

'e-Owls'



Part of Manchester & Lancashire
Family History Society (MLFHS)

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AUGUST 2020

MLFHS - Oldham Branch Newsletter

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Branch News :

Following April's Annual Meeting of the MLFHS Oldham Branch

Branch Officers for 2020 -2021 :

Committee Member : Chairman : Linda Richardson

Committee Member : Treasurer : Gill Melton

Committee Member : Secretary : position vacant

Committee Member : Newsletter & Webmistress:
Sheila Goodyear

Committee Member : Dorothy Clegg

Committee Member : Joan Harrison



Christ Church Vicarage,
Friezeland, built 1850
'The Jackson Bros'. Pub. MMXIX, (lic.:c.c.4)

Oldham Branch Meetings : Coronavirus Pandemic

Please note ... with great regret but in-line with the updated Statement, issued by the M&LFHS Trustees, and on the home page of the Society website, to which I drew your attention in an earlier email, all M&LFHS Meetings, Branch Meetings and public activities are to be suspended indefinitely.

The newsletter will be sent out as usual.

There will be further updates on the Society website Home Page and on the Branch pages.

The next issue of 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 won't be there for quite a long time! 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 well and enjoying the bit of freedom we can now have out and about. I notice there are no longer long queues outside the supermarkets and shops, which is good - no more standing in the rain and cold!

During lock down Gill Melton and I have been busy contacting and booking speakers for next year. We have managed to book some very interesting talks and we will be producing the new programme as soon as our office in Manchester Central Library reopens. If it looks like we might not be able to meet up for the rest of this year, I would propose to circulate a copy of the programme to you by email if possible.

So, look after yourselves and I hope to see you soon. Stay safe, and we will do our best to keep you informed through the Oldham Branch website and this newsletter.

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.

Late July and it's a month since I wrote my last 'Editor's Remarks' ... pandemic restrictions are being lifted ... and then re-imposed in some instances. Libraries are beginning to open again (not, so far, the Oldham Local Studies Library), but with limited access and facilities. Similarly, the National Archives is planning to re-open, but with restrictions. Check individual websites to find out just what is possible.

I've been a little self-indulgent in this issue (a lot, really!) and written up an ancestor's story in the Mixed Bag. It started life as an illustrated talk which became a casualty of the lockdown. Edwin was one of my ancestors who really started to come alive for me and I grieved, almost 200 years later, for his own and his family's pain. Although it's an abbreviated version it's still lengthy so I hope you'll forgive me. I've included thumbnail images of a few of the slides that illustrate the talk. The full, illustrated version is on the Oldham HRG website [HERE](#).

From our chairman, Linda, we have a new website to add to our regular links in the newsletter. It is the website : "*Made in Greater Manchester (MIGM) [which is] is a collaborative effort between the local authority archive services in the Greater Manchester Archives and Local Studies Partnership (GMALSP). Each of the ten archive services within the partnership has selected one important collection of business records to be processed as part of the MIGM project. The collections range from the meticulous engineering plans of Walker Brothers Ltd., a major heavy engineering business in Wigan, to a captivating collection of oral history interviews from the Tameside borough.*" [HERE](#) and Research Guide [HERE](#)

Serendipity is a wonderful thing! And this does seem to be my month to be self-indulgent ... editor's prerogative, perhaps!! My husband's uncle, by marriage, was an enthusiastic photographer in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Pictures in this month's Gallery, are two from his collection.

I'm really excited ... the new MLFHS website is progressing well and I'm enjoying putting together some new content for our Oldham Branch pages. I'm certainly not short of things to do whilst I'm self-isolating!

Keep safe and keep well.

As always, I've not listed any talks, for obvious reasons, but I'm still leaving the society/group names there, with a website url where available, so that you can keep a check on what might be happening

with them as lockdown rules seem to be changing by the day. Hopefully, we can all find ways of still pursuing our interests without risking our well-being.
PLEASE help us keep the journal and newsletters alive ... put on your 'thinking caps' and send us your photos, stories and pictures.

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

Oldham & District, Bolton & Scottish Branches

Please visit the Branch Websites for information and any updates :

Oldham & District [HERE](#)

Anglo-Scottish [HERE](#)

Bolton [HERE](#)

MLFHS updates

The MLFHS Family History Help Desk ... CANCELLED until further notice.
However, there is now a virtual Help Desk ... [HERE](#)



MLFHS : Planning for the future :

FAMILY HISTORY FAIR

in

Manchester Central Library

on

Saturday 27th March 2021

10:00am - 4:00pm

(More details to follow)

Sponsored by : Manchester & Lancashire
Family History Society

Watch this space!!

Beginners Talks ... CANCELLED until further notice

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.

MLFHS & Branch e-Newsletters

MLFHS 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.

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

Meetings and Talks at other Societies &/or Venues

Please note ... the relevant society/group websites or organisers care still being included, here, as they can be checked for further information or on-line resource material and activities.

All public activities are, of course, CANCELLED until further notice.

Oldham Historical Research Group: ...

Website [HERE](#)

Library Events & Gallery talks at Gallery Oldham

Saddleworth Historical Society & Saddleworth Civic Trust

At the Saddleworth Museum, High Street, Uppermill.

Family History Society of Cheshire : Tameside Group meeting.

See their website [HERE](#)

Tameside History Club :

Website and programme [HERE](#)

Tameside Local Studies and Archives - Regular Sessions and Events

Website and programme [HERE](#)

Moorside & District Historical Society

Regional Heritage Centre :

Website [HERE](#)

'A Mixed Bag'

From *'Legends of Longdendale ; Being a Series of Tales Founded upon the Folk-lore of Longdendale Valley and its Neighbourhood'*

by Thomas Middleton, Pub. 1906

Robin Hood's Visit to Longdendale.

Robin Hood, the greatest bowman that old England ever knew, frequently visited Longdendale. Probably the "thick woods of Longden." with their wealth of wild red deer, induced him to lead his band from the haunts of merrie Sherwood to the no less merrie land of Longdendale. Old traditions tell of a "mighty forest in Longdendale, whose trees were so thick

that the squirrels could leap from branch to branch from Mottram to Woodhead." Such a country might well attract a lover of the free forest life like bold Robin Hood; moreover, there ran a road over a good portion of Longdendale, along which the fat old Abbots of Basingwerke were wont to convey their treasures from their township of Glossop, to their fine abbey seat in Wales. Doubtless the Abbot dreaded a meeting with the mighty outlaw, for Robin dearly loved to pluck a fat-bellied churchman that he might place the golden nobles in the pouches of the poor.

This story, however, has nothing to do with the robbing of the Abbots or Monks of Basingwerke. It is a story of skill and fabulous strength. Indeed, there are many who doubt that the incidents related ever occurred—simply because such things seem impossible. But then those incidents are recorded in the traditions of the people of Longdendale, and, consequently, they are worthy of serious consideration. He must be either an amazingly bold or an exceedingly ignorant man, who would cast a doubt on the veracity of a Longdendale tradition.

However, the reader must judge for himself.

The story has it that bold Robin Hood and his forest band (including the redoubtable Little John, Friar Tuck, Will Scarlet, and Much, the miller's son, and a hundred other sturdy yeomen, all clad in Lincoln green, and having great long bows of English yew and good cloth-yard shafts) appeared one day in the Longdendale country. Weary of hunting the stag through the woodland glades, they were longing for some chance of adventure to present itself, when they became aware of a loud and dismal moaning hard by. The sound came from a handsome youth who, cast full length upon the sward, was bitterly bemoaning his cruel fate. It appeared that he was betrothed to a beautiful maiden, but her guardian (who was a grim old bachelor) had forbidden their union, and finally, to prevent all intercourse between them, had shut her up in his castle.

On hearing the story the foresters were loud in their denunciations of such heartless conduct. They vowed it was the greatest sin that man could possibly commit—to interfere with lover's meetings. Little John was for attacking the castle, battering down the gates, and sending an arrow through the mid-rib of the guardian, which process, he thought, was calculated to end the matter at once. But Robin, though anxious enough for a fight, was of opinion that his henchman's plan might endanger the maiden, who was completely at the mercy of the tyrant. He suggested an interview, and, accordingly, the stout Friar Tuck was sent as ambassador or emissary to make terms with the maiden's guardian.

At first the Friar was met with an angry outburst on the part of the guardian—a bold bad baron—who loudly declaimed that he would permit no outside interference with his affairs. "Out on thee, thou fat-bellied churchman," shouted the Baron. "What hast thou to do with lovers, particularly maidens. Methinks thy vows should bid maids and love severely alone." Now this sort of talk did not at all suit Friar Tuck, who, churchman though he might be, and shaven and shorn to boot, yet loved to kiss a pretty maid on the sly as well as the best layman who ever walked. But he loved not to be twitted about it in this fashion.

"Fat-bellied churchman," indeed," quoth he. "And what about thine own fat paunch. As for love and pretty maids, I warrant thou would'st have a long way to travel fore thou comest across a maiden who would fall in love with thee. Such a foul-visaged reptile I never set eyes on. As for beauty—well, as far as thou art concerned—the least said on that head the better."

The Baron stared at this rejoinder, as well he might. Such language had never been hurled at him before, and for a moment he could scarcely speak, so great was his surprise. When he recovered speech, he ordered his attendants who were in the room to seize the Friar and cast him into the dungeon. But Tuck lifted the quarter-staff which he carried, and brought it down so heavily upon their crowns that the men dropped like poled oxen. At this the Baron began to swear and rave, vowing all manner of punishments for the Friar,—all of which, however, only made Tuck fall a-laughing.

"Come," said he, "thou art short of wind enough, friend Baron. And if thou goest on like that thou art like to choke thyself. Moreover, if thou only so much as raises a finger to summon thy

vassals to thy side with intent to lay me by the heels, I shall een clout thee on the sconce as I have served thy catiffs. So thou hadst best listen to reason."

