



# HISTORY ALIVE TAMESIDE

## 10th Anniversary Edition



Stamford Park Early 1900s

Issue 5

Free

# Tameside Family History Centre



Open up Your Past  
Discover Your Family Tree



One-to-one help  
for your search

Inside Setantii  
Visitor Attraction,  
Ashton Town Hall,  
Ashton-under-Lyne



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

We should like to thank Councillor SR Oldham, leader of Tameside MBC, for his generous donation and support, and Councillor Jackie Lane for a welcome contribution from the Tameside Heritage Development Fund.

The Forum would also like to thank the *History on Your Doorstep* group for donating the proceeds of their ***Smokestack to Urban Chic*** publication towards this issue of ***History Alive Tameside***.

## Point of View

### On-line is fine... but you must think out of the box

The week before I took my finals in 1991 we were all given a document to read, which, we were assured, discussed the most important development in the information world. It was about *the Information Superhighway*, which eventually became what we now know as *the Internet*. *The Internet* has changed our world beyond recognition. We now have global communication and instant access to information.

However...as a Local Studies Librarian I do have some reservations. Increasingly, sources are being digitised and made available on-line. This has led in some quarters to the original sources being devalued. Digitisation has not as yet got a proven life-span. The reason Record Offices use microfilm is because it has a life of 500 years. When I spoke to Andrew Schofield at the North West Sound Archive I asked him what was the most stable medium for storing sound and he said the old 78 rpms! He added that when CDs first came out, we were told that you could fry an egg on them and it wouldn't damage them. Well, we all know differently. I went to a day school which featured a lovely book about the history of a Yorkshire village done by the local community. They had some wonderful photographs, which they had scanned and returned to the owners, so that the only format they had was a digital image. At Tameside Local Studies and Archives, if a photograph is not being donated, we take a copy creating a negative for the long term preservation of the image. There is also the unique experience of looking at original archives. If you are a family historian handling a document that your ancestor has signed, you are making a connection across time.

Also, it is not easy to browse documents on *the Internet* as specific terms retrieve specific information. Looking at the census on microfilm means that, as you go through the enumeration district, you can get a sense of the community as a whole - for example the industry of the area indicated by the occupations and the types of households indicated by information such as servants or multiple occupancy as well as demographic information. You also get a sense of why the census was created and its importance as a social document.

One area that particularly concerns me is *on-line mapping*. I do wonder if my small granddaughter will ever develop spatial awareness, if the only maps she looks at are on-line. I will definitely be bringing her to look at historical Ordnance Survey maps, not only so she can browse and make connections, see infrastructures and developments but also because they are aesthetically pleasing to look at. Current Ordnance Survey maps are now digitised and are only available on-line – they are featureless and have been stripped down to the basic information.

I reiterate that *the Internet* is a wonderful tool for access to, and promotion and dissemination of information.

This is a personal opinion and I am now officially a grumpy old woman!

**Maureen Burns**  
**Assistant Local Studies Librarian**

## Tameside Local History Forum 10 Years On

2010 marks the tenth year of the Tameside Local History Forum, looking back at our humble beginnings to where we are today gives myself and our members a great deal of satisfaction.

In 1999, some individuals/local historians discussed a need for local history groups to come together and have a voice on matters of historical and heritage issues in Tameside.

No sooner was the idea voiced, that it moved on very quickly: £186 was accessed from the Council for room hire and stationery; around a dozen people discussed how we were to move on and form a *Forum*. We were like-minded individuals, who wanted to make sure that our local history was recorded correctly and shared with everyone with an interest in our past.

On 26 January 2000, our first meeting was held and the Tameside Local History Forum launched with eleven groups as founder members. Our aim was to raise public awareness of local history in Tameside.

Our first newsletter of 21 pages was put together by volunteers painstakingly learning how to do this, many not having computer skills but supported by the Volunteer Centre Tameside and TAVYCO.

We had use of an empty shop in our local shopping centre for a weekend, where we went in with tables/chairs and exhibition boards, to show local people what heritage we had on our doorstep. Locals came in to this very unusual event with their memories and photos, buying from a good selection of books on local history. It was all a very exciting time, which we repeated for a couple of years.

Links were made with our local councillors and officials from Museums, Events and Tourism. Several churches in the Forum were involved in Heritage Open Days.

Funding was accessed for members to take IT courses, to produce a leaflet and buy exhibition boards. Many members did not have use of a computer: it was very much a learning curve for us.

### 2010

To date we are a very active group with many successes. We meet five times a year in a very beautiful building, Dukinfield Town Hall, with 30 group members subscribing: they range from Local/Family History, Churches and Canals, to Countryside and Theatre, Museums/Galleries Local Studies, Civic Societies, Heritage Centres and a Church Preservation Society.

We produce this yearly magazine ***History Alive Tameside*** (HAT), which is full of historical articles, book reviews and anniversaries. *HAT* has found its way to some faraway places, such as America, Australia, New Zealand and many other countries. Queries, through our website, have come from Israel and Brazil, with many interesting links from families who emigrated many years ago.



Our empty shop has brought us to a yearly Heritage Fair, where groups, from Tameside and beyond, come together and where the public can enjoy a day finding out about the past.

Many members have now learned new skills, even getting their own books into print and producing research material on all aspects of local history.

*Heritage Open Days* in Tameside is now a huge event, with volunteers hosting the opening of over twenty buildings. With support from the Council, a leaflet is produced with all the events/buildings open. 2009 saw 6,000 visitors coming to the Borough during the weekend.

With our many links, we now have input into new Blue Plaques and Events, the Heritage Consultation group and the new Centre for Applied Archaeology (late University of Manchester Archaeological Unit).

Individuals can enjoy being part of an active social group with visits to listed buildings, libraries and museums, and lectures and social events.

The rest is history and we look forward to the next ten years and what it will bring.

**Christine Clough**

**Hon. Secretary of Tameside Local History Forum**

# **Tameside Local History Forum**

## **‘HERITAGE FAIR’**

**AT HYDE TOWN HALL**

**SATURDAY 2 OCTOBER 2010**

**10.00 AM – 4.00 PM**

**CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR FULL DETAILS  
NEARER THE TIME**

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

## Heritage Open Days in Mossley 2009

The four Heritage Open Days in Mossley started at 11am, on Thursday 10 September 2009 at Mossley Railway Station with local Mayors and Mossley Hollins School Band.



The first stop was at one of Mossley's heritage sites: a blocked up archway through which railway trucks used to carry cotton under Manchester Road into Britannia Mill from a turntable on a railway siding. John Mayall had masterminded all this when he sold land to the rail company for the new railway line so his trucks could have direct access to his mill from the Liverpool docks. He also owned two ships that carried raw cotton from across the Atlantic giving him control over his supply line. A temporary explanation plaque was fixed on the archway for the HODS weekend with the hope this might become a permanent feature in the future. Attention was drawn to the big house visible on the hill above the station, built by John's brother George, which later became Mossley Town Hall.

The next stop was across Manchester Road on Queen Street so two PCSOs held up traffic while the dignitaries, the band and public crossed. The stop was above an underground passageway that used to link the bottom floors of Longlands and Britannia Mills: one end is still visible inside Longlands Mill.

The third stop was at the **Heritage Centre** where The Civic Mayor of Tameside, Councillor John Sullivan, supported by Councillor Val Carter, Mossley's Deputy Mayor, opened the special exhibition on the History of Schooling in Mossley which he praised most warmly. It is comprised of a time line from Victorian times to the present day.

The band then played a final piece. The playing by the school children was superb and they were all well-behaved throughout their visit; it was good to be able to give the Emmaus Mossley Community a treat as part reward for the community

members who had helped in putting on the time line exhibition plus putting up and taking down publicity signs, and for laying on pies and peas for Saturday's visitors. The Mayors thanked Emmaus Mossley for generously providing the space free of charge saying it is not many towns the size of Mossley which have such a splendid Heritage Centre.



On the Saturday morning Dyllis Wolinski, the author of the time line, gave an interesting presentation on *the History of Education in Mossley from Victorian times*. We were reminded of the role children had in the mills at the time the railway opened 160 years ago, originally with no schooling. The time line has illustrations showing the changes from then to today, and even beyond, with the current building of the new Mossley Hollins School.

The Lancaster Monitorial Teaching System:

*Andrew Bell, an Anglican, & Joseph Lancaster, a Quaker, developed this system in the 19th century.*

*Qualified teachers taught top ability groups of pupils to teach children in the lower groups. This system not only provided low cost education but also taught working class children responsibility. "Give me 24 pupils today and I will give you 24 teachers tomorrow."*

*Two religious organizations were formed to provide this education: The Church of England's National Society for the Education of the Poor (1811) and the Nonconformist British and Foreign Schools Society (1814)*

Précis of an extract from the **Spartacus** website:  
**[www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/)**

The time line is still in place and can be seen during Heritage Centre opening hours 2-4pm Wednesdays through to Saturdays.

Emmaus is open 9am-5pm Mondays to Saturdays (Wednesdays till 4.15pm)  
Tel: 01457 83 8608

**Richard Darlington**  
**Mossley Industrial Heritage Centre**





This is an exciting follow up to my article entitled *Dukinfield Halls in Jamaica and North Carolina* in Issue Three of our magazine pages 23-25. You can check online to read it again at: [www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk/hat.htm](http://www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk/hat.htm)

Whilst writing this article, I had known of the existence of Thomas Dukinfield, but every email address or contact details I found bounced back at me.

Two years later, I was delighted to receive an email from Thomas – he had found a copy of my article online on our Forum's website. He is a lawyer working in Washington DC, with an extremely impressive resumé, who has spent the last twenty years researching all instances of the Dukinfield surname in Jamaica and America.

The result of his meticulous research is an 85 page book, ***Barons and Bastards - a History of the Duckenfield Family from English Origins to an American Presence***, which documents the Dukinfield families from Jamaica, North Carolina, Massachusetts, Virginia, Texas, New York and Pennsylvania, set primarily in a geographical context and secondly along a chronological continuum.

His legal background prevents him from claiming conclusive evidence that he is a direct descendant from Colonel Robert Dukinfield of Civil War fame. Robert Dukinfield's great grandson owned the Jamaican plantation from as early as 1700, but his descent becomes a bit muddy, when his mulatto grandson Billy Dukinfield becomes a runaway slave circa 1767 who is eventually caught and resold to John Cross' plantation in Hanover County, West Virginia.

The story involves illegal deals with pirates off Madagascar, plantation owners and their free negro partners and mulatto offspring, the growth of plantations and indentured African apprentices after the demise of slavery. The Pennsylvanian Dukinfields emigrated there from Sheffield in 1854: John and Ann Dukinfield and their eleven children. Their son James, born in 1841, was the father of the film star WC Fields, real name Claude William Dukinfield, and Dukinfields still live in Philadelphia today.

A copy of this book has been deposited at Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre. It is neither a novel nor a narrative, as such, but facts gleaned from quoted original archive sources.

**Gay Oliver,**  
**Family History Society of Cheshire**

## ***The Spirit of Ashton-under-Lyne***

Joyce Raven pp 95 2009 £9.99

Available from *Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre*, local bookshops and online

LANDMARK COLLECTOR'S LIBRARY

### **THE SPIRIT OF ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE**

***The Spirit of Ashton under Lyne*** is a recently published book, which is stirring enthusiasm among those interested in Ashton's past.

Its author, local historian Joyce Raven, has written the book as a sort of tour around Ashton, featuring a wonderful collection of old photographs along with a number of new ones to bring her story up to date.



Joyce Raven

This is not an inaccessible text-heavy tome but a collection of around 170 photographs and some twenty drawings accompanied by detailed captions. You could become engrossed in the book for several hours or you could just happily dip into it from time to time.

The captions are packed with interesting snippets of information, which put the photographs into a historical perspective and demonstrate the research that the author has put into the preparation of the book. Even those, who know quite a lot about Ashton's history, are sure to discover something new!

The virtual tour in the book takes the reader around the town centre, to the West End, Waterloo, Daisy Nook, Park Bridge, Knott Hill, Hurst and Stamford Park.

Some of the photos are from personal collections and appear for the first time, giving an intriguing glimpse into the lives of people in Ashton in past years, capturing the *spirit* of the town, as suggested by the book's title.

The author, Joyce Raven, who was born in Ashton and is now chairman of Stalybridge Historical Society, has previously co-written books with colleague Alan Rose.

**Martin Clark**

## **Query**

Does anyone remember the Dukinfield Harmonizers? It was a music troupe which used to meet at St Mark's Band Club, Dukinfield. It was over 50 years ago. My auntie Gladys and uncle Harold Woodcock used to take me. I was about nine or ten years old. If anyone remembers it or was in the band or has photos, please get in touch. Please contact me through the Forum contacts in this magazine.

**Mary Owen**

## As We Say Goodbye to Another Landmark in Tameside

The factory, known as **Senior Service Ltd in Hyde**, started life as **Hyde Spinning Company Ltd**. It was the first cotton mill to be built on a new site in Hyde for over thirty years. The first sod was dug by Richard Threlfall in 1905, the builders were Partingtons of Middleton Junction and the architect was Sidney Stott, who said he believed the structure would be the equal of any mill ever erected. The spinning mill shut in 1958, with the loss of about 250 employees. [*Hyde Cotton Mills* by Ian Haynes, 2002]

In 1958, the factory was bought by JA Patteirouex [*Pats* as it was fondly known]; the production of cigarettes started in 1960, making over 2,500 cigarettes per minute. But, in 1996, it was announced the factory was to shut and all production was going to Northern Ireland. At this time, production was over 10,000 cigarettes per minute. The factory finally shut in 1999, with the loss of 900 jobs. The total loss of jobs in Tameside and other businesses we dealt with was 4,000.

