

'e-Owls'



Part of Manchester & Lancashire
Family History Society

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DECEMBER 2019

MLFHS - Oldham Branch Newsletter

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Branch News :

Following April's Annual Meeting of the MLFHS Oldham Branch :

Branch Officers for 2019 -2020 :

Committee Member : Chairman : Linda Richardson
Committee Member : Treasurer : Gill Melton
Committee Member : Secretary & Webmistress : Jennifer Lever
Committee Member : Newsletter Editor : Sheila Goodyear
Committee Member : John Curnow
Technical Support : Rod Melton



Chairman's remarks :

As this is the last newsletter before Christmas, I should like to thank everyone for their support this past year, especially those members who attend our monthly meetings. I have noticed that attendance at the monthly meetings has steadily increased over the last few months and I think we are beginning to turn things around.

I should also like to thank the volunteers who give up their time to ensure the smooth running of the Branch.

It was decided, at the last Executive meeting of the MLFHS, that Oldham should be brought in line with the other branches and that, at monthly meetings, there should be a charge of £3 for non-members and requests for donations discontinued.

May I wish you all a happy Christmas and hope to see as many of you as possible at the

Branch meeting in January.

My Best Wishes

Linda Richardson

Chair, Oldham Branch

email me at chairman-oldham@mlfhs.org.uk

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

There are two new links added to the 'Useful Website Links' at the end of the newsletter : (1) to Tameside Local Studies & Archives and (2) to the British Association for Local History.

There is also a new link to the upcoming free talks, at Tameside History Club, in the Societies not part of MLFHS section.

I've included the football team photo (mentioned in last month's newsletter), in the Gallery, with all their names. I'd originally planned to add more information about it but, so far, I've not been able to find what I needed ... hopefully more success in the new year.

Women's Suffrage having been another passion of mine, I've included a photo of Sylvia Pankhurst's grave and memorial in Addis Abbaba, in the 'Mixed Bag' section, which was kindly sent to me by Anne Jones, a fellow volunteer at the Local Studies & Archives.

Christmas is now only weeks away and I'd like to send you all my best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year and hope to see as many of you as possible at our monthly Saturday talks in 2020.

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 unless you decide to waive that right, at the time of sending.

Editor reserves the right to edit any contributions before publication.

email me at : [Oldham\\_newsletter@mlfhs.org.uk](mailto:Oldham_newsletter@mlfhs.org.uk)

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Oldham Branch Meeting on Saturday 9th November

'Murder in the Victorian Lancashire Family'. a talk given by Martin Baggoley

After a few teething problems, in our new venue for the talks, we settled down to listen to Martin give his account of some of the murderous activities in the 19th century. Unfortunately, the acoustics in the Performance Space, at the library, didn't do us any favours. Our speaker was softly spoken (and we don't have a microphone ... yet!) so anyone sitting much further back than the first couple of rows struggled to hear everything. I was sitting right at the back so I'm going to apologise now for any mistakes I might make!

Martin took several case studies and gave us the details. One concerned a new-born baby found dead in the cellar of a house. It was considered that the baby had been born alive but there was no proof that it hadn't died of natural causes. The police believed that Mary, the mother, was responsible as she had, previously, been out of work for a considerable time [presumably having fallen into debt?]. At the inquest she argued that she had placed the child on its stomach and it had died, accidentally, from asphyxia. Being found guilty [of manslaughter?], she was sentenced to serve 2 months in jail or 1 month with hard labour.

A further case concerned the death of an elderly father (74) and his adult son. A daughter, Sarah, had severe 'emotional difficulties'. She was discovered, with them, inside a locked bedroom and screaming in acute distress. A doctor's evidence concluded that she would have been physically capable of the killings, She was found guilty of the murder of her father and the manslaughter of her brother. However, she was considered unfit to plead and was placed in

Prestwich Asylum.

Another case was that, in 1888 in Ordsall, of a mother and 6 children being murdered by her husband, the father of the children. Concerns were raised that the family hadn't been seen for a few days and the curtains remained drawn. A constable was called and when he climbed a ladder to peer through an upstairs window he could see the bodies of the mother and children. On entering the house, the father, Samuel, was discovered dead, sitting in a chair in the kitchen. The deaths were found to have been caused by administering prussic acid mixed into treacle.

Further investigation found that Samuel was a bitter and resentful man, believing that he had been denied a rightful inheritance; that he had suffered a series of financial disappointments and, crucially, that he had worked as the manager of a chemist's shop.

Finally, we learned of murder and domestic violence in 1877. Domestic violence, in those times, was considered almost 'acceptable', as long as it didn't result in death, so neighbors would be reluctant to call the police. Annie was 25 years old, 8 months pregnant and living in Rochdale. On that last day of her life, her husband had returned home in a drunken state, falling into a chair and sleeping. Annie left the house to visit a friend; her husband followed her, forcing his way into the friend's home, where he started to attack his wife. Screams and shouts were heard, and neighbours gathered ... worried, but reluctant to intervene and call the police.

Eventually, some forced their way into the house, seeing Annie unconscious, but alive, on the floor. Her husband chased them from the house. Eventually, a doctor was summoned; the husband fled from the scene; and Annie died as a result of her injuries. Her murderous husband was caught, found guilty, at his trial, of murder, and hanged.

