLFHS newsletter automatically; non-members can find them by following the links, below.

To sign-up, for a Branch newsletter, to be emailed each month, simply click the appropriate link below and complete the short form on the e-newsletter page, where you will also find copies of all past issues to browse.

[MLFHS](#)      [Bolton](#)      [Oldham](#)      [Anglo-Scottish](#)

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**MLFHS Updates to the Great Database** (located in the Members' area of the Website)

**Emails to the Members' forum**, from John Marsden (webmaster), listing the updates.

\* New in the Member Area - Gibraltar Deaths 1855

\* a cutting from the Preston Chronicle which listed soldiers of the Third Royal Lancashire Militia who had died at Gibraltar in the third quarter of 1855. Just 30 names of men from Lancashire (and a couple of Irishmen), but I have added them to the Great Database

\* another 229 names to the war Memorial Database. These come from the following memorials:

Astley Wesleyan Methodist Church Memorial, WW1

Bickershaw War Memorial, St. James and St. Elizabeth Church, Bickershaw, WW1

Atherton Colliers Memorial, Atherton Parish Church House, WW1

Oldham, Shaw, St Paul's Methodist Church, Memorial Window, WW1

\* Barry Henshall has been busy at Urmston Cemetery transcribing the memorial inscriptions from plots H, N and P. I have just added a further 996 names recorded on 364 memorials to the Memorial Inscription database.

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### **Meetings and Talks at other Societies &/or Venues**

**Please note ...**

**Please check society/group websites or organisers for updated information**

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**Oldham Historical Research Group: ... Online Meetings on zoom**



Wednesday  
17th  
November  
at  
7 pm



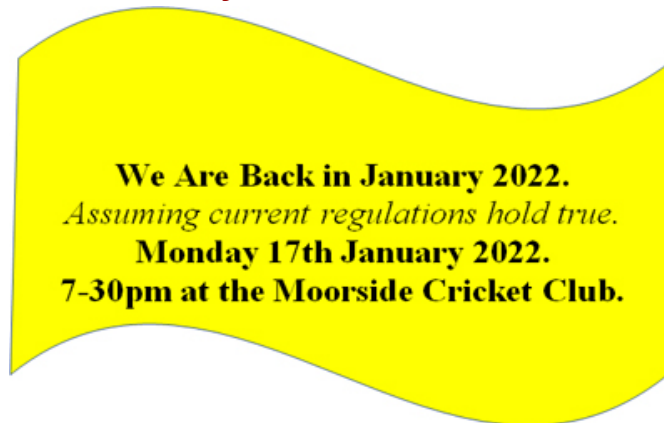
***Britain's Pigeons go to War:***

***The British Carrier Pigeon Service in France & Flanders 1914-1918***

a free, illustrated talk given by Dr. Gervase Phillips  
Everyone welcome ... booking on Eventbrite [HERE](#)  
Your support for our meetings would be appreciated and, if you would like more information,  
please email me at < pixnet.sg@gmail.com >.  
Website [HERE](#)

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**Library Events & Gallery talks at Gallery Oldham; Curator talks** [HERE](#)  
on [Eventbrite](#) and [Instagram](#)

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**Moorside & District Historical Society**



Further details next month

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**Saddleworth Historical Society Wednesday 10th November, 7.30pm**  
at the Saddleworth Museum, Art Gallery, High Street, Uppermill.

**"The Last Laugh of the Railway King -  
The Amazing Story of Edward Watkins, Manchester's Forgotten Star."**  
an illustrated presentation given by Geoffrey Scargill.

Society members free but a charge to non-members on the door of £3.  
All welcome. Refreshments available. Masks should be worn.

Website [HERE](#)

**Saddleworth Civic Trust** ..... it is likely, subject to verification, that the AGM of the Society  
will be held on Thursday 18th November 2021 followed by an Illustrated Presentation, TBA.  
The meeting is at 7.30pm and will be held at the Saddleworth Museum Art Gallery, High Street,  
Uppermill. All welcome and Society members free but a charge to non-members on the door  
of £3. Refreshments Available. All welcome & Masks should be worn.

**For both societies :**

Please note that if there is any upturn in the state of the ongoing Covid Pandemic, any or all of these  
meetings might be cancelled. Members of each Society should check with any Committee member, at  
the Museum office, if in doubt.

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**Family History Society of Cheshire : Tameside Group meeting.**  
See their website [HERE](#)

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**Tameside History Club :**

Meetings on zoom.

Website and programme [HERE](#)

&

**Tameside Local Studies and Archives - Regular Sessions and Events**

Website and programme [HERE](#)  
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**'A Mixed Bag'**

**'Autobiography Of A Manchester Cotton Manufacturer : Or Thirty Years' Experience Of Manchester ', pub. 1887.**

Originally published anonymously, later research showed that it was written by Henry S. Gibbs. The reviewer had given it 5 stars, as had others who had read it.

The author used pseudonyms throughout ... actual names, where discovered, in the footnotes.

**Serialised in the newsletter : Part 2**

The earlier chapters and an introduction can be read in last month's newsletter [HERE](#)

**Transcript: Chapter III**

**A MANUFACTURER'S DIFFICULTIES - ROUTINE OF THE MILL.**

I GAVE close attention to millwork, and as Mr. Thornton wished it, contrived to be in the building every morning before six o'clock. At five minutes past six the main entrance which led to the different rooms was closed, and the workers who afterwards arrived could only obtain admittance by ascending a flight of steps facing the office window, to a room under the care of a grim-looking spectacled man, who acted the part of a cut-looker and also took cognizance of the late comers. It was when this door closed that I began the interminable round of the mill. I had learned, with some trouble, the names of the hands, male and female, with the exception of the weavers, who were indicated in the wages book by the numbers of their looms. When I found a frame or machine standing which should have been working, the fact was noted. After going through each room deliberately, and observing that each person was in his right place of action, I generally found myself with William Meadows in the engine-house. If there is poetry to be found anywhere in a cotton mill it is in the engine-house you will find it, if the room be well kept, as it was here. To a person of lively imagination the contemplation of a powerful beam engine working satisfactorily has a salutary effect. The idea of power, obedience.

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and unobtrusive action are impressed on the mind; Provided it be kept in good order, its continued efforts in the service of its master and amenableness to his simple turn of a handle, inspires the beholder with respect and admiration. By treating the engine fairly, with thought and intelligence, you are sure of faithful service, but it requires constant care and watchfulness, for the want of which there is no limit to the havoc it might commit.

I do not forget, however, the occasional break in the monotonous life when some warbling weaver would launch out in a fine soprano voice, which could be heard high up above the clatter of the machinery. I have often stopped to listen to some well-known melody, which doubtless she had on the previous Sunday offered in praise to her Maker, in the church or chapel to which she resorted. It is a good sign when a weaver sings. It speaks to the fact that her yarn is good and her loom in good order. She cannot sing if her yarn be continually breaking. Apart from these considerations, I rejoiced in listening to a singing weaver.

The engineer was a pleasant man, and I soon found he possessed a soul even above his engines. A friendship was struck up which exists at the present moment. In a letter recently received from him he writes: "Were I ten years younger I would fly to you like a sea-gull, link my fortunes with yours, and build you a house" (supposing I was in the Bush). In the engine-house were two old-fashioned condensing engines, of some 150 horse power combined, which worked in a solemn

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manner, that often astonished me, considering the forests of straps and wheels of which they were the motive power. They ought long previously to have made way for others of more

modern construction. In an oldy place like this, if you once begin to pull out it is impossible to know how to stop; so in the absence of pulling the whole place down and of replacing everything it was best to leave things as they were.