The building was then bought by Findal Educational Suppliers. In 2008, Findal built a head office and call centre on the site of the car park. All 400 staff moved into the new building in May 2009. The Senior Service buildings were demolished in November 2009: the plans for building a housing estate have been put on hold for now.

**My Memories:** When I went for an interview for a job at Patteirouex, I was asked if I could see numbers in a grid of dots and if my hands were sweaty. Because I could, and they weren't, I got the job; that was October 1963. I was fifteen years old, I stayed for over thirty years and there were a lot of changes in the world during that time.

We made and packed cigarettes. One of my earliest memories was being asked to go for a *long stand* by the mechanics: they left me standing there for twenty minutes before saying, '*Sorry, we have none left*'. Being fifteen in a grown-up world was frightening. Other new starters were asked to go for a *bucket of steam* or a *bubble for a spirit level*. You tended to grow up quickly!

There are lots of reasons I enjoyed working for the company: one was the way everyone would help each other if anyone was in trouble. We all rallied round to help. When a friend's house caught fire, we had collections to buy new stuff. We had social clubs; any one could join. There were fishing, squash, bowls, and football clubs. We had ladies' football team and cricket team. We had games against the men: we beat them lots of times. [Just kidding lads, we cheated sometimes!]

The company was always forward looking, new machines being put in all the time. In the '60s there were six girls on one packing machine: by the middle '70s the making machines were linked to the packing machines. Each module could make and pack 7,000 cigarettes a minute with three crew. I left in August 1975 to have my son [no maternity leave then]. I went back in January 1977. We had started new shifts by then - 6.30am till 2pm, then 2pm till 9.30pm: it would be over ten years before the night shifts started.

Senior Service was a very happy place to work: I made lots of great friends in the time I worked there and we are all still best friends now, over thirty five years later. It is ten years since the company moved to Northern Ireland. Everyone who worked there will tell you, '*You can move the building but not the special friendships we have*'. Gallaher was bought by the Japanese three years ago. I still get a company newspaper about what is happening in the world of cigarettes. I feel proud I was in at the start in Newton, Hyde, Tameside.

*If you have memories, memorabilia, photographs etc. Please help us to build up an archive and bring them to the Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre or contact us through the Forum.*

**Mary Owen**

**Senior Service, 1963 to 1999**

## **The Public Catalogue Foundation**

### **Oil-paintings in Public Ownership**

*The PCF is cataloguing all oil paintings in public ownership in the United Kingdom. It is currently compiling three fully illustrated catalogues of museums and galleries in the Greater Manchester area: one for Central Manchester, one for the East and one for the West.*

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council is participating in this. This means that the whole art collection of oil paintings (in total 174 art works), held in the Astley Cheetham Art Collection, is being digitally photographed and will become part of the illustrated catalogue.

Other benefits include:

- Increased access to the collection for the public
- Great publicity for the collection
- A free set of high resolution, digital images of our paintings photographed by the Foundation
- A fully edited copy of all the painting data as it appears in the catalogue
- The logging of the paintings on the Art Loss Register's data base of paintings
- A free hard-back edition of the catalogue, in which we are featured, as well as a discount on buying other catalogues

The PCF is the sister project of the National Inventory Research Project which catalogued all pre-1900 continental European paintings in the collection. These works can now be accessed via their website, and means that more people have access to the Astley Cheetham Collection

***<http://vads.ahds.ac.uk/collections/NIRP/index.php>***

**Rachel Cornes**

**Social History Curator, Tameside Museums & Galleries**

After some delay the restoration of the **south east sanctuary window and the south side clerestory** windows got under way after Easter. The project costing £140,000 was programmed to take 18 weeks and finished in time for a wedding on 5 September 2008. Scaffolding had to be erected inside the church to gain access to the clerestory windows and protect two colours of the Manchester Regiment which were then encased in wooden boxes. This made the use of the south side of the church and part of the Sanctuary unavailable throughout the summer. Part of the Organ was also sheeted over but was still playable.



The first stage of the restoration was to photograph the window in detail before it was removed and taken to Pendle Stained Glass workshops at Padiham. On arrival at

the workshop the lead outline was traced. The window was dismantled and each individual piece of stained glass was cleaned with distilled water. The lead, which had become very brittle with age, was renewed and the window reassembled using the original photographs and tracings. Once this had been completed copper wire ties were soldered to the lead which would be used to secure the window to new bronze tie bars in the stonework. As the original tie bars were made from iron which was the main cause of the deterioration of the stonework, some of which had to be



replaced. The lead was painted with a special solution to act as a seal between the lead and the glass. The whole window was returned to the church, cemented into the stonework and attached to the new tie bars. Similar work was required on the **plain clerestory windows** where several pieces of glass and stone were replaced.

The two St Helen Windows, which had to be removed for safety but were considered too fragile to be transported to Padiham, were stored in a secure place on site until all the upper scaffolding had been removed. They were then put back in place. The whole project

was completed on time and the church cleaned with the help of the contractors ready for the wedding.

We will soon have four new sets of **Sanctuary furnishings**: one for each season of the Christian year. Each set consists of Altar Frontals, Pulpit Falls, Burse and Veil, Bookmarks and Stoles - green for Ordinary Time, purple for Lent and Advent, red for Special Saints and Pentecost and white for Christmas and Easter. These were commissioned from Juliet Hemingway who is based in Derby, at a total cost of £8000 in 2009. They are all contemporary designs with vibrant colours.

Following Roy Needham's article in the fourth edition of **HAT** last year readers may be interested to know that in the **Parish Church Chest** are over 100 plans, schedules and bundles of papers relating to several companies whose railways ran through the ancient Parish of Ashton on land owned by the Earls of Stamford and Warrington. These archives date from 1840s to 1901 and may have been put in the church when the Old Hall was demolished. The railway companies involved include the Ashton & Stalybridge Joint Railway, Huddersfield and Manchester Railway, Manchester Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway, Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway (Oldham Branch), London and North Western Railway and Oldham Ashton & Guide Bridge Railway. There are also plans of Tramways in the Ancient Parish. It is intended to make a detailed inventory of these archives during the coming summer.



The Friends are always looking for new members and invite you to become a Friend of Ashton Parish Church by joining them and helping to maintain and beautify this wonderful Grade 1 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 the Secretary Mrs Joyce Currie, 27 Rushmere, Ashton-under-Lyne. OL6 9EB Tel: 0161 330 5795.

For Guided Tours of the Church contact:-  
Mr Alan F Bacon, Church Historian and Archivist,  
17 St Christopher's Avenue, Ashton-under-Lyne OL6 9DT Tel: 0161 330 5829.

**Alan F Bacon**  
**Friends of Ashton Parish Church**



## Unveiling Ceremony of the Red Hall Datestone AD 1876

Members, friends and invited guests gathered at the site in readiness for the unveiling ceremony of the date stone, *Red Hall AD 1876*, to be performed by the Civic Mayor of Tameside, Councillor John Sullivan. This event took place on Friday, 11 December 2009 at 2pm. The stone is situated on Audenshaw Road, Audenshaw, almost opposite the new Trinity Church, where I had arranged for refreshments to be served after the ceremony.

This follows the closure of two Audenshaw churches, Bridge Street United Reformed Church and Guide Lane Methodist Chapel, and the demolition, in September 2007, of the Red Hall Chapel, where Trinity now stands, built on the vacant site.

Our society managed to fund the rescue of some important historical stones. Initially, Councillor Jackie Lane, Project Head of Heritage and Tourism, became involved and then, with help from Stuart Mollinson of the Town Manager's office, we had them moved to the stable block at Ryecroft Hall for storage. Mr Barry Hodcroft, a monumental stonemason from Dukinfield, agreed to dress the stone.

We had been in negotiations with Mr Ian Allwood, chief engineer from North West Water, in order to bring about the installation of the datestone in the drystone wall surrounding the reservoirs on Audenshaw Road. This was achieved by means of a grant, obtained by North West Water, to bring about a satisfactory conclusion, with lots of people from all walks of life coming together in order to achieve a common goal.



This has been an ongoing project of the society and a lot of effort has now been rewarded with a very pleasing end result of which we are justifiably proud.

**Julie Fisher**  
**Audenshaw Local History Society**

## Broadbottom History: Stories upon Stories

The history of Broadbottom particularly that listed on our website [www.broadbottomvillage.com](http://www.broadbottomvillage.com) has drawn in enquiries and stories from all over the world, notably from Australia to where many people emigrated in the 1950s. People researching their family history have found the site useful, though inevitably many questions are impossible to answer.

Karen Wilbur contacted us from Australia, through the website, to say that she had been interested to see the photographs of the servants at Hill End House and wondered if one of them might be her great grandfather, James Reid, who had been employed as head gardener at Hill End house in the 1880s. She wondered if we could provide any details of the servants in the photographs. Unfortunately, it is hard to date the photographs exactly but the maids' dresses in one photograph would suggest that they were taken in the 1880s and so Karen's uncle may be in the photograph below. Although the servants are often holding the tools of their trade, it's not possible to identify which would be the head gardener.



**Detail of photograph of servants at Hill End House**

Karen had more luck in finding out more about her great grandfather's sad death with the help of Sue Martin at the Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre in Ashton, who found an article from the ***North Cheshire Herald*** for 24 July 1897. Apparently Mr Reid fell and damaged his ankle, and the wound deteriorated. He was due to have the foot amputated but died suddenly, probably of a heart attack. An inquest was held at the Crescent Inn. Karen wrote, *'Your website has brought a picturesque understanding of their existence to life for me. You also have a photo of Harry Fields which was one of the places they lived as well as Hill End. Thank you.'*

**Mollie Sayer**  
**Broadbottom Community Association**

## The Fletcher Family

*Most of the information in this article is taken from an account by K Cliffe entitled 'The Fletcher Family' and is only a brief glimpse into their lives. The full story makes interesting reading, although some of the information may vary from that available from other sources. I must also thank Ann Stuart for her help.*

Joseph Fletcher was born in 1803 in a weaver's cottage in Failsworth of poor parents who could not afford schooling. Joseph's education was the free lessons given by religious bodies, chiefly the Methodists, and the Sunday school movement.

Joseph began his working life in the employment of Thomas Walmsley, a corn and provision dealer who had mills in Oldham, Ashton and Stalybridge. Eventually Joseph became a salesman, travelling on horseback, seeking orders in the local towns and villages.

On 15 September 1830, his work took him into Manchester and he had the opportunity to be present when the first passenger train from Liverpool to Manchester arrived at Liverpool Road station. It is reported that he shook hands with the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel.

By the 1830s Joseph was a corn dealer and had his own shop on Old Street in Ashton (possibly next door to the Pitt & Nelson Public House) selling sacks of flour corn, bran corn, hops and malt and was a well-respected figure in the corn markets. He was one of the largest bulk purchasers of corn and stocks at his Portland Basin warehouse at times were 10,000 sacks of flour, as well as meal, oats, beans and the like.

During periods of unrest in the late 1830s and 1840s, Joseph invested his money in property. In May 1848, he purchased, from Elizabeth Morris, all the freehold buildings and dwellings in the occupation of the Saddleworth Banking Company and Mr James Kenworthy. In 1846 Joseph became one of the first shareholders of the Knott Hill Water Works Company, serving as a committee member for six years before becoming Chairman. In the late 1840s he began work on what was to be an early shopping precinct in Ashton, which we know today as the Market Avenue. He purchased all the properties around to clear the area for this development. When the landlords of these virtually derelict buildings became aware of Joseph's plans they demanded outrageous prices. These buildings included a cotton mill, foundry, a machine shop as well as scores of wretched houses. Looking from Stamford Street today we can see that the Avenue is quite narrow; this is due to the high price he had to pay for the land and properties. Between Wellington Street and Old Street, one side of the Avenue is single storey and this may have been due to rising building costs. When completed this shopping area was known as Fletcher Arcade.

Joseph was also responsible for developing property in St Michael's Square and in the area around Market Street and Crab Street, which we know today as Fletcher Street. At the time these places were described as 'housing the very scum of the population' and at night were the resort of thieves and prostitutes. It would seem that Joseph greatly improved this area of Ashton.

In 1852 he was elected to the Council in the Market Ward serving for six years and was chairman of the Market Committee. At this stage in his career he was considered to be of middle class standing and he purchased Springfield on Stalybridge Road, a large red brick house with a conservatory, coach house and stables, set in extensive grounds.

For ten years he was Churchwarden at the Parish Church and was closely interested in the rebuilding of a new Parish School in 1862. Despite his great interest in making money, Joseph was a benevolent man giving to various charities and opening flower shows, bazaars and Christmas events.

Joseph and Elizabeth had no children and in 1865, aged 63, Elizabeth died. Joseph never recovered from this sad event and rarely left Springfield. In 1869 he asked his nephew, John Fletcher, to take over the management of all of his affairs. Joseph died on the 8 April 1871 and was buried in Failsworth. Joseph's entire estate, including Springfield, passed to his nephew, John.

John, the son of James Fletcher, was born in Failsworth in 1829 and at the age of six he was a child labourer in the cotton trade. After his day in the mill he would toil at night to gain some education. At the age of about sixteen he was encouraged by William Lees, a teacher at Hollinwood Church School, to become a teacher himself and in his early twenties, John opened a small school in Hollinwood with ten pupils. However, at the age of twenty-five he gave up teaching and returned to the cotton trade.

After marrying Jane Bromley, John worked in Mellor as a bookkeeper and cashier. Around 1860 he took a position as Rate Collector for Oldham Borough Board of Guardians. In 1866 John, together with two associates, took over part of a mill in Oldham and went into the cotton trade. This was a turning point in his life and it made him well known in the Lancashire Textile Trade. When he took over his uncle's affairs in 1869, he temporarily ended his connection with cotton production. In 1872 he became a member of the Ashton Board of Guardians and later Chairman.

