



# HISTORY ALIVE TAMESIDE



Free

Issue 3



**MUSEUM  
OF  
TRANSPORT  
MANCHESTER**

# *A fascinating journey through time*

*Where Greater Manchester's historic  
buses and coaches will take you  
on a nostalgic trip down memory lane!*

**From an 1890's Victorian horse bus  
to the prototype Metrolink tram!**

*Our tea room is a wonderful place to relax  
and our shop offers souvenirs for all ages.*

***We're open every weekend***

*(including Bank Holidays) and on Wednesdays  
from 10am until 4pm (5pm March to October)*

*An admission charge applies  
- visit our website or telephone for details*

Boyle Street, Cheetham Hill  
Manchester M8 8UW

Telephone: 0161 205 2122

**[www.gmts.co.uk](http://www.gmts.co.uk)**

## Contents

Editorial	2
A Diary of Events in 2007	3
Barbara Atkinson	5
Albion Commemorates 'Black Bartholomew's Day'	7
The Nine Arches Disaster	8
The Best Reference Letter Ever	10
The Red Hall Stones	11
Helpful Suggestions for Busy Mothers	12
Ashton Parish Church	13
Old Chapel Dukinfield 1707 – 2007	15
Canon A D Johnson	17
Joseph Johnson 1791 – 1872	18
Currier Lane Area, Ashton-under-Lyne	19
Denton Local History Society 1978 – 2008	21
Dukinfield Halls in North Carolina and Jamaica	23
MOSSLEY – Local Life in the Early Nineteenth Century	26
... But Better Never Late!	28
The Hollinwood Canal	29
Tameside Local History Forum Directory of Members 2008	31
History on Your Doorstep: St Petersfield, Ashton-under-Lyne	35
What's in a Churchyard?	37
Irritation Caused by Grey Rough Woollen Shirts	39
Recognition for 19th Century Aston Radical	41
A new dimension to the study of the recent past	42
All Things Bright and Beautiful	45
My Uncle Sam	45
Queen Adelaide and St George's School, Hyde	47
Joseph Boothby Pownall 1864 – 1911	48
Holiday Reading	50
Comments on Carrbrook	51
More from Mr Micawber and North Derbyshire	53
The Monumental Inscriptions at Chinley Independent Chapel, 1711	55
Facts from 1918: Millbrook & Stalybridge	56
Irene Smith 1917 – 2007	58
Book Reviews	59
Nineteenth Century Transport Links between Tameside and Oldham	63
Can You Help?	64
History Alive Tameside by post	64



# TAMESIDE LOCAL HISTORY FORUM

Established in the year 2000 to increase public awareness  
of all the elements of local history in the Borough

## History Alive Tameside No. 3 - 2008

### *Anniversaries and history*

Anniversaries are often prompts for the writing of history. Amongst others, this year's 'national' anniversaries include the end of the Great War (ninety years); all women becoming eligible to vote (eighty years); the establishment of the National Health Service (sixty years) and the end of standard gauge steam trains on British Rail (forty years). These anniversaries will be the subject of articles in *History Today*, *BBC History Magazine* and similar publications, but what about local anniversaries and local aspects of 'national' anniversaries? If a forthcoming local anniversary, or a local aspect of a 'national' anniversary, is prompting you to undertake historical research, why not write an article for the next edition of *History Alive Tameside* and share your findings with our readers? We welcome articles on any aspect, and from any era, of history related to Tameside and its people. Our contact details are on the first page of the Directory.

As always we are grateful for the generous financial support of a variety of bodies. This edition is supported by Tameside Heritage Development Fund, group and individual Forum members (who last year agreed a substantial increase in subscriptions) and our advertisers. We are also grateful to those who contributed articles and reviews – the reason for which *History Alive Tameside* was launched.

*Editors*

*The views expressed in articles and reviews are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Tameside Local History Forum.*



Tameside Local History Forum would like to thank Tameside Heritage Development Fund for their financial support towards this issue.

**Picture on the front cover: renovated bandstand, Victoria Park, Denton.**



Printed by Q3 Digital/Litho, Loughborough, Leicestershire

## Tameside Local History Forum

### Looking Back at 2007

Hello everyone!

I am looking forward to receiving the reviews of this our third issue of the **HAT** magazine. The previous two issues certainly travelled the globe. We heard from people in Brazil, Israel, America and Australia, and from many others whose families had moved from the Tameside area and wanted information about their ancestors.

The Forum has 30 plus member groups and individuals with interests in churches, canals, theatres, family/local history, archaeology and much more. All our members are volunteers; many have had an opportunity to see their research in print through a project named **History In Your Own Words**, which has been supported by the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit.

We are a very active group, having much involvement in our local museums, libraries and local studies, planning/conservation, Blue Plaques and events. Some of our members sit on the Heritage Consultation Group at Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council. I think I may be right in saying that the 'Forum' is unique, in that both Officers and Councillors join us and support the Forum in protecting the Heritage of Tameside.

So what have we been up to in 2007? In February, volunteers unpacked some 300 plus boxes of Magistrates Court records donated to the Archive Centre, some dating back to the mid 1800s and into the 1970s. These were placed on shelving in date order so that they could be made accessible to the public.

We have researched the memorials in Stamford Park and memories of the public about the park, supporting TMBC's Heritage Lottery Fund application.

A plaque was unveiled at *The Broadoak Hotel* to celebrate the anniversary of 'Gardeners' Question Time', first recorded at *The Broadoak Hotel* for BBC Radio in 1947.

Members attended a very emotional event at St Peter's School, Ashton, on the 13 June commemorating the 90th Anniversary of the Ashton Munitions Explosion. Children from the school sang songs relating to the event at the actual time and date it happened. Is there anyone out there who has any family connections to this event?

We were pleased to be invited to the 300th anniversary of Old Chapel, Dukinfield, where HRH Prince Edward unveiled a plaque. A lovely day was had by all who attended.

A visit this year was made to Dunham Massey, where we were given a guided tour of the house: many of our members had an interest in the family as this was the seat of the Earls of Stamford and Warrington.

Many of the buildings in the Tameside area are opened and hosted by Forum members for Heritage Open Days in September. With support from TMBC an information leaflet is produced for visitors to some 22 events.

In October we were at Dukinfield Town Hall for our second Local/Family History and Book Fair. This was again a huge success. There was an excellent choice of local history and family history books for sale, plus old maps. Groups had an opportunity to promote their work, and there was a chance to find out 'Who do You Think You are?' with our experts on Family History. If you are in the area on the 4 October 2008, pay us a visit. You will be most welcome.

Buildings at Tameside Hospital are being recorded and photographed prior to demolition in 2008: these include the former workhouse and former nursing home.

Well, I think you will see that we in Tameside really do care about our heritage. If you have links with Ashton, Audenshaw, Denton, Hyde, Mottram, Stalybridge, Mossley, Droylsden and Dukinfield, I hope you enjoy this, our third issue of **HAT**.

**Chris Clough**  
**Honorary Secretary**

**[www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk](http://www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk)**

Runner up in the e-Tameside awards 2007



**Best voluntary/community website**

## Barbara Atkinson

Barbara Atkinson, Acting Borough Librarian for Ashton-under-Lyne on the creation of Tameside MBC in 1974, and later Tameside's Reference and Information Librarian, died on 20 May 2007 at the age of 74. She set up the centralised Local Studies and Archives service for Tameside in 1976, creating an invaluable resource for local historians

Barbara was brought up in the West End of Ashton and in Manchester. She had a sharp eye for the social life of the cotton towns and had a fund of stories which revealed her affection for the communities in which she lived and worked. She used her critical skills to good effect in her work and, later, in retirement, in her book about the Second World War in Ashton.

She did well at primary school and went on to Fairfield High School for Girls, but left at sixteen as most of her friends did. Further schooling would have led to a teaching career, one of the few options available to girls who stayed on, and she did not want to be a teacher.

Instead Barbara started work as a library assistant at Ashton Library in 1949 earning £8 a month (which she gave her mother who returned her 10 shillings as spending money). Because she had done her School Certificate, it was automatically assumed she would do her library qualifications and so she went to college one day a week. When half way through the course, she became engaged and abandoned the plan to qualify as a librarian, but the engagement was broken off and then her father and stepmother died shortly afterwards.

Barbara was always a great traveller and had already visited a friend in New York and so she decided she would emigrate there, but moved in with a cousin in the interim. Her cousin persuaded her to finish her library exams and shortly afterwards the number of professional posts at Ashton Library was increased and so she stayed on as a librarian. When asked if this created a problem, as she was now the manager of assistants she had worked with, she typically said that it might have been for them, but wasn't for her. She recognised that she had a forceful personality, but she was always approachable. Back in the 60s, the counter staff called upon her to persuade Trevor Bolton, Ashton Borough Librarian, to let them wear trousers. In later years, she would always provide sensible, practical advice. Her staff could always turn to her with a problem knowing that it would not develop into some big issue. While she liked to play up to her image as a strong-minded woman who spoke her mind, she was in fact very kind and supportive. She proved to be a great influence on a lot of younger staff, especially those on the graduate trainee scheme



Barbara Atkinson (left) with Councillor Jill Harrison, Chair of Leisure Services, at the launch of Barbara's book

***The Home Front***, December 1995.

Trevor Bolton, whom she remembered fondly as a great mentor, died suddenly just before local government reorganisation in 1974 and Barbara became the Acting Borough Librarian. Reorganisation brought great opportunities and she soon settled into her new job as Tameside Reference & Information Librarian. She later said that the benefit of the new system was that you could make up your own job – in fact she wrote her own job description after she had been in the post for a few months.

Tameside's Reference and Information service, and the Local Studies and Archives service which grew out of it, are a memorial to her energy and effectiveness. Always careful to acknowledge Trevor Bolton as the founder of the reference collection, she was the driving force in the creation of a modern reference service. Keen to use the new sources and services, especially electronic materials which were beginning to appear, she extended the reference collection to give it a role in keeping details of community groups, services for local businesses, providing useful materials for school projects, a fax service, building up the HMSO collection and many other innovations which were especially novel in towns like Ashton. Barbara was sensitive to changes in society and the shifting expectations of users and was quick to adapt the service to new conditions. Library users will probably remember her as the very smartly dressed librarian with the sharp tongue – some of the more '*characterful*' users may even recall being sprayed with air freshener!

Barbara established a separate local studies and archive service, which centralised the collections from the various towns of Tameside, and recruited specialist staff to develop the service. She would often come from a management meeting to help shift heavy, dirty archive material from town hall cellars – but her high heels often limited her effectiveness!

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, Barbara was active in the forerunner of the Information Services Group within the Library Association. She served for a number of years as Secretary of the North West Group of the ISG and contributed to the planning of the Annual Study Group. It was Barbara's foresight in the early 1980s which drove forward a corporate decision to establish a Local Government Library and Information Service within the newly-built municipal headquarters in Tameside. The unit was placed under her managerial control and worked in close partnership with the Reference & Information Service.

Barbara's legacy remains in the reference and local studies services in Tameside and in the staff she trained who will always remember her with great affection. The numbers who attended her funeral, almost a complete complement of Tameside library staff c.1980, was testimony to the affection and regard in which she was held and the respect she commanded.

**Alice Lock**  
**Tameside Libraries and Archives**



## Albion Commemorates 'Black Bartholomew's Day'

On the ascent of Charles II to the throne in 1660, there was rejoicing that here was a King who would not continue the persecution of those with religious differences to the Church of England. He had promised that he would grant 'a liberty to tender conscience...in matters of religion'. However, hopes were dashed when he began to annul the acts which belonged to Cromwell's day. The Act of Uniformity forced ministers to give their consent to everything contained and prescribed in, and by, the 'The Book of Common Prayer'. If ministers had not consented by 24 August 1662 they were to be ejected from the church. This particular date was cruel in that it commemorated the date of 24 August 1572 which saw the massacre of the Huguenots in France. The Act of Uniformity was quickly followed by the Clarendon Code which debarred Nonconformists from taking any public office and the Five Mile Act which debarred them from living within five miles of their previous church.

The effect on ministers who chose not to 'conform' to the Uniformity Act was to suffer greatly for their faith, and it is interesting to note that many of them lived and preached in the Lancashire area.

Two hundred years later, the Lancashire Congregational Union, formed in 1806, chose to commemorate the event by publishing widely the principles of Nonconformity and the heroic history of Dissent. At the same time, the Congregational Union of England and Wales declared in October 1861 that by the 24 August 1862, to mark the 200th anniversary of Black Bartholomew's Day, they would raise enough money to erect fifty new buildings in the larger towns of the country and to lay the foundation stones of fifty more on that day, together with a monument to be erected in Bunhill Fields, a burial ground (not cemetery as it could not be consecrated) used for centuries for Nonconformist burials.

Despite the approaching Cotton Famine, the Lancashire Congregational Union helped to erect 30 memorial chapels and schools, and it is interesting to note that the original Charlestown building in Ashton-under-Lyne was erected through the funds raised for this commemoration. Charlestown was and still is connected to Albion Church.

Albion Chapel held a Memorial Service on the 24 August 1862 and our archives have the Hymn Sheet showing the two especially composed hymns to mark the occasion. The following is a verse from Hymn 1

*In sorrow's dark and troubled hour,  
To Thee our pious fathers prayed;  
They conquered – not by might nor power –  
But by Thine all sufficient aid.*

And a part of a verse from Hymn II -

*We meet in peace; no arm of might  
Disturbs us while we pray.*

Diaries still today show 24 August to be St. Bartholomew's Day, but to Nonconformists the date is still remembered as 'Black Bartholomew's Day'.

**Mary Whitehead**  
**Albion URC Heritage Group**

## The Nine Arches Disaster

I wonder how many people are aware, as they trundle their laden shopping trolleys across Asda car park and look towards the black stone arches of the railway viaduct carrying trains to and from Manchester, of the terrible disaster that occurred during its construction, over one hundred and fifty years ago?

It all began on a Saturday afternoon, 19 April 1845, at about quarter past three: a group of labourers were putting the finishing touches to the nine-arched viaduct which carried the Stalybridge-Ashton railway line over the River Tame and was due to be opened soon.

An old man called William Kemp was sitting on the battlements of the arches, watching them work, when he noticed a crack. He stuck his stick into it and then went down into the valley below to have another look from there. He saw what looked like a steady stream of black mortar falling from one arch. At the same time, Henry Morton, a navvy up on the viaduct, noticed the crack too and pointed it out to his mates. They laughed at it. 'It's nothing,' they said. Beneath them, Kemp heard the men laughing and looked up again and was knocked over by a piece of timber falling from the top. This was only the beginning. The arches fell one after the other until they came to the centre of the viaduct. After a short pause, the arches from the farther bank tumbled in orderly succession. The sound was like gunfire. There had been twenty or so men on the arches; five jumped or were thrown clear, one of whom was Henry Morton. The rest were buried in the collapsing rubble. It was twenty past three. Panic spread like wild-fire through the town of Ashton. Some women tried to claw through the debris to find men. Others ran about the streets screaming.

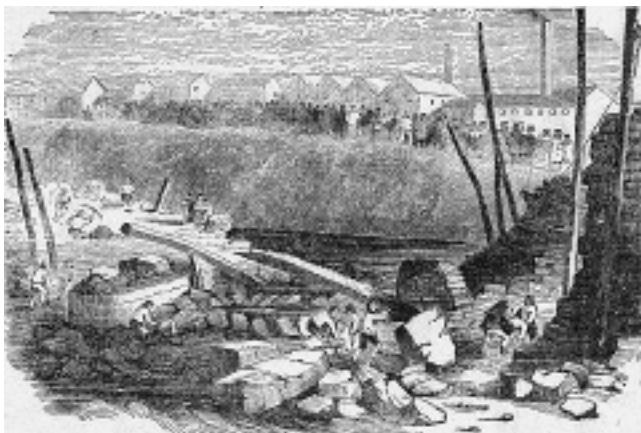
The military were called by James Lord, a magistrate, to control the curious crowd that had gathered. So many were there that they were hindering the work of the remaining navvies in their attempts to rescue their work mates.

James Fowler, a sub-contractor, had been on the second arch but had survived with just a sprained ankle. He stayed all Saturday helping to direct the rescue. Another man who escaped ran all the way to Hyde, without stopping, to let his wife know he was all right.

The **Manchester Guardian** reported that a crowd of twenty to twenty five thousand watched throughout Sunday, as the labourers tried to dig out the victims. There were two hundred rescuers to begin with, but as they were getting in one another's way, numbers were reduced to one hundred and fifty.