It was a sad litany of murders, by family members, in Victorian times. What made it even more sad, for today, was that murders of this type, are still making headlines, in newspapers or on the television news, in the 21st century.

Our thanks to Martin, for his interesting talk.

Sheila Goodyear

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**Oldham Branch : December 2019,**

**No Meeting ...**

**Have a Very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year!**

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Oldham Branch Meeting :

Saturday 11th, January, 2020, at 2pm :

Sheila Goodyear will give a talk on :

'An ANZAC In Our Family - The story of Wykeham Henry Koba Freame from his birth in 1880 in Osaka, Japan, to an Australian father (William Henry Freame) and a Japanese mother, Shizu Kitagawa. He would become a sailor, a

mercenary, a soldier in WW1 (awarded the DCM), a fruit farmer, a spy in WW2 until his murder at the hands of the Japanese, the subject of a biography, *'The Gallipoli Samurai'* by Brian Tate in 2011 and, finally, the subject of a chapter in a book about the history of Australian spies.

To be held in the Education Suite at Oldham Library.

Members of the committee will be available to assist anyone for a further half hour following the speaker's talk.

Refreshments on arrival.

Entry free to members and non-members £3 (refundable if you take out membership on the day).



Wykeham Henry Koba Freame

(Note: Council Car park is free for three hours on Saturday, but make sure you get a ticket)

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### **Oldham Branch Meeting :**

**Saturday 8th February, at 2pm :**

Alan Crosby will give us a talk on :

'*Crime in the 17th Century*' - This talk uses original court records to look at crime and misdemeanours in the Stuart period.

To be held in the Performance Space at Oldham Library

Other details as for January.

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Proposed Day out in 2020 :

National Arboretum

The branch is considering organising a trip to the National Arboretum next year, probably in June, and we think the cost will be in the region of £10-£15 for the hire of a coach, depending on how many people wish to go.

If you are interested in such a trip please let us know by email to oldham@mlfhs.org.uk as soon as possible, so that we can discuss the matter further between those who are interested.

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## **Bolton & Scottish Branches**

**Bolton Branch :December 2019,  
No Meeting ...**

**Have a Very Happy Christmas.**

Website link [HERE](#)

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Anglo-Scottish Branch, December 2019,

No Meeting ...

Have a Very Happy Christmas

Website link [HERE](#)

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## **MLFHS updates**

### **Beginners Talks :**

**No Talks in December ...**

**Have a Very Happy Christmas**

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MLFHS Online Bookshop:

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

Visit the [Online Bookshop](#) to see what is available.

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

Each of the MLFHS branches publishes a monthly e-newsletter which provides useful news items. The e-newsletters are free and available to both members and non-members of MLFHS. To sign-up, simply click the appropriate link below and complete the short form on the branch

e-newsletter page, where you will also find copies of past issues.

[Anglo-Scottish](#)

[Bolton](#)

[Oldham](#)

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

### Oldham Historical Research Group:

Wednesday 18th December, at 7pm

#### 'The Sholver Plane Crash of 1936'

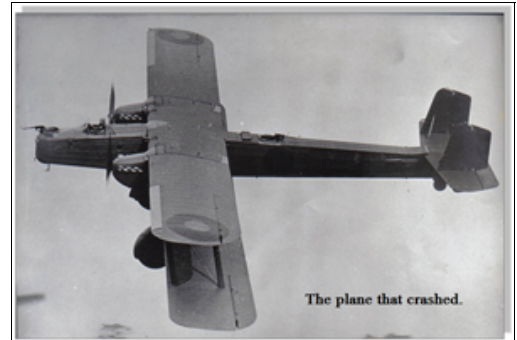
An illustrated talk by Mike Smith,  
of Moorside Historical Society

At Oldham Local Studies & Archives, Union Street,  
Oldham.

Door opens 6:30 for 7pm start.

All welcome ... no membership subscription, or entrance  
fee on the door.

Oldham HRG Programme of monthly talks [HERE](#)



### Library Events & Gallery talks at Gallery Oldham :

#### Gallery 1 – Oldham Stories:

This gallery permanently houses both:

**Oldham Stories exhibition**, featuring selected objects from our extensive collections to tell and show the stories of Oldham and its local communities. From birds and shells to a recreation of an Edwardian chemist's shop, every object has a fascinating tale to tell. The display features local figures such as suffragette Annie Kenny, the pioneering natural history collector James Nield and the popular artist Helen Bradley.

**The Community Gallery**, which has a wide range of exhibitions by groups and individuals from the Borough of Oldham.

Website [HERE](#)

### Saddleworth Historical Society

Wednesday 11th December, at 7:30pm

An Illustrated Presentation by John Fidler entitled :

#### **"Oldham's Health or Lack of it in the 1890's and the link with Moscow."**

At the Saddleworth Museum, High Street, Uppermill.

All welcome. Members free but a charge on the evening of £3 to non- members of the Society.  
Refreshments available.

### Saddleworth Civic Trust: -

No Meetings ...