I soon began to discover that the establishment of which I had become an active member was in a state bordering on dilapidation. I had access to every drawer, paper, and book in the place, and every overlooker had instructions to give me the fullest information on everything I wished to know. There was nothing therefore to hinder me from familiarizing myself with every fact in connexion with the mill's past history, its present condition, and future prospects. Moreover, William Meadows could enlighten me considerably' on subjects I wished to investigate, not only with regard to the engines, boilers, and gearing which belonged to his department, but also in other matters. From these sources and the books kept in Manchester, which I audited monthly, together with an accidental glance at the last balance-sheet, I became painfully conscious of the state of Mr. Thornton's affairs. The mill was not prospering. This was a blow, and a source of grief which has never been removed. The question at the time was how an improvement could be effected. I had been brought to regard Mr. Thornton with feelings differing from those I had towards most other men. He reposed great confidence in me; indeed,

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I thought too much so; but this fact alone, apart from his trustful, generous nature, and my regard also for his wife and children, determined me that no additional efforts or sacrifices on my part should be too great to make for him. But, alas! he had become so inextricably fastened in this forlorn, tumble-down place, that nothing short of a miracle in the shape of continuous and unheard-of good trade could relieve him. It was not a long while since he had taken the mill in a prosperous time (the best of all times to part with an old concern, and, of course, the worst in which to buy one) on a lease of fourteen years, two or three only of which had expired. It was taken at a maximum rental and the extensive machinery at a high valuation. It seems he somewhat precipitately detached himself from a thriving firm composed of his near relatives, but in which he did not act a very conspicuous part, and, in opposition to the counsel of his friends, grasped the bubble, which so soon collapsed, that he might reign supreme. I was much at his house, when he was wont to impart to me the circumstances of the terrible position in which he found himself. His wife also, on every available opportunity, poured into my ears the sad story of her husband's misfortune. I heartily sympathized with them, and being young, active, and hopeful, resolved to make their troubles my own.

My time was fully occupied with one thing and another. The daily wrapping of yarn and rovings to insure the thread being the correct count or thickness, the interminable journeys through the vast building, counting picks in the cloth, calculating

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costs and pricing finished fabrics, which were made up and labelled on the premises, previous to being packed in Hessian bags, and carted to Manchester, several times weekly, each piece being marked with a private character as a guide for the salesmen there - these were a part of my duties. Having a good eye for the raw material, and perception of its capabilities, I could discriminate for what purpose each bale was the best adapted. When the cotton was hoisted into the scutching room from the hold, weighed, checked, opened, and selected, mixings were made resembling hay ricks in size, shape, and construction. We had three mixings in use. One of them was composed of the strongest and longest fibre, without so much regard for colour, and was made for being spun into twist which afterwards was made into warps. Another mixing was formed of white soft cotton, and was made into weft. There was also a third mixing for a weft of an inferior quality, which was sold to country manufacturers.

One morning, Mr. Thornton came to me in a flushed and excited manner, and informed me he had discharged Reginald, the book-keeper, who, though he was clever, was deemed to be idle, and on too familiar a footing with the workpeople. Could I do his work in addition to my own, or

must he engage another man? Now the clerical work in a large mill, where not only spinning and weaving but the finishing of goods is carried on, is no trifle. The wages book alone, which was of huge dimensions, was enough to make any young fellow shudder. It contained the condensation of calculations transferred to it from a variety of sources

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in which at least forty other books, large and small, were concerned. It must have been my love for Mr. Thornton, coupled with the notion I had of my own powers, which prompted me to reply that I certainly could do the work, and that he must not engage any other man. He showed such satisfaction with my readiness to add Reginald's duties to my own, that I was already rewarded for the undertaking. W. Meadows thought I would not be able to carry out my well-intentioned purpose. He was mistaken. For a long period, by the time the big breakfast bell rang every morning at eight o'clock, I had completed the work in the terrible folio, which had occupied the departed Reginald nearly the whole day. I heard afterwards "John" was severely lectured by his wife for imposing this additional labour upon me.

Time went on, and Whitsuntide, which is the occasion of a great holiday in Lancashire, was approaching. An opportunity therefore offered of my making a visit to the West of England. My mother became so excited in the prospect of seeing me again, notwithstanding a week never passed without my keeping her informed of all my doings, that the doctor had to be called in, and I learned from a friend (not from my mother) that at one moment her case was serious.

On the evening before starting for home I was busy in preparing patterns of our various makes of cloth, with the intention of introducing them to some of the Bristol merchants, thus "killing two birds with one stone." There was a tinge of melancholy when I took leave of the family. It

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was, however, only for ten days. My visit was a pleasant one. I was greeted as a young cotton lord, and also learned with satisfaction how I was regarded by Thornton, who, in a letter to my brother, which he showed me, expressed a high opinion of my "talents and activity," and also informed my brother I was of great service to him already. I read that letter with immense satisfaction. It made me happy, and encouraged me to renewed efforts on my return.

I was unsuccessful in my efforts to do business with the British merchants. They were supplied with the same class of goods made by a neighbouring maker of celebrity. I was powerless to induce them to make a change. Wherever I went I was greeted with the name of P, who sold goods made by B, and with which they all appeared to be quite satisfied, and so T's patterns scarcely received a glance. Subsequently, however, one of the firms called upon us and had large transactions. My visit taught me that when you succeed in getting your customer to call upon you, the battle is half won.

The West of England looked slow and quiet by contrast though clean and bright with the North. I was a hero for the time being, especially with two sweet little nieces - they were twins - and much fun was created through the mistakes I made arising from the strong resemblance they bore one to the other. They were the daughters of my sister of Locksbrook memory, and I had been associated with the whole of their little lives. We renewed our story-telling and other amusements, but I had to leave them, for the call of Lancashire was irresistible.

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In a few months after my return, the terrible grind and daily wear and tear of my work began to tell upon me. I was doing too much, though I declined to recognize the fact. I had become like a machine - so much so, that on arriving at a certain spot on the morning journey to the mill, I regularly met, within a few inches of the same place, another machine like myself. He was the same gentleman who travelled with Thornton and myself when I made my first journey to Kearsley. We met here with clock-like regularity for three years, neither of us ever stopping, but content with throwing our respective heads on one side, in the true Lancashire mode of recognition. When it was winter I could not see him, but my quick ear recognised his footstep,

being a distinct sound from those of the people encased in the inevitable clog. At a period of thirty-two years from that time, the same gentleman, when I reminded him, on the Manchester Exchange, of those meetings, when a chronometer might have been set for their regularity, startled me by saying, "I am there, now, every\* morning at the same place, at the same time, and have never ceased to be so since the years we used to meet there;" and he added, with a look of pain, "and I am a poorer man now than I was then." What an experience I Hasten on with the Ship Canal!

But to return to the early days. I was losing flesh through incessant work. This change for the worse was noticed by Mr. Thornton, and. I was sent to spend a few days with his family, who had gone to Fleetwood for their summer holiday. The days by the sea-side flew too quickly. I made a

\* Simeon Dyson

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hurried visit to Furness in an excursion steamer, and was sensibly impressed with the beauty of the Abbey and its surroundings. On my return I was quite equal to the work again.

When I had lived six months with the Crewes, they became tired of me. I was not so quiet as they said they had been led to expect; but then the cats and the dog had not been taken into the calculation, and with these I carried on an incessant warfare. In leaving them I much improved my home existence, at the house of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Crompton. Their household consisted of two little daughters, without even a kitten. I enjoyed the change, and remained with them all the time I spent at Kearsley. The pretty little cottage, in which I had a room all to myself, was in the township of Farnworth, and at a greater distance from my work, but the additional walking exercise did me no harm. I was nearer to Bolton, which was about two miles distant, and as I frequently found myself there on Saturday afternoons, and at the Parish Church on a Sunday, this was a slight advantage. The Rev. Mr. Slade was the vicar in those days. He was a good reader and an original preacher. He charmed me by his manner of reading the Collect (generally the same one) before the sermon.

Robert Crompton was a quiet young fellow, and was coachman to a gentleman in the neighbourhood who possessed great wealth and influence, and who was expected to represent the adjoining borough in Parliament at the next general election. He subsequently headed the poll. Mrs. Crompton had been a lady's maid. She was a homely, clever

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little woman, and could cook well. I was in clover. On one occasion, when Mr. Thornton's cook was absent from some cause, he brought Mrs. Crompton a couple of partridges, and remained with me whilst she cooked them with great skill. They proved so great a success I began to have visions of future partridge suppers, for we demolished them on the spot. The cook must have speedily returned to her duties, for no more partridges came.