Gradually the men were rescued. Richard Critchley and Thomas Brown were brought out alive and not badly hurt. Two excavators, George Collier aged 45 and James Bradbury aged 23 or 24 were found dead, lying across one another. Another casualty, Abraham Nowell, left four children and a widow soon expecting a fifth. William Birchenough survived and was fit enough to go back to work on Monday. William Hardwick, known as 'Trump', was dead. Michael Kelty's body was recovered on Tuesday. He was Irish and was due to migrate to America and was wait-

ing only for a letter from the captain of the ship in which he was going to cross the Atlantic. His widow had been wandering about the ruins during Saturday, Sunday and Monday looking for him. Another body discovered was that of a Yorkshire man, named as 'York' in the contractor's book. The body was later identified as that of John Hufferton, believed to have come from some place within two miles of Leeds. The total death toll was fifteen.



An 1845 artist's impression of the disaster

On Sunday, 27 April at ten o'clock in the morning the workmen assembled in Park Parade, Ashton. They were joined by the engineer and manager of the company and then marched to the Parish Church to hear Reverend J. Handforth preach on a text from the thirty third chapter of Ezekiel. 'Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked: but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?' The navvies were all neatly dressed and behaved with great propriety. They seemed to feel the force of the Reverend's statement, that he had no pleasure in the death of their colleagues and that they themselves should turn from their wicked ways.

### **They went on building the railway**

There were various theories as to why the viaduct had collapsed. There were reports that it had been built only fifteen yards north of a coal pit that had been abandoned twenty five years earlier and that the foundations had subsided into old pit workings. This was denied by the rail engineers. The pit was there, they said, but everything was safe. No-one was to blame. The company said it had been up to the engineers to build the viaduct, the engineers said it was up to the contractors, and the contractors said in turn the engineers had supervised the work anyway and had been satisfied enough with it.

The report of three experts, given at the inquest, was damning. 'The rubble stone filling along with the improper workmanship, were alike unfitted to the purpose to which they were destined.' The pillars had been erected with an outer shell of ashlar stone and the whole of the interior was a mass of rubble and scabbings, neither bedded with care, nor flushed, nor

grouted, but full of cracks. 'Not the slightest adhesion had taken place between the mortar and the masonry, in any one part.' The coroner was unhappy. 'What,' he asked, 'if such an accident had happened at a time when thousands of the work people of Ashton had been packed into an excursion train on its way to Manchester on a holiday?' The jury brought in a rider which spoke of negligence in both construction and superintendence but their formal verdict was 'accidental death'.

The railway works were put back by three months but they went on.

**Source material:**

Extracted from *The Railway Navvies* by Terry Coleman (1965)

**Anne Wadsworth**  
**Ashton-under-Lyne Civic Society**

### **The Best Reference Letter Ever**

To Whom It May Concern

Bob Smith, my assistant programmer, can always be found hard at work in his cubicle. Bob works independently, without wasting company time talking to colleagues. Bob never thinks twice about assisting fellow employees, and he always finishes given assignments on time. Often he takes extended measures to complete his work, sometimes skipping coffee breaks. Bob is a dedicated individual who has absolutely no vanity, in spite of his high accomplishments and profound knowledge in his field. I firmly believe that Bob can be promoted to executive management, and a proposal will be executed as soon as possible.

*Delivered a short time later:-*

That idiot was standing over my shoulder while I wrote the letter sent to you earlier today. Kindly re-read only every other line.

**Eric and Jacqui Wright**  
**Ashton-under-Lyne Civic Society**

## The Red Hall Stones

Following the closure of two Audenshaw churches, namely Bridge Street United Reformed Church and the Guide Lane Methodist Chapel, there was discussion about them joining with Red Hall Methodist to form a new church on a neutral site. One or two possible sites were discussed with Tameside Council but, in the end, planning permission could not be obtained.



The Red Hall Chapel and the Sunday school buildings were in need of urgent structural repairs, and the possible costs were prohibitive and so eventually a decision was made to pull down the two buildings and for the three churches to join in the building of a new church on a vacant site.

During 2007, preparations were in motion to agree the costings for demolition with a civil property company and a demolition contractor. By August 2007 the civil property company was occupying the site and preparations for demolition of the church building were in place.

A member of the Audenshaw Local History Society called into the site manager's office at the church to ascertain which features of the church building were to be saved. He was informed that no provision had been made to save the church title 'Red Hall Methodist Chapel' or the large date stone 'AD 1876'; also no provision had been made to save the beautiful commemorative stones above the Sunday school doorway. Our society was advised to make contact with the architect for the new church building.

We were informed that it was too late, as the costings had been made for demolition on 6 September 2007. However, if we were prepared to pay the cost of taking the church front down, brick by brick, to access the stones, then a costing could be prepared and agreed before 6 September.

On Monday 3 September, the costing was notified to one of our members. The committee agreed the sum for the title stones and the date stone; however the costings for the Sunday school stones were beyond what the society could afford. We did state that if there was any chance at a later date that the latter stones could be salvaged, we would be very interested to retrieve them.

On the 20 September, the above mentioned stones (title/date stone) were ready for us to collect. The society had already made provision for moving the stones with Tameside's Town Management department, and Mr Stuart Mollison arranged to transport the stones to a safe

storage point at Ryecroft Hall. Since this event, the Sunday school stones have been salvaged from the debris and have been placed on one side.

We had reason to contact the church Deacon, Mr Roger Hensman, to seek his permission to have these stones placed with the others in a commemorative monument, the location of which is yet to be decided. Apparently the new church members are undecided what to do with the stones but are interested in what we intend to do with the stones we hold.

**George Walker**  
**Audenshaw Local History Society**

### **Helpful Suggestions for Busy Mothers (Ashton Reporter 1899)**

Many a busy housekeeper wonders what to do with an active baby when busy at some household task. It is not safe to leave him alone, for he can crawl anywhere, and perhaps pull himself up or get into mischief. One mother who has solved this question to her own satisfaction conceived the idea of padding a large box, the sides of which were just high enough for baby to take hold of them standing up. The box was padded with pieces of an old comforter and over that satin or some fabric which washes well and does not fade, was used. Here baby was comfortable and safe with his playthings. He could pull himself up as he felt disposed and it seems he grew to like his cosy little cage. Baby guards are admirable places to keep baby safe from harm or mischief. They are made in such a manner as to fold up when not in use. They can be found ready-made in different sizes, or can be made by anyone who understands the use of tools. His royal highness the baby will spend hours very contentedly in such a guard if he has been accustomed to one from the first. They can be used out of doors as well as in. Many a child has learned to walk by taking hold of his baby fence.



What to do with a wide-awake, active child of eighteen months or two years, during the long summer months, who is full of mischief and has a tendency to run away or get into the flower-beds, especially where there is no fence, is oftentimes a conundrum to the busy mother. For the benefit of such mothers the writer wishes to suggest fencing off a portion of the garden with wire netting so that it is impossible for the child to climb out. Make this fence or guard on a piece of grass if possible and put a big pile of picture blocks in with which the little one can build to his heart's content. Be careful to select a pleasant, sunny place where the fence is put up. A heavy rug should be placed on the ground if there is danger of dampness. If more mothers would dress their babies sensibly and comfortably in pretty cheviot or gingham dresses when they play out of doors, it would save much washing, besides making the babies more comfortable.

**Submitted by Mary Whitehead**



## Ashton Parish Church

**The Parish Boundary Book** discovered last year has now been fully cleaned and rebound at a cost of £4,000. A grant of £250 was received from Tameside Heritage Development Fund, £350 from The Friends of Ashton Parish Church and £500 from Ashton Parish Church Council. The balance was provided by Tameside Local Studies and Archives.

This important document was produced between 1855 and 1857 at the instigation of John Ross Coulthart who was mayor of the manor of Ashton and a churchwarden of the parish church. Measuring approximately 2ft by 3ft, it needs two library staff to lift it. This was the main reason why it could not be on display for Heritage Weekend as no display case could be found large enough to hold it!



The boundary book is split into sections which allows for enlarged detail of buildings and other features, many of which have now disappeared. It is hoped that during the summer it may be possible to locate some of the original boundary stones.

The book, which is the property of Ashton Parish Church, is on permanent loan to Tameside Local Studies and Archives at the Central Library, (Tel 0161 342 4242) where it can be consulted by appointment.

---

**Three stone tablets** which give some history of the church schools are now in the grounds of the new Parochial School. The wording on these tablets is as follows:-

*Given by the Right  
Honourable George Earl  
of Warrington, reserving jointly  
with the Rector, the appointment  
of Master thereof, and rebuilt by  
the Parish Anno Domini  
1721*

*The southerly Side of  
this Church Yard was  
enlarged in its area 4367  
Square Yards and this  
School rebuilt both at the  
Expence of the Parish in  
the Year of our Lord 1807.  
John Smith John Chadwick  
Sylvanus Fearn Thos Ousey  
Churchwardens.*

Removed from the old Schools, which were Situate  
at the South West corner of this Yard.

*The old Parish School  
was removed to this site and  
considerably enlarged, chiefly by  
the bounty of the Right Honble  
George Harry, Earl of Stamford &  
Warrington, for the additional  
purpose of a Sunday  
School AD 1827*

The Friends are always looking for new members and invite you to become a Friend of Ashton Parish Church by joining us in helping to maintain and beautify this wonderful Grade I listed building which is part of our heritage.

To join, pick up a membership form from the church, download a copy from the forum website or apply to our secretary: Mrs J Currie, 27 Rushmere, Ashton-under-Lyne OL6 9EB  
Tel: 0161 330 5795.

#### **For Guided Tours of the Church contact:**

Mr Alan F Bacon, 17 St Christopher's Avenue, Ashton-under-Lyne OL6 9DT  
Tel: 0161 330 5829.

**Alan F Bacon**

**Friends of Ashton Parish Church**

**Extract from: *Rules to be observed by the Friendly Boilermakers' Society*  
(As amended 6 April 1839) NB: *Spelling and punctuation as per original.***

#### **RULE 29**

*That a marshall shall be appointed every quarterly night as he stands on the roll, whose office it shall be to call for beer, and distribute the same without partiality, or shall be fined 6d. for every offence; he shall keep the reckoning—and if he calls for more beer than the club allows he shall pay for it himself. Any person calling for beer without liberty from the marshall shall be fined 6d. The marshall or any other person drinking out of his turn shall be fined 6d. unless it be a member at his first coming into the room—the marshall for non-attendance shall be subject to the same fines as the stewards so offending agreeable to 9th article.*

**Submitted by Bob Hayes**

## **2007: A Year of Celebration at Old Chapel Dukinfield 1707 – 2007**

Following the re-decoration and carpeting of the chapel in early 2007, we were ready to start the celebrations to mark the tercentenary of the first chapel on Chapel Hill, Dukinfield.

On April 27 we were joined by our good friends the Adamson Band for our St George's Day annual concert. Music has always been an important part of chapel life. A small orchestra provided music in the original 1707 chapel but it was superseded by an organ in 1816. An organ was built into the present 1840 chapel. This instrument was replaced by an Alexander Young organ in 1876, extended in 1896 and extensively restored between 2001 and 2005. Music was also part of our celebrations in July when another local music group, the Yew Tree Singers, delighted us with a concert.

Support from other organisations and churches has been a theme running through the year. The Mayor of Tameside, Councillor Michael Smith visited us so many times that he seems like a member of the congregation. He even offered to help with the washing up! The Dukinfield Assembly has also been helpful, particularly when we prepared for the royal visit, and through the presence of Councillors Jackie Lane, Brian Wild and John Taylor at many of our events.

Members of several Dukinfield churches and the East Cheshire Union of Unitarian and Free Christian churches played a major part in making our Flower Festival, in June, such a success. The beautifully designed displays featured important elements of chapel life such as baptisms, weddings and funerals; an arts and crafts festival; the pantomime and the Whitsuntide walks. At the Whit walks this year, we were honoured to be joined by the Reverend Celia Midgley, the President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches.

Our own congregation members have pulled out all the stops to make this year a success, nobody more so than our Chapel Warden, Janet Ford. As well as preparing each event and providing refreshment at many of them, members have also taken part. At the Historic Pageant in May, written by our Minister Emeritus the Reverend Doctor David Doel, members played characters from our chapel history. The first minister the Reverend Samuel Angier, Lady Judith Duckinfield, Beatrix Potter, whose maternal grandparents were leading members here in the nineteenth century, and Mary Kellett who designed the banners we carry at Whit, were brought to life. At Christmas, through carols arranged chronologically, we interwove the nativity story with readings about our history. Adults and children took part in this delightful service led by our minister, the Reverend Doctor Vernon Marshall, with over 100 in the congregation.

Other memorable events included, in July, a Joint Morning Service with New Chapel Unitarians, Denton, with whom we share a minister. The service was followed by lunch at the Alma Lodge, Stockport. In September, we opened our building for Heritage Open Days. Displays from our archive were augmented by a Beatrix Potter display from the Friends of Gorse Hall. We are grateful to Christine Clough for this display. Indeed, we are grateful for the



support of Tameside Local History Forum, who not only featured our chapel on the cover of ***History Alive Tameside*** issue 2, but whose members helped us in many ways. Also in September, our Sunday school children led us in a Harvest Service.

There is no doubt that the highlight of the year was the visit of His Royal Highness, Prince Edward, the Earl of Wessex. Old Chapel Unitarians may have been the centre of the honour of the visit but we felt we were hosting it for the whole of Dukinfield. We tried to involve as many local people as possible. A choir of local primary school children joined our Sunday school to sing the hymn, *Father Lead Me Day By Day*, written by former minister the Reverend John Page Hopps. Parents of the children joined us, as did representatives of local churches and businesses. These, along with officials from Manchester, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council, our local MP Andrew Gwynne and national and local representatives of Unitarian and Free Christian organisations, enjoyed a memorable day. The plaque Prince Edward unveiled has pride of place in our chapel porch, a fitting reminder of an exciting year for Old Chapel Unitarians.

**Dawn Buckle**  
**Friends of Old Chapel, Dukinfield**

# Tameside Local History Forum

## Local and Family History and Book Fair

At the JUBILEE Hall  
 Dukinfield Town Hall

SATURDAY 4TH OCTOBER 2008  
 10.00 am – 4.00 pm

TAMESIDE'S BIGGEST HISTORY EVENT  
 Please check our website nearer the time for full details  
[www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk](http://www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk)

## Canon A D Johnson

Do you remember Canon Johnson or Pa Johnson, as he was affectionately known? He was Vicar of Christ Church, Ashton-under-Lyne, from 1919 until he died in December 1957.

Alan Douglas Johnson was born in 1883, the son of William Henry Johnson, principal of a firm of iron merchants and wireworkers. He was educated at Eton, graduated from Trinity College Cambridge before attending Ripon Theological College and King's College London. After ordination, he was Assistant Curate at Astley Bridge and then at St Gabriel's in St Michael's parish, Ashton.



During the First World War, he served as a chaplain with Territorial Army (TA) forces in Egypt and Palestine. He was awarded a Military Cross whilst serving with the 4th Essex Regiment in Palestine. His brother, Captain William Morton Johnson, 16th Manchester Regiment, died in 1916. Another brother, Captain Ronald Lindsay Johnson, Royal Field Artillery, died in 1917. In 1919, he was appointed vicar at Christ Church, Ashton. He also continued as chaplain to the 9th Battalion the Manchesters.

Revd Johnson took a keen interest in the five day-schools and four Sunday schools in the parish and worked hard for their improvement. He was also interested in children's education and gave religious instruction at Ashton Grammar School and helped individual children with other subjects. He supported the football teams from the organisations and enjoyed the fellowship of many social events.

He was a well-known figure as he walked and cycled around the parish. He is certainly remembered for his greeting to everyone he met. His booming tone would call 'Good Morning' all around the town and his hat was doffed with a sweeping gesture to every female. His white hair and magnificent eyebrows were a constant memory for many parishioners.

He was devoted to the welfare of his parishioners. He had an amazing memory and, if one mentioned a parishioner, he would know all about them and their family. It didn't matter whether they attended Christ Church or not, if they were troubled in any way he would visit and help.

Many people remember him leading his congregation in the Whit Walks. People would run into the procession and greet him, also giving him donations which all went to missionary work.

At the outbreak of the Second World War he served as Senior Army Chaplain at Western Command (TA). He was away for four years retiring from the army in 1943. ***The Cheltenham Echo***, in August 1943, reported:

*Thousands of troops who served in the East during the last war remember a grey haired padre who travelled on his grey mare with hymn books in his saddle bags. 'Johnny' as many of them called him is retiring.*

In June 1948, during the centenary celebrations at Christ Church, the vicar was appointed an Honorary Canon of Manchester Cathedral. Canon Johnson died on 27 December 1957. He was buried in the churchyard with full military honours. Canon Johnson's medals are on display in the Museum of the Manchesters.