John was a prime mover in the formation of Whitelands Twist Mill and was elected Chairman of the Board serving for twenty-two years. He was also a founder member of the Federation of Master Cotton Spinners. In 1875 he purchased Birch Mills in Ashton. He built houses, mainly let to his mill workers, in Britannia Street, Oxford Street, Birch Street and Nile Street. These houses were small but had water and gas and the rent was 3/6d [17.5p] per week. There were larger houses for his more skilled workers.

At the age of 46 John was owner of two cotton mills, chairman of another, shareholder in many more concerns, including the Gas Company and owner of large amounts of property. By this time John and his family, three boys and three girls, were living a very comfortable life at Springfield. In 1884 John was elected as Ashton Town Councillor for the Portland Place Ward, a post which he held until he retired in 1889. In 1888 he was voted onto the Lancashire County Council as member for the Droylsden division. As a JP he sat on the local magistrates' bench.

John followed his uncle into property development and in the early 1890s the Post Office building on Warrington Street was built. On completion of this project a grand party, opened by the mayor, was held for 200 invited guests. John died in 1905 and at his funeral there were 25 coaches in the procession containing many notable people from the town. Flags were flown at half-mast on the Town Hall, Union Club, Parish Church and other buildings. Large crowds gathered along the way to Dukinfield where he was laid to rest.

John's sons, Joseph, John Henry and Albert, all received a good education and it was Albert who took over the running of his father's affairs. Albert had an office at Birch Mills but did not devote all his time to work. He was a keen cyclist and a member of the Ashton Cycling Club based on Market Street. Albert set up the Birch Mill Cycle Company in the 1890s dealing in bicycles and parts from BSA in Birmingham. In 1913 Albert took up motoring and purchased a motorised caravan for which he paid the grand sum of £1,000. He travelled the country extensively with friends in his caravan that slept up to six people, and other holidays were taken regularly in France and Germany. On occasions, caravan trips were arranged to take children and nurses from the Infirmary and the Workhouse into the countryside.



**Albert Fletcher's motorised caravan outside Springfield in 1919  
courtesy of Ann Stuart**

Albert was fond of walking and most mornings would walk around Stamford Park Lake as well as longer walks in Mottram and Greenfield. Albert took a great interest in gardening and on one occasion it is reported that he ordered 1000 tulips, 1500 crocus and 100 hyacinths for the garden at Springfield, from Samuel Yates, seed merchant, at a cost of £4-8-9d [£4.44].

Albert did not marry but dinner parties were still held, the guests being predominantly male, who appreciated the fine wine cellars at Springfield. Garden parties were no longer a regular feature but Albert allowed many organisations to

use the spacious grounds for fund raising events. These groups included Church bodies and the Liberal Party. John's sons did not buy further properties but concentrated on renovating where necessary the existing buildings. In 1910 the Shepherds Inn on Old Street was rebuilt at a cost of £1,894.

In 1906 the Fletchers holdings in property as shown on House Duty and Land Tax forms included five Public Houses, three Store Buildings, two Beer Houses, 35 Houses, four Cottages, 45 Shops, four Yards and Stables, 18 Houses, four Offices, two Workshops, one Smithy and one Post Office.

John Fletcher & Sons organised outings to Blackpool for their workers at Birch Mill. Before the First World War over a hundred people would gather at Guide Bridge station for the day trip. The cost was 3/6d [17.5p] plus 1/6d [7.5p] per head for a knife and fork dinner at Clarke & Heaps in the Palatine Building. Following the munitions explosion on William Street in June 1917, Albert gave £100 to the disaster fund.

In 1922 the Fletcher brothers decided to capitalise their assets and an auction was held to dispose of the Highland Laddie, Old Dog, Shepherds Inn, The Nags Head and The Newmarket. The total sale amounted to £39,000. Earlier, in 1916, the brothers had sold the Post Office building for £3,682-7-0d. Albert also owned shares in the local Gas Company, Banks, Railways and Cotton and at his death in March 1925 the value of his estate was in the region of £156,000.

Albert was laid to rest with his father at Dukinfield. Sadly Springfield that had been the home of the Fletcher family from the late 1850s was demolished. Tameside College now occupies this site. The only trace of Springfield is the gatepost pillars on Stalybridge Road.

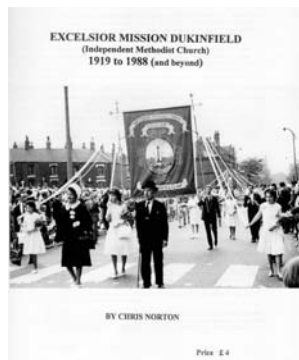
*I would be pleased to hear from anyone who has a photograph of Springfield.*

**Susan Knight**  
**Ashton-under-Lyne Civic Society**

### **Excelsior Mission, Dukinfield 1919 to 1988 (and beyond)**

by Chris Norton A4 45pp 2009 £4

The First World War had a profound effect on the churches. Young men returning from the trenches were naturally impatient with the petty restrictions of their home churches, little affected by the conflict abroad. In at least two Methodist churches in Tameside, the young men left to form their own place of worship. From the Foundry Street Chapel Dukinfield sprang Excelsior Independent Methodist Chapel in Lodge Lane, which closed in 1988. Chris Norton wrote a brief history at the time, which went up to 1954. He has now expanded this to complete the story and has added many photographs.



**Alan Rose**



## Some Account of the Family of the Armitages



Some time ago, a student from São Paulo University in Brazil, wrote to me asking for information about John Armitage and the Armitage family from Dukinfield. Apart from remembering the existence of a couple of plaques inside Old Chapel, Dukinfield, commemorating John and his father Cyrus, I knew nothing. I was soon able to point him to photographs of these plaques on a CD produced by our society, his grave, and baptism details from Dob Lane Chapel at Failsworth and various other bits and pieces.

His interest in John Armitage arose from the fact that John had written a history of Brazil in two volumes: ***A History of Brazil from the Arrival of the Braganzas in 1808 until the abdication of Don Pedro 1<sup>st</sup> in 1831***. This was apparently a continuation from Southeys' previous work, it was compiled from original archived sources and is a pretty weighty work. John had spent some time as a merchant in Brazil in the 1830s, before going to Ceylon in 1836, where he became an important merchant, magistrate and part of the legislative council. Ill health forced him to retire back to England in 1855, where he died shortly afterwards, aged 48. Copies of the book can be obtained from various booksellers eg Amazon and Ebay, but out of copyright versions can be downloaded in various formats from [www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)

More interesting to me, as a family historian, was another little book, written by his father Cyrus, which I also downloaded from archive.org ***Some Account of the Family of Armitages from 1662 to the Present Time***. This is a charming little book published in 1850 by Reed and Pardon in London. Cyrus Armitage was in partnership with Samuel Robinson, another leading light in education in Dukinfield, at Dukinfield Old Mill on Park Lane in the Tame Valley. Towards the end of his life, he was motivated to research his family history: an early genealogist.

Family legend had it that, after the Reformation, the Armitages had purchased Kirklees Abbey for a very low sum of money and were ardent Church of England adherents. By 1662, however, a descendant, Godfrey Armitage, was instrumental with Oliver Heywood in forming Lydgate Chapel in Kirkburton, near Huddersfield. From Godfrey descended a very strong line of Presbyterians and Nonconformists.

A lot of the book is compiled from a series of letters sent back to England from Godfrey's grandson, Enoch. Enoch had suffered a set of reverses in England and, shortly after his wife Mary's death, had emigrated in 1719, with three of his four children to New England, setting sail from Liverpool on 14 March and arriving at New York on 30 May. His son John was serving an apprenticeship in England and his master tricked Enoch into thinking he would be released from his service to go with them. John had watched with sadness as his family departed. The letters continue, pleading with John to join them, until Enoch's death. They include details of ships' passages he had bought for his son and recommendations of where to buy good barrels of brandy and cheese from merchants in Liverpool. These were the most valued commodities on ship both for your own sustenance and for keeping the sailors sweet on the voyage. John never followed his father, but had fallen in love with and married his cousin instead.



Enoch settled in New Jersey and I have a copy of a history of the Pennington Area Presbyterians, giving quite a few details of Enoch's contributions to the early churches there.

After Enoch died in 1739, his other son Reuben took over the family plantation and continued to write home. Reuben became blind in his old age, but with his old faithful black slave, Cato, continued to keep the plantation in good heart. Another relative wrote, sometime after the War of Independence in 1776, to tell of Reuben's sufferings at the hands of the American Soldiers, who had broken in,

smashed most of his belongings, set fire to the homestead, tortured Reuben and left him in the woods.

The story then moves on to Cyrus's father John, Enoch's son who had stayed behind. John moved out of Lydgate in Yorkshire, attracted by linen weaving in Lancashire and first coming to live with Christopher Travis in Droylsden before settling in Failsworth. Still fervently Nonconformist, the family worshipped at Dob Lane Chapel. Cyrus continues with a vivid description of the trials of Nonconformists in 1794, when stones were thrown and windows broken, terrifying the occupants. It ends on a more optimistic note: that his father lived long enough to witness an era of relative tolerance.

This is an extremely good read for those interested in early American settlers, Nonconformity and a family's journey in general.

### **Other e-books from archive.org**

If you find the price of original out-of-print books rather exorbitant from websites like abebooks.com or Ancestry and Ebay. **[www.archive.org](http://www.archive.org)** has downloadable copies of out of copyright books, mostly found in American libraries, although Cyrus Armitage's book was digitized from a copy in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. These are available in various formats, but those in .pdf format are reasonably small files and won't fill your hard drive too quickly. I have found, Glover's ***History of Ashton-under-Lyne***, Samuel Hill's ***Bygone Stalybridge*** and works by Edwin Butterworth and Thomas Middleton etc.

**Gay Oliver**

**Family History Society of Cheshire**

**Photographs reproduced here with kind permission from Bob Kirk**

### **History Alive Tameside by post**

Copies of *HAT* are available by post. Please complete the address form (or a photocopy) and enclose a £2.00 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.

## New Beginnings: The New Centre for Applied Archaeology

As some of you may know, the University of Manchester Archaeological Unit ceased business in July 2009. Three of its members, headed by Dr Michael Nevell with Brian Grimsditch and Adam Thompson, went on to form the new Centre for Applied Archaeology, created with the help and financial assistance of the University of Salford and its new Vice Chancellor Martin Hall, who was previously an archaeologist, specialising in Industrial Archaeology. The Centre, although under the wing of the University of Salford, is actually based on Portland Street in Manchester.

The Centre commenced work at the beginning of October 2009 and has been getting involved with all aspects of the heritage sector. The main project they were able to continue was the **Tameside Archaeological Survey** (TAS) funded by Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and championed by the Council Leader, Roy Oldham, (more of this project later). This has enabled us to continue our work with very little disruption that could have been caused by the move from the University of Manchester.

**The Centre**, as its name implies, will be concentrating on the application of archaeology and, whilst still undertaking some commercial projects, will be dealing with research and teaching and community archaeology. We are also looking into making heritage more accessible to the community, and one of those methods is the 3D visualisation of artefacts, buildings and landscapes, where a 3D digital model is *constructed* and viewers are able to see all round the model. This would be particularly useful in educational applications: to allow people to see objects not normally on display and to see parts of buildings not open to the public and also areas where some people may not be able to get to such as the upper floors of buildings that do not have disabled access.



**Gatehouse Excavation at Buckton 2007**

As this is a forum for Tameside, it is only right that I concentrate on the Tameside Archaeological Survey and other heritage projects within **Tameside**. High on the list are the continued investigations at **Buckton Castle**. Dependent on Scheduled Monument Consent, a third and final year of excavations, involving members of the community, will take place, hopefully in late March/early April. In previous years, we have discovered that the castle was not a simple, earthen rampart, with a ditch and possible wooden palisade, but was, in fact, a substantial, masonry walled castle with a gatehouse tower and elaborate entrance. The very small number of artefacts found last year indicates that it was in use during the late twelfth century. This year's dig will concentrate on the approaches to the castle and any exterior fortifications, as well as a further look to find the elusive building supposed to be in the south eastern corner of the enclosed area of the castle.

One of the key legacies of the TAS is the creation of the **Family History Centre**, based at Ashton Town Hall and run by Sue Mitchell. This is a drop-in centre for anyone interested in starting their family history research and for those, who are already researching but for some reason have reached an impasse and require advice. It is free to anyone and has access to all kinds of web based programmes such as **Ancestry.com** but, just as importantly, an experienced and dedicated staff who are only too willing to help and advise. This Centre has inspired many people to begin their own family research and has got many interested in their heritage.

Like several other groups in the Tameside area, the TAS is celebrating an anniversary, which is in its twentieth year. During that time we have surveyed many buildings,



investigated several archaeologically important sites and excavated places, like Buckton Castle, Newton Hall and Park Bridge, all with the help and participation of many local people and schools. We have assisted the Friends of Gorse Hall to research and discover the history and archaeology of the landscape there.

**Newton Hall 17<sup>th</sup> Century Farmhouse**

A very tangible result and another key legacy of the Survey has been the number of publications produced, varying from general archaeology, described in time-lines (**Tameside 1700-1930**), publications on the important buildings and people of Tameside and a series of seven (so far) books on various specific aspects of the archaeology of Tameside, such as the hatting industry of Denton, and Portland Basin in Ashton-under-Lyne. Two more are planned for this year on Newton Hall in Hyde (due soon) and Buckton Castle following this year's excavations there.

A current project that is in its pilot stage is the **Tameside Graveyards Survey**. This survey hopes to transcribe the burial records of the non-municipal graveyards (municipal graveyards are already being processed by the council),

archaeologically record all extant graveyards and grave markers and ultimately create a searchable on-line database for family historians and historical researchers. It would also be an extremely valuable educational resource; already the pilot study has revealed a gravestone of Samuel Bromley who was first thought to be a mason (from the symbols of compasses and set square on the stone). When cleaned and recorded, two cannon symbols were revealed and the inscription states that he was the company sergeant of the Third Battalion of the Royal Artillery. No date of death is recorded for him but his wife's details are inscribed at the bottom and she died in 1802 and so Samuel may have been involved with the Napoleonic Wars. It is intended that the survey has an extensive community involvement and, once the pilot study has been completed, we will be asking for volunteers to get involved. This would entail people transcribing the burial records, data inputting and fieldwork. All in all, this should be a very exciting project, where all members of the community, regardless of experience could become involved in their heritage.