Now that I had ample room there was nothing to prevent the introduction of a piano to my lodging. The want of one for the previous six months had been a great privation, and I felt I was losing my music. Mr. Thornton advised me how best to proceed in obtaining one. I advertised in the Manchester Guardian for a second-hand Broadwood, and on receiving a score of replies from people who wanted to part with their worthless instruments, and others whose pianos were not of Broadwood's make, we devoted the following Saturday afternoon to calling on their owners. It was agreed between us that Mr. Thornton should do the talking during the interviews, whilst I tried the pianofortes. There was only one of them likely to suit me, and it belonged to a lady at Higher Broughton. The price she required for it was twelve pounds. I succeeded in true Manchester fashion in reducing it to eleven pounds ten shillings, for which sum I purchased it. I afterwards thought the proceeding a mean one, for although an old six octave square, it was a capital piano, of sweet tone, and kept well in tune. After using it for three years I parted with it for ten



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pounds to a man who kept a second-hand musical instrument shop in Hulme.

At about this time I unexpectedly received a letter from Alfius Banham, a man whose friendship I greatly valued, informing me he was engaged scholastically at an easy distance from me, in the Moravian Academy at Fulneck, near Leeds. The letter intimated that he was coming on the Saturday to pay me a visit, which would extend to the following Monday morning. At this distance of time I like to think of the pleasure in prospect that letter afforded me. He was a man I loved with ardour. How well I remember one sentence in the letter, which ran, "Make no preparation for me but that of a pipe and tobacco. A fellow who has slept on the Carpathians can pass a night under a table, if necessary."

My little landlady, however, would take care he was well received, and on his arrival we were well nigh transfixed with the extensive preparations she had made for us. My friend had been educated in Germany, and was brimful of music, so I regarded the advent of the Broadwood, which was already placed in my neat apartment, with considerable satisfaction. He arrived, and what a meeting we had! I simply revelled in his presence. For a long time I had been amongst strangers, and now I had with me, and was going to have him all to myself for two whole days, the dearest fellow I had ever known. Banham was engaged to be married to a young woman whom I had known from youth up, and so he could talk with me of her by the hour. I was so much younger than he or the lady, there was no possibility of

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any misconception arising from the enthusiastic manner I sounded her praises.

He was charmed with the piano, and told me I had swindled the lady from whom I had bought it. He played upon it for hours. The old masters, Bach, Haydn, and Mozart, were as familiar to him as the long clay pipe in the use of which he made my room opaque with smoke. Then how he improvised! If I gave him a theme of some three or four bars he would work it out, enlarge upon, and elaborate it, reproducing it again and again in such a variety of shapes, until it seemed impossible for him to proceed further, and he would break down in a roar of laughter. Oh, how I enjoyed it! Of course, I introduced him to Mr. Thornton and the family, and Mr. T. joined us in our little tête-d-tête. How quickly the time flew, and how much I had to tell him of my new life. He listened to all I had to say with great earnestness, and gave me the best counsel one friend could impart to another.

His visit came to an end, like everything else that is pleasant, but never the remembrance of it whilst I live. Two days afterwards I received the following letter from him :—

"Fulneck, Monday, April 28th, 1851.

My dear Steinhauer, - Having just written a few lines to Fanny (my sister), I hasten to write and inform you of my safe arrival, as also to assure you of the pleasure I feel in the retrospect of my visit to Farnworth. How could it be otherwise? I cannot regard you otherwise than a dear relative, for I am sure we are equally interested in each other's welfare, and a mutual confidence subsists between us which sincere affection alone could

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engender and reciprocal appreciation cement. I am heartily glad that you see contentment and patience, amid the no doubt trying and monotonous duties of your present position, from above, in which case there can be no doubt that God, in His gracious and all-wise providence, will, when the proper time shall arrive, promote your progress onward to a new and to a happier sphere of action. - Ever your affectionate friend,

"A. B."

## **CHAPTER IV**

### ***THE EXHIBITION of 1851 - ANTI-CORN LAW LEADERS - KOSSUTH.***

ONE evening when Mr. Thornton came to the mill from Manchester, as was his custom, he was accompanied by a young gentleman, to whom I was introduced. He had not been mentioned to me before, and beyond the fact that he wore long hair, and had a penetrating glance, he did not particularly attract my notice. He was younger than Mr. Thornton, with whom, I soon detected, he was on familiar terms, as he addressed the latter as "John." Mr. T. went into the mill to inquire as to the progress of some cloth orders, and I was left alone with the stranger, who, to my surprise, asked me many questions respecting the internal working of the mill, such as related to the horse power, counts of yarn, and number of hands employed. He was also interested in our circulating library and the number of its volumes. To all of his inquiries I gave him ready replies, and by the time Mr. Thornton returned he was in possession, apparently, of all he wished to know, and the memorandum book in which all had been jotted down was returned to his pocket. They then talked of old times, and seemed very happy together, and I was invited to join them at tea that evening. On the journey to the house I was again introduced to the clever stranger, who was Mr. Hepworth Dixon. I had read two of his

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books, *The Prisons of England* and *Life of William Penn*, and my interest in him was therefore aroused. This was the year of the Great Exhibition, and Mr. Dixon had been appointed a Commissioner by the Prince Consort, to take the responsibility of the proper representation of the cotton industry at the forthcoming national display. As far as I can remember the result was very satisfactory. Mr. Dixon had begun his career in Manchester, of which he had an intimate knowledge, and also of many of the leading citizens. He was therefore, being a man of great activity and vigour, just the one to carry out efficiently so important an undertaking. Soon after this visit there appeared in the columns of the Daily News a description, though somewhat meagre, of the mill, under the heading of "*Visits to Lancashire Mills.*" Mr. Thornton said I must see the Exhibition, and for that purpose released me for a week or two; and I found myself soon afterwards in London, watching, to my intense amusement, Kearsley weavers in the Metropolis! They were weaving in that part of the building set apart for machinery in motion.

We never had reason to think we derived any advantage in inviting the foreigner over to witness the manner we made cloth. No doubt his eyes were opened and his imagination aroused, for in later times our former customers from foreign markets met us with the statement, "We make our own cloth now!"

On the approach of winter, and during its continuance, it was the custom of many millowners to give entertainments to their workpeople. Mr.

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Thornton, who was keen on social improvement, must not be behind his neighbours. It was decided our people should be given a treat, but it was to be called a "soiree," which was duly announced by the circulation of little handbills. But Mr. Thornton was not the man simply to indulge his people in the gratification of their animal propensities. His entertainment must include, in addition to beef and plum pudding, "the feast of reason and the flow of soul." To my horror, I observed it announced, amongst other attractions, that the workpeople would be addressed by Mr. Thornton and other gentlemen, amongst whom my own name was mentioned. I did not like the prospect, but as the community was a speech-loving one, I thought it my duty to add, if possible, to the success of the occasion. I wrote on paper what I thought might be an appropriate speech, and tore it up. I tried another, with the same result, then another, and tore it up again as unsuitable. I spent hours in the effort to produce something satisfactory, but was unsuccessful.

Mr. Thornton, anxious to secure all the available talent possible for the occasion, asked me to invite an old friend of mine from Bristol, to be present. Mr. G. Goldney, whom I had known from boyhood, and who had recently come to reside in Manchester, was a man of considerable attainments, and had travelled much on the Continent, and, I think, in America. He cheerfully

accepted the invitation, and made the speech of the evening. It was not long, but pithy and consecutive. In it he rapidly described the cultivation of the cotton plant, from the time the seed was sown, and its subsequent

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ginning, whipping, moteing, and packing experiences, to the moment it entered our mill. He wisely omitted any mention of the raw material from that moment (for he knew nothing whatever of cotton manufacturing, although he had for years passed the Bristol Mill daily, on his way to his glass works in the city), but he again took it up when it had become a cast-off rag, following it to the paper mill, and describing graphically the process there, until its arrival at the printing office of the editor, to be the medium of instruction to the reading millions, after it had ceased to clothe them. Mr. Goldney threw a halo of usefulness and dignity around cotton, which delighted every person present, and did not absorb an undue proportion of the time. Mr. Thornton was terribly long in his address; so was the old goggle-eyed "cutlooker," who read from a paper he had prepared with evident care, in which he lectured Mr. Thornton for his frequent inability to manage his temper. The ungracious old fellow received his reply some time after. He had not taken into account that we all have our foibles, and that he was no exception to the rule. But of this he was made conscious before his master sat down a second time.