Have a Very Happy Christmas

### Family History Society of Cheshire : Tameside Group meeting

Wednesday 11th December, 7pm for 7:30 start.

'Christmas Social and 'Crime in WW1' ... a talk given by Kate Booth

"Criminal Extracts from the First World War taken from the Reporter – Nothing changes"



Meeting in the Schoolrooms of Old Chapel Dukinfield

There is an entry charge of £2.00 for members and £2.50 for non members.

See their website [HERE](#)

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Tameside History Club :

Wednesday 22nd January, 2pm

'Diaries of a Forgotten Conflict : Hear how Lieutenant Colonel Pavasovic of the Royal Yugoslav Army & Royalist Resistance in Second World War made his way to Dukinfield'

'Tameside History Club is a series of events that are held at Tameside Local Studies and Archives, Central Library, Ashton. These events are for everyone from local historians to those with a more casual interest in a range of popular topics and are completely **free**. Book a place on any of the talks by ringing 0161 342 4242.'

Website and programme [HERE](#)

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## **'A Mixed Bag'**

Sylvia Pankhurst is, for me, one of the largely unsung figures of the 20th century Women's Suffrage campaign; not because she was 'nice', or because she was necessarily always right in what she believed or did, but because she was fearless, strident and passionate in her beliefs. So, when I knew that a fellow volunteer at the Local Studies and Archives would be visiting Addis Abbaba, I asked her if she would get a photograph of Sylvia's grave for me ... and she did; for which, I was very grateful.

### ***Sylvia Pankhurst***

The name 'Pankhurst' is, for most people, synonymous with the aggressive and violent Suffragette movement, which completely overshadowed the suffragist and law-abiding movement, for a woman's right to vote, in the earliest years of the 20th century. There were, originally, 4 Pankhurst women : Christabel born in 1880, Estelle Sylvia in 1882, Adela in 1885 and their mother, Emmeline, born in 1858 and married to barrister Richard Pankhurst. The girls also had a brother, Francis Henry born in 1884 (who died in 1888). In 1889 another son was born and named Henry Francis.

Sylvia, trained as an artist and probably destined for a successful career, is best remembered for her part, in the WSPU Suffragette campaign, for 'Votes for Women'. She was expelled from the Union by her mother and sister, in early 1914, continuing to run her own autonomous branch, the East London Federation of Suffragettes, throughout WW1. The rift was mainly caused by Emmeline and Christabel's increasingly dictatorial style of leadership, leaving behind their ILP ethos of socialism, and by Sylvia's strongly individualist, socialist and pacifist conscience.

Adela, had also been an active member of the WSPU but was given a one-way ticket to Australia, in 1914, after a disagreement with her mother and Christabel. She has been, more or less, completely 'airbrushed' from popular WSPU history.

Emmeline and Christabel were the dominant forces in the WSPU ... Emmeline leading from the front whilst Christabel escaped to Paris, for 2 years, when there was a warrant out for her arrest. Members of the WSPU (particularly Oldham's Annie Kenney) would travel there on a frequent basis to collect Christabel's campaign instructions.

During WW1, Christabel and Emmeline abandoned the suffrage campaign and threw their energies into supporting the war and actively campaigning for army recruits, offering the financial resources and support of the WSPU to the government. Deeply unpopular with the majority of their members ... after all, this government had been brutally forcefeeding hundreds of hunger-striking members in jail ... they left to form other suffrage groups. The WSPU was disbanded as such, in 1917, and became The Women's Party, as Emmeline and Christabel

devoted their energies to the government war effort.

During the war, Sylvia devoted her time to protecting the welfare and financial interests of women in the East End. She started a nursery, a canteen and a toymaking concern to help alleviate the desperate poverty being suffered. At the same time she continued to keep alive the issue of a woman's right to vote, and edit her own paper, 'Woman's Dreadnought'.

As a pacifist, Sylvia gave her heartfelt support to the International Women's Peace Congress, held at The Hague, in 1915. When the war came to an end, and women had achieved a partial franchise, she turned more and more to increasingly left-wing politics, renaming her newspaper 'Workers' Dreadnought.'

The final rift with her mother came in 1927, with the birth of her son, whom she named Richard Keir Pethick Pankhurst, and her refusal to marry the baby's father, Silvio Corio. He was an Italian socialist and the little family lived in Woodford Green in Essex. Sylvia remained active in left-wing politics all her life, significantly campaigning for support against the Italian invasion and occupation of Abyssinia (now Ethiopia) in 1935 which resulted in the Emperor Haile Selassie going into exile. She started a weekly journal, 'The Ethiopian News', drawing attention to Haile Selassie's appeal to the League of Nations. She maintained her strongly active support and, in 1941, the Emperor returned to Ethiopia, successfully reclaiming his throne, despite strong Italian guerilla warfare.

In gratitude for her continued support, Sylvia had been offered a home in Ethiopia and, after the death of Silvio in 1954, she accepted the invitation in 1956, moving to a new life in Addis Abbaba, with her son Richard. She was instrumental in founding the Social Service Society and edited a monthly journal, the 'Ethiopia Observer.' Sylvia died in September 1960 and, so great was the respect in which she was held, that the Emperor ordered that she should have a state funeral. Her son Richard continued her work in Ethiopia and, amongst his many other achievements, was a founding member of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies at Addis Ababa University. He died in 2017 and is buried, with his mother, in the Cathedral in Addis Abbaba.