Our plans for the summer are based on the industrial archaeology of **Broadbottom**. It is early days yet but the intentions are to create a project on similar lines to the one that ran for several years at Park Bridge, where historical research, archaeological surveys and excavations would take place, all with heavy community involvement.

This year marks the **twentieth anniversary** of the Tameside Archaeological Survey and this will be celebrated with a series of events running from April through to November/December. The name of these events will be **T20** and will involve a lecture every month on various aspects of archaeology and history in Tameside, concluding with the results of the Buckton Castle investigations in September. There will be a travelling exhibition at the various libraries and key events in the Tameside calendar, culminating at the Tameside Central Library in Ashton. Finally, scheduled for May, is a conference with short presentations by the people who have been involved with the Survey over the past twenty years. Once the details have been finalised, the events will be publicised along with any other information regarding the work being carried out by the TAS.

If anyone wishes to contact the Centre for Applied Archaeology for advice regarding their heritage and any matters archaeological or historical, the contact details are given in our advert or in the directory in this magazine. With regards to anything concerning Tameside, community involvement or anyone wishing to volunteer then Brian Grimsditch, who runs the TAS, is the man to talk to.



**Excavated Fernery at Gorse Hall**

**Brian Grimsditch**  
**Centre for Applied Archaeology**  
**b.grimsditch@salford.ac.uk**



## Spotlight on the Church of St Thomas the Apostle, Hyde the building and its glass

The Church of St Thomas the Apostle in Lumn Road in Hyde was built in 1868, the architect being J Medland Taylor. Taylor practised in Manchester and was responsible, often with his brother Henry, for a number of rather quirky church buildings in the area - St Thomas amongst them. His buildings do not quite fall into the Neo-Gothic pattern that was more the norm at the time. Taylor produced Gothic buildings but in an inventive mixture of styles and motifs and many of his buildings could be seen as forerunners for the Arts & Crafts Movement.

At St Thomas, Taylor reverses the usual building convention by using brick where you would expect stone and stone for brick. The buttresses and window surrounds are in brick with stone infilling. The church sits well in its setting with a double-pitched roof and, although it appears relatively small outside, it is larger than it appears.

The interior is a broad open space with a gallery at the west end with the organ placed on it. There is a fine, timber trussed roof but the glory of the church is its stained glass. The East window and a window in each of the south and north sides are late installations by William Morris & Co to designs by Edward Burne-Jones and Henry Dearle.

In the **East window**, the central figure is of Christ as 'Love' - a design that made its first appearance in 1895 in the windows at Albion URC Church [previously Congregational] in Ashton-under-Lyne. This Burne-Jones design went on to make over twenty appearances in churches up and down the country.



The figure of Mary in the window makes at least twenty-five appearances around the country, mainly in representations of the Crucifixion; while the accompanying figure of St John makes over thirty appearances, again nearly always in Crucifixion scenes. This figure of Mary first appeared in 1878 in St Michael's Church in Torquay.

The **North Window** has representations of St Thomas and St Hilda. The figure of Thomas was designed for Calcutta Cathedral and makes six appearances in the United Kingdom. In the Calcutta window, the figure faces left, whereas at Hyde it is the mirror image facing right, as it does in Brighton College Chapel and St Mary's Dundee with the addition in both windows of a beard. The design, named at Hyde as St Hilda, was a versatile one, being first used at Paisley Abbey in 1876 to represent Salome. The figure was also used as Eunice, St Anne, Devotion, Phoebe and St Hilda in Hyde and in Shrewsbury - only in Hyde has a pastoral staff been added.

The **South War Memorial Window** has Henry Dearle figures representing St George and the Salvador Mundi: both figures were designed originally for a

window installed in St Lawrence's in Bradfield, Essex in 1919. The Bradfield window is three-light with St Francis occupying the right hand third light and in the Hyde version the colours of Jesus' robes have been reversed. The St George design was used in six other war memorials between 1919 and 1932 and the Salvador Mundi figure was used in at least fifteen other places, appearing finally in a Methodist Church in Sutton-on-Sea in 1930. Dearle died in 1932.

*We are grateful for the permission of Father Phillip and the PCC of St Thomas for the use of material from their church leaflet for this article which first appeared in the **Greater Manchester Churches Preservation Society Newsletter**.*

**Brian Hartley**  
**Greater Manchester Churches Preservation Society**

### **Murder at the Strangler's Arms**

I remember being told about this murder by my father. It was quite an event for the people of Ashton. It was a normal Sunday morning on 20 August 1950 at the Prince of Wales Hotel, situated in a passage off Stamford Street next to Woolworths. But the affair that took place was far from normal.

The cleaner, Margaret Bailey was on duty, cleaning and taking early morning tea to the guests at about 7.45am. While in the kitchen preparing the tea, she noticed a man was standing at the stairs fully dressed. He said he and his wife were staying. He then asked where breakfast was being served. She said she would see to him right away. He replied he was going for a walk. She offered to take some tea for his wife. He replied he would do it later.

She thought it was strange and spoke to the landlord, who suggested that she took a cup of tea upstairs. At Number Seven she knocked and got no reply. On entering the room, she discovered the woman in bed appearing to be dead. At approximately 8.40am the landlord rang the police. The investigation revealed the woman had been stripped naked and strangled. She also had the word *WHORE* written on her forehead. Papers soon revealed she was Eliza Wood from Oldham.

On the 21 August, the police received a phone call from a Mrs A Shaw, saying a man with that description was lodging with her at Portland Street. Now, in the story I was told, he had spelled 'whore' wrongly and that is how the police knew he was the right one, as he spelled it out wrongly for them.

Mr James H Corbitt appeared at the Magistrates' court on Tuesday 19 September 1950. When he arrived at court later in the week, it was said he had been singing *Jealous Heart*. There was a history of drinking and arguing in pubs around the Oldham Area. He was committed to Liverpool Assizes where the case was heard. He had said previously that, if he could not have her, no-one could.

After the jury went out, they returned with a guilty of murder verdict. The judge donned his black cap and sentenced him to hang. Corbitt remained as composed as he had during the trial. He was hanged at Strangeways Gaol on Tuesday 28 November 1950 by Albert Pierrepont, who had once sang a duet with him.

**Pat Greenwood**

## The HV Morton Appreciation Society

*'Like a magpie picking up bright things'*

I became involved with the HV Morton Appreciation Society and developed the ability to use a mouse and search the internet all around the same time. A year after I retired, I was beginning to look around for different things to do with my time.

I had for over a decade been researching the history of my family, some of whom came from Scotland. I knew nothing of the geography of the country, and although I knew through family myth that some were Highlanders and some Covenanters, they may have as well been Martians for all I knew about the land they came from. It was to this end then that I idly picked up a book entitled ***In Search of Scotland*** by HV Morton at the Family History Fair in York in June 2004. It cost me 50p. I began reading it on the train ride back to Manchester and I was hooked.

Only since retirement had I learnt how to use the computer properly. I had typed at work but the mouse and its functions were a complete mystery to me and not a little frightening. I had attended three basic learning courses in the library at Denton before the knowledge finally sunk in. [I can't recommend Tameside Council trainers Sarah and Julie highly enough]. So as soon as I returned home from York, I went round to the library and keyed in HV Morton on the computer. You could have knocked me down with the proverbial feather when I read, *'born in Ashton-under-Lyne'*.

Henry Canova Vollam Morton was born on 25 July 1892 at 17 Chester Square, next door to the Astley Arms and virtually opposite St Peter's. How did a man from these beginnings become the author of numerous travel books [which are still in print today], the chosen correspondent of Winston Churchill himself to write about his Atlantic meeting mid-ocean with Roosevelt, and chosen by Beaverbrook to write about the opening of Tutankhamen's tomb?

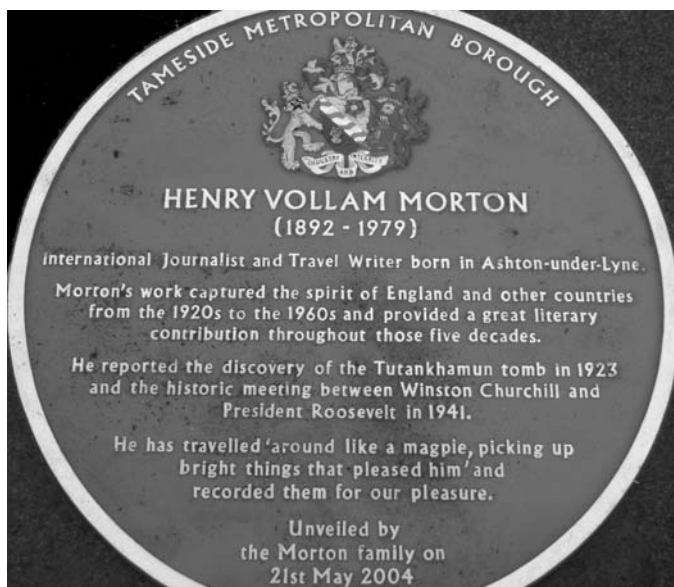
Even in the hand-out from Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council, a lot of the credit seems to be directed towards Birmingham, stating he grew up in Moseley and went to King Edward's School. But actually I've done quite a bit of research on him and his family was in Ashton until he was seven before moving to 334 Bury New Road, Salford where they lived until 1903, when he would have been eleven. The hand-out states he left school at sixteen to become a journalist. So I argue that the North-West can take a lot more credit for his beginnings than Brum.

In saying that, he did love Warwickshire and especially Stratford-upon-Avon and Shakespeare. He hardly mentions Manchester and certainly, to my knowledge, never Ashton. He makes me smile as about Manchester in ***The Call of England***; he describes the Queen Victoria statue in Piccadilly as, *'Where Queen Victoria sunk - I might say collapsed - in a hopeless depression, sat regarding Manchester with utmost disapproval'*.

He drove a bull-nosed Morris car called Maud from 1927 onwards touring the British Isles and wrote of the people and places he saw, interlaced with the histories and tales of the areas. His walk around the tombs of the kings and queens in Westminster Abbey in his first book, ***In Search of England***, is worth a whole term's history lessons alone, and is more memorable. He also travelled around the Holy Land which these days just could not be done: Walking *'In the*

*Steps of the Master*, but actually wandering in and out of the stories of the Old and New Testament; moving from the Mount of Olives onto the banks of the Jordan, and following the path of the Crusaders and many more places from Syria down to Egypt, all the time telling of the history and artifacts and, above all, of the people of the area.

I found the *Appreciation Society* through the Tameside website, because one of the men who runs the society was a leading light in getting a Blue Plaque commemorating HVM's birth erected in Henry Square. It is a web-based society and has nearly 200 members from all over the world. Our chief organizer resides in Perth, Australia. We exchange e-mails about our favourite pieces and say why we love them. For example: *'one of those gold mornings which April borrows from June'*. You just know what a lovely day it was. We hear of each other's trips to see the sights mentioned by our beloved author and we pass on information we glean about his life. People produce letters they find by him, given to some old aunt or vicar. People find articles printed in their local papers, which didn't make it to the national press. Last year someone discovered a lovely article Morton had written about the Shrimpers of Southport.



At the moment there is a really heated debate about Simon Schama criticising our beloved HVM and saying that Yorkshire's JB Priestley was a better travel commentator. The proof is in the pudding, Mr Schama. Mr Priestley is having his work reprinted by group revitalising interest in Yorkshire writers; HVM has never been out of print in the first place.

It is all great fun and makes turning on your own computer something to look forward to:

HV Morton Society website: <http://members.optusnet.com.au/~billgoman/>

**Marjorie Ross**

**HV Morton Appreciation Society**

## **Tameside's Forgotten Canal**

The Hollinwood Branch Canal, in spite of its name, had half of its length within Tameside, running from Fairfield, through Droylsden and Littlemoss, to Daisy Nook and beyond. The canal was built over 200 years ago to link the coal mines of Oldham with the Ashton Canal at Fairfield. As the coal mines were closed, so the canal was abandoned, as the use of canals for leisure had not taken off in the 1950s. There are stretches of canal in water in the Littlemoss area but the best-preserved stretches of the waterway are those within Daisy Nook Country Park, on the boundary between Tameside and Oldham.

The Hollinwood Canal Society was formed with the intention of saving what was left of the canal, and 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, re-connection with the Ashton Canal and eventually a new link to the Rochdale Canal.

Volunteers from the society, along with members of the Waterway Recovery Group, have been gradually carrying out restoration work on the canal in Daisy Nook Country Park. Although most of the canal there is in water, fifty years of disuse have taken their toll.

Volunteers have been engaged in such activities as removing trees that had been growing along the towpath edge and pushing up stones. They have also removed saplings growing in the canal bed, cleared vegetation that was hiding canal features and repositioned edging stones that were loose or had fallen in, along with numerous other tasks that are improving the appearance of the canal, as well as helping visitors to appreciate what was there. Work of that sort will help to preserve what is still there. It will be a greater challenge to start restoring stretches that are no longer in water.



**Droylsden Marina filling up with boats**

There are plenty of obstacles to get round, some perhaps requiring diversions, while others will require expensive engineering solutions. However, canals re-opening elsewhere have proved to be a catalyst for regeneration of areas they pass through, as well as creating green leisure corridors for the benefit of local people. It has also been found that house prices close to a canal have a value of up to 20% more than similar houses elsewhere!