Now sorely discomfited as he was, a bright idea suddenly struck the Baron, and turning blandly to the Friar, he readily consented to set free the maiden, and to permit her marriage with her handsome lover, providing the foresters (of whose shooting prowess he had heard so much) could shoot their arrows from the tumulii now called "The Butts" to the upright Druid stones, now known by the name of "Robin Hood's Picking Rods." By setting them this (apparently impossible task, he thought to rid himself of interference from the band; and he chuckled merrily to himself, when Tuck (who knew nothing of the distance to be covered by the archers) coolly accepted the terms.

The time for the shooting display having arrived, the Baron led a gay company to the scene, that he and all his friends might witness the discomfiture of the renowned archers of Sherwood. As for the handsome youth on whose behalf Robin had interfered, he was quite dismayed, and even the assurance of the outlaw could not comfort him, for he thought the feat impossible.

The archers stood at the butts, and away in the distance rose the stone target of "The Picking Rods." Robin Hood took the first shot, and he laughed inwardly as he drew the string tight and true. For he knew the secret of the "Long Bow"—(as, indeed, do the chroniclers who tell this story). The arrow left the bow with a shrill whistle of the goose-wing tip, and, greatly to the surprise of the Baron, it fell plump on the target with such force as to cut a notch in the hard stone,—a notch so deep that it may be seen to this day. Little John, Will Scarlet, and the rest of the forest band, all tried their skill, and but few failed to hit the mark, though none were quite so near the centre as their leader Robin Hood.

When the shooting was finished the Baron was in a great rage, and he sought for some means of evading the fulfilment of his promise. Turning to Robin Hood he made an offer—that if the outlaw, with his own hands, cast down the great stone which stood upon Werneth Low, then the Baron would not only bestow the maiden upon her lover, but would give her a good dowry into the bargain. On the other hand, if Robin failed to accomplish the task, the whole matter must rest where it was, and the maiden remain a captive

.Greatly to the surprise of all, Robin agreed to the proposal.

"I will humour thee this once," said he to the Baron. "But if thou attemptest to get behind thy word when the feat is done, my good foresters shall fall upon thee and knock sparks out of thy baronial hide."

"If thou doest the feat," quoth the Baron, "rest assured I shall keep my promise."

For the task he had set bold Robin was, as the Baron well knew, a thousand times more difficult than that of shooting at the Picking Rods.

Robin Hood conversed awhile with Friar Tuck, and then the whole company moved off to the summit of Werneth Low. The stone, or rock, as it should more properly be called, was a huge mass almost the height of a man. It had occupied its position on the summit of Werneth since the world was created. A round half-dozen of the Baron's retainers failed to lift it. But Robin Hood, casting aside his jerkin, and baring his brawny arm, raised the great stone slowly aloft, and then, with one mighty throw, cast it out westward towards the sunset, and, amid a wild shout of triumph, it disappeared in the distance.

They afterwards found the stone in the bed of the River Tame, near the woods of Arden, and, under the name of "Robin Hood's Stone" it remains in that same spot to this day.

Now there are some who profess to believe that no mortal power could cast that stone so great a distance, and they explain the event by supposing that Robin was in league with the good fairies, who gave him strength to lift the stone and then, (invisible to men) flew away with it, and dropped it in the Tame. And perhaps these people may be right.

Be that as it may, there is no record to show that the bold bad Baron disbelieved in Robin's powers, and we may take it for granted that the lovely maiden was duly released, that she married the lad of her choice, and that they lived happy ever afterwards, as they certainly deserved to do.

It is asserted by some that there was a much smaller stone near the great Robin Hood Stone on Werneth Low, and that Little John afterwards threw this stone in the direction of the one thrown by Robin. The second stone, being lighter, travelled a few yards further than the first, but the throw being not so skilful the stone was broken in several pieces by the fall. It lies to this day near the Robin Hood Stone in the waters of the River Tame, and it still retains the name of that giant forester Little John.

Author's Note.

The "Robin Hood relics," referred to in the foregoing legend, are objects of great local interest and curiosity. The "Robin Hood's Picking Rods" are situated on Ludworth Moor, and consist of portions of two upright stone pillars rising from a massive stone base. They are thought by many to be relics of the Druidical period, and are referred to in the "Legend of Coombs Rocks"—the first legend of the present series. It is said that they received their present name because Robin Hood and his outlaws used them as a target for their arrows, and the dents in the pillars are said to have been caused by the arrow points.

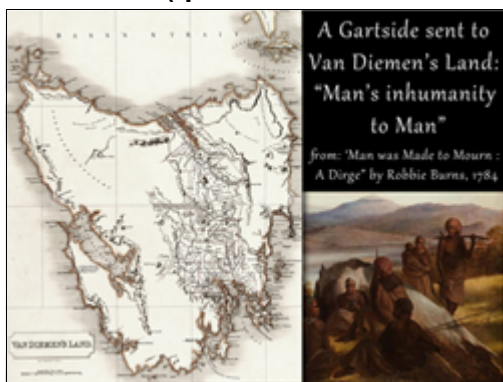
The "Robin Hood Stone" is a huge rock which lies in the bed of the River Tame near the Denton Cemetery at Hulme's Wood, almost opposite the Arden Paper Mill.

As stated in the legend, there are fragments of Little John's stone near it, and old traditions state that both stones were thrown to their present positions from the top of Werneth Low by the two foresters whose names they bear. Certain indentations in the larger stone are said to be the imprints of the fingers of Robin Hood, whose grip was so strong that he left the impression in the solid stone.

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### ***A Gartside Sent to Van Diemen's Land - "Man's Inhumanity to Man"***

**(quote is from Robbie Burns' *'Man was made to mourn: A Dirge 1784'*)**



This narrative is an abridged version of what started life as an illustrated talk, with literally dozens of projected images, for the local Family & Local History Societies. Its first 'outing' should have been in Shaw & Crompton, on the 26th March, 2020 ... the week many of us went into 3 months 'lockdown' as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic. Like many others, I turned to the internet to tell my ancestor Edwin's story. I hope you find it interesting.

The Gartside family name originated in Saddleworth around the 1300s and, even as late as the 1841 census (with or without the 't'), was found almost exclusively in Lancashire and the West Riding. This is a double-edged sword for the family history researcher, as searches can be concentrated in one area but, on the other hand, many babies with the same forename were baptised within months or even days of one another in the same local churches.

According to Ammon Wrigley, in *'The Wind Among the Heather'*, the Gartside family name was first recorded as 'de Garthside' in the 1300s; Garthside being a hamlet near Milnrow at that time. It's first appearance in Saddleworth was in Denshaw, in the late 15th century, when Roger Gartside of Rochdale, gentleman, became the owner of the 'Darkside' of Friarmere.

When I started researching this branch of the family, about 12 years or so, ago, I knew with certainty that I had the correct line going back from my own grandmother to my 3 times Great-grandparents BEN Gartside and BETTY Scholefield.

In the early days of the research, I'd wasted much time and effort, following a wrong assumption that fitted perfectly (or so it seemed!) but which turned out to be quite wrong when I dug a little deeper. I didn't want to make the same mistake ever again!

Extra vigilance in the search would be absolutely necessary!

Some of the family trees that I came across on-line recorded BEN as the son of John Gartside and Susannah Barker. This couple did have a son 'Ben', baptised on the 1788/08/30, recorded as "... chr. of 'Ben' at St Chad, Saddleworth; son of John Gartside and Susannah; yeoman;

Castleshaw". This fitted with BEN's known age; there were no burials or other marriages that might have been him; and it was the right area of Saddleworth. It was easy to believe, and agree, that BEN was their son as there were no others that appeared to fit the bill. However, John and Susannah were obviously substantial members of the Gartside family but my BEN was a clothier (or weaver) and his family were obviously not at all affluent.

BEN's putative father, John, died in 1812, so I went to Preston to look at his will. It ran to many, many pages and he mentioned children (both alive, and dead but with descendants), grandchildren and sons-in-law, amongst his many bequests. He was a man with a wide number of business interests and possessions but there was no mention of son 'Ben', at all. I was sure that he would have been mentioned, if only to deny him any part of the inheritance, if he was still alive. I returned to the old Parish Records to see what I'd missed.

The baptisms at St Thomas, Friarmere (Heights Chapel) and some of the Non-Conformist Chapels were not available on the usual births & marriages internet sites, at the time, so it was back to the Local Studies Library and trawling through Parish Records on the film readers; and I had my 'Eureka moment!' He was there! Baptised at St Thomas, Friarmere (Heights Chapel). BEN was baptised in 1789 on Jun 7th; his father was recorded as JOHN Gartside, his mother as HANNAH and his birthplace as Castleshaw.

Plus factors were his lowly station in life, his birthdate, his birthplace (the same as his home when his own children were baptised); BEN's mother's maiden name was Lees and his own second daughter, Betty, was baptised with 'Lees' as her middle name; a later daughter was baptised as 'Hannah Lees Gartside'

Trying to go back another generation to find JOHN's father was more difficult. There are those records that fit known facts but other records, telling a different story, might have been lost or not even existed. There is just one that I feel is 'the one' ... but have no proof so won't include him!

So, the first Gartside that I can claim as an ancestor, is JOHN Gartside who married HANNAH Lees in December 1781, at St.Chad's, Saddleworth.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries the Gartside families in Saddleworth were pretty numerous ... as well as being spread up and down the social ladder, from families who were poor weavers and labourers to those owning land, mills, mines and even, by 1830, a brewery! Needless to say, my own Gartside 'twig' was in amongst the poor weavers.

JOHN Gartside had 7 children in the 19 years of his marriage, until his death, aged 44, in 1800. BEN was his 3rd child. JOHN's widow, HANNAH, would marry again in 1807, this time to Jesse Reynolds with whom she had 2 daughters.

BEN, a clothier (a weaver) of Bleakhey Nook, Castleshaw, married BETTY Scholefield in February 1812, at St Chad's in Saddleworth and their first child, born in December 1812, was the Edwin of our story.

So ... what is my own connection? Edwin Gartside was my 3x great-uncle, on my father's side.