During Heritage Open Days, 11-14 September 2008, there will be a display to celebrate the life of this Christian man at Christ Church.

**Sheila Blanchard**  
**Christ Church, Ashton**

## Joseph Johnson 1791 – 1872

During the past few months I have been researching the family tree of Canon A D Johnson, Vicar at Christ Church, Ashton-under-Lyne from 1919-1957. After reading about the Johnson family, I discovered that his great, great uncle was Joseph Johnson who played a prominent part at Peterloo.

Joseph helped to start the radical newspaper, ***the Manchester Observer***, and to form the Patriotic Union Society. A public meeting was arranged for the 16 August 1819 in Manchester, at which invited guests would speak about Parliamentary Reform.

During the meeting, Joseph Johnson was named as one of the four men to be arrested. They were charged with 'unlawful assembly with banners, at an unlawful meeting and for inciting discontent'. Joseph was found guilty and sentenced to one year in Lincoln Prison.

At a later date Joseph was presented with a silver cup that was inscribed:-

*To Mr Joseph Johnson. This cup is presented by a few friends at Ashton-under-Lyne as a token of respect and approbation for his many and disinterested exertions on behalf of his oppressed countrymen, who attended a meeting, legally convened at Manchester on 16 August 1819, and were inhumanly massacred by armed ruffians in defiance of all law.*

After a protracted trial in the course of which the most clear and conclusive evidence was addressed of his having committed no breach of law, he was imprisoned for twelve months in Lincoln Castle.

The reference to Ashton-under-Lyne prompted me to see what had been happening there. The processions into Manchester for the meeting had been organised by the Reform Societies of the large mill towns. The casualty lists show that there were 30 associated with Ashton: Ashton Town (2) and the remainder from surrounding areas – Charlestown (13) Hurst (4) Smallshaw Green (1) Taunton (2) Boston (1) Little Moss (2) Haughton Green (1) Droylsden (2) and Dukinfield (2).

This information gave me an understanding of the events of Peterloo and the role of an ancestor of Canon Johnson. I wonder what happened to the Silver Cup?

**Pat Greenwood**  
**Christ Church, Ashton**



## Currier Lane Area, Ashton-under-Lyne

### An Ancient Highway

To appreciate this, you must imagine the scene without railways, canals or roads, a sweep of countryside from the site of Ashton Old Hall across Bank Top and on to Stalybridge and to the north towards Mossley. This latter part was a swamp, waterlogged and virtually impassable. An old map shows three rivulets from the area into the River Tame. The best known was Cock Brook - hence the current name of the area. Streams still run through primitive drains underground some houses.



The swamp was evident when workmen had to soak up the water with huge bales of cotton when laying sewage pipes in Beaufort Road/Stamford Road. A map of 1894 shows a large pond in the area where the future Tameside College would be built. Indeed the original foundations disappeared during its construction. In 1706 it was recorded that drainage operations were carried on in the Cock Brook area using gutter and 'shuttle trees'. No details were given as to how these were used.

There was a ford across the river and possibly a small Roman fort to guard it on the site of the future Ashton Old Hall. The Roman road would pass the fort and dip slightly and turn into the bridle path which would eventually become Courier (Currier) Lane. It carried on, joining Ridge Hill Road, and then out to the fortresses at Delph, Buckton Castle, and Melandra Castle and so on to the Pennine defences.

It is recorded that prior to 1650 there was no road south of Currier Lane and no vehicles were allowed on to the land. Scotland Street area was a sand-pit. These facts help to establish that the bridle path was the only way out of the area.

In 1553, the Revd William Thompson rode along the path to visit his parishioners and left 10 shillings annual stipend for maintenance of this, and a larger sum for maintenance of the Manchester part which connected to it. Thompson Cross was erected in his memory.

In 1732, the path became a turnpike road starting in Manchester. By 1740, it was extended well into Yorkshire; it was, at this time, one of the longest and earliest of these roads. This was, at the time, the only route out to the Pennines. Once the stage coach era started, the Earl of Assheton imposed a toll for its use and the first stone step to the Toll House is still in place. Stage coaches continued to use Currier Lane for the next hundred years as an important route to London, until, in 1831; Stamford Road was built to cope with the increasing traffic.



The area became more residential, and with the end of the tolls there was an increase in the number of houses being built, especially after the opening of the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway between 1845 and 1849 and things began to settle down. A number of larger houses were built with a few smaller ones in the remaining areas.

This brings our history almost up to date, but facts about the houses establish firmly the details about the ancient highway:

Working from the top of Currier Lane (Stamford Square end):-

- The mews cottages were stables belonging to the Earl of Stamford. A 'cruck truss' in number 15A shows marks of a seventeenth century carpenter's saw. This dates the building to c. 1650.
- Sunnyside Grove: Sunnyside was built by Summers of Shotton in 1860.
- Brookfield Grove: Brookfield House was built in 1830. Holly Bank in 1830.
- Mabs Court: Mabs Cottage was built in 1684. The original was on the lane and a toll house for traffic down the lane. The one built later took the original date stone and put it over the entrance. This was also a toll house for the mill workers going over the bridge to Whitelands. The name 'Mab's' is thought to have been derived from the old Saxon name for deer (Mabholes was a farm on the Earl's land).
- Cottages on the right hand side: 1641-67 authenticated by Manchester University Archaeological Unit which found the windows and doors upstairs were original pieces.
- Cottages on left hand side: built 1650-1700, one was reputed to be a brothel.
- Number 89, Fernlea: built 1874.
- Park View: built pre-1860.
- Thornfield Terrace area: built in 1876

Other aspects include:-

- In number 71 (white cottages), the first spinning jenny in Ashton in 1780.
- By 1821, there were four cotton traders listed on the lane.
- In the seventeenth century, the name changed from Courier Lane to Currier Lane.
- Leather working began at the bottom of the lane in Ira Stephens' Works and the workers occupied cottages in the lane.

This is just a beginning; there is much more to be done both in finding out what is already recorded and in adding new information which we are gathering from visitors and locals.

**Johnnie Barlow**  
**Currier Lane Area Residents Association CLARA**

## Denton Local History Society 1978 – 2008

### The first 30 years.....

Nearly thirty years ago, Denton was changing rapidly. The M67 was about to cut a swathe through the town from east to west and whole streets, as well as important buildings, were being demolished. Among these were hat factories, Christ Church and Russell Scott schools, public houses, Russell Scott's family home and many more. The task of recording all these was overwhelming and so, in June 1978, a small group met at the Festival Hall and Denton Local History Society was born.

Although the group was small, commitment was high. As well as recording all the motorway work, the society was asked to exhibit at Denton Show that same September. So began an annual contribution to the show.

At the same time, word came in that the last portion of Denton Hall was being vandalised and the fabric robbed. A long fight began to save the site and the remaining East Wing of the old hall. The next two years saw the society carry out an archaeological dig on the site, as well as recording the building, before it was removed to Alderley Edge, piece by piece. Some years later a final dig was carried out by Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit before the site was developed.

From the first it was decided that the society should not just be a group which met to listen to speakers, but a working society with an archive and collection of exhibits. Workshops have always been held monthly, so that members can carry out their own research and prepare for exhibitions and the society archive is open to other researchers. Outings, guest speakers, public meetings, school talks and exhibitions have all been high on the agenda. The society is proud of its increasing number of maps and books about Denton and Haughton and the surrounding area.

Recent years have seen further considerable development around the town which has kept members busy.

In the early 1990s the area of Debdale Vale, including the two golf courses and reservoirs with their old farmhouses and other buildings, was to be developed as Kingswater. The society researched and recorded the area and produced a booklet called **Kingswater**.

Crown Point North, a large shopping mall, was built around the Wilton Street area, formerly the main hatting centre of the town. That development included also the demolition of Wilton Street Unitarian Chapel as well as factories and houses. Much recording had to be done there, helped by the fact that the developers gave their full cooperation. The results of our research were two signage boards provided by the developers and our book **Hats Off To Wilton Street**. Two coats of arms and a decorative pediment from local hatworks were saved and displayed in the new development.

To the south-east of Crown Point, a Morrison superstore displaced other business premises, and some of the terracotta embellishments from the front facade of Booth and Moores' hat-works, erected in 1862, were incorporated into the new building. Francis Kirk and Son Ltd, Mill Furnishers, who had traded from part of that site since 1868, had to be re-located. Morrisons worked with us to reproduce early photographs of that area and beautiful glass windows etched with scenes of hatting processes.



Starting in 2006 and culminating in June 2007, the society undertook research into the history of Victoria Park, Denton, in readiness for the grand re-opening of the bandstand restored to its original state. Based on our research, two signage boards were erected in the park itself and school packs were produced. On the occasion of the re-opening members turned out in period costumes, since the park originally opened in 1913.

For those of us who were there at the start in 1978 and many who have joined us since, life has never been the same. A very busy, but enjoyable thirty years. The society is in good heart, although storage for our archives has always been a problem, which Tameside MBC and our District Assembly are currently trying to help us to resolve.

Attendance at meetings when we have a speaker is usually between twenty-five and thirty people, and they and members 'in exile' in other parts of the country and abroad, receive ***The Dentonian*** on a quarterly basis.

We miss the many friends who have made a significant contribution over the years but are no longer with us and we look forward to the next thirty years!

**Allan Arrowsmith**  
**Denton Local History Society**

## Dukinfield Halls in North Carolina and Jamaica

**Chance discoveries via the National Archives website:**  
[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)

**The National Archives website** released a new and little publicized facility about twelve months ago, where its on-line search facility not only searched through its own holdings but also those of archive repositories throughout the country. I was searching for any records relating to Tameside and came across a surprising series of Dukinfield Family records in **the London Metropolitan Archives**. These were listed in the Cooper Family Collection (LMA Acc/775) who, via a set of tortuous deeds over a period of about 120 years, had inherited half the bankrupt estates of Dukinfield Hall Plantation in Jamaica. This was following the death of a Robert Dukinfield in 1755. They included, amongst many others, a copy of his will, an account of the lands he owned and an inventory of his slaves, including their names and occupations. Copies of these documents are now at Tameside Local Studies and Archives Library. These copies were expensive and took an inordinately long time to arrive and so in the intervening period I set about trying to discover as much as possible from other sources.

### **Dukinfield Hall – Chowan County, North Carolina**

Google did not shed much light on the Jamaican plantation, but coincidentally turned up yet another Dukinfield Hall in North Carolina at Salmon Creek, Chowan. Initially in the possession of a William Dukinfield and later Nathaniel Dukinfield, running alongside Edward Hyde of Hyde Hall's plantation (see **HAT** issue 1 page eleven). I was very curious now, to know where these Dukinfields fitted into our Dukinfields of Dukinfield family tree.

According to Hickey, ***Dukinfield Past and Present***, William was the second son of Colonel Robert Dukinfield and Nathaniel was William's nephew. William left a will dated 7 May 1720 stating that he was formerly of Cheshire, but now of Chowan Precinct. He mentions his brothers John and Sir Robert Bart. of Duckenfield and Robert's son Nathaniel and siblings. A grant of 4,000 acres of forest land bounded by Albermarle Sound and the waters of Salmon Creek and the Chowan River had been granted to Lord Dukinfield as early as 1657.

Dukinfield Hall now renamed Avoca (see sketch on the right) is Indian for 'Meeting of the waters'. Basically it is the land between Black Walnut Swamp and the mouth of Salmon Creek which is at the juncture of Salmon Creek, Chowan River, and the Albemarle Sound. (sketch courtesy of the artist Laney Layton)



Dukinfield Hall in its earlier days was owned by Seth Sothel, the hated North Carolina Governor. When he died it eventually passed by marriage to Sir William Duckenfield and then to his nephew Nathaniel. I have a beautiful, if romanticized description of the house and plantation, entitled 'A Southern Gentleman's Estate', taken from the ***New England Magazine*** Volume 15, Issue 6, February 1894.

In 1776, the land, by then 6,000 acres, was sold as loyalist confiscated lands after the Wars of Independence, and the money thus derived was used to open the University of North Carolina. Nathaniel Dukinfield received £3,000 compensation from the English Government for his loss and ended his days in England. Both Sothell and Duckenfield had trading posts on the mouth of Salmon Creek at Avoca prior to 1690 and Blackbeard was prowling these waters from about 1713 until his death in 1718.

### **Dukinfield Hall, St Tomas, Jamaica**

Returning to Jamaica: John Dukinfield, born circa 1677, was the grandson of Colonel Dukinfield by his first born son, Robert. In the family tree, he is listed as a Bristol merchant who married Captain Andrews' daughter Anne, circa 1700. According the Bristol Port Cities website: <http://www.discoveringbristol.org.uk/>

*John Duckinfield, or Duckenfield was another merchant from Bristol who was linked to the trade with the East Indies as well as Africa. By 1701 he had become a wealthy merchant and was also an investor in the slave trade. In most of the years between 1712 and 1735, Duckinfield sent out at least one of his six ships on slaving voyages. Most of them followed the route from Bristol to Africa and thence from Africa to the Caribbean and back to Bristol. But on at least two occasions he traded in slaves from the island of Madagascar off the east coast of Africa. Trade with that area was at that time under the exclusive control of the East India Company. It was illegal for private traders such as Duckinfield to take part unless they had a temporary licence from the East India Company. In 1717 we know that Duckinfield bought such a licence. He loaded some 540 slaves on board his ship the Prince Eugene at Madagascar. Most were young boys and girls, and over half of them died on the voyage east. After that Duckinfield does not seem to have got another licence from the East India Company and later went on a similar slaving voyage, trading illegally without a licence. He was eventually found out, and had his ship's cargo impounded.*

John owned a plantation on the extreme eastern tip of Jamaica near Golden Grove, St Thomas, Jamaica, called Dukinfield Hall Plantation, later belonging to his sons Robert and Samuel. Robert is known to have lived there until his death in 1755. It is the extract of Robert's will in the Cooper Family Collection that originally sparked off my interest (LMA acc/0775/803), creation date 17 November 1755.



*On Jane Engusson, a free Negro woman, he settled 101 acres and 14 slaves\*, two lots of land in East Kingston (Duke Street) and the use of his town house in East Kingston until his brother Samuel should arrive from England, and all his furniture and plate, with £300 to have a house built on one of the two fore mentioned lots, also one of his chaises.*

*To each of his two sons William and Estcourt, by Jane Engussen, 400 acres, 4 slaves and a building lot in Kingston, opposite Thomas Wheeler on Duke Street. To their sister Elizabeth 417 acres, 7 slaves and a building lot in Kingston adjacent to her brothers. Also £500 to William, £500 to Estcourt and £1000 to Elizabeth as a dowry provided she marries a white man.*



*Residuary legatee of all his estates (including Dukinfield Hall Estate) to go to his brother Samuel with the remainder to his sisters Martha Richards and Rebecca Hale. Failing them to his cousin at Dukinfield Hall in Cheshire Sir William Dukinfield Daniel and failing all these to his children by Jane Engusson*

*\*The slaves are individually named: 'Psyche, Palor, Hannah, Phedelia, Betty, Clarinda, Mimbo and Nina, Plato, Willey, Elf, Jupiter, Papa and Limerick together with the future Issue, Offspring and Increase of the Female Slaves'.*

There is also a copy of an account of Mr Robert Dukinfield's estates in Jamaica taken by himself (LMA Acc/0755/802), creation date 29 July 1745. This document lists his various plots of land and acreage with the dates and by whom these were first patented.

By far the most interesting document is an inventory of the estate shortly after Robert's death giving the names, occupations and individual values of all his 320 slaves. These were split into men, women, boys and girls ranging in value from Sampson the bricklayer at £100 to Blind Joe and McIntoch, who had leprosy, worth £5 each, to 15 superannuated slaves worth nothing. Field Negroes ranged in value from about £20 - £60. Some of his horses and cattle were worth more. The total estate was valued at £41,236 and 19 shillings. By the time the property finally ended up in the Cooper family, slavery had been abolished and its value very much eroded. To the right is a rather poor quality early map of the slave village on the plantation.



The Dukinfield Sugar Factory is still an active sugar cane plantation and sugar processing factory. The factory and sugar lands are located at Golden Grove, Stanton and Suffolk Park, St Thomas. The main sugar cane lands and the Duckenfield factory lie south of the Plantain Garden River and immediately east of the Morant Bay to Manchioneal main road.