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and developer Watkin Jones plc have rebuilt the first 175 metres of the canal from Fairfield, with a marina basin which will be the centerpiece of the prestigious Droylsden Wharf development. Although the recession has stopped the house-building temporarily, the marina itself is now in use, with the boat moorings being managed by Portland Basin Marina.



**Crane lifting the Footbridge into position – photograph courtesy of GMPTE**

The construction of the Metrolink nearby required a widening of Manchester Road across the currently blocked-up canal bridge. GMPTE is achieving this by using the wide pavement on one side as an extra traffic lane, having constructed a new footbridge across the canal line to accommodate pedestrians. The Hollinwood Canal Society has commended the far-sightedness of GMPTE and of Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council for ensuring that the Metrolink works have not created an additional obstacle to the restoration of the canal! A GMPTE spokesman told us that they had come in for a lot of criticism over traffic delays caused by the road works in the Droylsden area and so it was nice to be able to get some positive publicity!

Why not join us or help on one of our working parties and play a part in helping to save this piece of local history? More information can be found on our website at [www.hollinwoodcanal.co.uk](http://www.hollinwoodcanal.co.uk) which includes photographs of the route and a selection of old photographs, including some showing the canal when it was in use.

**Martin Clark**  
**Hollinwood Canal Society**



## Hyde Chapel Organ Case Restoration 2008

Situated in the centre of Gee Cross, Hyde Chapel is an impressive building and local landmark. Built 1846-8 and designed by Manchester architects Bowman and Crowther, it was a symbol of the new prosperity enjoyed by Nonconformist congregations at that time. It was the second building on the site, the first dating from 1708 with later additions.

In 2008, Hyde Chapel celebrated its Tercentenary. For the Bicentenary the chapel had installed electric light, one of the first installations in the area. It was thought that a big project would be a good idea in 2008 and ideas were suggested. With new lighting in the chapel installed in 2006, the building was a lot less gloomy but this highlighted how shabby, in particular, the organ case at the rear of the chapel now looked.

The case is a fine piece of work, donated by Miss Ashton of Flowery Field for the new building in 1848 at a cost of £120. In oak, it has many carved details, heads, and angels playing instruments and other details and originally had highly decorated stencilled pipes. With the installation of the new organ by Hill of London in 1870, the case became decorative (it had housed the 1822 organ taken from the old chapel with the case pipes enlarging the instrument). This new organ was rebuilt again in 1939 by Conacher of Huddersfield and in 1986 by Jardine Church Organs of Old Trafford.

These rebuilds, when organ parts had been passed through the case, along with the passage of time, meant that by 1986, after 140 years, the case was looking poor. The stencilled pipes had become faded and tatty and were painted over with gold paint, and the case cleaned when the organ was rebuilt. By 2007, the gold paint was going black and the woodwork was dirty again, the new lighting showing it all up.

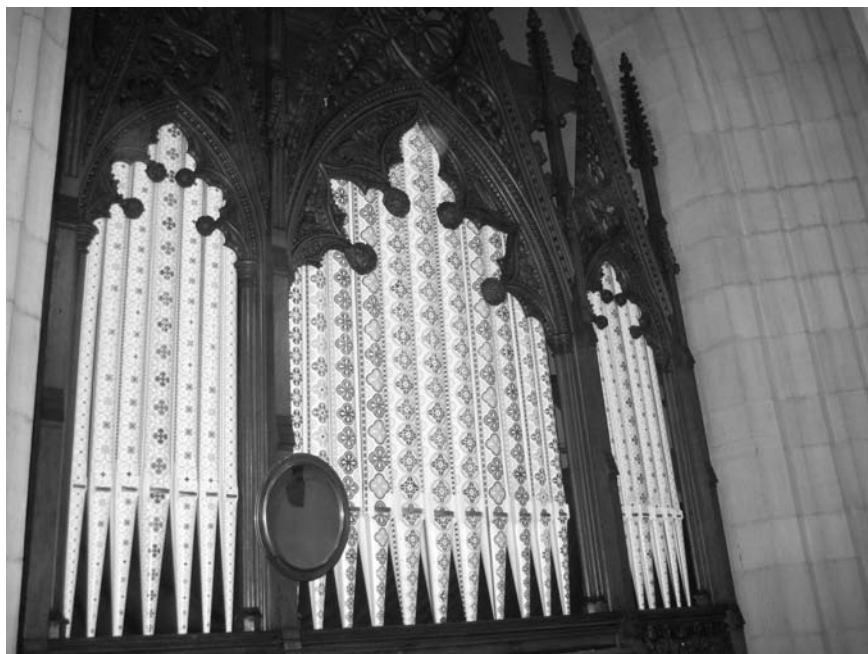
A bold scheme was started to restore the case and fundraising started. A quote from restorers Lambert Walker of Preston was accepted for around £15,000. This involved taking the pipes away, stripping them down carefully to be able to find and redo the painted scheme, professionally cleaning the case woodwork and replacing any missing carved decoration.

On stripping the pipes, it was found that hardly any decoration remained and, in parts, they had been sanded down to bare metal in preparation for overpainting. They were, however, of a lead/tin mix with a high lead content and the lead paint had etched the design into base paint as a black and white negative image. This was useful, as a photograph taken just before overpainting was found by Jardines and the two could be used together.

The designs, which are very complicated with some big pipes having six layers of stencilling, were redrawn and vinyl stencils made. The hard work of applying the paint in layers then commenced and took several months at the workshops in

Preston. Back at the chapel, missing carved details were replaced. The case had been originally made lying flat, with the smaller, carved details glued on. This meant that quite a few, smaller pieces, not easily visible from the ground, had simply fallen off and been lost over the years. The case was cleaned with professional *Archdeacons Mixture* which soaked into the wood's oil (not varnished) finish over a period of about a week and then dried to leave a very hard and shiny surface.

After this, the pipes were returned and for the first time we could see the case as it was originally intended in 1848. It certainly stands out now with the glowing woodwork complementing the bright colours on the pipes. Looking at the photographs taken when the pipes were gold painted, the case looked a pale shadow of how it was intended to look when new with its fashionable colours and sharp, new woodwork.



The case was dedicated in 2009 and a celebratory organ concert also took place which attracted more than 100 people. As a project, it was certainly something different and I hope that the case will be a reminder of Hyde Chapel's Tercentenary celebrations for many years to come.

**Michael Holmes**

## **Dukinfield Built: Huge order off to Ireland fifty-five years ago**



During the 1950s Córas Iompair Éireann (Ireland's Transport Company) embarked upon ambitious plans to replace steam locomotives with diesels. Oliver Bulleid, CIÉ's respected and innovative chief mechanical engineer, wished to buy locos from General Motors of the United States. However, the CIÉ board decided to purchase from a consortium of four British companies: Metropolitan-Vickers of Dukinfield, Crossley Brothers of Openshaw, English Steel Corporation and Metropolitan-Cammell Carriage and Wagon.

Orders were placed for sixty A-Class (1,200hp) and thirty-four C-Class (550hp) locos - the largest locomotive order ever placed by CIÉ. In the summer of 1955 the first loco - A1 - was dispatched from the Dukinfield Works, arriving at Dublin's North Wall on 4 July. Subsequently A-Class locos ousted steam from mainline passenger and heavy goods trains, while C-Class locos were used on branch line and lighter goods duties. After four decades of service the last of the Dukinfield-built locos was withdrawn in 1995.

Thus it was that, despite opposition, Metropolitan-Vickers won the contract and Dukinfield contributed towards the modernisation of Ireland's railways. Six of the locos are preserved and A39 (seen above at Iarnród Éireann's Inchicore Works, Dublin in 2008) is a proud reminder of Dukinfield's engineering history.

**Bob Hayes**  
**Forum Publicity Officer**

## Polish Camp at Audenshaw

I've been steadily researching my family history for many years. Last summer, my youngest son married a Dukinfield woman whose grandfather was Polish. Her grandfather died, as a result of a motorcycle accident in 1959, and there is no living member of the family with memories of his ancestry in Poland. In order to trace family records in Poland, it's crucial to know the person's place of birth. That's difficult enough but I've been amazed to find that between his arrival in the United Kingdom and his eventual marriage in Dukinfield in 1948, it's proving just as difficult to trace events here in Tameside.

On his marriage certificate, the only address given is 'H25, the Polish Camp, St Anne's Road, Audenshaw'. This is a reference to one of the 240 or so Polish Resettlement Camps (PRCs) set up in the United Kingdom to assist the 170,000 displaced Polish people, who entered the United Kingdom during, or after, World War Two. I can find no reference at all to the St Anne's Road Camp in local archives. The Ashton Polish Social Club in Lees Street no longer exists and the formal Polish Resettlement Camp organisation can confirm only the authenticity of address.

I've been in touch with one local woman, who remembers the approximate location of a site in the late 1940s and early 1950s. She knew it as *the Italian Camp*, and passed it daily as she took her father his lunch. He worked in the vicinity of the Shepley Industrial Estate, Dukinfield.

I know there was a German POW Camp at Mellands Road, Gorton, that was also known locally as *the Italian Camp*, and which might have been linked to the St Anne's Road, Audenshaw, site. The two Camps are quite definitely separate but there was a national filtering system in place and St Anne's Road is unlikely to have been our ancestor's first port of call.

In the 1960s, there was a series of marriages of women in our family to both Italian and Ukrainian nationals, suggesting that, despite its local label, *the Italian Camp* at Audenshaw could well have been multi-national. My feeling is that these marriages sprang from relationships through family bonds fashioned in Resettlement Camps.

This search started out as a personal quest. However, with the major growth in the family history industry over the past decade, I've now begun to wonder how memories of Polish United Kingdom post-war experiences are going to be recorded for future generations. So far as I'm aware, nobody has yet researched this theme in Tameside.

Of course, those with personal experiences of the *St Anne's Road Polish Camp* will now be at least in their 80s, if indeed any are still living. As in my own case, their descendants may have too little information and too few reliable facts to draw on, should they wish to trace their family roots in Eastern Europe. If anyone has memories of the camp that will at least pin down its location - or better still, photographs, anecdotes, names of people who were there, etc. - I will be happy to hear from you.

**Keith Wood**  
**[cyrott-polishresearch@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cyrott-polishresearch@yahoo.co.uk)**

# Huddersfield Narrow Canal

**Almost 32km (20mi) in length ...**



Lock 1W - Ashton-u-Lyne



Lock 1E - Huddersfield

**74 locks in total ..**



Part of the Diggle Flight

**1 - 32W  
(West side)  
1 - 42E  
(East side)**

**Two tunnels, including Standedge,**  
*Britain's longest, highest and deepest ..*



Standedge Tunnel



Scout Tunnel

**Five aqueducts and ..**

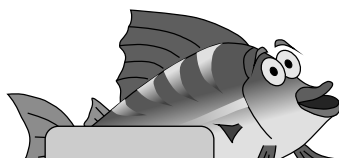


Royal George Aqueduct

**Ten reservoirs**



Redbrook Reservoir



## Notable Dates

**4 Apr 1794**

Act of Parliament passed to authorise construction of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal

**4 Apr 1811**

Completion of Standedge Tunnel and official opening of the Narrow Canal

**21 Dec 1944**

Canal abandoned by the London Midland & Scottish Railways (Canals) Act

**19 Apr 1974**

Huddersfield Canal Society formed to campaign for the restoration of the Canal

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**www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk**  
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Dr Bob Gough



Foreword by Robin Evans



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#### **1 May 2001**

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#### **3 Sep 2001**

Huddersfield Narrow Canal officially re-opened by HRH Prince Charles



Find out more at [www.huddersfieldcanal.com](http://www.huddersfieldcanal.com)

## James Bevan Hat Manufacturer of Denton and Stockport

**'A Life Associated with Romance in a Manner almost Unique'**



So said the **Stockport Advertiser**. James Bevan's story is one of a man fit for his times! But would any of it have happened if his father had not lost the family fortune? I was told his story by my 97 year old Uncle Gerald. James died when Gerald was five. Researched also from James' obituary (**Stockport Advertiser** 9 November 1917), an article '**The House of Bevan**,' in the **Hatter's Gazette** 1946, and the memories of his daughters, Dorinda, Gertie and Affie.

James was born on 28 March 1828 at Rivington, Lancashire, to a family with an estate and a velvet mill. In the 1841 census, I found a James Bevan, aged thirteen, at clergyman Isaac Temple's school in Plemonstall, Cheshire. Aspiring to be a physician, he was indentured to a

local doctor but James went to work for Romney & Co, chemists, when his father, also James, invested in a doomed 1845 railway scheme.

**Was it necessity or a nose for adventure?** When most men rarely left their county in a lifetime, James travelled three continents – first, to the **Colorado goldfields** around 1848/49. He returned to England and married Boadecia Rowland, a doctor's daughter. Next, he journeyed to **Adelaide, Australia**, but it was no smooth passage – in James' own account, he describes a fellow passenger's attempt to kill him, a mutiny and a fire in a hold which threatened the ship.

1850s Australia was rugged - only some sixty years previously, the First Fleet had brought white settlement. Drought defeated his sheep farming efforts. He heard about the gold discoveries in Victoria in November 1851 and went east. Instead of mining, he established provision stores and horse auctioneering. But, by 1855, he and Boadecia had moved to **Southern Africa**. Was this because of the brutal conditions causing the gold miners' uprising in late 1854, the Eureka Stockade?

His challenges so far were good training for what was to come! Newly arrived in the Cape Colony, James imported **Lancashire textiles** and British goods. But perhaps haberdashery was a little tame for one of his temperament. He saw traders bringing back exotic goods from the African interior – ivory, ostrich feathers, skins and tribal goods. So he left Boadecia in Cape Town, filled his bullock carts and set off to trade with the tribes.