To start off, the first Gartside mention that I came across, when tracing my family tree, was my father's grandmother, MARTHA Gartside, who was born in Gorton on March 3rd in 1864. MARTHA was the 9th of the 10 children of JOHN Gartside, who was born in Bleak Hey Nook, Saddleworth, in April 1821.

JOHN, in his turn, had been the 5th of the 12 children born to BEN Gartside and wife BETTY, nee Scholefield, who were married at St. Chad's, Uppermill in 1812.

The Edwin of our story was JOHN's eldest brother, born in December 1812, and baptised in January 1813.

In the years before BEN and BETTY married and before Edwin's birth, the area was mainly one of uncultivated moorland with 'islands' of cultivated fields around small farms and hamlets.

Bleak Hey Nook, home of our own Gartside family, was mainly a hamlet of woollen weavers



(clothiers as they were often described) working from their own homes in what was once a well respected, relatively well-paid, occupation until weaving began to become mechanised and the weavers started to gravitate towards the new mills. It was a slow, reluctant change leading to ever-increasing hardship, and poverty for the handloom weavers, as faster production in the mills meant cheaper cloth.

In the earliest days of the research, I'd wasted much time and effort following an assumption, which fitted perfectly but which turned out to be completely wrong when I 'dug' a little more carefully! A routine confirmation, as I thought, was to send for the marriage certificate for MARTHA, to my great-grandfather, in 1884. It gave me her own father's name as JOHN, which I hadn't expected! And a brother Ben, as witness. A rather large branch of my family tree fell off and 'bit the dust'! I didn't want to make the same mistake ever again! Extra vigilance in the search would be my mantra!

So, next came the search for MARTHA's birth, her mother's maiden name, and the family's presence in the census returns. Her birth certificate confirmed her father's name and also gave me her mother's name before marriage ... Martha Blakeley. The Parish record for the marriage of JOHN and MARTHA Blakely in 1843 provided me with the name of JOHN's father, BENJAMIN.

From census returns for the family, I knew that JOHN had been born in Saddleworth but, in the years that followed, he had moved around quite a lot. Working forward in time, from MARTHA'S birth in 1864, then backwards, I knew that in 1851 he was in Elton, Bury.

In 1861 he was in Gorton ... with his ever-growing family; in 1871 he was in Openshaw; in 1881 he was in Droylsden; and in 1891 he was in Gorton again ... where he died in 1892.

From these returns I also had the names of 9 of MARTHA's siblings.

How did I know it was always the same family? JOHN was consistent on the census returns; his age always tallied; his place of birth was consistently Saddleworth; he was always in the same occupation, as a foundry worker. His children could always be identified with certainty as several were born in different locations, which always matched up.

My next job was to find JOHN on the 1841 census. For this, I had to rely on putting together as many coincidental links as I could find, and it was here that I did have some luck.

From the Parish Records of his marriage in 1843 I had his address, on Booth Street, in Salford and also that of wife-to-be MARTHA; they were only doors apart. On the 1841 census JOHN was in Salford, an iron forger, unmarried and living in lodgings, on that same Booth Street.

The only thing that gave me pause was that he gave a 'Yes' to having been born in the county of Lancashire. But, as everything else fell into place, I accepted that he might just have wanted to fit in, with the others in his lodgings. After all, I had evidence of even bigger lies on my own mother's marriage certificate!!



Now I needed a little bit more luck. How could I tie him back to his own family in Saddleworth? There were too many 'Johns' around the same age! Fortuitously, there was a family sampler, handed down through the male line, of JOHN's family, and stitched after the death of his parents. His father, BEN, died in 1845 and his wife was named as BETTY. I started looking for Saddleworth marriages for a BEN & BETTY around the right date and then, having found them, a search for baptisms of their own children. Again,

consistency in BEN's occupation as a 'clothier' and the fact that they came from a small hamlet, Bleak Hey Nook, made this relatively straightforward.

BEN, a clothier, of Bleakhey Nook, Castleshaw had married BETTY Scholefield in February 1812, at St Chad's in Saddleworth. The first of their 12 children was born in December 1812, and he was the EDWIN of our story

Anyone, who knows me, knows that for years I have had a passionate interest in Peterloo. In

1819, BEN, as a 30 year old weaver, was living in Saddleworth from which a strong contingent of reformers marched to Manchester on that fateful day, Monday 16th August 1819.

It's not difficult to imagine that BEN would have been amongst the men who walked all those miles to attend the meeting, and hear Henry Hunt speak, about the necessity for Reform. Would BETTY have gone with him? I think, probably 'not'. Baby Lucy had been born in May of that year and BETTY already had 2 other young children to care for. However, the eldest, Edwin, would have been almost 7 years old and might well have accompanied his dad. My 2x Great-grandfather, JOHN, was the second son, born in 1821, following the birth of sisters, Mary (1814) , Betty Lees (1816) and Lucy (1819). BEN & BETTY would have a further 4 children, Frances (1823), Charles (1825), Ben (1827) and Alfred (1831) whilst still living in Bleak Hey Nook and BEN remaining a clothier.

At some time between 1831 and 1833, the family moved out of Saddleworth to live in Oldham. How do I know that? Because the next 3 children Hannah Lees (1833), Sara Ann (circa 1835), and Frederick (1836 and died in 1837) were born in Oldham. Their mother, BETTY, died in 1839 age 48 (according to the family sampler).

Most of the family are found on the 1841 census, living together on Soho Street, Above Town, in Oldham. Widowed BEN was still recorded as a clothier. But my JOHN, as I expected, was one of the siblings not on the census with them! How could I prove, to my own satisfaction, that my JOHN was, in fact, the missing JOHN from this family? Was the family sampler proof enough? This was a tricky one! In 1841 there were several 'Johns', around the same age, living in and around Saddleworth, Oldham and Ashton, several of whom were living in lodgings, and not with family but, importantly, none was a foundry worker.



Still convinced that this Oldham family was my JOHN's family, I then researched the siblings, after 1841, and this was where I had another stroke of luck. Several of the siblings were found living very near to JOHN, on several census returns, as were a couple of his nephews. The clincher, for me, was that JOHN & MARTHA's own first child, a boy, died in infancy and yet another sampler was stitched, naming their lost son, 'Edwin'. Three daughters followed; the fifth child was a boy who would also be baptised as Edwin. JOHN's sister, Lucy, and his son Ben, both had sons who were baptised as 'Edwin'.

Edwin, as a name, was practically unknown in the local Gartside families, at that time so, I thought, could they have been named for JOHN's elder brother? But for what reason? Was he lost to them in some way? He hadn't been found in any of the census searches I'd done. Had he died? Emigrated? Joined the army and was always overseas?

My next stroke of luck came when I discovered an Edwin Gartside was in the criminal registers on Ancestry. It was in the entry book for court costs for prosecutions, in this case, felony. But was it my Edwin? As already mentioned 'Edwin', as a Gartside name, was pretty rare.

Searching the records for an Edwin born around 1813 only threw up 3 results over a period of 20 years. The other two were found on later census returns.

So ... my Edwin was a criminal! He had been charged and sentenced at the Quarter Sessions, in December 1832. But what had he done, and where had he disappeared to?

Over the intervening years I pieced together his sad story. Always, in my imagination, I pictured an excited little boy, perched on his father's shoulders, on the long walk to Manchester, in August 1819. And then, I imagine the story darkening as this child sees the yeomanry, with sabres held high and flashing in the sunlight, as they rode into the throng on St Peter's Field, slashing at the people on all sides; and then, there'd be the long, sad walk back home, with the wounded, who limped and sobbed, alongside them.

The scenario would be real enough; but BEN and Edwin's part in it? That really is, just a possibiity, in my imagination.

Life in the Oldham of 1831/'32, in which Edwin would spend at least 18 months, would have

been very different from that with which he would have been familiar in the rural areas of Saddleworth. Wages for a labourer everywhere were low and hours would be 12 to 15 hours a day; sanitation and running water were virtually unheard of; privies were emptied infrequently; TB and other infectious and killer diseases could run through crowded urban communities unchecked. Given his circumstances, it's highly likely that Edwin was illiterate and never had any opportunities for an education.



Political activism in Oldham hadn't disappeared after Peterloo, but tactics had changed. We can read, in Hartley Bateson's 'History of Oldham' that,

*"The worst days of persecution [i.e., after Peterloo] were over and the Radicals were turning from militancy and violence to law-abiding persuasion. Indeed, Radicalism was now becoming fashionable ..."*

continuing again :

*"In the heated years, 1830/1831 however, the supreme issue was Parliamentary Reform. Parliament was dissolved on the question of the Reform Bill and a General Election held amidst wild excitement and enthusiasm..."*

and, Bateson continues:

*"John Knight, now a veteran of sixty, was ever in the vanguard, advocating the most extreme demands of the advanced Radicals ..."*

and continues, again :

*"The excitement of the General election, in 1831 was tame as compared with the hurricane of political fury roused in the autumn when the Lords rejected the Reform Bill. Their action brought the country to the verge of revolution and anarchy. The Oldham Liberal Party was engendered by that fury and born in the autumn. In November John Knight called a meeting at which a Radical Union was formed. As a consequence 100 special constables were sworn in, in anticipation of a riot."*

In June 1832, the long-awaited 'Great Reform of Parliament' and the extension of the franchise (although disappointingly limited) was, very reluctantly, passed in the Lords at the third attempt. The new Act gave Oldham and district the right to elect 2 MPs to the newly reformed Parliament and, in the December, there would be a General Election. At the prospect, Oldham was in a state of great excitement and hope for a better future. Amongst the Oldham candidates were the radicals, William Cobbett and John Fielden, both of whom would be elected.

Can we imagine Edwin taking any part in these proceedings or any of his family members, come to that? Or, was he too busy enjoying different thrills and excitement, in the company of other young men of his own age? All we know for sure is that, within weeks, he was in serious trouble in the courts.