I am in touch with a lady in Fayetteville, North Carolina, whose mother was born there, as were her two older sisters. Her grandfather, Richard Harvey Davis, and his brother Hugh owned Dukinfield Hall plantation at that time. She is not certain how long her mother's family lived there, but when sugar beet crashed the cane market, circumstances became dire for the family. She told me they owned two other plantations, Red Hazel and Fellowship, but one of these was lost due to a hurricane. Her mother told her she could remember liveried footmen at Duckenfield, carriages, and raft rides down the river and that, as a pre-teen, she went to school in the mountains there; a British style boarding school run by a Miss Campbell.

**Gay J Oliver**

**The Family History Society of Cheshire (Dukinfield Group)**

## MOSSLEY - Local Life in the Early Nineteenth Century

*extracts from the diary of Mr James Kenworthy:*



'I was born in 1824 in Roughtown, and in my younger days the cotton trade was in its infancy: the buildings and machinery were very much different from what they are nowadays.

Nearly all the cotton mills were built by the river-side, and worked by water-power. In many cases an old woollen mill was superseded by a modern cotton mill.

Most of the cotton mills of my younger days were about eight windows long and four storeys high; they contained eight pairs of hand mules or 'jinnies', of from 23 to 26 spindles each. My father worked on such jinnies, and his wage for a full week was between 23s and 24s [shillings]; the wages were paid fortnightly; each spinner had a great and little piecer, who were paid 7s 6d and 4s 6d per week respectively. The hours of labour were from 6 am to 8 pm daily and on Saturday until 4 pm. For the three meal times, one and a half hours were allowed.

In wintertime we worked by candlelight. The 'after-dilits' [daylight] were long and dreary and tiresome to the young boys and girls. There were no factory inspectors and young children had to work the full hours; later, when the Factory Act came in [1833], I was too old to enjoy the benefit, and never went to school, not even half-time.

Most of the spinners kept a stick or a strap and knew how to rouse up the sleepy or lazy.

There were, however, some compensating advantages: both spinners and piecers could go out of the mill for twenty minutes each afternoon, if convenient, and nearly always contrived to do so.

When the railway was made through Roughtown, nine cottages and a dozen cottage gardens were demolished. In my younger days half the elderly men of Roughtown were employed in the woollen trade as hand-loom weavers. No doubt their wages were small, but their ways of living and dressing were according to their income.

In fancy I can still see several of the old men getting their evening meal sat out at their doors in the 'fowt' [fold] in summer time. They would have large bowls containing good buttermilk or home-brewed beer with thick oat cake sops stuck edgeway in; on this they would make a good and hearty meal.

At this time [1830-1840] quite a number of persons earned a rather precarious living by hand-loom weaving at home. Sometimes there was work and sometimes there was none for weeks together. It was then rather 'hard times'.

A favourite walk was down by the mill, along the riverside to Winterforth bridge, or the other way by Woodend and the field way back.

Trout used to sell at 1s. per pound, and 'snigs' [eels] at 8d a pound. I can see my father skinning a snig, then cutting it into lengths about three inches long, put in the frying pan with some butter and a lot of fresh-gotten parsley out of the garden; and they were a treat to us children!

There was heavy traffic with boats on the canal. In the winter they would put three or four more horses to the iron boat to crash through the ice. I have known both the river and the canal thickly covered with ice for weeks together, scores of people skating and sliding on both river and canal. I am inclined to think we have a change of climate.

With the 'Fly Boats' [Pickford's or Kenworthy's] which ran night and day between London and Huddersfield, there would be five men and a boy, known as a 'nipper'. It was God help the poor boys, for they were often badly used.

It should be borne in mind that there were no railroads around here then; that the canal was of great importance in the way of traffic, and that it was a serious thing for it to be stopped.

I can remember long before the accursed Corn Laws were repealed [1846], and when there was not much foreign corn imported into this country, that if it happened to be a bad harvest, that both flour and meal were very bad and dear. I have known when we came home from the mill at eight o'clock at night, tired and weary, when we opened our cottage door, that we could smell the porridge, the meal being bad.

It was no unusual thing in those days for families to have a large brown dish full of porridge sent to the mill for their breakfast.

Many of the houses then consisted of a living place and one chamber upstairs; sometimes a kitchen or out-place besides. Often in these houses large families, young and old, would live for years, and all slept in the one bedroom. These things ought not to have been, but they were so! It was neither conducive to good health, morality nor comfort. There was no gas or water in the houses; common tallow candles were used for lights and water was fetched in cans from the wells and 'spouts'.

'Top o' Roughtown Spout' came from the overflow of the Wood well. Close by here was where, in my young days, the 'Roughtown Rush Cart' used to be built on Mossley Wakes Monday, and in fact, on the Sunday too; for a number of years, at the end, it was built at the left-hand side of the road in Wood Brow.

My father and others at one time kept quite a number of bees in their gardens. Honey and beeswax were articles of commerce amongst them.

The moors and common land were free to everyone. Today it is now parcelled out among a select number of sporting gentlemen, guarded by the gamekeepers; it is now almost high treason for a poor man to set foot upon its sacred soil.

Around Roughtown the trees were known as 'The Plantation', 'Nield Wood' and 'Little Wood'. W Winterbottom - otherwise 'Owd Bill o' Patts- was supposed to look after the Plantation; portions were sold to the makers of the 'Turnpike Road' and also to the railway company.

The plantation was the favourite place for young boys. It was nearly always warm and cozy therein, the wind could not get through the dense mass of firs. Threepence or sixpence a fortnight was the usual 'spending brass' - if a lad had a shilling a fortnight, he was classed as a 'swell'! Wages were paid fortnightly and the spinners would then call at the ale-house to get change to pay their piecers.

In some cases cotton masters, or family or friends, would keep a shop and here the work people were expected to do their trading where they had 'strap' or credit and paid their shop scores (or portions of them) fortnightly.'

Full text of this extract can be found in ***The Story of Mossley*** (1926 & 1974)

## **Marie Clues Mossley Civic Society**

### **..... But Better Never Late!**

The reasons why names were missed from local War Memorials have been discussed before, but whatever the cause, the fact remains that over 300 hundred names of World War One casualties were omitted from Stalybridge Memorial. And it is with thanks and deep gratitude to Stalybridge District Assembly that 90 years later the Missing Men have been acknowledged.

Following an open meeting, it was agreed to open a Roll of Honour in Stalybridge Civic Hall, and monies were allocated to provide a suitable display case, a bound book of names, and a dedication ceremony.

On Saturday, 21st July, 2007, over 60 people [including relatives of men whose names were missed, representatives of the Royal British Legion, local civic dignitaries, Stalybridge Old Band, and James Purnell MP] gathered in the Assembly Room for a very special ceremony. The names were read, and prayers said by the Revd Ian Stubbs from New St George's church to dedicate both the Roll of Honour and the Memorial Plaque before The Last Post was most movingly played. The action then moved to the War Memorial where wreathes were laid in commemoration following a short service. The haunting tones of Reveille closed a minute's silence, and the assembly marched back to the Civic Hall to the strains of Tipperary.

The Book may be seen upstairs in the Civic Hall. It is permanently lit, and the pages turned every month to display the relevant names. And so, if you are in town, and have 5 minutes to spare, why not pay your respects to the men whose families have waited too long for the recognition their sacrifices deserve.



**Kathryn A Booth**

## The Hollinwood Canal

Tameside may not be the Venice of the North, but it is fairly well-endowed with canals. The Ashton, Peak Forest and Huddersfield Narrow Canal heads radiate in three directions from Ashton but there was a fourth canal - the Hollinwood Branch Canal - heading north from Droylsden across Littlemoss, serving the coal mining areas around Park Bridge, Bardsley and Hollinwood.

Around 200 years ago, the area to the north of Ashton was very rural, with a few small scale industries. Good coal seams not far below the surface meant that small pits were being developed. There was a demand from Manchester for more coal to power the early mills being built there. The roads were in a poor state and, with just horses as a means of transport, it was expensive to transport coal to the city.

Then the Duke of Bridgewater opened his canal to bring coal into Manchester from Worsley, slashing the cost of coal and undercutting the collieries around Ashton. The solution was to construct a canal to Manchester from the Ashton area. The main line of the canal climbed eastwards from Manchester to Ashton with a branch northwards from Droylsden to Hollinwood and Werneth. Another branch ran eastwards from Waterhouses to Fairbottom, near Park Bridge. Simple tramways allowed wagons to be pulled from the various mines down to the canal where the coal was loaded into the waiting narrow boats.

The new canals thrived and many coal wharves were built behind the present Piccadilly Station to unload the coal. However, the coming of the railways meant that coal could be moved more cheaply and, as the pits north of Ashton began to run out of coal, so the traffic along the canal diminished.

The last boat to have used the Hollinwood branch was believed to be Joel, a maintenance boat, which also carried coal to the pumping station next to the locks, in 1933. After that, the hump back bridges over the canal were lowered and some sections filled in.

In the 1970s, when Daisy Nook Country Park was created, some canal features were preserved, with others altered and made more difficult to appreciate. Yet, an amazing assortment of canal features is to be found that is almost unique for such a small area, including the 80 feet high Waterhouses' Aqueduct across the River Medlock; the remains of locks, including a lock staircase; Crime Lake, once a magnet for Sunday afternoon trippers. and the cutting which was once 'Dark Tunnel'.

Walking beside the tranquil waters today, it is hard to picture the scene of a century ago, with colliery wagons clanking, coal crashing down chutes into boats, the lock keeper ratcheting up the paddles to fill the locks, smoke pouring from the tall chimney of the pumping station, with the huge iron beam rocking up and down as water was drawn back up past the locks, and loaded boats being towed by hard-working horses across the mighty aqueduct before disappearing into the blackness of the 'Dark Tunnel' on their way to the mills of Manchester.

Nowadays, modern freight is whisked across the Medlock Valley in seconds on the nearby M60 motorway, while the Hollinwood Branch Canal, once the freight highway of its day, is an almost forgotten backwater.



Volunteers removing excess vegetation at Daisy Nook

The Hollinwood Canal Society was formed with the intention of saving what was left of the canal, to prevent further deterioration of the structures and further encroachment onto the canal line. Longer term aims are to see the restoration of the Hollinwood and Fairbottom Branch Canals within Daisy Nook Country Park, reconnection with the Ashton Canal and eventually a new link to the Rochdale Canal.

The canal featured in the **'Locks and Quays'** television series during 2007, with local MP David Heyes voicing his aspirations for the canal's future.

The first short section of the canal in Droylsden will soon be reopened as part of the Droylsden Marina development between Manchester Road and Fairfield Lock.

The society held another Canal Day last summer at Daisy Nook Country Park to help raise awareness of canal heritage, with activities for all ages, including guided walks.



Volunteers removing excess vegetation from one of the infilled locks.

The society holds regular working parties at Daisy Nook when vegetation affecting the stonework of the canal is removed, helping to preserve the remaining structures. It could be very many years before any serious major restoration projects take place along the canal's route but without the dedicated work of volunteers at this stage, there could be nothing left to restore! Why not join us and play a part?

Find out more from the society's website **[www.hollinwoodcanal.co.uk](http://www.hollinwoodcanal.co.uk)** which includes new and historic photographs.

**Martin Clarke**  
**Hollinwood Canal Society**



## Tameside Local History Forum Directory of Members 2008

Secretary: Mrs Christine Clough (0161 666 0639)  
218 Newmarket Road, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL7 9JW  
Chairman: Alan Rose (01457 763485)  
Editorial: Jill Cronin: jillc4@btinternet.com and Gay Oliver  
Treasurer: Mrs Julie Fisher (0161 371 0770)  
Website: Gay Oliver: gayjoliver@aol.com

**[www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk](http://www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk)**

### **Albion U.R.C. Heritage Group**

Chair: Mary Whitehead  
2 Spring Bank Avenue,  
Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 8QL

Tel: 0161 330 9164  
[mary@marywhitehead.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:mary@marywhitehead.wanadoo.co.uk)  
**[www.albionurc.org.uk](http://www.albionurc.org.uk)**

### **Ashton Civic Society**

Chair: Susan Knight

Tel: 0161 339 6707  
[susan.knight8@ukonline.co.uk](mailto:susan.knight8@ukonline.co.uk)  
Tel: 0161 330 1340  
[eric.wright100@talktalk.net](mailto:eric.wright100@talktalk.net)  
**[www.ashtoncivicsoc.co.uk](http://www.ashtoncivicsoc.co.uk)**

### **Audenshaw Local History Society**

Secretary: Mrs Muriel Roberts  
11 Thornside,  
Denton, Manchester. M34 3TB

Tel: 0161 320 9834  
[lonestarbar@btinternet.com](mailto:lonestarbar@btinternet.com)  
**[www.audenshawhistorysociety.org](http://www.audenshawhistorysociety.org)**

### **Sheila Blanchard (Christ Church Ashton)**

5 Coblers Hill  
Delph, Oldham, OL3 5HT

Tel: 01457 874 513

### **Currier Lane Area Residents Association**

R.W. Barlow  
89 Currier Lane,  
Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 6TB

Tel: 0161 330 4735

### **Denton Local History Society**

Allan Arrowsmith  
94 Edward Street,  
Denton, Manchester, M34 3BR

Tel: 0161 292 1109  
**[www.members.aol.com/dentonhistorysoc](http://www.members.aol.com/dentonhistorysoc)**

### **Derbyshire Family History Society**

Keith Holford (High Peak)  
10 Buxton Road, Chinley,  
High Peak, SK23 6DJ

Tel: 01663 750478

## **Family History Society of Cheshire – Dukinfield Group**

Gay J Oliver  
26 Woodville Drive  
Stalybridge, SK15 3EA

Tel: 0161 338 5241  
dukinfield@fhsc.org.uk  
[www.fhsc.org.uk/fhsc/dukinfield.htm](http://www.fhsc.org.uk/fhsc/dukinfield.htm)

## **Fairfield Moravian Settlement**

Sylvia Gregory  
7 Broadway North,  
Droylsden, M43 6EE

Tel: 0161 370 1323

## **Friends of Ashton Parish Church**

Alan Bacon (guided tours)  
Secretary: Mrs Joyce Currie  
27 Rushmere  
Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 9EB

[alan@baconaf.freemove.co.uk](mailto:alan@baconaf.freemove.co.uk)

Tel: 0161 330 5829

Tel: 0161 330 5795

## **Friends of Dukinfield Old Chapel**

Secretary: Dawn Buckle  
20 Wheatfield,  
Stalybridge, SK15 2TZ  
Ian Peace

[dfbuckle@yahoo.com](mailto:dfbuckle@yahoo.com)

Tel: 01457 763 721

Tel: 0161 339 4028

## **Friends of Gorse Hall**

Mrs Christine Clough  
218 Newmarket Road,  
Ashton-under-Lyne, OL7 9JW  
Alan Pickles

Tel: 0161 666 0639

Tel: 0161 304 9022

## **Gee Cross & District W.I.**

Eileen Bowden  
14 Arnold Road  
Hyde SK14 5CH  
Marjorie Minister  
21 Rock Street  
Gee Cross, SK14 5JX

[bowdens@eileented.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:bowdens@eileented.wanadoo.co.uk)

Tel: 0161 368 5896

[e.minister@btopenworld.com](mailto:e.minister@btopenworld.com)

Tel: 0161 366 7067

## **The Greater Manchester Churches Preservation Society**

Rev. Brian Hartley - Chair & Secretary  
21 Penryn Avenue  
Heyside Royton Oldham, OL2 6JR

[brian\\_hartley@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:brian_hartley@tiscali.co.uk)

Tel: 01706 849132

## **History on Your Doorstep**

Jill Cronin  
4 Romford Avenue  
Denton, M34 3EJ

[jillc4@btinternet.com](mailto:jillc4@btinternet.com)

Tel: 0161 336 3989

### **Hollinwood Canal Society**

Martin Clark  
2 Rock Bank  
Stamford Road  
Mossley, OL5 0BD

Tel: 01457 836 273  
martin@ashton-under-lyne.co.uk  
[www.hollinwoodcanal.co.uk](http://www.hollinwoodcanal.co.uk)

### **Huddersfield Canal Society**

Transhipment Warehouse  
Wool Road  
Dobcross  
Oldham, OL3 5QR

Tel: 01457 871800  
Claire@huddersfieldcanal.com  
[www.huddersfieldcanal.com](http://www.huddersfieldcanal.com)