James was one of the first white men to reach **Matabeleland**, although missionaries, such as Robert Moffat and Livingstone, had preceded him. Early on, James befriended Mzilikazi, first king of the Matebele. He earned a favoured

relationship with Mzilikazi and his son, Lobengula, by saving the king from an illness – this was fortunate for, among the Matabele, if the king died from treatment, the witchdoctor was next! And so he became wealthy and the king told him of the great river to the north west, *'the Smoke that Thunders'*. James set off to find it and claimed he had met the explorer, **David Livingstone**, after his discovery of Victoria Falls in November 1855.

The distances he travelled were extraordinary – the Matabele kraal in Bulawayo



and Victoria Falls on the Zambezi were thousands of miles from Cape Town. Even more extraordinary, he survived hostile tribes, the Boer, malaria, dysentery and sleeping sickness, which afflicted livestock too, but James Bevan was not one to fall at the first, nor even the fourth, hurdle. James joined forces with another trader, Duncan, and they set up a joint collection centre. In 1866, the huge migration of blacks and whites from the Cape and Europe to mine diamonds near Kimberley opened new opportunities, but, in September 1868, Mzilikazi died, bringing fighting over his succession until 1870, when Lobengula won out.

At some point, James went into **copper mining in Namaqualand** with an engineer, Mason, and this part of James' life becomes guesswork. He must have known Mason by 1862 when eldest daughter, Dorinda, was born, for her second name was Mason. We know he had mines along the Buffels River by 1866 – we have a handwritten note by Boadecia, that Ethel, (*Affie*), was *'the first white child to be born on the Buffels River'*. Walter was born in Namaqualand in 1867, but his youngest son, Ormerod, was born in Cape Town in 1868. Had the family returned there?

**Boadecia** was a beauty and feisty by nature. She was clearly well matched with James - during one of his absences, Boadecia quelled a miners' riot considered too dangerous by the white mine manager. In the moonlight, wearing white and on a grey horse, luckily for her the rioters thought she was a spirit and fled. She was probably carrying her fifth child at the time. James had eight children with Boadecia, two of whom died. Their children were Dorinda Mason (1862), James

Alfred (1863), Gertrude Ann (1864), all born in Cape Town; Ethel Frances Henrietta (1866, *Affie*, born on the Buffels River), Walter (1867, Namaqualand) and, finally, Boadecia died giving birth to Ormerod in 1868. She was thirty eight and left James with six children under the age of seven.

Like his family, James' empire had grown - but disaster stalked him. Mason was killed in a brawl, leaving James without mining expertise. Duncan's wagon train was attacked. Worse, the tribesmen ransacked the collection centre and thousands of pounds' worth of goods was lost. Was it Matabele rebels opposed to Lobengula? Years before, he and James had become blood brothers. Was James subsidizing his mining efforts from the trading business? For, after this, he closed the mines.

James searched for an alternative port to Cape Town and claimed he was the first white man to cross **the Kalahari** from east to west. Was this a clue to the location of the collection centre? James prospected a route, which came out near Walvis Bay, now the main port of Namibia. Walvis Bay was known since the 1480s but commercial activity was limited before 1840. James established a station there and returned to England to float a company to finance development. During this trip, he met Messrs Norbury and Morgan and financed them in a hat manufacturing business in **Denton**, thus Norbury, Morgan & Co. was born in 1873. (Thomas Middleton, *History of Denton and Haughton* [1936] - courtesy Denton Local History Society).

**Why did James leave South Africa?** His business thrived, his Cape Town house was so grand that it was later used as the Governor General's residence and yet he did not succumb to diamond fever. His daughters said he was opposed to Cecil Rhodes and Rhodes' treatment of the tribes. Rhodes dominated the diamond fields and pursued British dominion '*from Cape to Cairo*' and so was popular with the British Government. He pushed aggressively into the lands north of the Limpopo where James traded. He obtained concessions with the Matabele, the first two in 1880 and 1881. Did Rhodes' activities signal the end for James in Africa?

The Bevans had returned to England according to the 1881 census. Initially, I found no mention of James or his daughters in 1881 - but I found his teenage sons, with a housekeeper, Maria Gibbes, at 6 Saxon Street, Denton. Maria was from Cape Town - had James sent the boys ahead while he tied up loose ends? I found him and the girls, accidentally. On census night, James' daughters were listed as scholars at a boarding school in Stone, Staffordshire, run by two sisters, Emily and Annie Daniel, and who stayed overnight as a visitor? None other than James! James married Annie in 1885 - he was fifty-seven and Annie thirty-nine. They had two daughters: Hilda in 1887 and Dorice in 1889. Annie was not well loved by her stepchildren.

At some point, James acquired **Denton Lodge** - a grand mansion set in grassy lawns, with a lake, its carriage drive lined with lime trees. Demolished in 1989, the land was vacant when I visited in June 2009. James took over the hat business. Morgan had departed in 1874, and, in 1886, Norbury also left, taking the customer base. Did this loss of business force James to sell Denton Lodge? By July 1889, Dorice's birth certificate places the family at **St Lawrence's Rectory**, off Vaudry Lane, Haughton.

James and eldest son, James Alfred, established new markets and re-named themselves **James Bevan & Co.** It was one of the first hatters to be publically floated. Initially, their hat works was in Bond Street, Denton, but this burnt down in 1896. It was not insured. James bought premises in Pit Street, off the Stockport Road but the Bevan fortunes may not have recovered. By 1901, the Bevans were living in Parsonage Road, Heaton Moor, no longer at the rectory but, by 1905, in a yellowing letter from James to daughter, Affie, he apologizes for not enclosing the usual ten shillings birthday gift, '*as I am sorry to say it would be a convenience to me.*'

James, by his own description, was '*five foot six inches* in height '*but muscular, strong and active*'. And still able to jump a five-barred gate on his eightieth birthday! Further stories illuminate him. After a day's hunting and celebrations, he arrived home complaining of pain in his hip. On inspection, his pipe was found in his pocket, burning merrily! The second story was more disastrous. Outside the factory, he tried to grab the bridle of the milkman's bolting horse and fell under the float, resulting in partial paralysis of his legs. He died in Dorice's house in Whitefields, Stockport on 3 November 1917, before the tragic events of Hilda's murder and Dorice's farewell to her family. But that, as they say, is another story.



Dedicated to my Uncle Gerald (with James in the picture on the right) who died on 2 May 2009.

**Sara Green (great granddaughter)**

**Denton Local History Society**

Abridged from an article in **the Dentonian** Autumn 2009 with thanks to Sara Green

### **Chemicals, Plastics, and the Sterling Group: a Chapter in the Recent Industrial History of Stalybridge**

I have recently written a paper entitled **Chemicals, Plastics, and the Sterling Group: a Chapter in the Recent Industrial History of Stalybridge**. It is in the Tameside Local Studies and Archives Centre at Ashton-under-Lyne.

It sets out the history of the Sterling Group of chemicals and plastics manufacturing operations that eventually occupied five of the derelict cotton mills in Stalybridge and Dukinfield. These manufacturing businesses were started in 1948 by an Austrian refugee, Rudy Sternberg, and, at their peak, employed about 1000 people in Albion, Castle, Whitelands, Tower and Queen Mills, as well as the Globe and Phoenix Iron Works sites.

Some Forum members may be interested in knowing that this history paper now exists.

**Tom Craig**



## Waterworks; Celebrating the pioneering work of John Frederick La Trobe Bateman

2010 marks the two hundredth anniversary of the birth of a great engineer, one to whom Manchester owes a great debt of gratitude. John Frederick La Trobe Bateman was responsible for designing and constructing the chain of reservoirs in the Longdendale Valley. It was his foresight and determination that gave the people of Manchester clean water for the first time.

Bateman was born near Halifax in 1810. He was the grandson of the Revd Benjamin La Trobe, a former Moravian minister at Fairfield, Droylsden. John Bateman took on his mother's family name, La Trobe, by royal licence in 1883.

Bateman was educated at the Moravian schools of Ockbrook and Fairfield. He later became an apprentice to Mr Dunn, a local surveyor, and mining and civil engineer from Oldham.



In 1834, he set up his own business, as a civil engineer and land surveyor in Manchester, and resided in Pall Mall. He married Anne Fairbairn in 1841. Together they had three sons and four daughters.

Having already worked as a surveyor for the construction of the Hurst Reservoir, Bateman was approached by Manchester Corporation to help them supply clean water to Manchester and the surrounding areas, including the area now called Tameside. Later that year, Bateman submitted his plan to obtain water from the Longdendale Valley.

The Bill was initially defeated in Parliament, due to opposition from local mill owners. They feared the damming of the rivers would leave them with insufficient water to power their machinery. After much negotiation, competition from rival schemes and promises of compensation for the mill owners, the Manchester Corporation Water Works Act came into force on 9 July 1847.

From 1848 to 1877, Bateman designed and constructed the main five, principal reservoirs in Longdendale - Woodhead, Torside and Rhodeswood for drinking water and Vale House and Bottoms Reservoirs to provide compensation water to the River Etherow. Two smaller reservoirs were also built at Hollingworth and

Arnfield. At the time, these reservoirs were the largest to be constructed in the world and became Europe's first major Water Conservation Scheme. The chain of reservoirs is still in use today. Its waters have never run dry.

The health of the people of Manchester and Tameside was greatly improved thanks to the pioneering genius of Bateman. A **Blue Plaque** honouring Bateman is located on the deepest air shaft from the Mottram Tunnel. This can be seen on Lowry Court in Mottram.

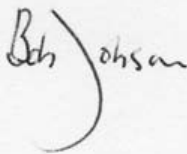
In Spring 2010, Tameside Museums and Galleries are opening a new museum celebrating the Longdendale reservoirs. '**Waterworks**' is situated in Ashton Town Hall and follows on from the popular Setantii Museum. The museum looks at our uses of water past and present and tells the story of how Bateman's scheme became a reality. Visitors can also learn more about wildlife on the moors, explore a mock up of the Mottram Tunnel and discover what life is like for the people who work on the reservoirs.

Contact Setantii Museum on 0161 342 2812 for further information and opening times.

**Rachel Cornes, Social History Curator at Portland Basin  
Tameside Museums & Galleries**

Photograph of JF La Trobe Bateman courtesy of the Institution of Civil Engineering

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## John Owen, 1815–1902, *Old Mortality*

Family and local historians in South East Lancashire, East Cheshire and North Derbyshire should prick up their ears with the mere mention of the name John Owen. Owen was literally a man before his time: 'his then futuristic forays into family history and allied industries' would be fêted and honoured nowadays but, alas, as an anonymous pauper, he died in 1902, publicly unrecognised, in the Stockport Workhouse. Whilst researching a series of ten articles on matters relating to Hayfield, Derbyshire, penned in 1899 under the name 'Scrutineer', I fortuitously came across this account of how his research material came to be in the public domain. This article neatly jigsawed into the 1902 account of his pauper's death in the Stockport Workhouse, one could say that eventually he was 'mentioned in dispatches'.

### **The High Peak Advertiser 25 August 1899**

#### **John Owen, fifty years of individual endeavour**

*An interesting addition is about to be made to the collection of books in the Manchester Central Public Library in King Street. It consists of **eighty manuscript volumes** got together by Mr John Owen, and the price agreed to be paid for them by the Free Libraries Committee is £200. Alderman JW Southern, chairman of the Committee, in an explanatory statement made to the Manchester City Council, said that Mr John Owen, a man of about eighty years old, had spent fifty years of his life in preserving and recording interesting things relating to the Manchester of his day, and obtaining, as far as he could, authentic information for the benefit of those, who came after him.*

*In the eighty volumes Mr Owen recorded all the inscriptions in the various churches of the city and some of those in the surrounding towns<sup>1</sup> and there was not a single inscription in the [Manchester] Cathedral which he has not carefully set down, nor of the changes which have taken place there in his day. A beautiful sketch was given of the exact form of anything which he thought was worthy of preservation and retention. Wherever in a district where places of antiquarian interest were being removed for improvement purposes or becoming obliterated by the hand of time, Mr Owen has gone and with feeling and care made sketches of their appearance.*

*Here, therefore, was 'a mass of authentic material which would be of enormous value to the future local historian'. The collection is absolutely unique of its kind and since, a good deal of that has now gone into the limbo of the past, it could not possibly be recovered except by means of these volumes. Seeing that the books would never be printed<sup>2</sup>; it is well that they should come into the possession of the citizens through the Libraries Committee.*

*Mr Owen, who for many years has been a frequent visitor to Hayfield, and has taken great interest in its antiquities, has copied the inscriptions from every gravestone in the Hayfield Churchyard and every stone in the crypt underneath the church.<sup>3</sup>*

### **The Stockport Advertiser 24 January 1902**

#### **The death of a Stockport Antiquarian**

*An interesting personality is removed by the death of Mr John Owen, an antiquarian, who was well known to his friends by the name of Old Mortality, from the fact that he delighted in gravestones, Parish Registers, and other records. John Owen spent the final years of his life in the Stockport Workhouse, lonely and confused; his death on the 18 Jan 1902 is given as 'dementia', the last ten years of his life he struggled to cope with poverty, old age and illness.<sup>4</sup>*

He was born in Bolton on 25 May 1815 and his father died in the Manchester Infirmary, when the boy was two years old and he came to Manchester by canal packet boat. He began to take an early interest in local antiquities, and made copies of all the gravestones and memorial inscriptions at the Cathedral. He copied the Parish Registers, the Sexton's books, and comments of every kind that came under his notice. He and the late Mr RW Proctor were closely associated and Mr Proctor dedicated his **Memorials of Manchester Streets** to Mr Owen.

Mr Owen's collection, extending to eighty volumes, mostly folio and quarto, were bought for the Manchester Reference Library in 1899 and an index<sup>5</sup> and the descriptions were processed and printed by Mr Ernest Axon. Regarding some families there are hundreds of entries; as to the Hulme family, there are over 2,000, and the entries relating to the Bradshaws are not much less exhaustive. In addition to the transcripts, many sketches of buildings and architectural details are delineated in a most painstaking fashion.