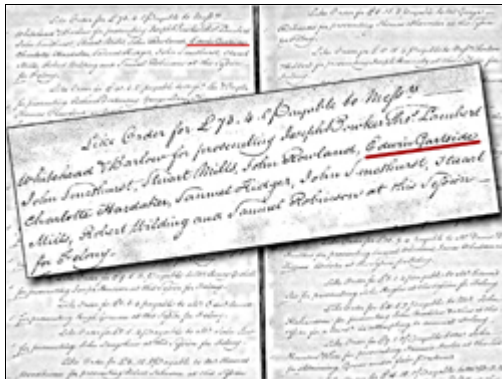
In the criminal records, we can find that on the 3rd of December, 1832, at the Salford Hundred, Michaelmas Quarter Sessions, 19 year old Edwin Gartside was sentenced to 7 years transportation, after being found guilty on a charge of larceny. So ... the first thing to find out was, what exactly had he done? When and where? Rowbottom's Diary concludes in 1830 so, unfortunately, that wasn't going to provide any answers. The next source I turned to was Edwin Butterworth. In the Local Studies and Archives Library are transcripts of Butterworth's 'Register of Oldham News and Reports' which include cover of 1832. If Edwin was sentenced in December then I could work backwards from the trial date and see what I found. I didn't have to go back far. In November, under the stark heading of 'FELONIES', I read :

"On Thursday evening the shop of Mr. W. Warmisher, Clegg Street, was robbed of several waistcoats to the value of £3. The police officers, having seen a gang of thieves in the



neighbourhood, proceeded to a house of bad fame and there found some of the property hid in a chimney. Two of the inmates were taken into custody, one of whom was liberated and the other committed."

Intrigued, as to whether or not Edwin had been in trouble before, I carried on, working backwards. In June, there was mention of a 'Gartside' being caught attempting to break into the 'Old Fox' public house, on Henshaw Street. Edwin again? I found no mention of another committal.



The Prosecutor's Bill for Salford Quarter Session, in December 1832, includes an entry under Edwin's name, for "felony - stealing and receiving".

The judgement and sentencing reads :

"Whereas Edwin Gartside late of the township of Oldham in the County of Lancaster, labourer, hath at this session been convicted of felony, this court doth therefore order and adjudge that the said Edwin Gartside shall be sent and transported to some part beyond the seas for the space of seven years next, pursuant to the statute in such

cases made and provided." So now I knew ... but that was harsh!

By mid January, Edwin was on his way to the Prison Hulks, at Chatham, on the River Medway, with the shipyard nearby. The '*Cumberland*', in Edwin's case, was his destination. He would remain there until he was transported, in July 1833, aboard the '*Isabella*' bound for Van Diemen's land. The Hulks were old warships, no longer fit for active service and were notoriously vile and dangerous. They were used for those serving shorter jail sentences and for convicts en route to be transported.

Life on the Hulks was generally considered to be 'hell on earth'. Once the prisoners arrived at Chatham they would have been given a prison uniform of coarse trousers and jacket. They would also have had leg irons fitted. Whilst on the hulks, the convicts would be taken back to shore, each day, to labour in the nearby shipyards or embankments and then brought back to the hulk each evening. Typically, the day finished with the final muster and prayers, at 7:30. Following this, they were locked up for the night in tiny cells of multiple occupancy. Unsupervised, it was lawless below decks, even when fighting, yelling or screaming was heard. Punishments, for any misdemeanours, were harsh, including 50 lashes, ration restrictions, solitary confinement, and double irons. Disease was rife and scurvy common. When Edwin was held there, horrific as it was, almost unbelievably, it had been far worse in earlier years with a high percentage of deaths.

On the 28th of July, 1833, after 6 months in the '*Cumberland*', Edwin, one of 300 convicts, sailed from Plymouth, on the '*Isabella*', for the voyage, of 4 months, to Van Diemen's Land, where he arrived on the 13th of November.

Transportation was considered good value for money, by the government. The cost of transportation was about £20 per man in 1830 but, taken against the cost of keeping a convict in prison in Britain, for 7 or 14 years, this made admirable sense. It would only cost about £1 a year in the colonies as most of the costs would be met by the 'masters' to whom the convicts were assigned.

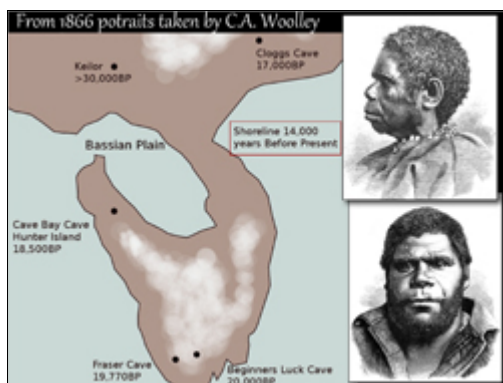
Only a couple of years before Edwin was transported, the chances of surviving the voyage had increased dramatically, as a result of the newly appointed surgeon-superintendants who would be in charge of stores, and a medical officer on board the ship.

*'The Transportation of Convicts, after 1783'*, written in 1923 by James E. Gillespie, gives an account of transportation in the first 2 or 3 decades of the 19th century and he writes :  
*"From the commencement of the convict's journey to Australia, he was subject to evil influences. Youthful criminals and those whose crime was slight were thrown into close association with the most vicious and hardened characters. To prevent mutiny on shipboard, guards were placed on the deck and at the gangway, but this was all the*

*control or regulation to which convicts were subject. The mental horror of such a journey, where two or three hundred beings were stowed in the hold of a transport for four months, with nothing to do but to strive to eliminate all reflection can be imagined. The whole voyage was passed in gambling, in singing indecent songs and in every species of vice. A school was thus provided by criminals of the greatest experience. A man was valued according to the amount and adroitness of his villainies. Almost all their conversation was of the larcenous kind consisting of details of their various robberies and the singular adventures they had passed through."*

In contrast, in an assessment of his work as a surgeon-superintendent, Colin Arrott Browning, writes of his appointment as such, in 1831, and his subsequent attempts to ensure a good conduct-survival rate and institute education programmes etc. His book, '*England's Exiles*', published in 1842, makes it appear that great improvements had been made but, how quickly or how far these guide lines were implemented, in other ships with other superintendent-surgeons, is not examined.

Nothing changes overnight so it's more than likely that Edwin's own experience was somewhere between the old ways and the new, during the transitional period. However, a news article in the 'Hobart Journal', dated 19th November, tells us that the '*Isabella*' docked in Hobart, in November, 1833. The island itself is in almost 2 parts astride a geographical line running from north to south. It is mainly mountainous, covered with tall forests and thick, impenetrable scrub and vegetation, making much of it too difficult for early settlement. To top it all, there is a stunningly beautiful coastline. West of the 'line' is a dense, rainforest-like landscape with almost daily rainfall. Habitation in the west was only really possible, along the coastline. To the east, and in the more central areas, there were some open plains, most of which had been created by the aboriginals, annually burning off the scrub, to create the necessary hunting grounds for kangaroo and wallaby etc. Unfortunately, this also provided ideal conditions for the settlers who applied for, and received, land grants on these traditional hunting grounds.



40 odd thousand years ago, Van Diemen's Land was connected to Australia by a land bridge, across which the first Aboriginals walked. Rising sea levels eventually covered the land bridge and, for around 10,000 years, the Aboriginal Tasmanians were isolated, from the rest of the world until 1642 when the existence of the island became known to the Dutch explorer, Abel Tasman. Over 100 years later, in 1772, a French explorer visited the island then, in 1773, an English explorer and, finally, Captain Cook in 1777. Itinerant European sealers and whalers

were working from temporary island bases from around 1798.

At the turn of the century (18th to 19th), the indigenous population was variously estimated as numbering between 3,000 and 10,000. Some of the early explorers are known to have landed, and even had brief contact with the Aboriginal people. However, there was no official attempt to settle Van Diemen's Land, by any country, until 1803 when Britain decided to annex the island for herself by establishing a tiny military outpost, with 24 convicts, at Risdon Cove. That settlement quickly proved to be unsuitable and was relocated to what is now Hobart.

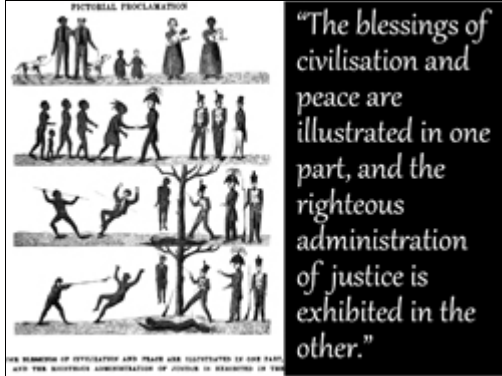
Free settlers began arriving in large numbers from 1820 onwards, attracted by promises of land grants and free convict labour. From 1826, settlement in the island's north-west would be monopolised by the recently formed Van Diemen's Land Company. The traditional hunting grounds of the aboriginals provided just the sort of land the settlers needed for farming and rearing livestock. As they settled their land grants and pushed the indigenous population into areas that couldn't support their nomadic, hunter life-style, hostility intensified and conflicts became more aggressive.

Relations between the aboriginals and the settlers were strained almost from the beginning,



and most published illustrations and accounts were biased, emphasising that the aboriginals were the most likely aggressors although records tend to show a different story. A number of incidents have now been classified as a 'massacre' because of the initial intent to murder the indigenous population.

The rapid colonisation transformed traditional kangaroo hunting grounds into farms for growing crops and keeping livestock, resulting in the appearance of fences, hedges and stone walls. In effect, this left the indigenous tribespeople without the means to hunt for their own food. The situation was exacerbated, in those years, by numbers of escaped convicts, known as 'bushrangers,' who viciously and mercilessly preyed on both settlers and aboriginals alike. The government's public stance was that there should be even-handed justice ... but that was never going to happen.