The original Memorial  
Addis Abbaba

Photo Wikipedia Creative Commons



Memorial with the addition of son Richard

Photo courtesy of Anne Jones

10 years of the *Woman's / Workers' Dreadnought* can be searched and read in the newspapers on the websites : '*Find my Past*' and '*The British Newspapers Archive*', both of which are subscription sites but can be accessed at the Local Studies and Archives.

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Trawling through the old Oldham Chronicle newspapers, looking for something specific, I am frequently caught by something totally unrelated to my search. The following, is one such find!

It caught my attention because I had realised, when researching the years after Peterloo, just how little I could find, about the history, organisation and responsibilities of the Vestry, in particular the Churchwardens.

From : *'Times That Are Gone By', Oldham Chronicle, Saturday April 25th, 1925*

'History of Oldham Under the Chuchwardens'

by Hartley Bateson.

Our Oldham historians have centred their interest and their inquiries upon feudal tenures and successive lords of the soil. Hence the dwellers on the manorial estates remain buried in obscurity. Perhaps the lack of good documentary evidence has dissuaded our historians from the attempt to recall the lives of our forefathers, whether bound or free,. The fact remains that the history of early Oldham is presented as a chronicle of feudal holdings, duties and services. The days are now past, however, when the family trees of Cudworths, Radcliffes or Chattertons could excite or satisfy our curiosity. The centre of interest must be shifted from lord to labourer; from hall and manor house to cottage and vestry. In my opinion the history of the Oldham community could best be related in three chapters or columns : (1) Manorial Oldham; (2) Oldham under the Churchwardens; (3) The transformation wrought by the Industrial Revolution.

The Oldham Manor Court

In this short essay I wish merely to proffer a few discursive comments on our scanty Churchwardens' Accounts and their importance. Meagre as they are, they will become increasingly valuable when the historian recognises that, in Oldham especially, the Churchwardens became the centre of communal life towards the close of the 16th century. To appreciate the changes which at that era shifted the focus of our local government we ought first to outline the organisation of local government in pre-Reformation times; but, unhappily, not a single vestige of direct evidence regarding a Manorial Court in Oldham has survived. We have to rely on mere presumptions. A deed relating to Theale Moss dated 1514 refers to the Moss Reeve of Oldham, and the existence of such an official surely implies a Manor Court by which he was elected. The manorial estate can be planned only in broken outline with faint and unsure tracings. A reference of 1541 to the 'field' of Oldham implies the 'campus,' or open arable fields; and from the evidence of obsolete field names compounded with the element 'shutt,' a hypothetical plan of the townfields, with at least two fields, might be constructed. The commons of pasture are inferred from a dispute as recorded in 1554, when Richard de Oldham has made a lideate (lidgate) to shut out the beasts of tenants who claimed the right of pasturage. The estate thus intimated by these scattered references must have possessed its Manorial Court, charged with the appointment of Reeve, Hayward, Ale-tester, Tithingmen and overlookers of commons, hedges, gates and plats[sic].

It is a problem to decide whether the Oldham Manorial Court vanished with the sweep of Reformation changes; whether the suppression of the Priory of St. John was a disintegrating factor; or whether a ghostly survival of a Manor Court persisted until a sequestration of estates during the Commonwealth. We can be sure of one thing only : that whilst such Courts as those of Newton and Broughton continued to function late into modern times, in Oldham the duties performed in the Middle Ages by the Manor Court had wholly devolved, in the 17th century, upon the Churchwardens.

The Great Pillage

This shifting of authority at the opening of Elizabeth's reign was preceded by a period of chaos; this chaos was produced by the tragic injunctions and proclamations of Edward VI. The printed Chronicles of Oldham present a sheer blank concerning these years of upheaval. Their

silence, however, need not be a matter for wonder. Examples of Churchwardens' Accounts are rare enough before the 16th century; but no Oldham Accounts dated earlier than the middle of the 17th century are now extant; and I can trace only one direct reference to Oldham Churchwardens in the pre-Reformation period. Documents must have been destroyed; but we must not lay all the blame upon the 'ignorant and careless' officers of later times who lit the vestry fires. They may have been wilfully burned during those deplorable confiscations of property so aptly stigmatised by Dr. Jessop as the period of the Great Pillage. Immediately following the death of Henry VIII a new systematic plundering of corporate property began, and within three years almost all of the Parish churches of England were looted. Was Oldham mercifully spared? I hardly think so; being a chapel of ease it probably suffered far more than Middleton or Prestwich. Chapels of ease were specified along with chantries and hospitals in the swarm of proclamations which authorised the Great Pillage, and Oldham chapel of ease must have suffered far more than has been admitted.