It is certain that so complete a collection of the Collegiate Church [the Cathedral] inscriptions could not now be made. Many of the inscriptions were only accessible during the restoration of the cathedral, and, of course, the whole of those in the yard are now covered up, ranking in importance with the copies of the voluminous registers of the Parish Church of Manchester. The transcripts begin, as does the original register, in 1573, baptisms are continued to 1753, the weddings to 1804, and the burials to 1801. They occupy twenty volumes and are complete transcripts of the originals.

During the '50s and '60s [1850 and 1860] Mr Owen was in most daily attendance at the Cathedral and made notes of discoveries and occurrences during the very drastic restoration which was then in progress. The collection includes the various inscriptions at St John's, St Ann's, St Mary's, St George's and Cross Street Chapel, Manchester. There are extensive notes on Manchester physicians, surgeons, dentists and chemists

All the portions of Cheshire bordering South East Lancashire and North West Derbyshire are represented in the collection. Bowdon, Bramhall, Mobberley, Cheadle, Stockport and many other parishes are very exhaustively treated. The Peak District received almost as much attention as the adjoining parts of Cheshire, in several churchyards, the whole of the inscriptions were copied, and from Chapel-en-le-Frith, and other church registers, copious extracts have been made. The funeral took place yesterday at Harpurhey, Manchester. [abridged]

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

1. Tameside monumental inscriptions include those at Ashton-under-Lyne St Michael's Church, Stamford Street Chapel, Denton Church, Mottram Church, while the then contemporary descriptions of Denton Windmill, Denton Hall, Dukinfield Old Hall and Staley Hall are described. This list is not exhaustive.
2. The 80 manuscripts are available on microfilm at Stockport Heritage Library, Wellington Road South.
3. Owen MSS inscriptions made at Hayfield Church, and Chinley Independent Chapel are now included amongst the recent recordings [2009] of the monumental inscriptions in those graveyards, available on CD.
4. For a fuller account of Owen's life see '**Old Mortality**' in the **North Cheshire Family Historian**, Feb 2006, author David Gilligan.
5. The index runs to eighteen pages of a small typeface on A4 paper.

## Schooldays before and during the Second World War

I started school in 1931 at Parkbridge St James' C of E School. It was *home from home*, our infant teacher taking over from our mothers. *Miss* looked after us with kindness from day one. She would make Horlicks for us on cold winter mornings, and made sure we were well wrapped-up to go home.

There were two rooms. We Infants had a sand-pit and games, and slates and chalk to write the alphabet and numbers. There was a lovely picture of Jesus, holding a lamb, to watch over us.

By the time we moved to the Big Room, at seven or eight, we could all read and write and do easy sums, reciting our Times Tables from a very early age. We also started simple sewing and knitting. From then, we progressed to joined-up writing and were able to compose stories and do arithmetic to a good standard. I always thought the best lesson was *Silent Reading*, where we had a collection of classical books to choose from, which taught us the look of words and the correct way of writing English. I remember a representative from OXO setting a writing competition and awarding fountain pens as prizes.



When I left Parkbridge at eleven, and went with other girls by train to Heginbottom Modern School in Ashton, the scholars from Parkbridge were always at the top of their classes, which said a lot for our little school and the two teachers.

The war started when I was twelve and we went to school with gas masks and had training to go quickly to the concrete air raid shelters when the sirens sounded. We were taught cookery, using the meagre war-time rations, and how to waste nothing. About this time school dinners started, which was a big help to our mothers, and, in spite of all the war-time regulations, we managed to have a very good education in all the main subjects.

In the top class, we walked across town to join the boys at the Technical School, and had a grounding in science, textiles and engineering with them. Our room in the Technical School [where we now hold our *History on your Doorstep* class] overlooked the playground. We used to lean out of the big sash window and pass notes to the older boys below.

Going home from school on winter nights in the blackout, Parkbridge station and the lanes around would have been in complete darkness, had it not been for the glow from the ironworks below, which worked round the clock in three shifts producing the much needed iron. We could hear the big steam-hammer in the Top Forge every so long making the *pigs* to be sent to the Bottom Forge for rolling into long bars, which, in turn, went up to the station to go for munitions.

The war was still on when I left school and went to work as clerk at the school clinic on Water Street, demolished long ago in the slum clearance scheme. I can always look back with pleasure on schooldays and friends, made both at Parkbridge and Ashton.

## “Who is this Ruddy Kipling?”

The **Ashton Reporter** posed this question in October 1912, in an article publicising Rudyard Kipling's visit to speak at a political meeting in the town. While Kipling was very concerned about the state of politics in Britain, Ashton seems a very unlikely place for him to choose to speak about his views. This surprising visit was engineered by the new Conservative MP, Sir Max Aitken, later Lord Beaverbrook.

Aitken himself was a surprising candidate when he first stood in Ashton in December 1910. At that time, he was a young Canadian financier with no connection to the area. He had only ten days to campaign and his success was later attributed to the amount of money he spent and his efficient organisation. He campaigned on the issue of tariff reform and imperial unity, and was quite open about his lack of knowledge on other concerns.

One theme, which was to be a feature of Aitken's later life, was his use of the local, national and international press in his election campaign. In fact, AJP Taylor suggests that it led directly to his connection with the **Daily Express** which, of course, he eventually came to control. *‘Thus, Aitken's association with the **Daily Express**, which later shaped his life, began as a ‘by-product’ of his constituency propaganda’.* He contributed financially to the **Express** and in return his activities as MP were well reported, and articles from Canadian newspapers about him were picked up and, in turn, reprinted in the Conservative **Ashton Herald**. He had controlling shares in the **Express** by November 1916.

Aitken's success was a result of a general swing in Lancashire from Liberal to Conservative candidates but he ascribed it to *‘brilliant organization and tariff reform’*. His initial euphoria was quickly followed by nervous collapse, the only cure for which was a holiday in the South of France.

Aitken had asked Kipling to speak in Ashton during the election campaign in 1910, but the death of his mother prevented the writer from appearing. Kipling eventually made good on his promise. It was a testament to the strength of the friendship between the two men.

Thomas Pinney notes that Aitken was introduced to Kipling at Bateman's, his home in Sussex, in October 1910. AJP Taylor believed *‘the real link between them was enthusiasm for the British Empire’*. Aitken also advised Kipling on his investments, Taylor noted that Kipling had failed to appear in Ashton 1910, but *‘even so, he received his reward: Aitken gave him \$50,000 underwriting in Steel Company of Canada’*.

Aitken's politics were almost entirely centred on the Empire and this alone would have been an important factor in Kipling's eyes. Kipling's comment on the election result was, *‘What specially cheered me is that you seem to have won out on straight business talk – pure Tariff Reform. It's a huge victory in every point of view’*. By 1911, the Kipling family were frequent visitors to the Aitkens' home, even spending the Christmas there. Aitken's third child was named Peter Rudyard Aitken and Kipling was his godfather. The two families went on holiday together and the wives became, and remained, very close friends.



This close friendship between the families led Kipling to Ashton in October 1912. A letter to his son John, then at boarding school, shows he was not looking forward to the visit – *‘Tomorrow (if I live) I have to go and make a speech at Ashton under Lyme (sic) which is Sir M Aitken’s constituency. I’ve been sweating blood for days just trying to think what the deuce I am to say. Pity me!’*

The event was organised by the Ashton and District Branch of the Junior Imperial and Constitutional League and took place in the newly built Pavilion, the first purpose built cinema in Ashton, on Friday 19 October. The building was completely packed and many people had to be turned away. The chair was taken by H Schofield Heap, who introduced Kipling with a reference to his role in helping the people of Ashton understand the importance of the Empire and the lives and customs of the people of the colonies.

Kipling was received by great cheering. He said that Britain was in the middle of a revolution, which had deprived the electorate of the right to decide what laws should be made and *‘the right of full control over our day’s earnings after the King’s taxes have been paid.’* He felt that these rights had been taken away by a confidence trick – the Liberal government had said that they had millions of pounds to spend on deserving voters but, in return, they would reform the House of Lords. They would take the House of Lords away *‘fettle it up’* and bring it back reformed. *‘That was fourteen months ago and they have not brought it back yet.’* The Commons could, therefore, do whatever they liked without the restraint of the Lords – so the first thing they did was award themselves £400 per annum per head. The next step was to reward the voters with the Insurance Bill (to establish unemployment benefits), which Kipling described as a form of slavery, which would blunt character and kill self respect. It would create a *‘servile class whose time and mind and energy are diverted from the control of their own affairs...to break them to the idea of a shameless dependence on an all-pervading and all-providing Government.’*

He then moved on to Home Rule for Ireland, which was a particularly important issue for him because it was a threat to the unity of the Empire. *Home Rule* was under discussion, because the Liberal government relied on the support of the Irish MPs to stay in office. Kipling said that the government was *‘compelled to grant Home Rule to Ireland or run the risk of losing their salaries* (Laughter). *You may ask why didn’t they insure themselves against unemployment under the provisions of the Insurance Act.’* Kipling believed that *Home Rule* had never been properly put before the electorate.

He ended by saying, *‘Let us be thankful for what we are about to receive –* (Laughter). *State-organised slavery; state-guaranteed anarchy...and from these mercies there is no appeal....A land without a Constitution, within measurable distance of civil war, under the very shadow of Armageddon, for which by land and by sea and in our own distracted souls we are utterly unprepared. And on our fate hang the destinies of one-fifth of the human race.’*

Kipling’s speech was followed by Aitken who talked about *Home Rule*, pointing out the lack of consultation with voters, the role of New York Irish funding, the

cost and the impact on the Ulster Protestants, who did not want Home Rule. He finished on his usual theme of tariff reform.

The votes of thanks made reference to Kipling's role in the Boer War, making people aware of the needs of the wives and children of the men who served. Kipling replied to this, saying that he envied Aitken the '*friendship, loyalty and support*' of the people of Ashton.

The Conservative **Herald**, which was well under Aitken's control, reported the MP's speech in considerably more detail than Kipling's speech, but the most detailed accounts of both were in the **Reporter**. Both papers promoted the event the week before it happened, with potted biographies of Kipling, and the **Reporter** also ran a leader on the speech in the issue which reported it. As a Liberal paper, the **Reporter** supported '*the much needed social reforms*' of the Liberal government and the '*granting to Ireland a much delayed measure of justice*' and so were not sympathetic to Kipling's description of these changes as '*revolution*'. They noted that many Conservatives were not happy with his speech saying that the **Pall Mall Gazette** and the **Observer** had criticized his attack on the Insurance Act. The leader writer was, however, impressed with the quality of the speech – '*as an oration his speech showed the master hand, and there came quietly forth at times the happily turned and beautifully balanced phrase of a great master of diction which held his audience charmed and delighted*'.

Aitken remained as Ashton's MP only until 1916, when he was offered a peerage and resigned. Kipling and Aitken's friendship did not survive much longer. Kipling's last signature in the visitors' book at Cherkley was in 1920. He could not accept Aitken's support for the treaty which created the Irish Free State but, according to Aitken's biographers, he also felt that Aitken had adapted too well to the manoeuvrings and compromises of politics – '*over the ten years they had known each other, Beaverbrook had learnt the political ropes too well for Kipling's liking*'. This breach led to one of Kipling's most famous quotes which appeared in one of his cousin Stanley Baldwin's speeches in 1929 – '*What the proprietorship of these papers is aiming at is power, but power without responsibility – the prerogative of the harlot throughout the ages*.' This is generally thought to be Kipling's epitaph on his friendship with Aitken.

*The newspapers recording Kipling's visit and Aitken's period as MP can be consulted in the Local Studies and Archives Centre in Ashton along with biographies of Max Aitken.*

**Alice Lock**  
**Local Studies Librarian**  
**Tameside Local Studies & Archives Centre**

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## Brief History of the East Cheshire Union of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

In September 2009, the East Cheshire Union of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches (ECU) celebrated its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday. The service, meal and celebratory concert were held, most appropriately, at Old Chapel, Dukinfield, where the first meeting, to explore the setting up of the original missionary society, was held in February 1859. The service was addressed by the Revd Robert Wightman, President of the General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, who brought national greetings. The President of the ECU, Roy Buckle, gave the brief history outlined below, when proposing the toast to the ECU at the meal. The concert was an entertaining variety of turns provided by members of six of the churches in the Union with an age range of ten-eighty plus, including Tameside Local History Forum members Harry Lever and Dawn Buckle.

### History

The beginning of what became the East Cheshire Union of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches, arose from an original idea, for establishing an association for missionary purposes, from Mr HA Bright of Liverpool, through the Provincial Assembly of Unitarian and Presbyterian Ministers and Congregations of Lancashire and Cheshire (PA), in April 1858. But, by the beginning of 1859, the PA had done nothing to take this idea forward. So, the minister at Old Chapel, Dukinfield, Revd John Gordon, called a meeting at his home on 22 February 1859. The eleven people at the meeting agreed unanimously that it was *'expedient to form an association of Free Christian Churches in the district in and around East Cheshire'*. Thus, **the East Cheshire Missionary Association** was founded. Present at the meeting were representatives from Gee Cross, Dukinfield, Mottram and Ashton.

A further meeting of representatives was held on 5 May, also at Dukinfield, to adopt rules, and attending, additionally, were members of Dean Row, Styal, Oldham, Macclesfield (Parsonage Street) and Congleton. Oldham later withdrew and King Edward Street, Macclesfield, sent word that they preferred to wait until the PA acted, and they joined later that year.

It wasn't until 30 June 1859 that the PA decided to constitute a missionary branch of the Assembly in East Cheshire. Then, later in the year, **the following associations** within the PA were also established: the Manchester District Unitarian Association, the East Lancashire Unitarian Mission and an association for the West Riding of Yorkshire, the North Midland Unitarian Mission and one or two others. The Liverpool District Missionary Association was started in 1860.