### **Hyde War Memorial Trust**

Marjorie Minister  
21 Rock Street  
Gee Cross, SK14 5JX

e.minister@btopenworld.com  
Tel: 0161 366 7067

### **Kathryn Booth (Virtual Millbrook and Missing Soldiers)**

1 Sun Green  
Millbrook,  
Stalybridge, SK15 3WQ

Tel: 0161 338 3078  
kathryn@kabooth.fsnet.co.uk

### **Living Memories of Hyde Society**

Chair: Alan Ehrenfried  
28 Lakes Road, Dukinfield,  
Cheshire, SK16 4TR  
Secretary: Sylvia Walker  
58 Kenyon Avenue, Dukinfield,  
Cheshire, SK16 5AR

Tel: 0161 330 1992

Tel: 0161 338 4662

### **Longdendale Heritage Trust**

Chairman: William Johnson  
25 Ashworth Lane,  
Mottram-in-Longdendale, SK14 6NT

Tel: 01457 763555

### **Emmaus Mossley Centre**

Richard Darlington  
Longlands Mill,  
Queen Street,  
Mossley, OL5 9AH

Tel: 01457 838608  
mossley.community@emmaus.org.uk  
[www.emmausmossley.org.uk](http://www.emmausmossley.org.uk)

### **Mossley Civic Society**

Mrs Marie Clues  
31 Cemetery Road, Mossley  
Mr D Shufflebottom  
76 Ladbrooke Road,  
Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 8PW

Tel: 01457 832813

Tel 0161 330 6409

### **Park Bridge Heritage Centre**

Visitors' Centre:

The Stables,

Park Bridge,

Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 8AQ

Tel: 0161 330 9613

[www.tameside.gov.uk/parkbridge](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/parkbridge)

### **Stalybridge Historical Society**

Peter Schofield

23 Beaufort Road,

Ashton, OL6 6PJ

Tel: 0161 344 5180

### **Tameside Local Studies & Archives Centre**

Librarian: Alice Lock

Central Library

Old Street

Ashton-under-Lyne OL6 7SG

Tel: 0161 342 4242

[localstudies.library@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:localstudies.library@tameside.gov.uk)

[www.tameside.gov.uk/leisure/new/lh23.htm](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/leisure/new/lh23.htm)

### **Tameside Museums & Galleries Service**

Emma Varnam

Portland Basin Museum,

Heritage Wharf,

Ashton-under-Lyne, OL7 0QA

Tel: 0161 343 2878

[portland.basin@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:portland.basin@tameside.gov.uk)

[www.tameside.gov.uk/museumsandgalleries](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/museumsandgalleries)

### **Teds of the Riverbank** [www.tedsoftheriverbank.com](http://www.tedsoftheriverbank.com)

Tel: 0161 303 0011

### **Theatre Royal Onward, Hyde**

Muriel Nichols:

412 Mottram Road,

Hyde,

Cheshire, SK14 3BP.

Pat Jackson:

Tel: 0161 368 4938

[bnichols@bnichols7.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:bnichols@bnichols7.wanadoo.co.uk)

[www.theatreroyalhyde.org.uk](http://www.theatreroyalhyde.org.uk)

Tel: 0161 430 8621

### **University of Manchester Archaeological Unit**

Mike Nevell

Field Archaeology Centre,

University of Manchester,

Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL

Susan Mitchell

Family History Centre

Setantii Visitor Attraction

Town Hall

Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 6DL

[mike.nevelle@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:mike.nevelle@manchester.ac.uk)

Tel: 0161 275 2313

Tel: 0161 342 2813

## History on Your Doorstep: St Petersfield, Ashton-under-Lyne

We are doing it again - not three books this time, just one about St Petersfield!

Should you have used the Local Studies Library on some Thursday afternoons between September 2006 and Easter 2007 you would have seen members of the group at the tables poring over directories, plans, maps, rates books, council minutes, reference books and local guidebooks. Other members would have been seen winding the census films onto the film readers or researching the filmed copies of early local newspapers.

We had our 'Eureka Moments'

- Lord Stamford's plan of Henry Square dated 1800, which showed plots of land that had been acquired by named individuals.
- An entry in the Council Minutes of 8 July 1868 signed by the Mayor Councillor Darnton which set in motion the building of the baths.
- A contact made with Jack Brierley of RoDO Brushes who was able to relate its history from 1926 when the business was set up on Old Street.
- Learning from the census that Williamson's printing works started behind the living accommodation of the Williamson family on this part of Stamford Street.

Our research was conducted at the same time as the demolition work at the bottom end of Stamford Street and so we hastened to photograph the shops and premises before they were gone forever. Amongst the more interesting was the Cotton Workers' Union Building. We were sad to see such a splendid piece of architecture disappear.



Cotton Workers' Building just prior to its demolition



Howard Residence exposed in 2006

When the façade was removed from what had been Bowers Leather shop we were able to see and photograph the former elegance of Nathaniel and Samuel Howard's town house. This building later became the place where the **Ashton-under-Lyne News** was printed, financed by Hugh Mason. It was first published in 1868.

The scaffolding erected on the baths building raised our hopes that, at last, a decision might soon be reached regarding its future use.

We have received a good response to our request for recollections from previous residents of this part of Ashton and many will be included in the book.

Lastly, we have seen the new buildings; accommodation, offices and businesses rise from the dust of what was once such a thriving part of the town. We hope that our book will provide a record for future generations and a nostalgic look at the past for individuals who have memories of shops and businesses that were once sited here.

An early view (1950/60) of Old Street when the model shop occupied only No 201. Tameside Image Archive Ref: t01695.



Stamford Street c.1977 showing some shops and, in the distance, the Red Lion Pub.

Tameside Image Archive Ref: t01649.

**Shirley Howard**  
**History on Your Doorstep Group**

## What's in a Churchyard?



One of my many hobbies is exploring old churches and churchyards and there are people like me who find reading, understanding and working out explanations for some of the strange epitaphs very interesting. Then there are people who tell me I am morbid and twisted but these remarks run like water off a duck's back. I often find that what is cut into the old stones, gives one an insight to the person who lies under or near the stone and quite often I am able to know the person's character. Take, for example, Mary Broomfield who is buried in St. Michael's Churchyard at **Macclesfield**. Her epitaph reads:

*Mary Broomfield  
Dyd 19 Nov 1755 aged 80*

The chief concern of her life for the last twenty-five years was to order and provide for her funeral. Her greatest pleasure was to think and talk about it. She lived many years on a pension of 9 pence a week, yet she saved £5 which at her own request was laid out at her funeral. This tells a lot about a woman who lived in an age when people had a different attitude towards death.

Some epitaphs tell of drama, like the empty grave in Mottram Churchyard, while others tell their story bringing a smile to one's face, like the one I saw in a churchyard in **Cheadle**:

*Here lies my poor wife  
Without bed or blanket  
But dead as a doornail  
The Lord be thankit.*

Or another I remember well, I once saw in **Altrincham**

*Here lies John Hill  
A man of skill  
His age was five times ten  
He ne'er did good  
Nor never would  
Had he lived as long again.*

I know of one or two people who, if the truth were told, would have an epitaph something like the one above but would it be allowed today? I think not. Strange as it may seem, the Church does not encourage these verses even though they tell the truth but they do not object to a short verse, if it is 'nice', even though it may not be sincere or very truthful

One of my favourite verses is on a grave at **Wilmslow** and refers to a publican buried there. It reads:

*Poor John lies buried here  
Although he was both hale and stout  
Death stretched him on a bitter bier  
In another world he hops about.*

I could go on with more verses in this vein but enough. What of those epitaphs I said needing understanding and working out?

In Martham Church Tower in **Norfolk** there are two slabs of stone now partially obscured, by the organ's having been placed over them but one can still read most of the following inscription:

*Here lyeth the body of  
Christopher Bunnaway  
Who departed this life  
Ye 18th day of October anno domini 1730  
And there lyeth Alice  
Who in her life was my sister  
My mistress, my mother  
And my wife  
Died February 12th 1729  
Aged 76 years*

You must admit that the above needs some explaining and a lot of understanding. He was obviously a religious man, as his name is on a bell in the steeple and so how does this puzzle fit together? Well, at the latter end of the seventeenth century there resided at The Hall, Martham in the county of Norfolk a farmer, who was Lord of the Manor and a person of position in the district.

He had a daughter named Alice, aged 17 years, who through an incestuous intercourse with him, gave birth to a son. To hide the disgrace and prevent it becoming generally known, the child was taken away and placed in the Foundling Hospital. Attaining the age for leaving the institution he was put out and employed in agriculture when, after a number of years and in the course of his wanderings for employment, he came to the village of Martham. The lady, who, by death of father and mother, had become possessed of the farm, required a labourer and, upon his applying to her, he was engaged in that capacity. By perseverance, steady habits and industry he rose to the position of steward or farm bailiff and by his successful management of the property his mistress was induced to become his wife.

His position of Master of the Hall raised him to the office of Churchwarden. One Sunday morning he was changing his linen, when Alice his wife inadvertently entered his bedroom and observed a peculiar mark on his shoulder and she instantly recognised him as her son. She was so struck with horror that she fainted. Upon recovering consciousness she was able to explain to her husband the fact but the shock was too much for her and she never left the room alive.

The effect upon him was so great that gradually he sank and requested that the above inscription should mark their resting place and the incident which so unexpectedly terminated their lives. He died a few months later.

**Submitted by Harry Lever**



## Irritation Caused by Grey Rough Woollen Shirts

Tameside Local Studies and Archives have recently received a very interesting collection of records which give an insight into the minds of **Dukinfield soldiers** serving in the First World War. They were all sent to Elizabeth Hannah Kenyon who was mayor of Dukinfield and chair of the Dukinfield branch of Queen Mary's Needlework Guild. The Guild sent socks and shirts to men in the army and navy who were serving abroad. They wrote to Mrs Kenyon to express their gratitude and often give a brief account of their lives in the services. It is a very varied collection from men from many different backgrounds serving in many different countries. Not only do we get an idea of the conditions and problems they faced but the phrasing of the letters is also interesting. The habits of deference to higher levels of society, which perhaps allowed so many soldiers to be used as cannon fodder, are very evident in some of the letters.

The collection was kindly deposited by Christopher Kenyon of **William Kenyon and Sons of Dukinfield**.

Kenyon's rope works was established in 1866 and the family had a long association with the town, often serving as councillors, aldermen and mayors. An index of the letters was compiled while they were held at Kenyons. This index can be consulted on the Local Studies web page [www.tameside.gov.uk/history](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/history) and so it is possible to find out whether a particular soldier sent a letter. Information from the war



memorials and Mike Pavasovic's ***Men of Dukinfield*** (1997) has been added so that we know which soldiers did not survive. The book of letters has been catalogued as DD356/1.

Among the men who were killed was **Walter Ralphs**, the brother of Dr Ralphs who later became the county coroner and who lived at the Lakes. They were the sons of Joel Ralphs who was a school master at St Mark's School. Walter had had quite an adventurous life before the First World War. He had worked in the Manchester and County Bank in Ashton before moving to London where he came to the attention of Lord George Hamilton who recommended him for a post in the Chartered Bank, Shanghai. Both the Ralphs boys were noted sportsmen and Walter became well known in Shanghai as a rider and polo player. He also became a lieutenant in the Shanghai Light Horse and commanded a squadron in the Chinese Revolution of 1912.

When the First World War started, Walter came home to join up. He became a second lieutenant in the Royal Field Artillery, was soon promoted to lieutenant and, in July 1916, he became a captain. Unfortunately a few days later, on 15 July 1916, he was dead, dying of

wounds on the Somme. He does not appear on the Commonwealth War Graves database but there is a tablet to his memory in St Mark's Church.

His letter in the Kenyon collection shows his concern for his troops as he says, *'the Tommies are suffering from much irritation caused by the recent issue of grey rough woollen shirts which makes them resort to thin cotton undervests as a means of protection. The numerous complaints I have had have made me wonder if any of your 'soldiers comfort' friends could send me out a small lot to distribute among them. It is needless for me to say how much appreciated they would be.'* He went on to comment on the men's morale – *'Have had some interesting if not enjoyable days up at the Batteries and in the trenches. Tommies now are fight (sic) ... for the honour of the British Army. Strikers and slackers no longer worry them – they have long since given up such as incorrigible.'* His letter was signed Walter and so he must have been a friend of the Kenyons.

All the letters give a good impression of the hardships of the war – from uncomfortable woollen shirts to the welcome relief of a clean shirt after 50 days of wearing the same one. We hope that the collection will be used by researchers studying the First World War as well as people searching for soldier ancestors.

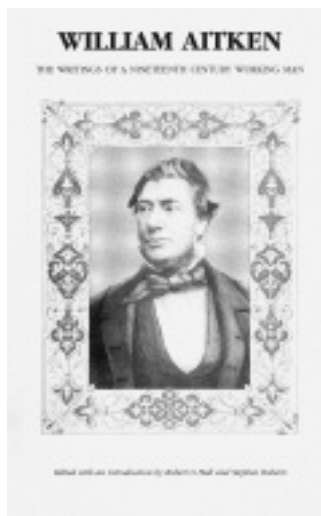
#### **Tameside Local Studies & Archives**



## Recognition for 19th Century Ashton Radical

**William Aitken** was an Ashton Chartist and school teacher who has now been included in the latest online update of the ***Oxford Dictionary of National Biography***.

Aitken was arrested for seditious conspiracy in 1839 and went to prison for nine months. On his release, he was involved in the general strike and Chartist activity of 1842. When the strike collapsed he felt it safer to leave the country and went to the United States, later writing a book about his travels on the Mississippi. He returned to Ashton and set up a school where Chartists continued to meet. After the collapse of Chartism he remained interested in public life – he campaigned for the ten hour day, was involved in the Oddfellows and the Liberal party. In the late 1860s he was ill and had to give up his school. He started writing his autobiography which appeared in instalments in the ***Ashton News*** but his bad health and depression eventually led him to commit suicide in September 1869.



Aitken's autobiography in the ***Ashton News*** and his book about his travels can be consulted in the Local Studies and Archives Centre at Central Library where copies of the book ***Writings of a Nineteenth Century Working Man*** are on sale at £4.50. This book contains Aitken's autobiography and his poems, and is edited with an introduction by Robert Hall, the American academic who has written the entry for the ***Oxford Dictionary of National Biography***.

The online ***Oxford Dictionary of National Biography***, which contains references to nearly thirty notable historic residents of Ashton and Stalybridge, can be consulted in Tameside libraries or by library card holders on their own computers by logging on to [www.tameside.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.tameside.gov.uk/libraries) and scrolling down to Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.

Contacts:

**Local Studies and Archives Centre - Alice Lock**

[archives@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:archives@tameside.gov.uk)

0161 342 4242

**Tameside Libraries Information Service online services – Karen Heathcote**

[information.direct@tameside.gov.uk](mailto:information.direct@tameside.gov.uk)

0161 342 2031

***Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* - Philip Carter**

[Philip.carter@oup.com](mailto:Philip.carter@oup.com)

01865 355036

## 'A new dimension to the study of the recent past' \*

**Oral testimony** has played a significant role in the study and writing of history since the time of the ancient Greeks, when Thucydides used the source in writing his ***History of the Peloponnesian Wars***. Although A.J.P. Taylor (in 1971) stated he was 'a total sceptic' as to the value of oral history, pioneering work was undertaken by academics such as Elizabeth Roberts and Paul Thompson, and by Ken Howarth at the North West Sound Archive (NWSA). Since then the gathering of oral testimony and its use in the writing of history has flourished.

There are many facets of the past - particularly the lives of the 'common people' - that are not recorded (or adequately recorded) in documentary form, and oral testimony offers local and family historians new insights into the past. Consider for example our understanding of the Manchester Blitz of December 1940. Fire service, ambulance, hospital, local government and commercial records provide an insight into the number of deaths and injuries and the extent of damage to homes and businesses. But what were the sounds, the sights and the routines of the air raids, and what were the feelings and the anxieties experienced by those living through these horrific events? Oral testimony can help us answer these questions, as it offers insights that simply do not exist in the documentary record. This short article explores the uses of oral testimony for historians.

### Archive collections

Oral testimony collections are to be found in national, regional, local and specialist archives. Below are examples of resources that may be useful to those studying the history of Tameside.