A Period of Bewilderment

One clear fact emerges when we pass beyond the obscure period of transition : at the close of Elizabeth's reign Oldham had been transformed into one of those parishes wherein the transference of civil government from Manor Court to Vestry was unqualified and complete. Thus, whilst in some neighbouring manors certain officers, such as Lanelookers, were still appointed by the Manor Court as late as the 18th century, in Oldham Parish these officers have suffered a change into Surveyors of the Ways, subject to the Churchwardens and appointed by the Parish Meeting at Easter. Again, whilst in many manors the charge of footbridges was still entrusted to Lanelookers, in Oldham smaller bridges were under the supervision of the Constable, partially amenable to the authority of the Churchwardens. The Churchwardens had become responsible for every form of local government such as had formerly been in the control of the Hundreds and the Manor Courts; in fact they were not only burdened but, in Parishes like Oldham, must have been bewildered by the multiplicity of new duties without the executive machinery to cope with them. Their task would be further complicated by the alienation of their property.

Unfortunately the Chronicles of Oldham tell us nothing about the Churchwardens' efforts to adjust their old status to their new civic functions. The silence of Oldham records, however, is broken by a few incidental references in the Manchester Quarter Sessions Records. It appears as if they were unable for a time to grapple with the new situation. The Poor Law Act of 1601 had directed Churchwardens to meet monthly 'to take take order for the relief of the poor; but in 1604 Richard Ogden, Churchwarden of Chadderton, Richard Wynterbottom, Churchwarden for Royton, and James Worrall, Churchwarden for Crompton are indicted for having refused to meet monthly as provided by the Act. The same year the inhabitants of Oldham are fined for not repairing the highways, "and not finding carts according to the custom". Various laws from 1555 onwards have prescribed that parishioners should work four days a year on the repair of roads and should provide a stipulated number of carts. For some reason the Churchwardens were proving remiss during these years; but probably these references do not reflect discredit upon their good will. They would not have yet created the machinery nor established the authority for enforcing their commands and effectively performing their many duties.

Churchwardens' Duties

We can catch only fleeting glimpses of their activities in Oldham until we reach the middle of the seventeenth century. The earliest Churchwardens' Account extant, the drift and salvage from the records of at least 5 centuries, are unusually late. They record a period when the Churchwardens had fully accommodated themselves to their onerous offices. Their civic duties comprised the levying of rates, the relief of the poor, the maintenance of roads and bridges, the policing of the parish, and the protection of crops and farm produce; together with the appointment of special officers for these various functions. I dare not venture, in this brief essay to deal with their performance of all these duties, or even to select the most important. I will just

try to illustrate the interest of the Churchwardens Accounts to the antiquarian, as well as their value to the historian.

Bells and Ringers

Naturally, the Churchwardens were primarily concerned with the Church fabric : this was their most ancient duty. Extracts from their accounts relating to the carting of stone and the purchase of horsehair and lime might prove very dull reading; so I will continue my remarks on this subject to the upkeep of the bells. No subject occupies more space in all Churchwardens' Accounts than the repair of bells and disbursements to the ringers. In Oldham, as in most parishes, there were six ringers, and in 1745 each received as emolument the sum of 6s. 8d. per year, with an extra 12s. set down to their account for the current year. Such perquisites as the latter item of 12s. occur frequently. For the year 1734 the sum of 4s. is entered for 'hiring them at several times'; but six years later the Parish Meeting took exception to these incidental expenses and ordered that 'no more than four shillings shall be spent on the ringers in the whole year.' This resolution, however, may be read as expressing just a fitful zeal for economy. The wars of the last half of the century gave the ringers a busy and profitable time. Thus in 1762 they received 11s. 'for ringing on three days' rejoicing', and in 1775 the sum of 3s. 6d. 'for ringing when the King's troops took possession of New York.'

Public Penance

Churchwardens were empowered to impose public penance, especially on delinquents convicted of incontinence and slander. Several orders were issued in the 17th century directing them "to provide a convenient white sheet and a white wand ... to be used at such times as offenders are censured for their grievous and notorious crimes." Accordingly in 1739 a certain Edward Heywood, of Shaw, performed public penance "with a white wand in his hand and a white sheet."

The Dogwhipper

An interesting official appointment by Churchwardens is the Dogwhipper - an officer of pre-Reformation origin. Masters were in the habit of bringing their dogs to Church, and so to regulate the behaviour of dogs every parish possessed its official dogwhipper. It is surprising to find that his remuneration in Oldham Parish was greater apparently than that of the ringer. In 1752 we find the sum of 5s. entered "for carrying the whip this half year", whilst in 1745 the ringers were receiving 6s. 8d. each for the whole year. He was also provided with a uniform : in 1735 the sum of 8s. 8d. is paid for "cloath for Dog Whpr. coat." In 1729 an extra payment, entered for special service, was disallowed.

Hedgehogs

An Act of Elizabeth's reign has thrown upon Churchwardens the onus of preserving grain and farm produce. The Act provided that they should raise funds to reward persons killing "ravening birds and vermin". Among other vermin hedgehogs were specified, and it was stipulated that 2d. per head should be reward. The fact that our local accounts mention hedgehogs but no "ravening birds" suggests that Oldham of the 17th century was mainly a pasturing district and arable farming was proportionately insignificant. In 1735 the sum of 1s. 8d. was paid for the destruction of 11 hedgehogs; also 11d. in Royton for 5, 8d. in Chadderton for 4, and 3s. 2d. in Crompton for 19. The heads would be presented to the Churchwardens and burnt in his presence.