I fondly hoped, after all the eloquence of the evening, I should be overlooked, but it was not so to be. There were shouts from all parts of the room for Mr. G., and I was considerably conducted by two gentlemen to the front of the elevated platform. It was fortunate I had put some ideas into shape on the previous evening, for I was now not entirely without a little matter on which to say something, though

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in thinking it over afterwards it appeared to me infinitesimal. I could add little that would be either amusing or instructive, after the distinguished gentlemen (including the old cut-locker) who had preceded me, but I would, in conclusion, make one remark, of which no previous speaker had hinted, with a wish that had not hitherto been expressed. It was this, "that we should all live to meet again under similiar circumstances." The effect of this was magical, and during the prolonged applause which followed I retired. Only twice since, in my life, have I brought myself to address an audience. I mentioned in a former page the turn of my political instincts, and that I had warmly sympathized with the efforts of the Anti-Corn-Law League. As all the world knows, the leading men of this body were Cobden, Bright, Milner Gibson, and George Wilson, with whose speeches I had been greatly attracted, especially those of Bright. I had never seen these heroes, but as I was now living near the seat of war I was soon to have the opportunity. Mr. Thornton invited me to accompany him to a political soiree, to be held in a large room of the Albion Hotel, at which they would all appear and take an active part in the proceedings. Before the commencement of Parliament, this phalanx of four were annually in the habit of addressing enormous masses of constituents at the old Free Trade Hall, a building which would accommodate eight to ten thousand persons. On these occasions, Mr. George Wilson occupied the chair, in the functions of which he was a genius! He was a man with a powerful colmtenance, having a massive forehead penetrating eyes, and fine

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features, upon which a smile rarely played, although the whole visage seemed to be illuminated with a benevolent design. I have seen him in the large room in Peter Street, at the commencement of a meeting, when there was some unaccountable noise of voices and general commotion at the other extreme end of fine room, rise, and whilst his eagle eye was turned to the noisy quarter, he has held up his hand in a manner so expressive and remarkable, that the hundreds of turbulent spirits were hushed as if by magic, and he has then begun the opening proceedings.

On the occasion of the meeting at the Albion no such display of power was necessary. The

room would not accommodate more than a few hundred persons, so the audience was select. As T. and I sat together and watched the ascent of the orators, one by one, to the platform, I amused and astonished him by pointing out the various personages by name, although I had never before seen any of them. I afterwards enlightened him that I was indebted to *Punch* for this familiarity with their personnel. The speeches had all been delivered, and were directed to the late Papal Aggression by the introduction of the Roman hierarchy, concerning which it had been a matter of uncertainty how the event would be regarded, and hitherto the leaders had made no sign; and it appeared to me a murmur of disappointment ran through a portion of the room at the course matters had taken, Mr. Gibson being the first to break the ice by saying, "We had better leave the Roman hierarchy alone." After this Lord John Russell's celebrated letter to the Bishop of Durham was

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mercilessly criticised. Mr. Bright had peeled and eaten an apple, the rind of which he let fall on the floor (how we notice and remember little things!), and T. and I had regaled ourselves with very dry sandwiches and a glass of poor sherry, and we then left the building. For many years after this I was furnished with a platform ticket, and attended the annual meetings in the Free Trade Hall. I was also present at the meeting, and sat within a few feet of him, when Kossuth made a speech in English lasting two hours. At the end of this extraordinary address Dr. Vaughan rose, and grasping the Magyar by the hand, vehemently said, "God bless you, sir!" and something more, which I have forgotten. I saw Kossuth the same day taken down Market Street in an open carriage drawn by enthusiastic Hungarian sympathisers.

When Mr. Thornton and I left the Albion it was past eleven o'clock. He told me there was a train (the last, which went by the name of the "tipplers" train) to Kearsley at 11:15. It was generally late, and he hoped it would be so, for my sake, on this occasion. He was going to pass the night at his mother's house. I had only twelve minutes to make the journey to the New Bailey Station, where I arrived after rapid walking, to find the train had left. It was now 11-30. I was some eight or ten miles away from my lodging, in a strange city, on a dark night, and not improved by a drizzling rain peculiar to Manchester. There were no cabs. Had there been any it would have been all the same, for I had no money in my pocket; so being in the proper direction for Bolton, I resolved to put my locomotive organs to the test.

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I had been sitting the greater part of the evening and felt quite equal to the occasion, though a little provoked, as Mr. Brooke\* of Farnworth (my landlord's master), had offered to take Mr. Thornton and myself home in his carriage. It was a dreary walk, and after passing Pendleton and approaching Clifton it became still more dreary. The road though wide, was muddy. I kept in the centre of it to avoid ditches and possible garotters. I arrived, however, without mishap, and at two o'clock a.m. let myself into my lodgings, damp and tired, and hastened to bed. I slept until 5-30, and was at my post at the mill as usual, after meeting my never-failing time-keeping friend at the same unerring place, and knowing him by his unclogged footstep, for it was still dark as pitch. When Mr. Thornton appeared at 8 a.m. I had finished the work of the big folio. He was thus encouraged to accord future indulgences, in which he was never backward.

\* Thomas Barnes

*More in next month's newsletter.*

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Again, a continuation from last month's newsletter, with an introduction, [HERE](#) from, '*The Book of English Trades*' published in 1827



## THE WIRE-DRAWER.



The Wire-drawer reduces rods of different metals into smaller sizes, in order to render them proper for use in various trades, and for manufactures, and also many other purposes. When the wire-drawer became a distinct trade it is difficult to determine, but there is no doubt that the manufacture and use of wire is of some antiquity. Nor is it easy to say when attempts were originally made to draw into threads metal, cut or beaten into small slips, by forcing them through holes in a steel plate. It appears that as long as the work was performed by the hammer, the artists at Nuremberg were called wire-smiths; but that after the invention of drawing-iron, they were denominated wire-drawers, or wire-millers. Both these appellations occur in history, so early as the year 1351; therefore the invention must have been known in the fourteenth century. In France, a company of gold wire-drawers existed previously to the year 1583; and there were statutes in existence, a long time before this period; one of which forbids the separation of the gold wire-drawer from the gold-beater.

At first threads exceedingly massy were employed for weaving and embroidery: it is not known when the flatted metal wire began to be spun round linen or silk thread. The spinning mill, by which the labour is now performed, is a contrivance of great ingenuity.

Metal wires are frequently drawn so fine as to be wrought with other threads of silk, wool, or hemp; and thus they become a considerable article in the manufactures. The metals most commonly drawn into wire are gold, silver, brass, copper, and iron.

Silver wire and gold wire, so called, are the same, except that the latter is silver covered with gold. There are also counterfeit gold and silver wires made of copper gilt, and silvered over.

The business of a wire-drawer is thus performed : If it be gold wire that is wanted, an ingot of silver is double gilt, and then by the assistance of a mill it is drawn into wire. The mill consists of a steel plate, perforated with holes of different dimensions and a wheel which turns the spindles. The ingot, which at first is but small, is pressed through the largest hole, and then through one a degree smaller, and so continued, till it is drawn to the required fineness; and it is all equally gilt, if drawn out as fine as a hair.

The next operation is that of the flatting-mill, which consists of two perfectly round, and exquisitely polished rollers, formed internally of iron, and welded over with a plate of refined steel; these rollers are placed with their axes parallel, and their circumferences nearly in contact; they are both turned with one handle; the lowermost is about ten inches in diameter, the upper about two, and they are something more than an inch in thickness. The wire unwinding from a bobbin, and passing between the leaves of a book, gently pressed, and through a narrow slit in an upright piece of wood, called a ketch, is directed by a small conical hole in a piece of iron, called a guide, to any particular part of the width of the rollers, some of which are capable of receiving by this contrivance forty threads. When the wire is flatted between the rollers, it is wound again on bobbin, which is turned by a wheel, fixed on the axis of one of the rollers, and so proportioned, that the motion of the bobbins just keeps pace with

that of the rollers.

Brass and copper wire is drawn in a similar manner to that already described. Of the brass wire, there are many different sizes, suited to different kinds of work. The finest is used for strings of musical instruments. Pin-makers also use great quantities of wires of several sizes to make pins.

Iron wire is made from bars of iron, which are first drawn out to a greater length, to about the thickness of half an inch in diameter, at a furnace, with a hammer gently moved by water. These thinner pieces are bored round, and put into a furnace to anneal. A very strong fire is necessary for the operation.