The superb **North West Sound Archive**, at Clitheroe, holds over 110,000 sound recordings, plus BBC recordings and a huge collection of 78rpm records. The archive is able to locate recordings for researchers by name and keyword searches of its extensive database. A search returns information in the following format:

*Ted Arrowsmith and Ann Arrowsmith of Denton (1991 recording, duration unspecified). Ted Arrowsmith describes work in mines, accidents, gas, ponies, pay, strikes, colliery rescue service, flooding, visit of Haile Selassie to Brinnington Colliery, work at Northern Aircraft. Ann Arrowsmith describes work at Ashton Brothers, walk to work, passing notes in church, local countryside.*

*Maniben Patel (1995 recording, c. 35 minutes). Describes coming to England, her family, an arranged marriage, working in a cotton mill as a winder, then at Robertson's jam factory in Droylsden, Asian women's group.*

The above references were drawn from keyword searches of, respectively, 'Dukinfield' (fourteen recordings) and 'Droylsden' (thirty-two recordings).

**Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre** (TLSA) holds more than 500 tape recordings and is custodian of the **Manchester Studies Collection**, created during the 1970-80s. A subject

index identifies places, organisations, events and many different facets of life, which help researchers locate tapes of interest: for example 'Denton' provides references to seven recordings and 'courting' yields no fewer than thirty recordings. The collections provide opportunities to explore the ordinary and the extraordinary. Amongst the more unusual is that of Lillian Buckoke, *née* Urmston who was born at Copley 2 June 1914. During the Spanish Civil War she travelled to Spain and worked as a nurse for the Republicans fighting against Franco's fascists. More recently TLSA was heavily involved with the 'Here to stay' project, recording the recollections of people who moved to Tameside from Bangladesh, India and Pakistan.

The nature of oral testimony may result in recordings being located in unexpected places. For example, someone born, educated and who worked all their life in Hyde, might retire to, say, the Yorkshire coast. Only after retirement might they be interviewed and, consequently, the recording be deposited at a Yorkshire archive. It is always wise to search national, as well as local, archives. For example a brief search of the **British Library Sound Archive** online catalogue identified items relating to Ashton, Dukinfield and Stalybridge. 'Lateral thinking' is always useful when considering where recordings may be held. **The Access to Archives website** ([www.a2a.org.uk/](http://www.a2a.org.uk/)) is particularly useful for this type of search.

### Do it yourself

What is involved in gathering oral testimony? At its most basic it requires a decent quality recording device, a willing interviewee and a place where the interview can be conducted without interruption. Whatever equipment is chosen it is essential that a *separate* microphone is used, as all inbuilt microphones pick-up the sound of the recorder motor which muffles the words of interviewees and interviewers. Although the basics are straightforward, it is essential to plan and prepare thoroughly for a recording. Anyone wishing to record oral testimony should first consult one or more of the suggestions below and, ideally, speak with someone who has already undertaken some recording work. The North West Sound Archive's ***Tape recording oral history*** is particularly useful for all the basics.

### Using oral testimony

It is important to remember oral testimony is not the same as oral history. The former is the *source* (just like documents), while the latter is the *interpretation* based on oral testimony sources. Gathering together a few interviews should not be seen as an alternative to using written sources. In ***Sounding boards*** (see below) David Marcombe succinctly observes that interviewing a few Macclesfield mill workers cannot provide sufficient historical evidence to produce a 'History of the Cheshire silk industry'. In some cases transcripts of recordings are available, but researchers should be aware of the limitations of transcripts, which cannot convey the feeling and intonation of the spoken word. As with any source, the historian should critically examine oral testimony and check its reliability against other sources.

### Conclusion

For future generations of local and family historians oral testimony will, arguably, become even more important, as the electronic communication age in which we now live drastically reduces

the amount of written sources generated. Consider how the phone call from relatives in Canada, India or Poland has replaced the detailed letter, or how the text message from friends on holiday in Benidorm, Berlin or Bognor Regis has replaced the postcard. Future historians are likely to be confronted by a dearth of letters and postcards. A distinctive feature of oral testimony is the potential for historians to help *create* sources. When recording oral testimony consider allowing copies to be made by an appropriate public archive: after all, as well as obtaining sources for our own research we are creating the raw materials for future historians. Both the North West Sound Archive and Tameside Local Studies and Archives would be pleased to have copies of your recordings relevant to their collecting policies. With oral testimony we should think not exclusively in terms of the past, but in terms of *past, present and future*.

### **Selected sources and further information:**

#### ***Publications:***

Ken Howarth, ***Oral history***, Stroud, 1998.

David Marcombe, ***Sounding boards: oral testimony and the local historian***, Nottingham, 1995.

Robert Perks & Alistair Thomson, ***The Oral History Reader***, London, 1998.

North West Sound Archive, ***Tape Recording Oral History***, [nd].

***Oral History Journal*** (available for reference at Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre).

#### ***Archives:***

British Library Sound Archive, 96 Euston Road, London NW1 2DB.  
[www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/nsa.html](http://www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/nsa.html)

North West Sound Archive, telephone 01200 427897.  
[www.lancashire.gov.uk/education/record\\_office/about/archive.asp](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/education/record_office/about/archive.asp)

Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre, Old Street, Ashton-under-Lyne, OL6 7SG.  
telephone 0161 342 4242.

*Note:* \*David Hey (editor), ***The Oxford Companion to Local and Family History***, Oxford, 1996, p. 332.



**The illustration** (left) shows an inexpensive Sanyo audio cassette recorder and (right) a Sony MiniDisc recorder. Note the separate clip-on microphone attached to the MiniDisc recorder essential for any recording.

### **Bob Hayes**

## All Things Bright and Beautiful



Gee Cross and District Women's Institute are involved in the district's annual Well Dressing event. In 2007 they chose as their theme 'All things Bright and Beautiful'. There are full colour photographs of every display since 2000 on the Forum's website:

[www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk/geecross.htm](http://www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk/geecross.htm)

## My Uncle Sam

My earliest memory of my Uncle Sam is of him sitting crossed-legged on the floor showing me magic tricks. He was the kind of man who could enter a child's world and play at their level. He was adored by children of all ages. He was not a blood relation: he had married my mother's sister, my Aunt Elsie.

He was born and bred in Hyde and as a young man joined the army. He was sent to India and during the Second World War was sent from India to Singapore and was there when it fell to the Japanese. He remained a Japanese prisoner of war until his repatriation when the war ended. He met my Aunt Elsie at a dance at Hyde Town Hall one Christmas shortly after his return. I remember going to their wedding. He and my father were great friends and they would both play games with my brother and I during our visits to my grandmother's home on Sunday afternoons. They were uproarious times.

He had many interests: he loved natural history especially wild birds and he was fascinated by falconry. He became friendly with the Manchester bird man who gave him wounded kestrels and owls to look after in an aviary he had built in his back garden. He also loved archery and was a member of the archery club which met near Cheetham Park in Stalybridge. He trained his three sons in the skill and all were to take part in and win national contests. The eldest, Alan, in fact, won the All British Junior Championship. He loved to watch boxing matches and would have been thrilled to find that we have a local world champion. He also loved conversation and the subjects were varied and wide ranging. As an adult I would hold many a philosophical discussion with him.

Due to the effects of maltreatment as a Japanese prisoner of war, his health deteriorated and he was forced to retire early. One of the effects was tunnel vision and he was registered blind. Sadly, he died some years ago but one of his legacies was a batch of poetry he had written during the final years of his life when his health was failing. I have included two of those poems here; one is about the barber's shop he frequented in Gee Cross. It was situated near the Ring o' Bells pub and perhaps some of the older residents of Hyde will remember it. The other is about a retired boxer and shows some of my uncle's philosophical leanings.

#### **THE BARBER'S SHOP**

*The Barber's shop to which I go  
No other place could be,  
For the likes of old Wilf Broadbent  
Again you'll never see.*

*He'll rant and rave on politics  
And inform the likes of us,  
And then perhaps he'll turn and wave  
To any passing bus.*

*At times he'll have a cup of tea  
And through the window stare,  
And never gives a second thought  
To the man who's in the chair.*

*Although it be a pantomime  
To go, I'll never stop,  
The gems of wit I've often heard  
In that old Barber's shop.*

**Samuel Johnston 1990**

#### **TO AN OLD FIGHTER**

*When all the world has left you  
And there's nothing left but tears  
Whilst those who stood and cheered you  
Now deride you with their jeers.*

*All those who as spectators stood  
Who could never reach the goal,  
As champion or challenger  
For them the impossible role.*

*And when they've had their say and gone  
And you alone are stood,  
Knowing what you had has gone  
And knowing it's gone for good.*

*Then brush away your tears my friend  
And we will drink to you because,  
It's better to be a 'has been'  
Than to be a 'never was'!*

**Samuel Johnston 1990**

**Valerie Bowker**



## Queen Adelaide and St George's School, Hyde

In the nineteenth century, after a great deal of wrangling as to whether the working classes should be educated, schools began to spring up across the country. At this time, only two years after the opening of St George's Church, Hyde, in 1834, a foundation stone was laid for an adjoining, substantial stone-built school.

It had been necessary to embark on a funding project and as well as help from forward thinking mill owners, royalty came forward in Hyde: in this instance Queen Adelaide who donated for sale nine pieces of tapestry, including a handbag, a portfolio and a Scottish Shepherdess, worked in wool. The latter has recently reappeared and been donated again. The little oval cartouche at the bottom of the tapestry says '*Queen Adelaide donated to St George's in 1835*'.



By 1870 a larger school was needed and the same process saw it built in no time, with the same aims and help which raised £1,400.

One hundred years on and a smaller, modern school was required to compete with changing times, after the advent of more secular places of education. This airy, brick building, with greater facilities both outdoors and in, was opened by another Royal: HRH the Princess Royal, who throughout listening to a lengthy headmaster's speech, never stopped looking up to give the children (who also had to listen) her wonderful smile. Her great, great, great, great, great aunt was Queen Adelaide who was renowned for her love of children, and had cared for and educated the young Princess Victoria throughout the difficulties she experienced as a girl and young woman, as well as never ceasing in good works and travels throughout the country. The Princess Royal talked to and reacted with children in the most wonderful way.

Times have changed, as they have for many church schools, alongside a changing population. British Asian children, whose origins are Bangladeshi, now attend the school: its academic record has made it very much in demand by this sector. Boundaries are being broken down by open and far-looking schools like St George's.

The school continues to be helped by dedicated volunteers in very much the same way as their counterparts of dedicated gentlemen and their crinolined ladies did in the nineteenth century. Open, willing to move on, attentive to current needs, long may St George's and others like it continue.

**Submitted by Muriel Nichols**

## Joseph Boothby Pownall 1864 – 1911



Joseph Boothby Pownall was the son of Joseph Pownall, a boot and shoemaker who moved to Ashton in 1849 and became a Town Councillor for Market Ward in 1887.

Joseph was educated at the Stamford Academy in Ashton, and at Owens College, Manchester, becoming articled to the Steward of the Stamford and Warrington Estates, and later to a London firm of solicitors. He was admitted a solicitor in 1888, and, after marrying Emma Jane Taylor (daughter of William Taylor, draper of Ashton), he settled in Currier Lane, later moving to Moss Cottage, Manchester Road.

Joseph founded the family firm of J B Pownall & Co. Solicitors, at 127 Old Street, Ashton, and subsequently opened an office in Manchester. The firm later became Hibbert & Pownall, then Hibbert, Pownall & Newton. (More recently in 1999 this firm was merged with Pluck, Andrew & Co, Solicitors of Hyde)

Joseph was elected Town Councillor in 1892 unopposed, representing St Michael's Ward. He became chairman of several important council committees and in particular was chair of the Sewage Disposal Committee overseeing the construction of the new Plantation Farm Disposal Works which was opened in 1903. In 1900 he became Mayor of the Borough of Ashton, a position he retained for three consecutive years. As Mayor, in 1900, he welcomed back to Ashton the volunteers who had served in the Boer War and in 1902 represented the Council at the Coronation of King Edward VII in Westminster Abbey. He was elected a Lancashire County Councillor in 1907 and was Leader of the Ashton Conservative Party from 1904 to 1910. He was appointed an Alderman in 1910 and served as Deputy Mayor in 1910 until his death in 1911. A marble font in Ashton Parish Church commemorates his Mayoralty.

Joseph had joined the 3rd Battalion (Volunteers) of the Manchester Regiment in 1894, eventually resigning his commission as Major in 1910. He was solicitor to a number of charitable, philanthropic, political and recreational organisations, and served as election agent in the local constituency. He was Vestry Clerk at the Parish Church between 1889 and 1901 and a director and legal adviser to a number of local cotton spinning concerns; he was a member of the 'Ashton Syndicate' who were instrumental in building several cotton mills in the area at the turn of the twentieth century. He was elected President of the Ashton, Stalybridge and District Law Society in 1902-3. As a Freemason, he served in senior positions over many years.

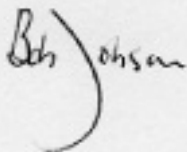
Sadly, on 4 March 1911, at the early age of 47, Joseph died of a stroke. He was accorded a military funeral, the service taking place at Ashton Parish Church and the funeral was attended by upwards of 85 carriages carrying Town Council and other representatives and a body of some 150 territorial soldiers. It has been estimated that 15,000-20,000 townspeople lined the route via Stamford Street to the church. Ending the burial service at Hurst Cemetery there was a 60 strong territorial firing party sending out three volleys and the sounding of the last post.

Joseph is remembered as a thoroughly good-hearted Englishman, a good and faithful servant of the townspeople, who was well liked and respected. He was a brilliantly successful advocate, businessman and leader. ***The Ashton Herald*** in its obituary columns considered that, although a very busy man in his profession, he proved himself to be a zealous and able guardian of the public interest.

A memorial oil painting given by public subscription was unveiled at the Town Hall in March 1912.

**Christine Clough, Secretary of Tameside Local History Forum**, is grateful to Mr Alan Pownall, grandson of Joseph Boothby Pownall, for passing on the above information.

## BOB DOBSON



Buys, sells and searches for  
**Lancashire & Cheshire**  
local history books etc

'Acorns', 3 Staining Rise  
Staining, Blackpool FY3 0BU

Tel/Fax 01253 895678  
landypublishing@yahoo.co.uk

## Thackeray's

48-50 Manchester Road, Denton, M34 3LE

### Thackeray's Books



Thousands of books in stock  
Adults' and children's titles  
College course books  
Lots of cut-price offers  
We can order any book in print

### Thackeray's Tea Room

Enjoy the taste of good food  
Everything from a snack  
to a full meal



### Thackeray's Arts & Crafts



Art Materials, Craft Kits, Gifts,  
Cardmaking, Calligraphy, etc  
Winsor & Newton and Reeves  
Special offers on canvases

**Tel: 0161 320 4220**

## Holiday Reading

*An occasional series of articles about our former Blue Badge Guide's reading of long-established books with a tangential relationship to Tameside history. He starts with **Helena**, Evelyn Waugh's 1950 novel.*

The Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, made the historic pilgrimage to Palestine, found pieces of wood from the True Cross, and built churches at Olivet and Bethlehem. Her life coincided with one of the great turning points of history: the recognition of Christianity as the official religion of the Roman Empire.

Waugh wrote his short, imaginative work as a novel because much of Helena's life 'begins and ends in surmise and legend.' He claims Britain as her birthplace: the daughter of a British Chief. Her husband was Constantius, a great-nephew of the Emperor Claudius, visiting Britain in 273. Their eyes met across a feast and their love blossomed during furious horse-riding. The couple settled in Dalmatia, where the young Constantine was born. Both husband and son became Emperors, but Helena was not invited to Rome until she was past 70 and attended Constantine's jubilee.

Their slow conversion to Christianity leads to Helena deciding in 326 to seek out the Holy Places in Jerusalem, all heavily restored after 300 years of neglect, building and rebuilding....the Sepulchre, the Upper Room of the Last Supper, the Garden of Gethsemane, Golgotha.... She saw the Crown of Thorns, the Lance, the Holy Coat, the Shroud....but she wanted to find the True Cross. She is told all kinds of fantastical tales: 'the Cross was compounded of every species of wood so that the entire vegetable world could participate in the act of redemption.' 'Nonsense,' said Helena.

After much searching, the answer comes in a dream and she is shown the spot by the very Jew who had hidden the Crucifix after the execution. On awakening she sees the imprint of a goat's hoof where he had told her to dig. Three crosses are found – which is THE one? The timbers are laid in turn next to a dying woman – she recovers after touching the third one.

So fragments of the True Cross can, it is said, be found across Christendom, and there were 136 parish churches dedicated to Helena. Some think our very own Ashton Parish Church was once one of them. Its wonderful Medieval glass tells a different, even more dramatic, version of the discovery of the True Cross by Helena.

The stories live on...a few years ago in a shady inner courtyard in Crete I was told that the basil growing in pots reminded the faithful that Helena dug where the plant was sprouting, because it resembles a cross....and that a basilica is so called in the herb's honour.