In 1826, a proclamation had been issued, in pictorial form, so that no-one could 'pretend' not to understand it, which purported to state that penalties, for attacks or crimes, would be treated in the same way whether or not the perpetrator was a settler or an aboriginal. It didn't work, and what became known as the 'Black War' gathered momentum from 1828.

The 'Black War', between 1828 and 1832, refers to a period of intermittent but frequent conflict between the British colonists, whalers and sealers, and the Aboriginal people. By some modern historians, it is described as genocide resulting in the eventual elimination of the full-blood Tasmanian indigenous population.

In November 1828, Governor Arthur had declared martial law, giving soldiers the right to shoot, on sight, any Aboriginal in the Settled Districts. It would remain in force for more than three years. In the so-named 'Black War', the official attitude changed and it became open government policy that the swiftly decreasing numbers, of indigenous aboriginal men, women and children, who still remained, should be forcibly re-settled in places where they could not impinge on the activities of the white settlers or be perceived as a threat.

An attempt to confine them on the narrow Tasman Peninsula failed, and was followed by failed attempts to transport and settle them first on Flinders Island and finally, in 1847, when only 47 Aboriginal tribespeople still remained alive, they were again uprooted, and this time sent to Oyster Cove, where most remained until the ends of their lives.

### **Returning to the convicts ...**

they were brought on-shore in Hobart. They would have been in irons as even on this far distant island, convicts escaping was an ever present possibility. Most escapees would be recaptured; a few would survive for a time in the hostile environment, joining one of the gangs of notorious 'bushrangers'. Others would meet their death in the inhospitable terrain and a tiny, tiny few would be lucky enough to reach the coast and find a ship to get away from the island. Van Diemen's Land was variously described as a 'Hell Hole', the 'Botany Bay of Botany Bays', and a place for 'the most felonious of felons'. The smallest transgressions against authority resulted in excessively severe punishments.

To try and give any sort of comprehensive description, of what a convict could expect, experience or suffer, would take hours, and prove too harrowing to read. However, when I was doing the research for this article, I came across an image, on the Tasmanian Libraries website, showing a page from a convict's notebook, in 1823. It was a crude drawing depicting the brutal flogging of a convict and the note at the bottom reads : "The flogging of Charles Maher ... 250 lashes ... single flogger."

The description on the next page reads :

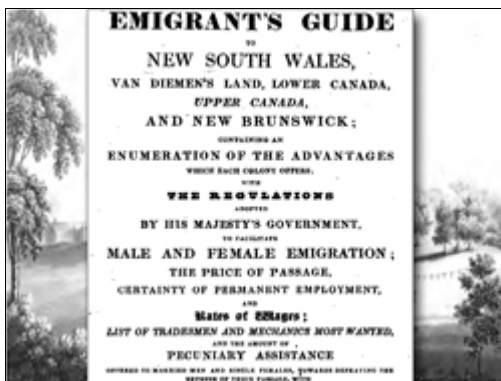
*"Thursday 11th, I well remember the date. Began the most stormy weather on record here the cascade was partly destroyed. The flogging of Charles Maher almost brought about a mutiny. His back was quite bare of skin and flesh. Poor wretch he*

*received 250 lashes and upon receiving 200 Kimberley refused to count meaning thereby that his punishment was enough."*

Some of the images and descriptions of punishment that I have come across have been too horrific to include in any detail.

Enough to say that they well deserve the subtitle of this article, "*Man's Inhumanity to Man*".

At the time of Edwin's arrival, Sir George Arthur was Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land and in office from 1824 to 1836. He was followed by Sir John Franklin, who was Lieutenant Governor from 1837 - 1843.



The British Government started promoting Van Diemen's Land as a land of opportunity, and encouraging emigration by settlers, from about 1820. Settlers could apply for a grant of land and some financial aid.

Incidentally, the offer was also extended to women, in an effort to even up the numbers of men and women on the island. Men outnumbered women by an enormous number. The promotional literature reads like a gazeteer with fanciful and attractive descriptions of what life would offer! However, a report from 1843 criticises this policy as

it didn't prepare the would-be-settlers for the dangers, problems and harsh realities of what would be a difficult, pioneering existence.

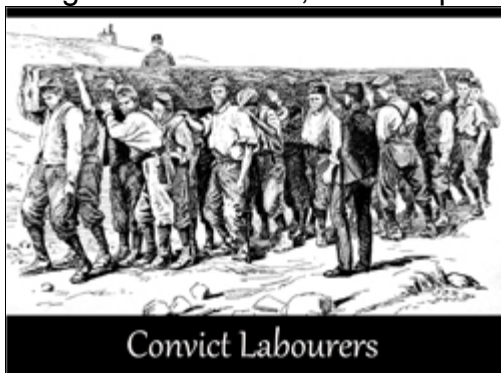
Escaped convicts and criminals fled into the forests and mountains and, lacking hunting skills, found little to eat. They became known and feared as 'Bushrangers'.

A newspaper item, from the week Edwin arrived in Hobart, is a report of a cave being discovered and evidence of bushrangers living in it. Although their more notorious activities were in the years before Edwin's time, they were still very much in evidence, as the dozens of newspaper reports show. Another report was from the 26th November, just 2 weeks later, and concerned a policeman being ambushed and shot whilst escorting a prisoner back to town.



When the Convicts landed they were assigned to whatever occupation would benefit most from their expertise. The convicts without particular skills would be assigned to work-gangs, wherever a road, a bridge or a building needed constructing; or wherever forest and jungle needed cutting back, or to individual 'masters' who needed a small, cheap workforce.

Men who had been educated and were literate, might be sent to work in local offices etc., or to small business men, to live and work in that place. The 'masters', in these instances, would be responsible for feeding and clothing the workers. Generally, blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, coopers, wheelwrights and other such artisans were valued servants and, as such, when assigned to a master, could hope for better conditions in return for working well.



Edwin landed in Hobart a few days short of a year since he was sentenced, in far distant Salford. It must surely have seemed a lifetime ago, even, a forgotten world. Having no obvious skills, he was assigned as a labourer for Public and Community works.

As we first come across the following terms, they can seem confusing but, as you can see, they are completely different. These definitions are taken from the National Library of Australia website:

**A TICKET OF LEAVE** allowed convicts to work for themselves provided that they remained in a

specified area, reported regularly to local authorities, attended divine worship every Sunday, if possible. They could not leave the colony.

**A CERTIFICATE OF FREEDOM** was issued at the completion of a convict's sentence as proof that he/she was a free person. They were free to travel anywhere and could return to Britain (if they could afford it!).

**A CONDITIONAL PARDON** allowed convicts with life sentences freedom of the colony but they were not allowed to return to Britain.

**An ABSOLUTE PARDON** gave a 'lifer' complete remittance of sentence. The convict had freedom of the colony and could return to Britain.

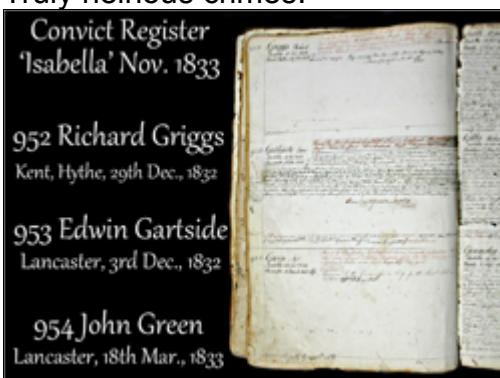


When Edwin arrived, his details would be entered into a 'Conduct Register' which would follow him, throughout his years of penal servitude. As a convict, the men would not be dignified by use of their names, they would be known just by their number, in Edwin's case, 953, which would probably have been given to him, back in England, when he boarded the '*Isabella*'.

The pages, in the Register, seem to have been ready-ruled to hold 3 names. The writing on them is not easy to read, and many words are abbreviated, however,

trying to piece together the entries near Edwin's, for comparison, we can read that number 952, was a 'Richard Griggs' who had been sentenced at Hythe, in Kent, on the 29th December 1832. They were both transported, for 7 years, on the same ship, at the same time.

On the entry for Richard Griggs, we can make out that : He was transported for the theft of 2 bushels of beans. He had been transported before, about 15 years previously for theft of hay, and sent for 7 years. He had also served 3 years 8 months at Sheerness, once, for poaching. Truly heinous crimes!



Edwin's is a far sorrier tale than the other two entries on this page. We can make out that he was transported for the theft of 5 waistcoats. His gaol Report is that his 'Character is indifferent'. His Hulk report reads 'orderly'. He was single. He acknowledged his offence was the theft of 5 waistcoats. The surgeon-superintendent's Report was, 'orderly'. There is a note at the side which reads: '7th April, 1837, original sentence extended by 3 years'.

Brutal ... what could he have done to deserve that?

I've transcribed what I could of what's on the page but I've not used the abbreviations. I thought that the Capital letters between the forward slash signs were the initials of the complainant and, where I thought I could second-guess an illegible word, I did:

**December. 9th 1833** absent without leave.

**June 24 1834** Strong suspicion of taking the thighs of two cows, the property of his master, 3 years Imprisonment and hard labour and strongly recommend for Port Arthur. (A harsher regime for more frequent offenders)

**December. 10th 1834** Chain Gang / Refusing to go to his work, 50 lashes.

**March 9th 1835** In reply / Profane swearing, 6 weeks Imprisonment and hard labour on Long-Meadow Chain Gang

**August. 25th 1835** Bullock Drivers / Neglect of work, 20 lashes.

**April 20th 1836** / Insolence, 10 days hard labour on the Road Gang. / then to undergo [something I can't read or guess] at Riley's Ford Road Gang; then to be sent afterwards to Morven. Vide Lieutenant-Governors Decision. 12th May 1836 (Vide meaning 'see' )

**Sept. 27 1837** Embezzlement - Committed for trial, 12 months probation, Campbell town, to be reported. Vide Lieutenant-Governors Decision. 21 Oct. [The year his sentence extended]



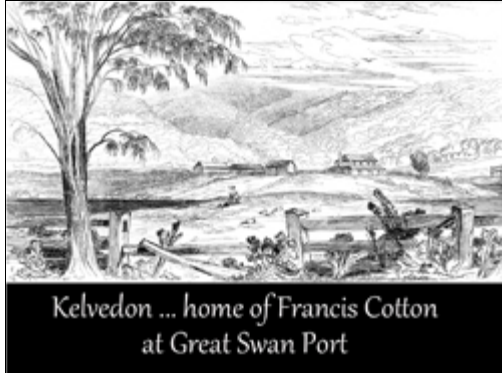
**January 3 1839** Drunk, Cells and Bread & Water for 24 hours.