They are then delivered to the workmen, called rippers, who draw them into wire, through two or three holes, and then anneal them a second time: after which they are to be drawn into wire of the thickness of a pack-thread: after this, they are again to be annealed, and then delivered to the small wire-drawers. The plate in which the holes are is iron on the outside, and steel on the inside surface, and the wire is anointed with oil to make it run easier. The first iron that runs from the stone when melting, being the softest and toughest, is usually preserved to make wire of.

The wire first spun about thread was round; and the invention of first making the wire flat is probably a new epoch in the history of the art; and it is a curious fact, that three times as much silk can be covered by flatted, as by round wire; so that various ornamental articles are cheap in the same proportion. Besides, the brightness of the metal is heightened in an uncommon degree, and the article becomes much more beautiful.

The greatest improvement ever made in this art was undoubtedly the invention of the large drawing machine, which is drawn by water or by steam, and in which the axle-tree, by means of a lever, moves a pair of pincers, that open as they fall against the drawing-plate; lay hold of the wire, which is guided through a hole in the plate; shut as they are drawn back; and in that manner pull the wire along with them.

Wire-drawing, in all its branches, is profitable to the master and to the workman; it is a good business, being a trade that is not exposed to the weather; that can be carried on at all seasons of the year; and by which the workman may earn from one guinea to double that sum in a week.

### THE CORK-CUTTER

The Cork-cutter cuts the bark which is stripped from the cork-tree, into a variety of small round cylindrical pieces, for the purpose of stopping casks, bottles, phials, &c.

The Cork-tree is a species of oak, and this, as well as the uses to which its bark is put, was known to the Greeks and Romans: by the former of whom it was called *phellos*, and by the latter *suber*. By the Romans, we learn from Pliny, it was even employed to stop vessels of every kind; but its application to this use seems not to have been very common, till the invention of glass bottles, of which professor Beckmann finds no mention before the fifteenth century.

The Cork-tree grows thirty or forty feet high, having a thick, rough, and fungous bark: its leaves are green above, and white underneath; its fruit is an acorn, which is produced in great abundance. The bark is taken off by making an incision from the top to the bottom, and likewise one at each extremity round the tree, and perpendicular to the first. The old bark being thus detached, the tree still lives, not being in the smallest degree injure and in six or seven years a succeeding bark is again fit for use.

The Cork-tree is found in great abundance in France, Spain, and Italy: from these countries we receive the bark.

The bark, when stripped from the tree, is piled up in a pit or pond, and loaded with heavy stones to flatten it; it is then taken to be dried, when it is fit for sale.



Corks are divided into bungs for stopping casks, wine-corks for bottles, and phial-corks for stopping phials, &c.



*The Cork Cutter.*

The Cork-cutter's business requires but little ingenuity; the knives used in the operation have a peculiar construction, and they must be exceedingly sharp. The knife is almost the only instrument wanted in the trade. The principal demand for corks, is for the purpose of stopping bottles; these are cut by men and women, who receive a certain price *per gross* for their labour. Cork-cutters sell, also, corks by the gross. It is one of the blackest and dirtiest of trades, and not very profitable either for the master or the journeyman.

Cork is, likewise, used by young people in learning the art of swimming; such are those represented in the plate as hanging from the ceiling.

The cork waistcoat is composed of four pieces of cork; two for the breast, and two for the back, each nearly as long as the waistcoat without flaps. The cork is covered and adapted to fit the body. It is open before, and may be fastened either with strings, or buckles and straps. The waistcoat weighs about twelve ounces, and may be made at the expense of a few shillings.

This article of dress would be very useful to all persons who travel much by water, or who are in the habit of bathing in the open sea. Cork is also used for the inner soles of shoes.

A cork spencer has lately been invented, to save persons from drowning in cases of shipwreck. It consists of a belt, containing refuse pieces of cork, inclosed in any kind of covering, and fastened round the body with tapes.

In Spain cork is burnt to make that light kind of black, called Spanish-black, which is very much used by painters. The Egyptians make their coffins of cork; and these, when lined with a certain resinous composition, preserve the dead a great length of time. In Spain, they even line the walls of their houses with cork, which not only renders the apartments warm, but corrects the moisture of the air.

Cork, when burnt and reduced to powder, is often taken internally as an astringent; and it has been said that cups made of cork are useful for hectic persons to drink their common beverage from.

Fossil cork is the name given to a kind of stone, which is the lightest of all stones; it is a species of amianthus, consisting of flexible fibres loosely interwoven, and resembling the vegetable cork; it is fusible in the fire, and forms black glass.

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**From the e-Postbag**

The Oldham HRG's October meeting was on the anniversary of, and about, the 12 October 1941, bombing of Oldham. It sparked quite a number of memories and also, an email from a regular visitor who has researched, in great detail, WW2 bombings in Greater Manchester. I'm pretty sure that his will also be of interest to our MLFHS followers with Manchester Links.


From George's Cogswell's email to me ...

"My GMBV website lists all 27 of those highlighted this evening [OHRG October Meeting] , plus a few stragglers, ending with the Abbey Road V.1 incident of the 24th December 1944.

What it doesn't show (at least not under "Oldham"), is the five Oldham Firemen that were killed during the Manchester Christmas Blitz down at Trafford Park. They are correctly listed under "Stretford", where they were killed and where they are listed in the statistics. I believe that this was an oversight of mine and will correct that situation in the next few days by adding them to the Oldham district on my website. It will not alter the statistics as they will not be duplicated on my database.

I have a total of 59 persons listed as being killed in Oldham during WW2. 27 on the 12th/13th October 1941, 1 in 1943 and 31 on the 24th December 1944. Add to that the five Firemen killed at Trafford Park - a grand total of 64.

I have not yet been able to determine where 16 of those listed are buried. If anyone can help with this missing information, I would appreciate from them, or any other personal info and images for that matter. This is a central information point for the whole of Greater Manchester. Any information I have is freely available to anyone else. The information doesn't belong to me, it belongs to those unfortunate enough to be included on my websites."

| Greater Manchester WW2 Blitz Victims                                                                                    |                                                                                    |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Records the names of 1,535 men, women and children civilians killed by German bombing on what is now Greater Manchester |  |
| <a href="http://www.greatermanchesterblitzvictims.co.uk">www.greatermanchesterblitzvictims.co.uk</a>                    |                                                                                    |

It ends with George's thanks for my bringing his website to your attention.

If you can help at all, please contact him directly through his website, [HERE](#)

email address:  
[enquiries@greatermanchesterblitzvictims.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@greatermanchesterblitzvictims.co.uk)

## 1921 ... a Census Centenary

As all we family history enthusiasts are well aware, the 1921 census should have been released this year ... however, for obvious reasons, it won't be! Hopefully, we can look forward to its release in 2022.

MLFHS, **1921 Centenary Project** ... follow the links to the short introductory video [HERE](#) , other short videos and the many blog articles (20 and counting!) [HERE](#) which are full of unexpected information, making fascinating reading (they're on the public access pages).

A dedicated 1921 page, bringing it all together, is [HERE](#). and a 1921 World Timeline is [HERE](#).

A great deal of hard work has gone into this project, including bringing us some talks, on zoom, with a 1921 link ... follow the links and enjoy just what the team have found for us.

The final Journal (*Manchester Genealogist*) of the year, will be a special **1921 Centenary** edition.

And, for our newsletter, I'm still hopeful that some of you may have your own 1921 memorabilia to share with our own readers, in the December 1921 newsletter.

Please, get in touch with me, through the newsletter email address.

## 1921 ... Ireland

As we approach the end of 2021, with our newsletter and website memorabilia of 1921, and the centenary for public release of the 1921 census, I find my thoughts being drawn back to



Ireland, and that era in its history. My own links with Ireland are through my maternal Shea ancestry in Tipperary and Roscommon.



**Cuchulain**

On my mantelpiece, I have a bronze figure, on a Connemara marble base, which is a portrayal of the bronze statue of Cuchulain, erected in 1935, in the Dublin Post Office. It commemorated those who had fought and lost their lives in the Easter rising in 1916. I bought my own figure, when I visited Ireland, in 1966, the 50th anniversary of the Rising. It depicts the legendary hero of all heroes in Irish mythology. In the myths, he dies still fighting, sword in hand, lashed to a standing stone. On his shoulder is the Morrigan, in the guise of a crow, a goddess of war and fate; and only then did Cuchulain's enemies know he was truly vanquished.