Almost as an afterthought, it seems Helena also rescued the bodies of the Magi, which now rest in Cologne Cathedral. If you don't believe me, nip up to the Three Crowns on Huddersfield Road, Scouthead, and read the explanation of the pub's name. Cheers.

**Roy Parkes**

## Comments on Carrbrook: a Textile Village and its Valley Dr M Nevell, 2006

Dr Nevell's recent book (1) on Carrbrook's industrial history contains several errors, and its treatment of some recent topics should not be regarded as comprehensive. This note identifies some of these features of the book, offers constructive comments, and provides accurate references to Carrbrook's recent history that readers may find useful.

The outside back cover of the book carries a photograph of the CPA logo of the Calico Printers' Association carved in stone 'above the doorway of the company's headquarters on Mosley Street in Manchester'. The CPA head office was in St James' Buildings on Oxford Street, not Mosley Street (5).

The book states (page 64) that Carrbrook Village School closed in the 1970s as the textile industry workforce declined. In fact the school did not close. It was merely re-located to a new and larger building to cater for the increased number of pupils associated with local housing development (5).

The book's description (pages 79-81) of the disaster caused by the hexane vapour explosion at Chemstar Ltd in 1981 in part of the former CPA print-works is superficial and contains errors. The ripples of that event spread far beyond Carrbrook. The lessons learned from the explosion and its aftermath helped to bring about significant improvements at national level in the laws governing chemical process safety and the protection of the environment from industrial accidents.



Accordingly, the history of the Chemstar episode deserves to be recorded correctly and distinguished clearly from anecdote. In this connection the book's version (page 80) of how a worker (a lorry driver) was killed in the fire is not supported by the evidence in the Health & Safety Executive Report (2) and the Greater Manchester Fire Service Report (6), and should not be presented as history. Similarly the book's claim that the explosion was caused when 'a chemical reaction started, resulting in the ignition of hexane vapour' is incorrect (2).

The Health and Safety Executive report of the events surrounding the Chemstar explosion and fire (2) is identified incorrectly as 'HMSO 1982' by Dr Nevell in his text and is not listed in his references. Examination of Dr Nevell's text suggests that he has relied on the anecdotal version of events set out at the Carrbrook village website (7). A copy of the HSE report has been available at Tameside Local Studies Library since 1982. More recently an independent expert analysis (3) of the HSE report has been placed in the library. HSE inspectors who frequently vis-

ited the Chemstar plant could have enforced simple changes to make the company operate its process safely, and indeed they had a duty to do so under the Health and Safety at Work Act. Reference (3) sets out a detailed technical argument that by not exercising their legal powers and duties the HSE inspectors were criminally negligent in allowing Chemstar to operate its flammable waste solvent distillation processes in a primitive way that was self-evidently hazardous and ultimately led to a disaster.

After the fire, the Chemstar site was found to be contaminated to a depth of several metres with a wide range of hazardous chemicals, some of which (in particular dioxins) are extremely toxic. Based on well-documented histories of similar situations (the contamination of housing by leaching from chemical waste landfill sites in the US and Holland) there was a risk that the chemicals would leach from the Chemstar site into the soil underlying the village and become a health hazard.

This social and environmental aspect of Carrbrook's recent history is discussed comprehensively in (4), a copy of which is in Tameside Local Studies Library. Prior to the scientific investigation of the Chemstar site contamination, it was widely and wrongly believed that large fires on chemical plants burned the sites clean. Reference (4) also gives details of the investigations and clean-up of the Chemstar site contamination that were carried out by Tameside MBC to allow the present use of the land as a country park.

The documents cited below may be of interest to anyone seeking detailed information on the particular strands of Carrbrook's history created by Chemstar's ill-fated operations in the former printworks.

**Dr Tom Craig**  
**tcraig@distillation.demon.co.uk**

References:

1. Michael Nevell with Brian Grimsditch and Caroline King (2006) Carrbrook: ***A Textile Village and its Valley. A Study in the Industrialisation of the Pennine Uplands.*** Tameside MBC and the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit.
2. Health and Safety Executive (1982) ***Explosion and Fire at Chemstar Ltd.***
3. Tom Craig (1983) ***Who inspects the Factory Inspectors?*** (New Scientist, Volume 98, No. 1364, pp 954-957.
4. Craig TO and Grzonka RB (1994) ***A case study of land contamination by solvents, polychlorinated biphenyls and dioxins.*** Land Contamination and Reclamation, Volume 2, No.1, pp 19-25.
5. Mr Ron Collins (Carrbrook). Private communication.
6. Greater Manchester Fire Service: Chemstar Fire Report FP/F/44/11. Undated, but was noted as having been read by the Coroner at the inquest held in Dukinfield on 17 November 1981. The fire began on 6 September 1981. (A copy of this document has recently been placed in Tameside Local Studies Library).
7. <http://carrbrookvillage.users.btopenworld.com/> (Cowbury Green link).

## More from Mr Micawber and North Derbyshire

Is it rather late in the day to be making confessions of a personal nature? Well here goes - to date I have not assembled any extended personal family trees. In fact, I have the sneaking suspicion that family historians can be very boring, especially to those living outside the time consuming, esoteric world of recycling old and new ancestors. However, one cannot escape the fact that local history impinges and interlinks with families, one cannot be divorced from the other, there is no escape. So, alas, indexing in the Chinley Register Office, an area that stretches from Glossop to the south of Buxton, including the minor towns of Chapel-en-le frith, Hayfield, New Mills, Whaley Bridge and the Hope Valley, briefly goes on.

Not for much longer! The bunting is ready; the champagne is on ice! I write this news report with the end in sight and on site. After over 5 years work indexing the seemingly endless shelves of Birth, Marriage and Death Registers at the Chinley Register Office, the work is all but complete. By January 2008, the Glossop and High Peak Branch indexed 181,660 Births, 153,128 Marriages, 134,369 Deaths, and there are just a handful of Buxton Death Registers to open and close. Ernie Drabble, our local computer wizard, conjured up the consolidated time statistic that the time expended so far equates to real time of 3 years, 1 month and 2 weeks – give or take 5 minutes - there are no plans to bring in the auditors!

The finding of an elusive ancestor, or answer, is not what I seek with my pennings but various bon mots seem to touch nerves, tickle people's fancy or awake dormant recollections amongst the scattered membership of the Derbyshire Family History Society. In the society's September 2007 magazine, there was fleeting mention of the October 1945 murder of a Castleton mother and child. Fellow member Rosamund Pratt, formerly of Castleton, wrote from Bristol:

*I remember mother coming home from a whist drive and saying that Joyce Bock (nee Breeze) and the baby were missing. [The bodies were later found in a cellar of Peveril House (Peveril Café) - it had been the Ship Inn.] The lodger, Harry Jarvis, aged 20 years was later found guilty of the murder of Joyce (the baby's murder was left on the file). She goes on to say that Joyce's husband was a Czechoslovakian refugee, (a former Corporal in the Czechoslovakian Air Force) who, together with a colleague, had gone back to their homeland to find homes for their English wives.*

Member Alan Barker from Kenilworth responds to anything anecdotal about Second World War aircraft accidents or local to New Smithy (between Hayfield and Chapel). In the society's December 2007 issue, his mouth watering report mentioned that, during the Second World War, Womens Voluntary Service ladies sold Shaw's 'succulent meat pies' at Croft House, New Smithy. According to my contemporary report, the WVS ladies of Buxworth were more than equally enterprising: 'Shaw's of Chapel-en-le-frith delivered pies to Bugsworth War Memorial Club. Several ladies, including Mrs A W Cribb, Mrs A E Fryatt, and Mrs M Holford, sold these pies to the villagers, later they developed the service into selling jam tarts and buns. Clothes couldn't be bought off the peg, a rationing system had been introduced whereby each item, in addition to the cost, was allocated so many coupons - each person was given 20 points to last 6 months, a coat=20 points, a dress = 5 points, a pair of shoes = 7 points etc. Once a month a 'Swop Day' was held at the club:

*mothers brought their children's outgrown garments and shoes which could be exchanged for larger sizes.' Later the venue was changed to Buxworth School.*

My shadowy, over the shoulder, Mr Micawber, mentioned in the last **History Alive Tameside** magazine, although turning up a little tardily, proved to be still alive and kicking. The September 2007 issue of the Kent Family History magazine published an extended article describing the local and family history of the extended Buck family, who originally lived and made a host of house moves, largely within what is now known as Tameside. The story revolves around my purchase, many moons ago, of two 120 year old framed testimonials to a Charles Buck. Starting life as a bobbin turner, he became the first Chief Constable at Margate, before moving to a similar post at Rochdale. The immediate response was several levels below disheartening but then at the end of the year Mr Micawber produced a dual turn up.

The first was a letter from a Peter Lomas, living in Wiltshire, by chance a member of the Kent Family History Society. He had recently published a book which in great detail describes both the chronological development and his family connections with the former Buxton Hydro Hotel, known later as the Spa Hotel. Peter was seeking local knowledge to help with the promotion of his book, and he later kindly furnished me with a copy. The first Mr Micawber moment came when reading the revelatory chapter on how and why hundreds of wounded Canadian troops ended up at Buxton during the First World War, together with a mass of detailed research and references to articles in the **Buxton Advertiser**. What I had lovingly dubbed 'The Canadian Black Hole' first came to my notice whilst indexing the Buxton 1914-1920 BDM Registers.

The answer was an immediate heart-stopping déjà-vu. Originally, the Canadians were hospitalised in large hotels, unused due to the war, in of all places - MARGATE. A decision had to be made to move the hospitalised Canadians inland: Margate was being both shelled from the sea and subjected to sporadic aerial bombing by the Germans. Fortuitously, Buxton had many similar, large, under-utilised hotels that could be quickly converted to hospitals, including Peter's Buxton Hydro Hotel. A German POW Camp on the southern outskirts of Buxton may also have influenced the decision.

The second letter came from Suzannah Foad, a researcher and archivist at Margate Museum, claiming that she was noseby by nature (a self-effacing statement that I rather took a liking to) and would be interested in any further revelations concerning Charles Buck. Furthermore, she enclosed two articles by a W H Bishop from old issues of **Bygone Kent**, entitled 'Seaside Coppers.' The articles outlined the history and development of the Margate Borough Police from 1858, until it was amalgamated into the Kent Constabulary. I would hazard a guess that the gradual development of this constabulary would broadly fit any fledgling force that you could care to name. A police constable in 1858 was paid £1 for an 84 hour week, had no time off for meals and there were no rest days until 1912. (Phew). Charles Buck's background was stated to be largely unknown, although he was claimed to be heavily involved with Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee Celebrations. The serendipitous links to the Buxton Hydro Hotel and the Canadians continued: a paragraph mentioned the aerial bombing by silent Zeppelins and Gotha aircraft during the First World War.



The Glossop and High Peak Branch finally and seasonally wrapped up the present known records of Charlesworth Top Chapel in time for Christmas. Eventually there will be two complementary CDs on offer, one in an easy read deciphered format of the nearly 900 pages of assorted records. The other is in the form of scanned images of the original documents. Make no mistake, the first version is so much easier to read, clinical but correct, whereas the second version is for purists, those who hate short cuts as in haircuts or generally prefer to make life difficult for themselves! Many thanks are due to a working nucleus of local members, that is the 2 handfuls who undertook various levels of homeworking punishment. There were no rumbles or grumbles, well, not within my hearing or knowledge. CD copies, and our thanks, were officially handed over to the minister Stephen Hartle and the chapel trustees, whilst the original records are now safely lodged in the County Record Office at Matlock.

There could well be a sting in this tale: at Charlesworth Top Chapel is safe Number 2, still awaiting the 'open- sesame' treatment. A case of one door closes, another opens, welcome aboard Pandora? Also waiting in the wings is a stack of records recently retrieved from the deserted organ loft of Bugsworth Primitive Methodist Chapel which closed for services in 1989.

### **The Monumental Inscriptions at Chinley Independent Chapel, 1711**

The April 2006 walkabout disk, containing nearly 600 Monumental Inscriptions and 150 cremations has now, at long last, been found and converted from an outdated, given up the ghost, 1992 Apple Mac system to a Microsoft Word format. There is a long and convoluted story to finding the disk, the plot variously involves a power cut, a leaking toilet cistern, a keyboard and printer awash with water, a surge protector and lastly a fridge/freezer, in that order with yet more embellishments. All will be eventually revealed together with the inscriptions.

Earlier, I mentioned bunting and champagne, for the dawning completion of indexing all the BDM Registers at Chinley Registration Office. Well, you really knew that it was too good to be true! After much gnashing of teeth and soul searching, there are moves afoot for the Branch to take on the Birth Registers for the Bakewell and Tideswell Registration Districts that are currently held at the Bakewell Register Office.

No rest for the wicked or the willing!

**Keith Holford**  
**Derbyshire Family History Society**

## Facts from 1918: Millbrook & Stalybridge

### January:

- Some shops in Stalybridge decided to close at 8pm on Saturday nights to solve the problem of food shortages.
- Jane Smith, Castle Farm, Carrbrook, was attacked at 6am on her way to work. She fought her attacker for 20 minutes before being rescued by two men who had heard her screams. They found her with a sack over her head and a rope around her throat.
- Mary Bethell of St James's School was awarded a medal and certificate for five years full, and punctual, attendance.

### February:

- Stalybridge Council reported 83 births and 100 deaths in the previous three months.
- The supply of sheep for the meat scheme fell from 48 to eight.
- John William Marsh was killed at Carrbrook Printworks, having been caught in the rollers.

### March:

- An aeroplane was brought down in Crows i'th' Wood by unexpectedly high winds. The pilot was taken to Oakfield House to recover whilst the 'plane was guarded by the Cheshire Volunteer Regiment.
- A Labour Party was formed in Stalybridge.

### May:

- A communal kitchen was opened in Carrbrook to provide hot meals. Three hundred who had bought a meal-ticket attended on the 3rd.
- There were terrible thunderstorms on the 17th, 21st and 22nd with a lightning storm lasting for eight hours.
- Harry Harrop published *The Bird Life of Brushes Valley*, but it would be another Millbrook man, Richard Wolfendale, who would become the first RSPB full-time warden with Eastwood as the first dedicated reserve.

### June:

- A selection of civilian suits was available on the 15th. There were 34 patterns and would cost 57/6 [£2.87]. There were 19 boys' patterns, and overcoats costing 3 guineas [£3.15].
- Postcards would now cost one penny postage.
- 8,000 ration books were distributed in Stalybridge. Families would be allowed 50 pickling eggs for the winter.
- Two nine year olds stole £40.50 from a Stalybridge shop.
- 4,000lbs of bones were in circulation every week, but in reclamation week, only half were recovered.

### July:

- There was a meeting at the Town Hall to raise more money for regular parcels of food and clothing for the troops.
- One hundred and thirty gross wild roses [18,720] from John Groom's Homes for Crippled and Blind Girls were sold: over £7 was raised.
- Baby week was marked with a pram parade from the Welfare Centre to West Hill. There were 60 entries. £1,000 was raised for POWs.
- Councillor J H Hall travelled to Middlesbrough to attend the Annual Conference of the UK Federation of Retail Newsagents.

- The new fire-engine arrived from Leyland Motors. It could run at a speed of 35-40 mph and deliver 450 gallons of water a minute.

### **August:**

- To mark the anniversary of the outbreak of war, there was a service at St Paul's to note Remembrance Day.
- John Cumberland had finally opened a local branch of the Comrades of the Great War on Market Street. Stalybridge Band led the Scouts and over 150 veterans to the celebrations. Maimed and blind soldiers were taken there on wagons.
- Three local farmers were fined for selling skimmed or watered milk.
- The Directors of the Printworks put aside £5,000 for their work people's benefit.

### **September:**

- The latest medical report noted 26 births and 40 deaths with 12 cases of bronchitis and 9 of influenza.
- Pansy Day raised over £80 for the YWCA who ministered to the women's auxiliary forces.
- St James's School introduced an experiment to save fuel and power. The morning session would last from 9am until noon, and the afternoon session from 1:15 until 3:40. If successful, it would be used throughout the Borough.
- The meat supplies for the town would be 23 beasts, 150 freshly killed sheep, 45 quarters of beef and 45 frozen lambs to feed a population of 23,000 for a week.
- Trying to save fuel, restricted lighting was tried out in Millbrook. There were so many complaints that light was soon restored.