**30th Oct.1839** / Charged with stealing wheat under the value of £5, to be kept to hard labour in chains for 12 calendar months and to be sent to Port Arthur. Port Arthur Chain Gang conduct to be referred. Vide Lieutenant-Governors Decision./Nov.1839.

**May 25th 1841** / Disobedience of orders and of duty, 6 Months Hard Labour, 3 Months of which in Chains on Jericho Chain Gang, then Cleveland out of Chains. Vide Lieutenant-Governors Decision.. 28/5/41.

This sentence would take him up to the end of November 1841

The final entry on the register page shows that Edwin received his Free Certificate, No. 868, in 1843, after 10 years of brutalising and humiliating servitude.



So, where was he in 1842, the year before he was freed? We know from the Convict Return for 31st December 1841, in which all the convicts, throughout the colony, were listed, that Edwin was assigned to Mr. F. Cotton, of Swan Port. As far as can be judged, this is where Edwin probably remained until he received his Certificate of Freedom, a year later. Quite a lot is known, and written, about Francis Cotton, a Quaker. It was this forceful businessman with whom Edwin would probably serve-out his final year of servitude.

Referencing the Australian Dictionary of Biography, we can read that, Cotton was born, in 1801 in London, and educated there. He served his apprenticeship as a builder and set up his own business before emigrating to Van Diemen's Land, with his wife, in 1828.

Having ambitions to become a landowner, he explored the central areas of the island but found nothing to tempt him, that wasn't already settled. He then turned his attention to the east coast and, undeterred, after several serious setbacks, he prospered in sheep farming, around Oyster Bay. Amongst his entrepreneurial enterprises he exported high quality fleeces, and wattle bark to England and sent wheat to Hobart. He extended his initial land grants with 2 further land grants and also 2 lots of land which he purchased.

By the time Edwin was assigned to Cotton, his new master was already successful and had built his family home and estate which he called '*Kelvedon*'. Unfortunately, because of Cotton's many and varied business interests, it's not possible to know in what capacity Edwin would be working but I think it's safe to assume that it would be labouring in some way.

Then, a year later ...

There is a GOVERNMENT NOTICE. No. 304, printed in the GAZETTE, which reads :

*"Colonial Secretary's Office 21st November, 1842.*

*The periods for which the under-mentioned persons were transported expiring at the date placed after their respective names, Certificates of their Freedom may be obtained then or at any subsequent period upon application at the Muster Master's Office, Hobart Town, or at that of a Police Magistrate in the interior ..."*

And there he was! The '*Isabella*' - Edwin Gartside, 3rd December.

It would have been lovely to end the story with a paragraph about Edwin's life in later years ... that he became a successful artisan or farmer; married and had children; any outcome, as long as he seemed happy. It would have been even better, to write that he returned home to the family.

But it wasn't to be.

Edwin died in July 1844, age 30, having been a free man again for barely 18 months. Where he spent those months, or what he did, I have no way of knowing. Cause of death is recorded in the register as 'emphysema' which is, according to the NHS website, 'damage to the air sacs in the lungs causing breathlessness and difficulty breathing'.

His death is registered in Campbell Town.

Had he gone there looking for work? Was he in hospital? We can't know.

Although letters between convicts and those left at home seem to have been possible, somehow, it seems hard to believe that Edwin would have been in contact with family at home, even if we can believe he might have been literate. After all, what could he have written about?



He had no obvious plans to keep his 'head down' and earn remission of his sentence; and would he really have wanted to let his family know of his sufferings and brutal treatment?

It's also unlikely that the family would have actually been anticipating his return as so few convicts actually returned home.

On a last, sad thought, did the family ever know that he had been given his freedom, or that he had died?

In reality, he had been lost to them in December 1832.

by Sheila Goodyear

For a more detailed, illustrated account, with all the pictures (enlarged) which would have been used in the talk, and with a list of the resource material, much of which is available on-line, go to the Oldham Historical Research Group website [HERE](#)

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From :

'The Annals of Manchester : A Chronological Record from the Earliest Times to the End of 1885', edited by William E.A. Axon, pub. 1886

INTRODUCTION.

MANCHESTER, the great centre of the cotton manufacture, is a corporate and Parliamentary borough, and was elevated to the dignity of a city in 1847, by being constituted the see of a bishop, and by, royal proclamation in 1858. It is situated on the river Irwell, in the hundred of Salford, and county of Lancaster, and is distant from London 188 miles by the London and North-Western Railway, 189 by the Midland, 188¾ by the Great Northern, and 31½ from the port of Liverpool. According to the census of 1881, the municipal borough of Manchester contained 341,414 inhabitants, and the Parliamentary borough, which includes the townships of Harpurhey, Newton, Bradford, and Beswick, contained 393,585. In 1885 the city boundary was extended to include Rusholme, Bradford, and Harpurhey. and the population of the municipal borough was thus raised to 373,583, and of the Parliamentary borough to 406,82-3. The limits of the municipal and Parliamentary borough of Salford are identical, and the population at the census of 1881 was 176,235.

The following outline of the history of the city is condensed from an article contributed to the Encyclopedia Britannica by the editor of this volume :-

Very little is known with certainty of the early history of Manchester. It has, indeed, been conjectured, and with some probability, that at Castlefield there was a British fortress, which was afterwards taken possession of by Agricola. It is, at all events, certain that a Roman station of some importance existed in this locality, and a fragment of the wall still exists. The period succeeding the Roman occupation is for some time legendary. As late as the 17th century there was a floating tradition that Tarquin, an enemy of King Arthur, kept the castle of Manchester, and was killed by Launcelot of the Lake. Early mention of the town, in authentic annals, is scanty. It was probably one of the scenes of the missionary preaching of Paulinus; and it is said (though by a chronicler of comparatively late date) to have been the residence of Ina, King of Wessex, and his queen Ethelberga, after he had defeated Ivor, somewhere about the year 689. Nearly the only point of certainty in its history before the Conquest is that it suffered greatly from the devastations of the Danes, and that in 923 Edward, who was then at Thelwall, near Warrington, sent a number of his Mercian troops to repair and garrison it. In Domesday Book, Manchester, Salford, Rochdale, and Radcliffe are the only places named in South-East Lancashire, a district now covered by populous towns. Large portions of it were then forest,

wood, and waste lands. Twenty-one thanes held the manor of Salford among them. The church of St. Mary and the church of St. Michael, in Manchester, are both named in Domesday and some difficulty has arisen as to their proper identification. Most antiquaries have considered that the passage refers to the town only, whilst others think it relates to the parish, and that, while St. Mary's is the present Manchester Cathedral, St. Michael's would be the present parish church of Ashton-under-Lyne. Manchester and Salford are so closely allied that it is impossible to disassociate their history.

Salford received a charter from Ranulph de Blundeville, in the reign of Henry III., constituting it a free borough, and Manchester, in 1301, received a similar warrant of municipal liberties and privileges, from its baron, Thomas Greeley, a descendant of one to whom the manor had been given by Roger of Poitou, who was created by William the Conqueror lord of all the land between the rivers Mersey and Ribble. The Gresleys were succeeded by the De la Warres, the last of whom was educated for the priesthood, and became rector of the town. To avoid the evil of a non-resident clergy, he made considerable additions to the lands of the church, in order that it might be endowed as a collegiate institution. A sacred guild was thus formed, whose members were bound to perform the necessary services of the parish church, and to whom the old baronial hall was granted as a place of residence. The manorial rights passed to Sir Reginald West, the son of Joan Greslet, and he was summoned to Parliament as Baron de la Warre. The West family, in 1579, sold the manorial rights for £3,000 to John Lacy, who, in 1596, resold them to Sir Nicholas Mosley, whose descendants enjoyed the emoluments and profits derived from them until 1845, when they were purchased by the Town Council of Manchester for £200,000. The lord of the manor had the right to tax and toll all articles brought for sale into the market of the town; but, though the inhabitants were thus to a large extent taxed for the benefit of one individual, they had a far greater amount of local self-government than might have been supposed, and the Court Leet, which was the governing body of the town, had, though doubtless in a somewhat rudimentary form, nearly all the powers and functions now possessed by municipal corporations. This court had not only control over the watching and watering of the town, the regulation of the water supply, and the cleaning of the streets, but also had power, which at times was used freely, of interfering with what would now be considered the private liberty of their fellow-citizens.

Some of the regulations adopted, and presumably enforced, sound grotesque at the present day. Under the protection of the barons the town appears to have steadily increased in prosperity, and it early became an important seat of the textile manufactures. Fulling mills were at work in the 13th century; and documentary evidence exists to show that woollen manufactures were carried on in Ancoats at that period. An Act passed in the reign of Edward VI. regulates the length of cottons called Manchester, Lancashire, and Cheshire cottons. These, notwithstanding their name, were probably all woollen textures. It is thought that some of the Flemish weavers who were introduced into England by Queen Philippa of Hainault were settled at Manchester; and Fuller has given an exceedingly quaint and picturesque description of the manner in which these artisans were welcomed by the inhabitants of the country they were about to enrich with a new industry, one which, in after centuries, has become perhaps the most important industry in the country. The Flemish weavers were, in all probability, reinforced by religious refugees from the Low Countries. Leland, writing in 1638, describes Manchester as the "fairest, best builded, quickest, and most populous town of Lancashire." In 1641 we hear of the Manchester people purchasing linen yarn from the Irish, weaving it, and returning it for sale in a finished state. They also brought cotton wool from Smyrna to work into fustians and dimities. The right of sanctuary had been granted to the town, but this was found to be so detrimental to its industrial pursuits that, after very brief experience, the privilege was taken away.