1916, was of course, the year of the Easter Rising. The Rising was instigated by Irish republicans, against British rule in Ireland, with the aim of establishing an independent Irish Republic. The Republican fighters took over a number of strategic buildings in Dublin, making the General Post Office their main headquarters.

Thousands of British soldiers poured into the city and heavy fighting took place over most of the week. The British forces were using machine guns, and heavy guns firing shells. The GPO and other buildings in the area suffered heavy shelling; fire broke out in the GPO, and the surrounding buildings. By then a mere shell, the GPO had to be abandoned as the leaders of the Rising surrendered. The country remained under martial law; several thousand were taken prisoner; and the leaders were executed. That battle had been lost but the war wasn't over.

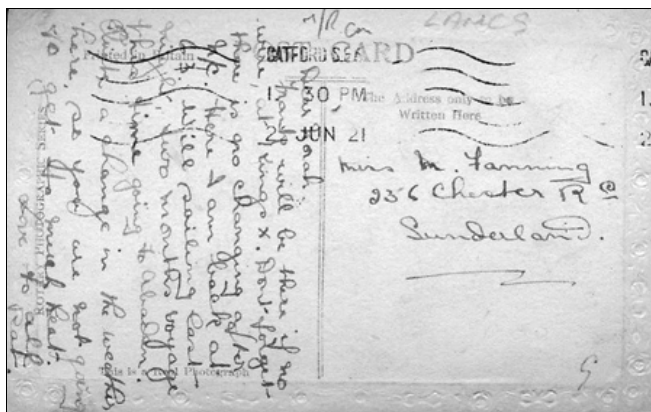
Skip forward to late 1921, and the Irish Peace Treaty. Violence, particularly over the previous two years had escalated alarmingly in tit-for-tat, violent attack and reprisal, with sectarian undertones as well as political motives. In May 1921, the border, separating Northern from Southern Ireland was created, resulting in two self-governing territories, both remaining in the UK. Following further talks, the Anglo-Irish Treaty was signed in December 1921, ending British rule in most of Ireland and, a year later, the Irish Free State, in southern Ireland, was created, with dominion status. Northern Ireland remained within the United Kingdom. This situation remained until 1931, when "*the Statute of Westminster confirmed the Irish Free State's full legislative independence.*" (wikipedia)

Sheila Goodyear

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### 1921 postcard

Searching for more 1921 related artefacts, I came across a postcard. Intriguingly, it had links to Manchester, London and Sunderland. The card's illustration was a contemporary photo of Market Street, in Manchester; it was posted in Catford, at 1:30pm, on the 2nd June, 1921, and was going to an address in Sunderland. I could see the names of the sender and recipient.



To: Miss N. Fanning, 236, Chester Road, Sunderland.

Dear Norah,  
Frank will be there if no wire, at Kings X. don't forget there is no changing after M/c. Here I am back at 63. Will sailing last night, two months voyage this time going to Abadan. Quite a change in the weather here, so you are not going to get to[o] much heat.

Love to all, Pat

There had to be a story there! The following is sheer speculation but very plausible!!

Chester Road, Sunderland is, today, a long and busy main road (A183). Most of the houses seem to date from the early years of the 20th century and are large terraced houses with bay windows on both floors. Each house has a small walled area in front of it. Number 236 has been demolished and in its place is what appears to be the side of a relatively new hospital.

I was lucky in that searches in Find my Past produced convincing results. There was only one Norah (middle name Eileen) Fanning living in Sunderland in 1911; not in itself conclusive but strengthening the case was a sister called Patricia Veronica (Pat) and a brother called Francis (Frank?).

But who was Will? And how did Abadan come into the story?

Will had sailed, the previous evening, for a 2 month voyage to Abadan, which appears to be, "*a city and capital of Abadan County, Khuzestan Province, which is located in the southwest of Iran. It lies on Abadan Island. The island is bounded in the west by the Arvand waterway and to the east by the Bahmanshir outlet of the Karun River*" [google maps].

Was Will sailing as a seaman or as a passenger?

Going back to the 1911 census, I had found a Fanning family living at 11, Whitehall Terrace, Sunderland. Norah Eileen is 11 years old, Patricia Veronica is 18 and Francis Edward is a 28 year old seagoing engineer (on the 1901 census he is shown as a 'Marine-engineer, (apprentice). Along with them, on the 1911 census, are two more sisters and two lodgers. Their mother, Margaret A. Fanning is a 51 year old widow. The record shows that there had been three other children who had died.

I had to go back to the 1891 census to find Margaret with her husband. She is shown living with her family at 22, Chester Road, Sunderland, her husband, Francis, is recorded as an engineer, born in Ireland.

Still trying to find 'Will' I wondered if he might be Patricia's husband so looked for a marriage for her. In the second quarter of 1921, in Sunderland, Patricia Veronica Fanning married William James Fagg.

The postcard was sent just over two weeks before the 1921 census was taken, on the 19th June, so we can safely assume that Patricia and William were already married when he set sail for Abadan. Using the earlier censuses, I found that William was born in Sunderland, and he was a 'mariner boatswain' in the 'coal shipping industry'. Checking back to an earlier census, we can find that his father was also associated with ships as a 'Seaman's mate'. So ... had Patricia met William through her brother, Frank?

If we go back to the postcard, Pat had returned to '63'. I think that this is probably Francis's address and that Pat is staying with her brother so that she can wave her new husband off on his voyage. Francis had married Bertha Atkinson, in the 3rd quarter of 1913, and it was registered in Chorlton, Lancashire. However, in 1920, they had a daughter, Joan E.J. Fanning, whose birth was registered in Lewisham. From Pat's instruction to Norah about not changing at Manchester, and Frank meeting her at King's Cross, it seems probable that Norah was planning a trip of her own to catch up with her brother and sister. Could it also be a good chance to see the baby who, by then, would be about 12 months old?

I couldn't identify any more children for Francis and Bertha. Looking for children of Patricia and William, I found a son, William F. in 1923 and a daughter, Patricia M. in 1932. Both births were registered in Sunderland.

The next 'port of call' for this story was the 1939 register, trying to find out who was where and doing what! When we look at the 1939 register we can find all three of the Fanning siblings. Their brother, Francis, now age 56, was living in Lewisham, with his wife Bertha (née Atkinson) and their 19 year old daughter Joyce (registered Joan E.J. at birth). By 1939, Francis had left the sea, and is recorded as an engineer, in a 'sugar refinery', ex. Marine Engineer, 1st Class Certificate. It is also noted that he was an A.R.P. warden in WW2, as was his daughter.

Patricia, now a widow, was living in Sunderland, with her unmarried sister Norah, and her 16 year old son, William F. There is no redacted child's name for Patricia's daughter, but cannot identify a death for her. So, Pat was widowed ... when?

A death for, William James Fagg, was recorded in the 2nd quarter of 1932, in Sunderland. How had he died? When I searched the newspapers I found three reports of William's drowning, all on the 23rd June, 1932. One was a brief notification of his death, *"A verdict of 'Found Drowned' was returned at an inquest at Sunderland yesterday on William James Fagg, (50), chief officer of the steamer Whitwood, who had been missing since June 2nd, and whose body was recovered from the South Dock, Sunderland, where his ship had been laid."* The second newspaper item was also simple enough ... **"FAGG - Accidentally drowned on June 3, aged 50 years, William James Fagg, of 267, Cleveland Road, Chief Officer S.S. Whitwod, beloved husband of Patricia V. Fagg. Interment at Bishopwearmouth Cemetery, Friday noon."** However, the third newspaper item, was anything but straightforward and seemed to pose more questions than it answered.

From *'The Sunderland Echo and Shipping Gazette'*, 23rd June, 1932

### **Witness Rebuked by Coroner**

MAN TOLD TO "KEEP QUIET"

Sunderland Ship's Officer's Death

### **"FOUND DROWNED"**

A verdict of "Found drowned" was returned at the inquest held by Coroner J.C. Morton yesterday on William James Fagg (50), of 267 Cleveland Road, Sunderland, whose body



was recovered from the South Docks yesterday.

Mr Fagg was chief officer of the Whitwood which was laid up in the South Docks and he had been missing since June 2.

Coroner Morton said that there was no evidence to show how the man came to be in the water.