### **October:**

- A 6" howitzer was to visit. There was a big push to raise £125,000 to 'feed the guns'.
- Only 2,800 tons of coal arrived – the previous year 5,000 tons had been delivered.
- A traction engine towing a Lancashire boiler lost control, and ran down Ditchcroft. The engineer stayed on board, and managed to steer them round the corner.

### **November:**

- Bonfire Night was enjoyed despite the regulations which banned lighting them. The following morning, the air was full of wood smoke.
- To avoid influenza, mothers were told to keep homes clean and 'flushed with fresh air', to gargle, and eat light food and broth.
- Schools closed at mid-day on the 11th to allow the children to celebrate peace with their parents.
- Stalybridge started to plan a permanent memorial.
- Mr Harold Feber showed his film: ***The Blood Red Trail of the Hun*** at Millbrook Conservative Club.
- The new Education Act was introduced: there would be no more half-time exemptions, and no child under 12 could be employed.

### **December:**

- The War Bonds campaign continued into a week which was known as Thanksgiving Week. £116 was raised for Stalybridge War Prisoners.
- The 14th: Election Day – *'If only women would realise that they in particular can wield an enormous influence'*, and a question was put to a local candidate: *'Do you support equal moral standards for men and for women?'* There was no reply noted.

- The influenza epidemic was taking its toll: 52 dead in October, 35 in November, and 22 by the 10th of December.
- The year ended with the news that a regular programme would start at Stalybridge Celtic, the mills would restart following the latest strike, and 2,880 tins of unsweetened condensed milk were for sale.
- And on the last day of the year, there was a terrible snow storm.

## **Irene Smith 1917 – 2007**

*Remember me with smiles and laughter*

Irene was the youngest of three children born to William Rhodes and his wife, and was probably one of the last of the children born to a First World War casualty still alive at the 90th Anniversary of the Armistice.

Thirty years old William Rhodes DCM was born in Millbrook on 9 January 1887, to Robert and Kitty at Grenville Street and baptised at St James's on 6 February 1887. The family had moved from Greenfield where his brother, Fred, and sisters Frances and Mary Jane were born. On 1 February, 1885, his sisters Ellen [aged 6] and Emma were baptised. He attended St James's School until 20 December 1899. The family moved to Stamford Street and then 423, Huddersfield Road.

He married Anne Dawson Thornley in 1908, and lived at 301 Huddersfield Road, where they had two children: Harold [born January 1911] and Mary [born 1913]. Irene was born in the September following his death. All his children were educated at St James's School. The family later moved to 20 Lindsay Street, Stalybridge.

They visited the inauguration of the Tyne Cot Memorial to the missing in Belgium, and made regular, annual visits there. Irene continued to visit following her marriage to the late Walter Smith, their subsequent move to live at Sheffield Road, Hyde, and the birth of her daughter, Sheila. She also journeyed to the battle fields paying her own tribute to the site where her father had died on 31 July 1917. She made her final visit to the ceremony at the Menin Gate on 11 November 2007. Unfortunately, she was taken ill on her return and died, aged 90, on the 18th. A memorial service was held for her at Rosemount Trinity Methodist Church.

She and I shared many telephone conversations, and she was able to help me with her father's biographical details. Her lively mind and positive outlook on life coupled with her determination to keep her father's name alive should be an inspiration to us all.

## **Kathryn Booth – Millbrook**

### **Are you reading this?**

So are many others in Tameside and Greater Manchester, as *HAT* reaches a wide audience. Advertising can include your own black and white artwork and rates are very reasonable:

**Quarter page : £15**

**Half page : £25**

**Full page : £40**

Send copy to: **HAT Advertising**

**218 Newmarket Road, Ashton-under-Lyne OL7 9JW**

**or: [clough@tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk](mailto:clough@tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk)**

## Book Reviews

***A View O' Round Here***, Mike Riley, 36pp A4. 2005. £7.50

Available from Portland Basin Museum

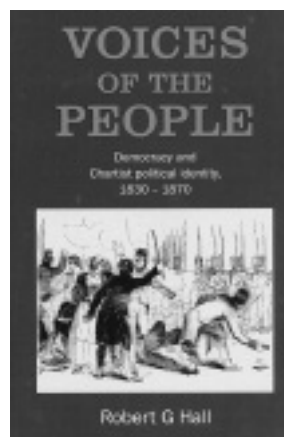
The sub-title on the cover says it all: 'Stories, views and reminiscences 1943-1965 of a lad growing up in Ashton'. Mike Riley grew up in a two-up, two-down terraced house in Egerton Street, Ashton, and attended St Mary's Roman Catholic School nearby. His memories are arranged by topics rather than chronologically and give us a series of all too brief glimpses of Ashton in the immediate post-war years - shops, cinemas, Monday wash day, the Coronation parties, Saturday jobs, the beginnings of Rock n' Roll and much else. There are some good stories, including a meeting with Lowry on Park Road, Dukinfield. Mike's father was head porter at Ashton General Hospital during the war and after, and some of his experiences are here, too. An engaging, if disjointed, read.

**Alan Rose**

***Voices of the people: democracy and Chartist political identity, 1830-1870***,

Robert G Hall, Merlin Press, 2007. 228pp. £15.95 [www.merlinpress.co.uk](http://www.merlinpress.co.uk)

This is the eighth volume in the Merlin Press 'Chartist studies' series. Despite a rich vein of primary sources, much of Chartist history has focused upon its leaders and divisions between 'moral force' and 'physical force' Chartists. Given the immense significance of Chartism - today we take for granted five of the 'Six Points' - it is perhaps surprising that historical analysis has been so narrow. In this volume Robert G. Hall takes a fresh approach and explores Chartism from the grassroots. It is based upon an extensive study of **Ashton-under-Lyne and Stalybridge**, which he describes as 'two of the most militant Chartist towns'. Hall challenges the interpretations of Gareth Stedman Jones and Patrick Joyce and argues there was a significant and democratically autonomous working-class base to the movement. Although Hall succinctly sets the scene, this work is not for the newcomer to the history of Chartism (for whom Ted Royle's *Chartism*, Longman Seminar Series, is ideal); rather it should be read in relation to other writings on Chartism. Throughout the work there are detailed references to places, events and individuals across many areas of **Tameside**. The significant role of women activists is explored (1,312 of the 6,312 **Ashton** signatories of the First Petition were women.) and there is a study of sixty-five identified Chartist activists during the period 1838-42. An appendix provides thirteen tables of social, economic and political data. This is an important contribution to Chartist historiography which will also be of interest to local historians. It is well-written and very readable - recommended.



**Bob Hayes**

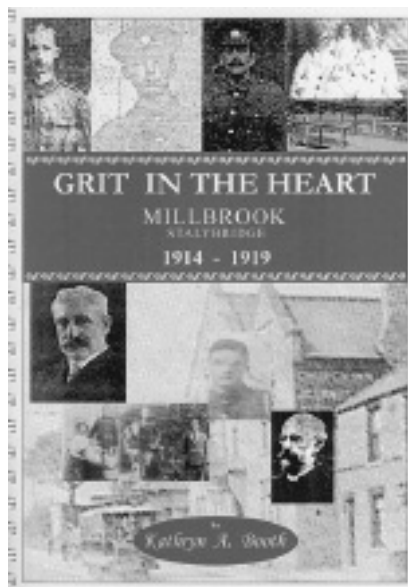
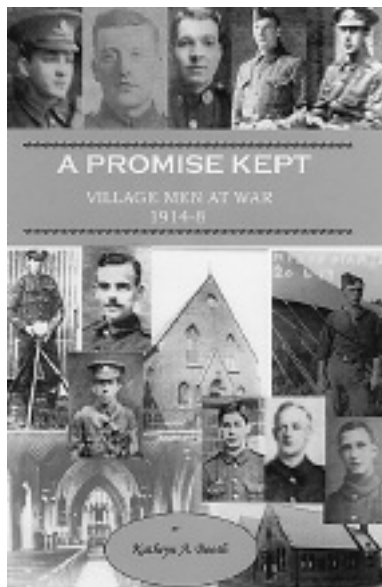
***A Promise Kept - Village Men at War 1914-18***, Kathryn A Booth, A4 [2007] 168pp. Illus. £12.50

Non decorated soldiers were effectively anonymous until the carnage of the First World War. In Tameside, for example, there appear to be no memorials to those who died in the Boer War (1899-1902). A different attitude prevailed after 1918 and many (but not all) Stalybridge men are commemorated on the town's beautiful War Memorial in Trinity Street. Some men from the outlying settlements were missed, however. Kathryn Booth has worked tirelessly to compile a full list of the casualties from her home village of Millbrook - a promise made to her grandfather: hence the book's title. She has also included men from Carrbrook, Heyheads, Heyrod and Copley. The book is more than a list of names: it is a set of mini-biographies, mostly sharing a common background. A three-page potted history of Millbrook serves to give context (although the dates given for the two Methodist chapels are not quite right) and there are helpful maps. Altogether a remarkable achievement.

### Alan Rose

Also by Kathryn: ***Grit in the Heart*** – Millbrook 1914-1919, A4 [2007] 260pp. Illus. £20.00

A virtual recreated diary of village life which runs concurrently with what was happening at the front.



***The Buxton Hydro (Spa Hotel) 1886 -1974*, Peter Lomas.**

Published by Ashridge Press/Country Books. Bakewell. DE45 1NN. 317 pp. £14.99.

Over 300 pages of Buxton social, local and family history is expounded and explained within the 108 year lifetime of *The Buxton Hydro Hotel*, later rechristened *The Spa Hotel*. What started off as a quest by the author for knowledge of his family history background, developed into the detailed research of the consequences in the 1840s of an Anglican minister, the Reverend James Shore, being unjustly imprisoned in Exeter jail for preaching without a licence in Totnes, Devon.



The Reverend Shore eventually entered into a change in the direction of his life, by opening the Malvern House Hydro, Broad Walk, Buxton. He had become increasingly influenced by the medicinal properties that were claimed for spa waters. By 1862 he was living at Matlock, he and his wife assisting at Smedley's Hydro, before opening his own hydro at Matlock House which he ran until 1865.

In 1866, Shore opened the Malvern Hydropathic and Homeopathic at Hartington Street, Buxton, also taking on the lease of the Royal Hotel in Spring Gardens. He died, due to a riding accident, near the *Duke of York*, Burbage in August 1874, leaving the Hydro in his will to his grandson H R P Lomas.

H R P Lomas was variously an antique collector, linguist, musician, traveller and bachelor. He was a boarder at Ashwood House, Upton, Cheshire and then Clifton College, Bristol, keeping a diary for the years 1874-1876. In effect, it was a snapshot of what life was like for a 14 year old boy in a middle class Victorian family. Having been willed the Buxton Hydro by his grandfather, he went on to develop both the site and the range of facilities, expanding it from hydro to hotel.

The First World War largely put paid to tourist visitors to Buxton. In 1917 the Hydro was requisitioned by the Canadian Army, converted into a military hospital and renamed the Granville Canadian Special Hospital. The Canadians had been moved from Margate, where sea and aerial bombardment had made their stay untenable. There is a wealth of information on how a First World War temporary hospital operated, with references to Canadian war diary sources. Afterwards, it took two years' litigation by the Spa, to resolve the claim for back rent and dilapidations. The action was used as a test case for other military requisitions.

Late in 1920, the Hydro was advertising in the **Buxton Advertiser** that 'The Hydro is open for business as usual.' But the habits of the general public had changed, stays were now for days rather than weeks. Although the entertainments and balls were as lavish as ever, the balance sheet showed a different story. Later, in an attempt to widen the appeal, a conversion from largely hydro to hotel was undertaken.

On New Year's Day 1931, the name changed from the Buxton Hydro to Spa Hotel. The **Buxton Advertiser** ran an effusive article entitled:

*Why the Hydro is dead, long live the Spa!  
Why a hotel changed its name.*

By November 1937, the receiver was running the Spa, eventually to be taken over by Griffin Hotels. The group had plans to use the outstanding acoustic ballroom for wrestling and boxing matches, a far cry from the old lavish balls and functions. After a while, Griffin Hotels also fell by the wayside and for twelve months the Spa was left empty. By the start of the Second World War an attempt was made to reopen the Spa, but only the bars. In 1940, to escape the German bombing raids, Norwich Union Life Insurance bought the Spa and moved from Norwich, echoing the Canadians move from Margate in the First World War.

After the war, there were further turbulent times for the Spa, passing in and out of various ownerships, eventually becoming virtually ownerless and empty, taken over by squatters and the death knell coming with its demolition in 1974.

Along with this detailed history, the author also provides pen portraits of members of staff, notable famous residents and visitors, the entertainments, skating on wheels (roller skating), descriptions of the various hydropathic treatments, the year diary kept by H R P Shore, plus a raft of references and an extensive index.

**Keith Holford**

***What about the workers?***

**[www.workershistory.org](http://www.workershistory.org)**

**NORTH WEST LABOUR HISTORY**



## **Nineteenth Century Transport Links between Tameside and Oldham**

My involvement in the Industrial Heritage Centre at Emmaus Mossley has sparked off interest in the history of where I live in Grotton, Saddleworth, which in turn has taught me about the transport links between what is now Tameside and Oldham in the nineteenth century - first the Huddersfield Canal and then later the railways. As a result I am now caught up with two separate pieces of work in having heritage information boards erected in both Mossley and Grotton.

The Mossley work is aiming to have a Heritage Information Board erected on the towpath near to the Waggon Road/Micklehurst Road bridge. Tameside MBC has already erected one board next to the Market Place in Mossley and it would be good to have it replicated next to the canal. The board mentions the Heritage Centre. This idea is subject to getting a grant which is being supported by the Huddersfield Canal Society.

My explorations have included discussion with Tameside's Tourism Officer who is being most helpful and is also looking at the idea of signposting from the tow path to the Heritage Centre. The canal, of course, continues east into Saddleworth which is now part of Oldham MBC.

The Grotton board concerns the history of Grotton and Springhead Station, built in 1856, and the Delph Donkey rail service that ran between Delph and Oldham Clegg Street Station via Greenfield. At one stage there were nineteen trains a day stopping at Grotton and I have collected many memories of local people who used it or worked on it. The Oldham to Greenfield section also carried mainline trains through to Huddersfield joining the Manchester line at Greenfield. At the other end, passengers could catch trains at Clegg Street to Ashton via Park Bridge. Sadly these branch lines all went in the 1950s and 60s.

**Richard Darlington**

**Mossley Civic Society and Emmaus Mossley**

### ***Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter – 9 January 1948***

#### **No Free Travel for Pensioners**

The [Stalybridge, Hyde, Mossley and Dukinfield] Joint Transport Board has refused the request of the Old Age Pensioners' Association to grant free travel on the buses during the slack periods of the day – from 9 to 12 and 2 to 4.30. In reply to the application by Mr Robert Horsfield of 12 Freeman-road, Dukinfield, the pensioners' hon. secy., a letter from the Board stated that no further concessions for free travel can be granted.

**Submitted by Bob Hayes**

## Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

When I was a young girl I remember a big house at the bottom of Turner Lane. The drive of the house was on Lord Street, and it ran along Lees Street and the back was on Elizabeth Street. Ashton-under-Lyne. It was demolished about 1952/1953. Me and my friends used to climb up these big chimneys that were in the house. Over the years I have tried to find out about the house to no avail. The only thing that I have found is a sketch of two cottages called Ashurst Cottages and they are listed on an old map of Ashton, but the house did not look like them. There is still an original wall that runs up Lees Street. Can anyone help name the house and the date it was built, also if there are any photos of the house? It would solve a big mystery before the house gets forgotten.

Regards

**Pat Greenwood**

*Editor:* If you can help, please contact me at: **jillc4@btinternet.com** and I shall send your replies on to Pat.

## History Alive Tameside by post

Copies of *HAT* are available by post. Please complete the address form (or a photocopy) and enclose a £1.50 cheque or postal order - payable to 'Tameside Local History Forum' - to cover post, packing and administration.

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

Post code:.....

Send to: HAT by Post:

218 Newmarket Road, ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE OL7 9JW.

# Stalybridge Splash



**Bank Holiday Monday**  
**28 May 2008**  
**12.00noon - 5.00pm**

Tameside's biggest annual street festival is back for a record breaking eighth year!

This massive event promises to bring Stalybridge Town Centre and Armentieres Square to life with a fantastic programme of colourful street theatre, fun participatory workshops, music and dance for the whole family.



**Event hotline: 0161 342 4114**



Ashton Town Hall



Dukinfield Town Hall



Denton Town Hall



Stalybridge Civic Hall



Hyde Town Hall



Ryecroft Hall

Photographs Courtesy of Tameside Metropolitan Borough