The college of Manchester was dissolved in 1547, but was re-founded in Mary's reign. Under her successor the town became the head-quarters of the commission for establishing the reformed religion. In the civil wars the town was besieged by the Royalists under Lord Strange,

but was successfully defended by the inhabitants under the command of a German soldier of fortune, Colonel Rosworm, who complained with some bitterness of their ingratitude to him. An earlier affray between the Puritans and some of Lord Strange's followers is said to have occasioned the shedding of the first blood in the disastrous struggle between the King and Parliament. The year 1689 witnessed that strange episode, the trial of those concerned in the so-called Lancashire plot, which ended in the triumphant acquittal of the supposed Jacobites. That the district really contained many ardent sympathisers with the Stuarts was, however, shown in the rising of 1715, when the clergy ranged themselves to a large extent on the side of the Pretender, and was still more clearly shown in the rebellion of 1745, when the town was taken possession of by Prince Charles Edward Stuart, and a regiment, known afterwards as the Manchester regiment, was formed and placed under the command of Colonel Francis Townley. In the fatal retreat of the Stuart troops the Manchester contingent was left to garrison Carlisle, and surrendered to the Duke of Cumberland. The officers were taken to London, where they were tried for high treason and beheaded on Kennington Common.

The variations of political action in Manchester had been exceedingly well marked. In the 16th century, although it produced both Catholic and Protestant martyrs, it was earnestly in favour of the reformed faith, and in the succeeding century it became indeed a stronghold of Puritanism. Yet the descendants of the Roundheads, who defeated the army of Charles I., were Jacobite in their sympathies, and by the latter half of the 18th century had become imbued with the aggressive form of patriotic sentiment known as Anti-Jacobinism, which showed itself chiefly in dislike of reform and reformers of every description. A change was, however, imminent. The distress caused by war and taxation, towards the end of the last and the beginning of the present century, led to bitter discontent, and the anomalies existing in the Parliamentary system of representation afforded only too fair an object of attack. While single individuals in some portions of the country, had the power to return members of Parliament for their pocket boroughs, great towns like Manchester were entirely without representation. The injudicious conduct of the authorities, also, led to an increase in the bitterness with which the working classes regarded the condition of society in which they found themselves compelled to toil with very little profit to themselves. Their expressions of discontent, instead of being wisely regarded as symptoms of disease in the body politic, were looked upon as crimes, and the severest efforts were made to repress all expression of dissatisfaction. This foolish policy of the authorities reached its culmination in the affair of Peterloo, which may be regarded as the starting point of the modern Reform agitation. This was in 1819, when an immense crowd assembled on St. Peter's Fields (now covered by the Free Trade Hall and warehouses) to petition Parliament for a redress in their grievances. The authorities had the Riot Act read, but in such manner as to be quite unheard by the mass of the people, and drunken yeomanry cavalry were then turned loose upon the unresisting mass of spectators. The yeomanry appear to have used their sabres somewhat freely; several people were killed and many more injured, and although the magistrates received the thanks of the Prince Regent and the ministry, their conduct excited the deepest indignation throughout the entire country.

Naturally enough, the Manchester politicians took an important part in the reform agitation, and when the Act of 1832 was passed, the town sent as its representatives the Right Hon. C. P. Thomson, Vice-President of the Board of Trade, and Mr. Mark Philips. With one notable exception, this was the first time that Manchester had been represented in Parliament since its barons had seats in the House of Peers in the earlier centuries. In 1654 Mr. Charles Worsley and in 1666 Mr. R. Radcliffe were nominated to represent it in Cromwell's Parliaments. Worsley was a man of great ability, and must ever have a conspicuous place in history as the man who carried out the injunction of the Protector to "remove that bauble," the mace of the House of Commons. The agitation for the repeal of the corn-laws had its head-quarters at Manchester, and the success which attended it, not less than the active interest taken by its inhabitants in public questions, has made the city the home of various projects of reform. The "United Kingdom Alliance for the Suppression of the Liquor Traffic" was founded there in 1853 and

during the continuance of the American war the adherents both of the North and of the South deemed it desirable to have organisations to influence public opinion in favour of their respective causes.

A charter of incorporation was granted in 1838; a bishop was appointed in 1847; and the town became a city in 1853. The Lancashire cotton famine, caused by the civil war in America, produced much distress in the Manchester district, and led to a national movement to help the starving operatives. The relief operations then organised are amongst the most remarkable efforts of modern philanthropy.

The spinning of cotton and the manufacture of various fabrics from that article are the staple of the Manchester district. There are also calico-printing works, in a wide circuit round Manchester, of great magnitude, and the warehouses established in the city in connection therewith are of corresponding extent; while the bleach and dye works, for miles round, furnish employment to numerous hands. The manufacture of an infinite variety of articles comprised in the general term of "smallwares" engages a large amount of capital, and many of the mills are of large dimensions. Ironfounding and the manufacture of stationary and locomotive steam engines, together with machine and tool making, are branches of great importance, employing immense power and expenditure. Many chemical works are on an extensive scale, and in the vicinity are paper mills. The merchants and manufacturers of Manchester have commercial relations with all parts of the world.



'King Street' from : 'Old Manchester - a Series of Views' drawn by Ralston, James & Others. with Introduction by James Croston. Pub. 1873

Manchester contains some fine public buildings, the most noteworthy being the Royal Exchange, Assize Courts, Royal Infirmary, Free Trade Hall. Royal Institution, the Town Hall, the Owens College, and the Post Office. The new Town Hall is one of the most spacious and elegant structures in Europe, and is probably the largest in the world devoted to civic purposes. Besides public edifices, there are many warehouses of gigantic size, foremost among which stands the magnificent warehouse of Messrs. S. and J. Watts. Many new streets have been formed of late years, and others widened for the immense traffic constantly passing along them. Nearly in the centre of the city is Albert Square, in which stands the new Town Hall and the memorial erected to the late Prince Consort. Deansgate, an ancient thoroughfare of many centuries' existence, has been transformed into a broad and handsome street.

The charitable institutions of the city are numerous, affording relief and consolation to the

poor and indigent. The educational machinery of Manchester and Salford ranges from excellent elementary schools to the Victoria University, empowered to grant degrees alike to men and women. Schools for the Deaf and Dumb and an Asylum for the Blind are likewise provided; whilst the foundations of Bishop Oldham, Humphrey Chetham, and Benjamin Nicholle remain as monuments worthy of imitation.

The government of Manchester, previous to the charter of incorporation being granted, was vested in a boroughreeve, two constables, and other officers, elected or appointed at the Court Lest of the Lord of the Manor. The corporate body, under the municipal charter, consisted of a mayor, fifteen alderman, and forty-eight councillors. This number has increased, since the incorporation of Rusholme, Bradford, and Harpurhey into the city, to nineteen alderman and fifty-seven councillors. The first election took place on the 14th December, 1838, and on the 15th Mr. Thomas Potter, afterwards knighted, was elected to the civic chair, and the following year re-elected. A stipendiary magistrate sits daily at the City Court, Minshull Street, for the disposing of petty offences, or committal to the sessions or assizes of more serious offenders.

Salford also has a stipendiary magistrate, who sits at the Town Hall. Assizes are held thrice during the year, and sessions every six weeks.

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### From the e-Postbag

We've all had that feeling of déjà vu, and this email from Mary Pendlebury is all about that. In the newspaper clipping that she sent, Mary writes :

*"I find it interesting that this could have been written in recent years - state of road, someone should do something about it; building work destroying our street; AND it is an ancient footpath."*

*The Oldham Chronicle, December 2, 1876*

#### **Bad Roads in Oldham**

*To the Editor of the Oldham Chronicle*

*Sir,*

Through your valuable paper I wish to call the attention of the proper authorities who ought to see that our roads are kept in something like a reasonable state. I am sure that when the road is visited that leads to our splendid Park from Ashton-road, over the foot-bridge across the Oldham, Ashton, and Guidebridge Railway, its abominable condition will be strongly condemned. It is not fit for anyone to use since the Broadway Mill Company began carting their materials down. It is so much cut up and so deep in mud that it is positively dangerous for aged people and females to go to the Park. It practically debars the inhabitants on that side of town from enjoying the Park. I hope this may catch the eye of someone who will cause the proper persons to make the road passable, as it is an ancient footpath. I have travelled over it for between 30 and 40 years, and never knew it so bad as now. If the owners will not do something, I suggest that the Surveyors Committee begin to pave it at once, for it really is a disgrace to Oldham, especially to be a thoroughfare to the Park, which cost the town so much money.