Surveyors of Highways

Whilst the Manor Courts of Salford, Newton and Broughton were still electing Lanelookers and Moorlookers late in the 18th century, in Oldham the later officers disappear (except on the estate of Chamber Hall), while the former reappears with the designation of Surveyor of the Highways. An Act of Elizabeth's reign, enlarging an Act of 1555 has provided that two road surveyors should be elected annually at Easter in districts where no similar officers already existed. The measure was no doubt urgent, for the monasteries in pre-Reformation times had maintained the roads as a pious work; but it is significant that Oldham possessed no such officers, for their 17th century designation is phrased according to Elizabeth's Act. The earliest

recorded reference to them occurs in 1699, when the surveyors of the highways are out of pocket in defending an indictment brought against inhabitants of Oulldham[sic] for not repairing at Hathershaw Lane." Abundant material exists to show them performing their duties in the eighteenth century. For instance, we find them in 1765 paying a labourer 4s. 1d. "for working 3½ days in th' Maygate Lane"; paying 5s. for 2 carts of boulders; and 8s. to James Buckley for paving three days in Hathershaw Lane.

Constables Accounts

Constables' Accounts are frequently entered in the same volume as Churchwardens' Accounts and may be regarded as supplementary to them. Several entries in the Oldham Constables' Accounts mention levies for the maintenance of bridges. Even in pre-Reformation times the upkeep of smaller bridges had been the concern of the Constables of 'Tithing-men'. Since the Reformation a series of Acts had empowered Justices of the Peace to rate the inhabitants of counties for the maintenance of the great highway-bridges in the county, and the Constables were responsible for the levies. Thus in 1725 the considerable sum of £4 7s. 6d. was paid by Oldham Parish towards the repair of the Ribble Bridge, and in 1718, 3s. 2d. was paid towards a bridge lay at Middleton.

Naturally the constables had charge of the Parish armour which was invariably kept within the Church. In 1718 they paid 6d. "to Broadbent for mending the watching weapons and other work about the Constables' Seat in the Church." They were also responsible for the military training of parishioners. Hence their office included the general supervision of the butts which were situated near Priest Hill, just to the north of the Church. In 1718 the sum of 5s. 6d. was paid for "making Butts near Priest Hill". An Act of 1466 had ordered that Butts should be made in every township, at which the inhabitants were "to shoot up and down on all Sundays and Holy Days, under pain of a half-penny for each omission." It was customary to place considerable stores of gunpowder within the Parish Church and probably this explains the site chosen in Oldham for the construction of butts.

Hartley Bateson.

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### From the e-Postbag

From our reader : Anne Grimshaw

#### ***"Joseph Travis, grocer, of Oldham"***

My 5x-great uncle, **Edmund Elson** (born 1740), owned two properties about 10 yards east of Rochdale Road along Booth Hill Lane in north Coldhurst/Tetlow Fold/Northmoor area.

According to the enclosure map of 1804 one of these was next to land held by **John Travis** (size: 2 acres 2 rods 27 poles) and the other close by.

Edmund Elson was the brother of Samuel Elson, my 4x great-grandfather. Edmund died on 18 June 1813 – six years before 'the Manchester Meeting' which came to be known as the Peterloo Massacre, or simply Peterloo. His death was noted by local weaver, William Rowbottom, who kept a diary 1787-1830 the transcription of which is on this website [HERE](#): *1813 June 18th Died Edmund Elson, of Northmoor, joyner and loom maker, aged 73 years – a man with a universal good character.* [I like that bit! AG]

Unusually for my ancestors, Edmund left a will. The executors were his wife and sister, both called Mary. All other beneficiaries of his will had their family relationship stated except another executor: Joseph Travis, grocer of Oldham. Who was he? Presumably not a relative. Why was he an executor? Was he related to John Travis, the owner of the land adjacent to property owned by Edmund Elson?

#### **The trial of Henry Hunt**

A Google search for "Joseph Travis" + Oldham + grocer produced a real surprise! He was a witness at the trial of Henry Hunt, the Radical speaker for electoral reform at Peterloo on 16

August 1819. This took place at the York Lent (February-April) Assizes 1820. (Presumably Joseph Travis walked there and back, about 60 miles each way part of it over the Pennines...) At the trial, the proceedings were recorded verbatim by court reporters and later published in various publications now online one of which was *The Trial of Henry Hunt* (Read [HERE](#))

Joseph Travis had been assigned to counting how many people were going along the road towards Manchester on the morning of Monday 16 August 1819. For this, he stated he was “employed by the magistrates as a Special Constable or else I should not have gone.” Shortly after, he says, “I was forced to come on”. Does there sound an element of reluctance and coercion here?

The road to which he was assigned was probably the main Rochdale-Oldham road which passed the end of Booth Hill Lane before passing through Coldhurst and on to Bent Green (now the Rochdale Road entrance to Oldham Civic Centre) then south-east to Manchester – about an eight-mile walk.

*If* Joseph Travis was related to John Travis, did Joseph live on Booth Hill Lane or somewhere else in the Coldhurst/Tetlow Fold/Northmoor area but which he referred to simply as Oldham?