After the Coroner had returned his verdict, Mr. Fagg, brother of the dead man, rose and asked the Coroner: "Why has not the main witness been called - a man who spoke to my brother at nine o'clock the night he went missing?"

"If you don't keep quiet," retorted the Coroner, "you will be taken out of court. I will not tolerate conduct such as yours."

Mr. Fagg then spoke to Mr. G.N. Cook, the widow's solicitor, and the Coroner said to Mr. Cook: "You had better warn him, Mr. Cook, that he may be committed for contempt of court."

Earlier in the proceedings, when Mr. Fagg had concluded his evidence, he said to the Coroner: "Could I ask you a question?" "No, certainly not," replied the Coroner peremptorily.

The widow, Patricia V. Fagg, said that when her husband left home on the night of June 2 to go to his ship he went off bright and happy."He was quite well and did not complain at all."

### **EXPECTING PROMOTION**

She knew he went on board the ship that night. The master told her next day that he was missing.

Mr. H.K. Strange, who appeared for the owners of the Whitwood, Messrs. France, Fenwick and Co., Ltd., asked Mrs. Fagg if her husband was expecting to be discharged. "No," she replied.

He was on a reduced wage?- oh, yes.

Did he seem depressed at all? - No.

Did you tell the master that he had been very depressed of late? - No.

Mr. G.N. Cook (representing Mrs. Fagg): As a matter of fact your husband was expecting early promotion? - Yes, he was next in turn to be master.

During Mrs. Fagg's evidence a woman sitting with Mrs. Fagg attempted to say something to elucidate a point but was told by the Coroner that she must keep quiet or she would have to leave the court.

Edward Fagg, of Thomas Street North, Monkwearmouth, said that he had no doubt that the body was that of his brother. He could not recognise his features but he recognised him by his build.

George Edward Atkinson, of 12 Topliff Road, Monkwearmouth, described how he saw the body floating in the water at the north-east corner of the Hudson Dock.

P.C. Dodsworth, of the River Wear Police, said he could find no marks of injury on the body. There was a boot on one foot only, and it was unlaced.

That made interesting reading!

Was the solicitor for the ship's owners trying to make out it might be suicide? Was there a financial claim of some sort that would be contested? William's brother seemed very angry that all the evidence hadn't been considered. Was he implying there was a cover-up?

This is as far as I've taken my little story and I've found it fascinating ... far more than I expected! Thank goodness for middle names!! They certainly helped me to identify them with a degree of certainty. However, hopefully, the 'proof of this pudding', right back at the beginning, will be there for us in the 1921 census!

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**A short selection of entries from the MLFHS FACEBOOK PAGE [HERE](#) ...**



since the last newsletter :

\* The first refugees, 1685, Huguenots

[HERE](#)

\* The Memory map of Jewish Manchester; the Manchester Jewish Museum

[HERE](#)

\* RSPB's Emily Williamson: The woman who saved a million birds

[HERE](#)

\* The History of Parliament :

Keeping up appearances: make do and mend in the old Palace of Westminster

[HERE](#)

\* Who invented frozen food?

[HERE](#)

\* Railway Life, Death & Memorial :

Ten Men Memorial, at Queensbury Tunnel

[HERE](#)

\* British Library : Untold Lives Blog :

Bury me at sea inside my piano

[HERE](#)

and many more ... [HERE](#)

\* Find my Past Blogs :

The rise and fall of Disappearing Surnames

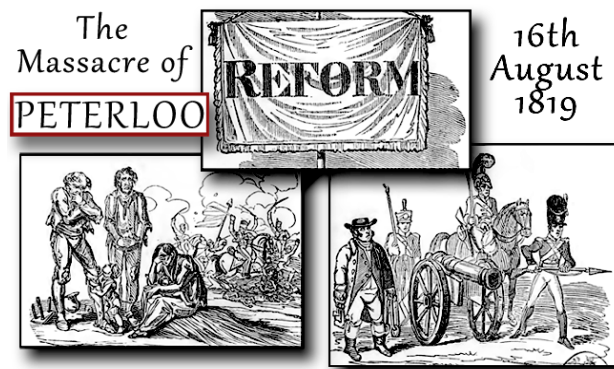
[HERE](#)

and many more <https://www.findmypast.co.uk/blog>

\* For much more, visit the MLFHS Facebook Page : [HERE](#)

And [HERE](#) is the link to the MLFHS Twitter page.

## PETERLOO : the Bi-Centenary



Visit the website for **The Peterloo Project** with particular reference to Oldham, people, accounts, life at the time and more ... at [Peterloo-Manchester](#)

Although the long-anticipated Bi-Centenary has come and gone, there are some Peterloo websites still active with history, news, photos and reports.

You can make searches on websites such as :

**Manchester Histories - Peterloo 1819** ... Manchester Histories have created a website which publicises all that is happening, or has happened, around the region.

Visit their website [HERE](#)

**Coronavirus Pandemic**  
**Oldham Local Studies and Archives is open again**

**Coronavirus Update and Statement July 2021 :**

Oldham Local Studies and Archives is pleased to announce that it is now fully open to the public.

**Our opening hours are as follows:**

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 10am-5pm; Tuesday 10am-2pm; Saturday 10am-4pm.

Although it will not be essential to book your place as has been the case over the last few months, we encourage you to consider booking in advance as this enables us to get everything ready in time for your visit, particularly if you wish to view archives. To order please visit:

[https://www.oldham.gov.uk/forms/form/891/en/local\\_archives\\_document\\_order\\_form](https://www.oldham.gov.uk/forms/form/891/en/local_archives_document_order_form)

If you wish to use PCs to access family history websites or to use microfilm readers, we advise you to book a place by contacting us at:

[archives@oldham.gov.uk](mailto:archives@oldham.gov.uk) or telephone 0161 770 4654.

Although it is no longer mandatory, we are encouraging visitors to continue using masks where possible and to respect 2m social distancing with regard to staff and other users.

Hand sanitisers will also continue to be available.

**Local Studies and Archives at 84 Union Street, Oldham, [OL1 1DN](#),**

**In normal times** there are regular Family History Advice Sessions every Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 2-4pm.

There's no need to book. Just turn up with all the information you have and the resident family history experts will be on hand to help.

Archives are unique, original documents created in the course of everyday activities. Oldham's date from 1597 and cover an enormous range of subjects and activities :

- Hospital records
- Poor Law Union records
- Coroners Court records
- Local Authority records including Chadderton, Crompton, Failsworth, Lees, Oldham, Royton and Saddleworth
- Schools and education records
- Records for statutory bodies like the police force
- Church and religious records
- Business records
- Solicitors and estate agents records
- Trade unions and associations records
- Co-operative Society records
- Sports, entertainment and leisure records
- Personal, family and property records
- Society and Association records
- Records of Oldham communities

There is no charge to look at archival records although you would need to bring proof of your name and address (e.g. your driving licence) to do so.

Most archives can be produced immediately, with no advance booking required. However,

some archives are stored off-site, in which case at least 2 days' notice is required in order to see them.

**Other archives may be closed due to their fragile condition, or because they contain confidential information.**

[Oldham Council Heritage Collections](#)

There are regularly changing displays in the Local Studies Library.