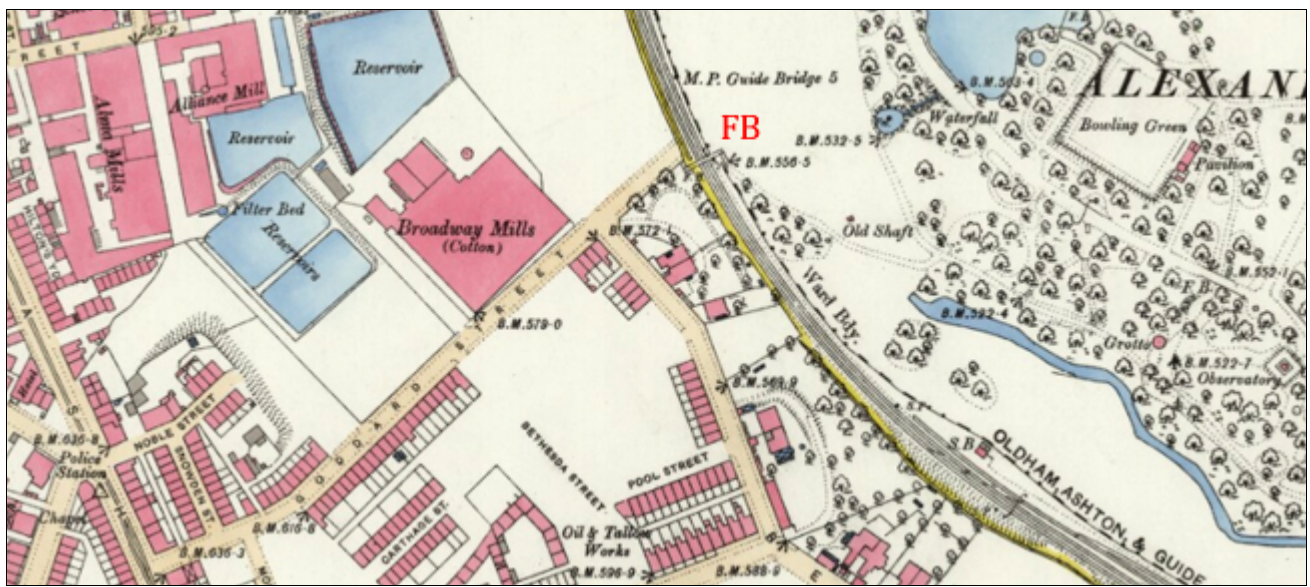
Yours &c. AN ANTI-MUDITE

This section, from an OS map, 25 inches to the mile, is from the National Library of Scotland website and is nearest in date to the letter, being surveyed just a few years later, between 1890 and 1891. It shows the Broadway Mills site and the footbridge over the railway leading into the park near the lake.

Footbridge marked 'FB' in red.

A link to the full map of the area is on the NLS website [HERE](#)





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A short selection of entries from the MLFHS FACEBOOK PAGE, [HERE](#)... since the last newsletter :

***The Hop-Pickers' Holiday – A Collision of City and Rural Life'**

BLOG.BRITISHNEWSPAPERARCHIVE.CO.UK

In this special blog we use articles from The British Newspaper Archive to discover more about the hop-picking holidays of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

[HERE](#)

*** NWfilmarchive**

Opening of Manchester Central Library (1934)

Amateur record of the opening of Manchester's Central Library by King George V on 17th July 1934.

[HERE](#)

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**\* Abandoned Manchester Railway Tunnels ... and more**

[HERE](#)

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*** What do you remember about Belle Vue**

[HERE](#)

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**\* Memories of Moss Side**

[HERE](#)

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"Some of you may remember a Shirley Baker exhibition held at MCL in 2018. Born in Salford, Baker was famed for her street photography of working class inner-city areas. Photographs of Manchester Airport were discovered within the library archives. They explored work created in the summer of 1987 after Shirley Baker was approached by the Documentary Photography Archive (DPA) who were seeking to commission photographers to grow their collection of contemporary work."

[HERE](#)

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**\* The V&A's Theatre and Performance collections** chart the fascinating history of theatre in Britain from the middle ages to today.

[HERE](#)



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* **Historical Directories of England & Wales**

[HERE](#)

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\* **Proceedings at the Old Bailey 1674 to 1913**

[HERE](#)

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* **The voices of 19th-century poor through letters to the Poor Law authorities**

[HERE](#)

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\* **Try Parish Clarks online**

[HERE](#)

\* **'Find my Past Blog' : Parish records**

[HERE](#)

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* **Manchester Archives + wants your lockdown experience**

[HERE](#)

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\* **All things Georgian.**

The Eighteenth Century Gin Craze

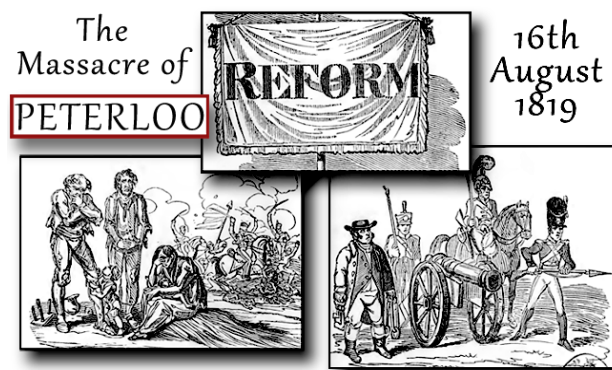
[HERE](#)

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

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

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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 some Peterloo websites 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](#)

Oldham Local Studies and Archives - CLOSED until further notice.

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.

[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 - [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](#)

### Some Local Archives

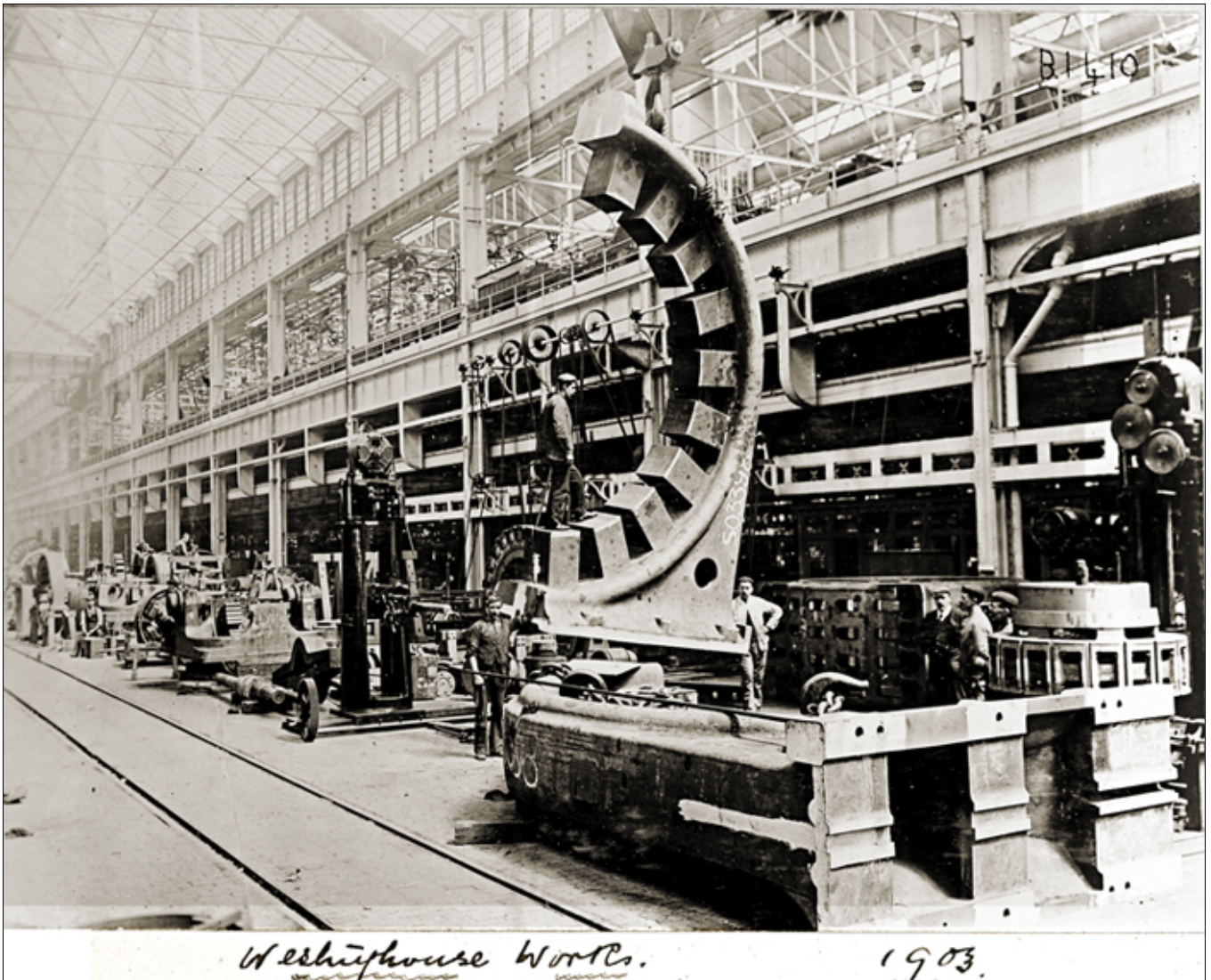
Barnsley Museum & Discovery Centre – [www.experience-barnsley.com](http://www.experience-barnsley.com)  
Birkenhead – [Local & Family History](#)  
Bury – [www.bury.gov.uk/archives](http://www.bury.gov.uk/archives)  
Chester - [Cheshire Archives & Local Studies](#) (linked from Discovery at the National 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

'Westinghouse 1903'



The photographer, Ben Clayton, was born in 1855, in Failsworth, and by the mid 1890s was living at 133, Duke St., Old Trafford. He was an enthusiastic amateur photographer who also did his own developing and printing in a makeshift darkroom at the top of the stairs. Most of his photos are from the wider Manchester area, including Royton and into Cheshire, or from his own holidays. My family possesses an album of his photos, taken around the turn of the century, and two of them seemed, at first, to be anomalies. They were both captioned 'Westinghouse, 1903' and were of workmen inside an immense engineering works. I tried to find out where this photo might have been taken but the only references I could find were to the American firm of that name ... no reference to anywhere in the UK. Disappointed, I put them to one side. That was about 3 years ago. This month, I have been working on content, for the Oldham Branch pages,

on the new MLFHS website, and I was transcribing chapters, on social history, from, '*The Victoria History of the County of Lancaster*', Vol 2, by Farrer and Brownbill, published in 1908. In a subsection titled, 'Engineering', there it was ... an entry for the Westinghouse Works built at Trafford Park, Manchester in 1901 ...

"A large firm of much more recent origin is the British Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Co., Ltd., Trafford Park, Manchester. Building operations were commenced early in 1901 and finished a little over a year later. The promoters, with a typically American optimism, laid their plans on a very large scale, so that within four years of commencing work over 5,000 hands were employed."

It was on Uncle Ben's own doorstep!!



Photos courtesy Martin Goodyear Collection