As a witness at the trial of Henry Hunt, Joseph stated that he counted 864 people. With him, and writing down the numbers, was “Mr Chippendale”. Joseph also stated that he did not think that Mr Chippendale was present at the trial. On the morning of 16 August 1819 while getting his orders from the magistrates Joseph had to call on his 71-year-old father, John Travis, to mind the shop. According to Joseph there was no cause for alarm at the behaviour of the marchers and hence no reason to consider closing the shop [and losing passing trade? AG] He knew some of the marchers, including one of the Reformer leaders, ‘Doctor’ Healey, probably more of a quack than a medical doctor or at best a herbalist/apothecary.

### **Spymaster!**

This threw up another question: who was “Mr Chippendale”? I came across the answer by chance when looking at Gallery Oldham’s Peterloo exhibition. Indeed, there was a whole display panel about him and an artist’s impression of him! William Chippendale was adjutant and captain of the Oldham militia who enthusiastically ran a network of spies for the authorities – he was a spymaster and one who seemed to relish his job of undercover work with code names and so on.

So, depending on your viewpoint: was he a ‘hostile witness’ (for the Prosecution) or was he an upstanding citizen of Oldham who was trusted enough to have *direct links* to the Home Office and the military in London? Yes, he really did and in one letter made an indirect reference to Joseph Travis when he stated:

“With the assistance of a Friend I counted the Columns & made the best estimate of the Stragglers that Circumstances admitted of and we made the whole to amount to about three thousand...” (Read [HERE](#))

(Of course, William Chippendale *could* have been referring to someone other than Joseph Travis but Joseph is a very good ‘fit’.) Joseph did not know much about Mr Chippendale but considered him a ‘gentleman’ so perhaps they were not really friends as such although they had discussed matters about the counting.

So, if Joseph Travis was a Special Constable working, at least on 16 August, with William Chippendale, he was acting on behalf of the Loyalists and authorities but was he doing so reluctantly? Cross-examined by Henry Hunt himself, Joseph did not attempt to discredit the Reformers in any way. His only negative comment was that following the well-behaved crowds of Reformers were some unruly stragglers.

Six years before all this he had been an executor of Edmund Elson’s will. Had they talked about the growing Reform movement albeit somewhat muted then? The cry for reform of the electoral system had been rumbling for some time and tensions were rising between the powers-that-be and the ‘lower orders’. What had Edmund Elson made of it? Only a year before his death (1812) the authorities had clamped down viciously on the Luddites who regarded the



new steam-powered looms as a threat to their livelihoods, thus they broke into manufactories and smashed them.

Edmund Elson was a loom-maker and joiner; someone who made hand-looms from wood. His work would have been threatened too. Did he have Reformist leanings? Or was he content with the status quo? Or was he, like many, simply apathetic?

As Henry Hunt's trial was beginning in early 1820, William Rowbottom noted in his diary the death of Joseph's father ([HERE](#)):

*"February 9th 1820 Died, at Oldham, Mr. John Travis, chandler, soap boiler, and grocer. A man universally respected. His age, 71 years "[born 1749].*

### **Bankruptcy**

Joseph inherited his father John's estate which included the land off Booth Hill Road – and his debts. This monetary misfortune led to Joseph being declared bankrupt in October 1821. *The London Gazette* 12 July 1823, which cited his bankruptcy, referred to his asset: the land which had belonged to his father and quoted its size: 2 acres 2 rods 27 poles, exactly as on the enclosure map of 1804.

But Joseph Travis appeared to have weathered the storm. The 1851 census showed him as a widower and an annuitant (living off his own means) in the household of his cousin Edmund Travis, a landed proprietor in Burnley Lane, Chadderton, born in 1790. [Was he named after Edmund Elson? AG]. Joseph Travis died the following year in January 1852 aged 77 (born 1775). He was buried at Holy Trinity church, Shaw.

I have found no family relationship with Edmund Elson and Joseph Travis but they appear to have been closely acquainted and almost next-door neighbours and thus would have known each other.

### **Oldham's motto**

Finally, William Rowbottom noted in his diary just two and a half years after Peterloo: *10th March 1822. At night died, in Church Lane, Oldham, Mr. William Chippendale, captain and adjutant in the Oldham local militia, his age 30 years.*

As Samuel Andrew of the *Oldham Standard*, a later annotator of the diary, stated: *"Mr. Chippendale married the daughter of John Lees, Esq., of Church-lane, Lord of the Manor of Oldham. He died young, but he stands credited, according to tradition, with having invented or suggested the motto for the Oldham coat of arms. "Haud facile captu" – "Not easily caught".*

*E. Butterworth says:- "The armorial bearing of the Oldham family was – Sable chevron, or between three owls proper; on a chief of the second three roses, gules seeded, or. As there seems to be no authentic motto relating to the arms, a military officer of a local corps, inclined to be waggish, imparted a jocular motto. (Read [HERE](#))*

What a fascinating story that short phrase in Edmund Elson's will "Joseph Travis, grocer of Oldham" has uncovered! Here was someone who had known an ancestor of mine and had also actually spoken with Henry Hunt! He is my own, albeit very tenuous, link to the Peterloo Massacre!