[Opening hours and contact details.](#)

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## Website Links

### Other Society Websites

Catholic Family History Society – [www.catholicfhs.co.uk](http://www.catholicfhs.co.uk)  
Cheshire Local History Association – [www.cheshirehistory.org.uk](http://www.cheshirehistory.org.uk)  
Chadderton Historical Society (archived website) – [www.chadderton-historical-society.org.uk](http://www.chadderton-historical-society.org.uk)  
Lancashire Family History and Heraldry Society - <https://www.lfhhs.org.uk/home.php>  
Lancashire Local History Federation – [www.lancashirehistory.org](http://www.lancashirehistory.org)  
Liverpool and South West Lancashire FHS – [www.lswlfhs.org.uk](http://www.lswlfhs.org.uk)  
Manchester Region Industrial Archaeology Society – [www.mrias.co.uk](http://www.mrias.co.uk)  
Oldham Historical Research Group – [www.pixnet.co.uk/Oldham-hrg](http://www.pixnet.co.uk/Oldham-hrg)  
Peterloo - [Peterloo-Manchester](#)  
Ranulf Higden Society (Latin transcription) - [Ranulf Higden Soc.](#)  
Royton Local History Society – [www.rlhs.co.uk](http://www.rlhs.co.uk)  
Saddleworth Historical Society – [www.saddleworth-historical-society.org.uk](http://www.saddleworth-historical-society.org.uk)  
Tameside Local History Forum - [www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk](http://www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk)  
Tameside Local & Family History - <http://tamesidefamilyhistory.co.uk/contents.htm>  
The Victorian Society - [Manchester Regional Website](#)

### Some Useful Sites

GENUKI - [Lancashire](#)  
Free BMD - [Search](#)  
[National Library of Scotland](#) - Free to view, historic, zoomable maps of UK :  
1891 - Oldham and locality [HERE](#)  
Online Parish Clerk Project : Lancashire - [HERE](#)  
British Association for Local History - [HERE](#)  
and for their back issue journal downloads - [HERE](#)  
Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, website, [HERE](#)  
and for their back issue journal downloads, website, [HERE](#)  
Internet Archive ... The Internet Archive offers over **24,000,000** freely downloadable books and texts.  
[HERE](#) There is also a collection of 1.3 million modern eBooks that may be borrowed by anyone with a free archive.org account.  
Made in Greater Manchester (MIGM) [HERE](#) and Research guide [HERE](#)  
Historical Maps of parish boundaries [HERE](#)  
Regiments & Corps of the British Army (Wayback machine) [HERE](#)  
Special Collections on Find My Past [HERE](#)  
FmyP - The Manchester Collection [HERE](#)

### Some Local Archives

Barnsley Museum & Discovery Centre – [www.experience-barnsley.com](http://www.experience-barnsley.com)

Birkenhead – [Local & Family History](#)

Bury – [www.bury.gov.uk/archives](http://www.bury.gov.uk/archives)

Chester - [Cheshire Archives & Local Studies](#) (linked from Discovery at the National Archives)

Derbyshire - [Local & Family History](#)

Leeds - [Leeds Local and Family History](#)

Liverpool Archives and Family History – <https://liverpool.gov.uk/archives>

Manchester - [Archives & Local History](#)

Oldham - [Local Studies & Archives](#)

Oldham - [Oldham Council Heritage Collections](#)

Preston – [www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives)

Stockport – [www.stockport.gov.uk/heritage-library-archives](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/heritage-library-archives)

Tameside Local Studies and Archives - <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/archives>

York – [www.york.ac.uk/borthwick](http://www.york.ac.uk/borthwick)



## For the Gallery

from : *"The Works of John Trafford Clegg ("Th' Owd Weighver")' published 1895*

Two views from Rochdale



ROCHDALE (FROM ST. CHAD'S CHURCHYARD).





TOWN HALL SQUARE, ROCHDALE.

The next two pictures come from :

***'History of Ashton -under-Lyne and the Surrounding District'***  
 compiled by William Glover & edited by John Andrew, published 1884



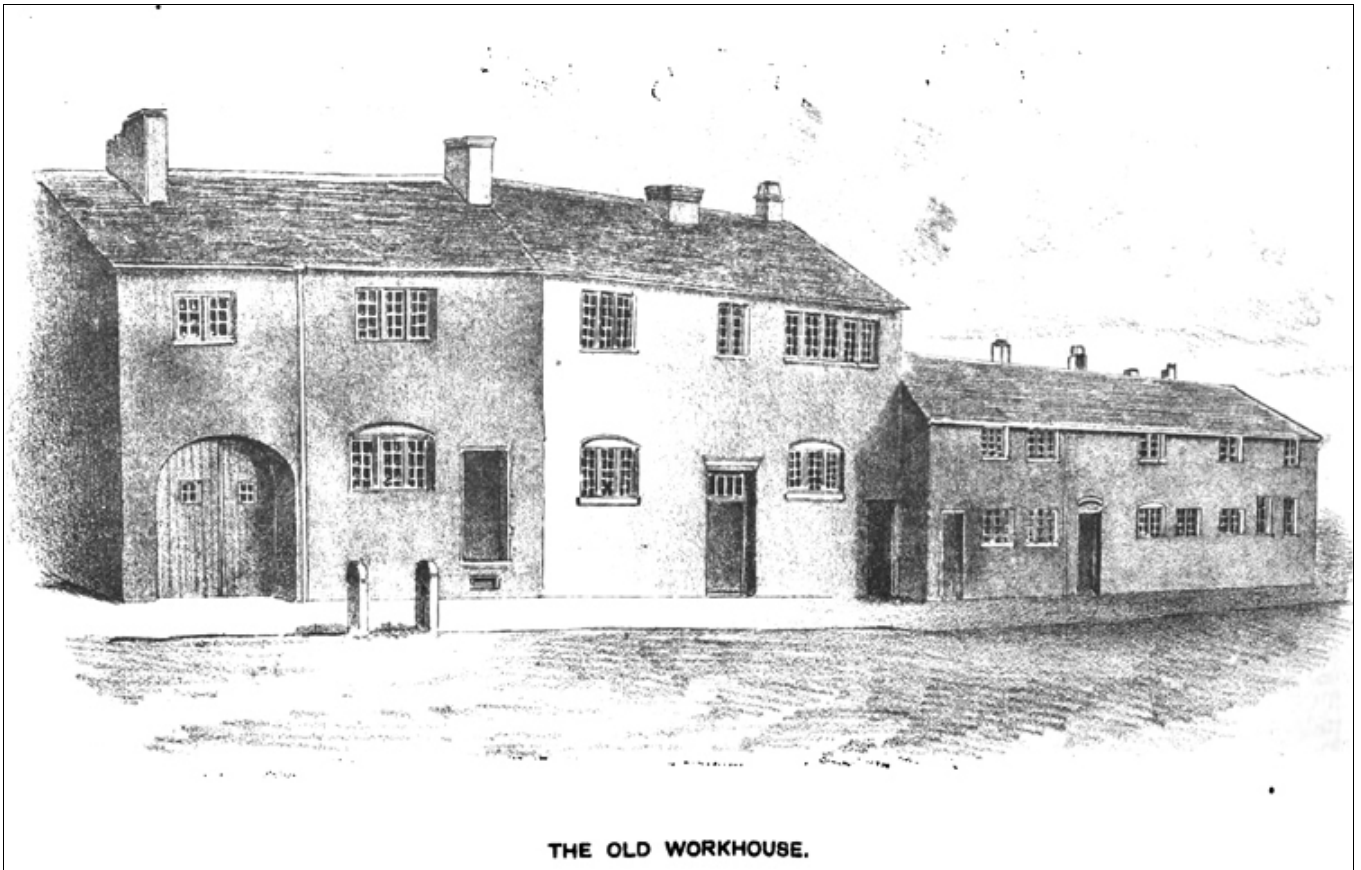
DENTON HALL.

*The Ancient Residence of the Denton Branch of the Holland Family*

Number 7 : **EXCAVATIONS AT DENTON HALL, on Windmill Lane, Denton**

Download the booklet, from Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit about this forgotten Hall [HERE](#)  
 and for more publications visit their website [HERE](#)





THE OLD WORKHOUSE.

On the '**Workhouse**' website [HERE](#) we can read that it was on Dungeon Street, now Market Street and had accommodation for 64 inmates.

from: '*Abstracts of the Returns Made by the Overseers of the Poor 1777*'

from: '*An Account of Several Workhouses for Employing and Maintaining the Poor*'

\*\*\*\*\*

## Lancashire, Ashton-under-Line.

Dec. 22. 1729.

**A** Workhouse is now erected here, and we felt an Advantage from it, even before it was finished; the Dread of what is called Confinement, having spurr'd on several of our Poor to labour for a Livelihood, which they

[ 144 ]

they would never have endeavoured, as long as they could have been relieved by the Parish-Rate, or by an Alms at our Doors; other Places are about to follow our Example.

\*\*\*\*\*

AN  
ACCOUNT  
OF SEVERAL  
*WORK-HOUSES*  
FOR

Employing and Maintaining  
the POOR;

Setting forth

The Rules by which they are Governed,

Their great Usefulness to the Publick,

And in Particular

To the PARISHES where they are Erected.

As also of several

CHARITY SCHOOLS

*For Promoting WORK, and LABOUR.*

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The SECOND EDITION very much Enlarged.

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