### **Anne's Note:**

There were several John Traveses described as yeoman, tallow chandler, grocer, dealer, chapman and combinations of these occupations living the Shaw/Royton area. I am not sure whether Joseph's father was the same John Travis as described in William Rowbottom's diary as *"Old John Travis of Goldborne and his family, were somewhat important people in Oldham."* Read [HERE](#)

He had prospered and had the trust of local people and businesses so much that he acted as an unofficial banker. Perhaps he was let down by his 'financial' customers? In addition, Samuel Andrew, annotator of William Rowbottom's diary, stated:

*"Up to a certain time his wealth increased, but misfortune is said to have overtaken him through his connection [in 1805] with the Rochdale Canal Company, in which undertaking he is said to have dropped a great amount of money."*

And another thing: if you see the recent film *Peterloo*, watch out of an on-off appearance and one line of dialogue from "Mr Chippendale" (played by Ryan Pope).

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From Pat Etchells, editor of the MLFHS Quarterly Journal :

The following poem was first published in the Journal, some years ago but can still give us a much-needed laugh, in these rather gloomy times.

The Computer Swallowed Grandpa

*The computer swallowed grandpa, yes honestly it's true.
He pressed 'control' and 'enter' and disappeared from view.
It devoured him completely. The thought just makes me squirm.
He must have caught a virus or been eaten by a worm.
I've searched through the recycle bin and files of every kind;
I've even used the internet, but nothing did I find.
In desperation, I asked Jeeves, my searches to refine;
The reply from him was negative. Not a thing was found online.
So, if inside your inbox, my grandpa you should see,
Please copy, scan and paste him, and send him back to me*

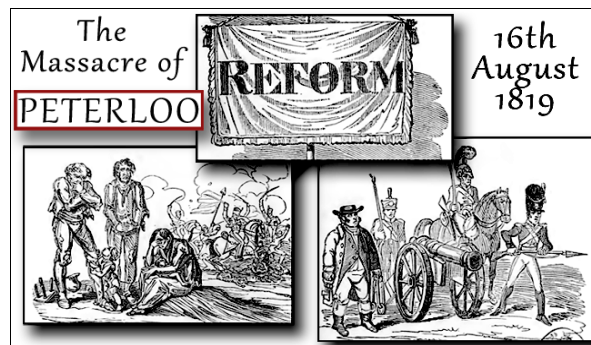
by Arthur Davenport

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## **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](#)



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Although the long-anticipated Bi-Centenary has come and gone, there are still some exhibitions to be visited, if you have missed them; and the Peterloo websites are still active with 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](#)

Peterloo Memorial Campaign Group ... to find out more about the memorial etc. organised by the Memorial Campaign Group, visit their website [HERE](#).

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**The following entry for this PETERLOO exhibition is still on-going :**

**People's History Museum**

Website [HERE](#)

March 2019 to February 2020

**'Disrupt? Peterloo and Protest'**

## **The MLFHS Family History Help Desk**

Don't forget if you hit a wall, the Society has a help desk at the Central Library.

It is located on the ground floor of Manchester Central Library at St. Peter's Square. Our location, from the main entrance, is to the right, beyond the cafe.

The Help Desk is open every weekday, Monday to Friday, except for Bank Holidays, between 10.30am and 3.30pm.

Central Library is adjacent to the St. Peter's Square Metrolink station with direct services from Altrincham, East Didsbury, Eccles, Bury, Oldham, Shaw, Rochdale and Ashton under Lyne and with easy connections from other lines.

Many bus services from South Manchester stop at the Oxford Street end of Portland Street, which is a five-minute walk from the library. Other services may arrive at Shudehill Interchange or Piccadilly Bus Station. Shudehill is about 15 minutes and Piccadilly about 10 minutes' walk from the library. There are Metrolink connections adjacent to both bus terminals.

If you can avoid coming by car then do so! There is no parking at Central Library, even for disabled parking.

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Oldham Archives and Local Studies

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

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.

There are regularly changing displays in the Local Studies Library. The current ones are : **'Ben Brierley'**, **'Activism in the Archives'**, and a display of plans and information about the new Local Studies and Archives to be housed in the old 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)  
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](#)  
British Association for Local History - <https://www.balh.org.uk/>

### 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)

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For the Gallery

Shawside A.F.C. 1920 - 1921



On the back of the photo is written :

Please return to:

Mr. F. Turner, 41 Arthur Street, Shaw.

Back row:

S.Hooper. H. Ellidge, F. Whitehead, D. Baldwin, J. Gibson (Sec.), G. Shirt, W. Whitehead, W. Readcliffe, J. Ballard, N. Thornley, L. Butterworth.

Second row:

Aldred Fletcher (Chairman), J. Whitehead, G. Latham, W. Pogson, H. Whitehead, T. Butterworth, A. Morton, H. Tattersall.

Front row:

G. Gresswell, T. Taylor, C. Bennett, J. Rydings (President), R. Henthorne, H. Buckley,
W. Butterworth, J Naylor.

(This is the Photo referred to in last month's newsletter and in the Editor's Remarks in this one.)