Four years later the East Cheshire Missionary Association changed its name to the **East Cheshire Christian Union for Missionary Purposes**. It was not until 1952 that it became known by its present name of **the East Cheshire Union of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches**.

An essential feature of the Association was to provide a preacher for most of the associated congregations in the area. A **Preachers' Plan** was agreed in September 1859 which continued to operate for nearly forty years. Ministers who settled in the district, lay preachers and students of the Unitarian Home Missionary Board (founded in 1854 and now known as Unitarian College, Manchester) co-operated in maintaining services in various churches. The Plan included Heyrod and Flowery Field and from 1860 Stockport. At a quarterly meeting in September 1861 Stalybridge appeared on the Preaching Plan for the first time and Glossop was first mentioned in the minutes.

In the first year of existence the Association mainly concentrated its energies to bring additional strength to the groups which had no ministers. For example, it was decided to help the congregation at Parsonage Street, Macclesfield, to find a minister and financial help was promised from the modest funds. At this time the Staffordshire congregations of Newcastle-under-Lyme, Longton and Red Street were included in the preaching plan. Although outside the Association's geographical limits, it was felt that these isolated congregations deserved help. Newcastle-under-Lyme is also part of the Union today; the other two congregations are no longer in existence.

The generosity of a Northwich resident in 1872 was useful in providing services for a time, with the help of the minister at Knutsford. In 1879 these services were unfortunately discontinued and by 1910 the Association finally gave up on Northwich. There were 160 people present at the inaugural service at Marple in 1908 and from 1912 to 1916 they had a full-time minister. This was made possible by generous grants from the Association and the British and Foreign Unitarian Association (B&FUA). In 1917, however, the congregation disbanded. Interestingly, in 1948 it was revived in a shop converted into a place of worship. Alas, it did not last.

The B&FUA had started to make **grants** to individual churches in the Association before 1874 and continued to do so to help congregations to pay ministers' stipends. The role of the B&FUA has changed over the years and it does not now make grants. It is mainly concerned with managing funds from legacies left to churches and being Custodian Trustees.

The Buxton Trustees first received help from the East Cheshire Association in 1883. For many years the Association's annual report included the work of the Revd George Street, minister of Buxton from 1898 to 1928. He began Bible classes in the three Peak villages of Flagg, Pomeroy and Litton Mill. At first he paid his own expenses, until the Association made him a small, annual grant.

Other towns and villages outside East Cheshire witnessed missionary activity; with various degrees of success. They were Hanley, Cheadle (Staffs),

Whitchurch, Boston Mills, Middlewich, Biddulph, Hadfield, Bollington and Congleton - all now closed.

**The Rules of the Association** stated that funds for its activities were to be raised by annual collections and private subscriptions. In the first year ten churches gave £51. For the year 1861/2 total receipts were £171. By this time the Association had made itself responsible for the stipend of the minister at Flowery Field, amounting to £120 per annum. In 1867 the Association appointed a second missionary minister at Stalybridge and Mottram, increasing the liabilities by another £100 per annum. In 1868 the Association was £40 *in the red*. Arising from this, an annual grant was arranged from the B&FUA. In 1872 the PA gave the Association £50 to clear a deficit of £20. By 1898 the deficit was £300. Six years later, the Association had a cunning plan. Inspired by the Manchester Districts' Bazaar, the Association decided to have a Bazaar of its own in Manchester in 1904 to raise £5,000. They did not achieve this but over £2,500 was raised with support from the PA Stall and the London Stall. £1,287 of the proceeds was invested, £168 was used to clear the Association's debt, £948 was paid for the new building in Ashton, on Katherine Street (the site is now a Mosque) and £175 was allocated to Denton, Glossop, Buxton, Mottram and Congleton.

At the time of **the Union's Centenary** in 1959, there were 22 churches in the ECU. The congregations of Knutsford and Macclesfield migrated to the Manchester District Association in the 1990s. The congregation at Glossop decided to close in the late 1980s and kindly agreed to transfer the proceeds of the sale of the church building to the B&FUA for investment. Interest from the capital is credited to the ECU account. Since then 75% of it has automatically been distributed to each congregation, totalling about £65,000 in all. The remaining 25% is put into the general account for church surveys and major repairs, and for grants for children to attend national Unitarian events, among other things.

Currently, there are seven churches in the ECU including: New Chapel, Denton; Old Chapel (Unitarian) Dukinfield; Flowery Field Church, Hyde; Hyde Chapel, Gee Cross; the Christian Unitarian Church, Mossley; the Old Meeting House, Newcastle-under-Lyme; the Unitarian Church, Stalybridge and the Unitarian Fellowship, Hyde.

Much of the information for this article is taken from ***Richly Poured, a Centenary Sketch*** by the Revd F Kenworthy MA, BD, published in 1959.

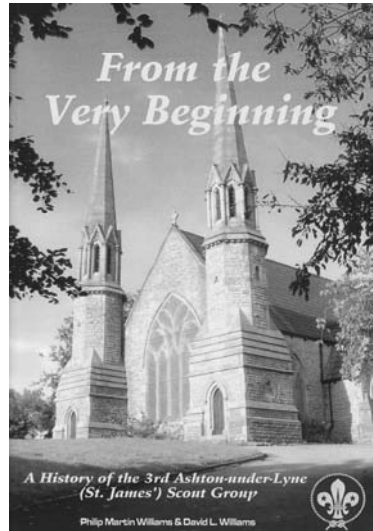
**Roy Buckle**  
**Friends of Dukinfield Old Chapel**

## From the Very Beginning

PM and DL Williams 48pp 2009 £4.

Scouting began in 1907 with Baden Powell's camp on Brownsea Island and had spread to Ashton by December 1908, when a group began, linked to St James', Cowhill Lane. This attractive booklet tells the story of the group and its links with the wider world - camping at Swineshaw, trips to London and World Jamborees - through memories and many photographs. A valuable appendix lists leaders and officials and vicars of St James'. Few Scout groups can boast such a long history of achievement.

**Alan Rose**



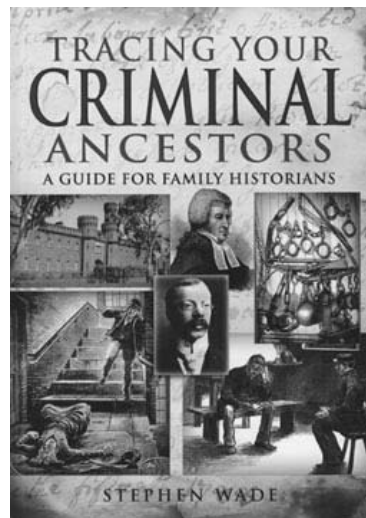
## Tracing Your Criminal Ancestors

Stephen Wade 176pp 2009 £12.99

Do you have a murderer in the family? What about a deserter, a debtor, a mutineer or a poacher?

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Each section has detailed case studies and is well written and accessible, with tips to get you started. You don't have to be a family historian to enjoy this book.



**Gay Oliver**



## Millbrook in the 1920s

**By 1920**, the devastating results of World War One were apparent 1½ miles north-east of Stalybridge in the village of Millbrook. Even though it now had a regular tram service, street lights, its own police house (with cells), two chapels, one church, a day school, the Rosebery Liberal Club, a Conservative Club and six public houses, it was regarded by many in the town as a place of difference, and, as such, mourned its one hundred dead with a quiet desperation. Many of its young women would never marry, and many who did would live with husbands suffering from a variety of complaints, ranging from neurasthenia through nephritis to shrapnel damage and amputations. Those who had served don't seem to have held those who didn't in contempt: indeed, they helped each other to maintain as much dignity in family life as was possible. That is not to say that it was a village of unity and harmony – it is well recorded that those who lived in Cambridge Terrace, Oxford Street, and the *top* of Huddersfield Road, had *nothing to do* with those, who lived on Ditchcroft, Grove Road or Hartley Street – a coolness which extended into the junior school where the children often played in separate group.



**Local Farmer, Luke Coates, on his milk round**

As the new vicar, Revd Wainwright BA, had served in the War with a group of Chinese workers and didn't return to his parish until late 1919, the head teacher of the school, Mr Hibbert, took control, and it was he who initiated the village **Armistice Commemoration**. He paid for a flag pole, and invited the village to the lowering of the flag, to join the two minute silence, the playing of the last post, and the laying of wreathes. Mill owner, Alderman James Grimshaw Lowe JP, contributed towards the costs and attended the inaugural event. As the managing director of Oakwood Mill and the owner of many village houses, he had extended his compassion into a rent amnesty during the war, and would do so again in the hard times of the 1920s. His father had taken over the mills from the Harrison family and it was important to him that his mills had had constant employment.

**1920** began with poor attendance as sickness swept through the village school, but poor James Eastwood probably wished he'd been away ill, when a bar from the door fell on his head! Millbrook has never had its own full-time doctor - messages were left at local houses and contact made when help was needed. January concluded with a terrible storm. In April, there was a gas escape in school and several children left to work as half-timers in the mills. During Health Week in May, Standards Three and Four from the school went to the town hall for a *special address*, and others went to the circus. There was a measles outbreak in the village which did not stop one young man *getting the master* of his mother, who took him back to school for discipline. Excitement filled the senior classes when swimming lessons started in September – hopefully, this would cut the number of drownings in the local dams and

reservoirs. There were two deaths in December: Novello Norris (formerly Overseer of the Poor) and 39 year old Hetty Pott. Mr Norris had held many roles in the village including working for the Staley Family Burial Society, Staley Cricket & Tennis Club and Millbrook Fair. Hetty had pricked her thumb with a fork on the Sunday the 11<sup>th</sup>; on Monday, she had severe pains in her arm, and, despite the attention of Dr Clifford of Stalybridge, she died of septicaemia. She was to have been married the following Wednesday. The year ended foggy and cold with a maximum of 43° Fahrenheit in the classrooms.

**On 19 February 1921**, James Wallwork, secretary of the Rosebery Liberal Club, was presented with a gold Albert watch chain and fountain pen: J Brown, E Dawson, J Reynard, A Barker, GH Moss, J Wallwork, H Jackson and James Barber Lawton put on an entertainment for him. In July, many of the villagers travelled to Ashton to see the Prince of Wales. In September, three boys gained scholarships to the Central School, and one boy and one girl passed to Hyde Secondary School: some returning in October as part of a physical training display.

**An inspection in March, 1922**, found that no Millbrook child was attending school without a proper meal. In May, a large gas escape meant that there were no lights in school. In June, measles struck the village again. In November, school was closed for an election.

**One of the main topics of conversation in early 1923** was the imminent retirement of Mr Hibbert. There was a splendid village party held at the school on 29 May and many tokens of love and respect were handed over including a booklet of memories from former pupils. Mr RE Bagnall took his place on 9 April in time to close the school for the Duke of York's wedding. In November, many of the village men voted in the general election and did so the following October in the municipal election.

**Some villagers were shaken by an explosion in late July, 1925**, when the side of North End Mill was blown out. There was great sympathy for the family of the one casualty, William Henry Booth, the engineer, who had been badly scalded when the boilers blew. He had cleared the mill and was attempting to replace the engine governor which he had found displaced. He died of burns at Ashton Infirmary on 4 August. Another death which moved the villagers was that of 47 years old Alice Woodhouse. She had been Matron at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Western General Hospital in World War One, and was one of four presented to the King and Queen on their visit to Manchester, to be thanked for her efforts. Her family placed a plaque in St James' in her memory.

**Things progressed quietly until 17 February 1927**, when diphtheria struck 13 Stamford Street. But the main excitement was on Huddersfield Road when a Joint Board 'bus collided with a pony and trap driven by Norman Harrop. Its owner, Councillor Stanley Cuttle of Oakwood Farm, was in court for the hearing. Tragedy struck at 397, Huddersfield Road in March when Clara Elizabeth Norris (45) died: her mother, Hannah Elizabeth (82), died the following week. There had been changes in education, and on 25 April, thirteen boys and girls left school for the new secondary schools: Waterloo Road and West Hill.

**But there was a greater change ahead in June 1928**, when the news many had dreaded spread throughout the villages: their benefactor and champion, and Mayor of Stalybridge, James Grimshaw Lowe, had died at home following a long and painful illness. In January, he had cancelled all engagements and had been in a Manchester Nursing Home. On 7 June, housewives drew their curtains, the mills stopped, and the pavements filled with deep lines of villagers, who bowed their bare heads as the cortege passed. A long line of men followed the hearse at 11.40am, and they walked silently past the schoolchildren, who were standing outside the school. His wife was too ill to attend and many of her friends stayed with her in Oakwood. Two months later, there was excitement of a very different kind when the Headmaster had a radio fitted into school, so that the pupils could listen to a live broadcast from Paris! It was the signing of the Kellogg Treaty, which it was hoped would bring peace to Europe\*. In September, Kenneth Radding of Swineshaw Lodge, was fined 10 shillings for owning an illegal gun but villagers barely noticed, as much of their time was spent preparing for their Allotment Show which was opened by J Wilson JP. The year ended with another outbreak of influenza.

**More excitement caught the villagers when one of the school teachers, Agnes Norris, married their vicar on 9 April 1929.** The following month was a time of sadness and worry when smallpox was again diagnosed: a fifteen year old girl was taken to Hartshead Isolation Hospital, followed by a mother and her six children. The same week John Platt, who lived at Sun Green, died in the infirmary. Yet again, pupils lined the roadway for a funeral. One happy boy was his neighbour, twelve year old William Greenwood who had won a prize in the *Reporter's Children's Corner*. Regular customers of the Sportsman's Arms stood, regretfully, to watch their beloved pub demolished: they had many memories of election night celebrations, as it had been used by the Conservative Party for years.



**St James Infants 1929**

The next decade would continue with village triumphs and disasters.

\*The Kellogg Pact was a multilateral treaty which hoped to outlaw war as an instrument of national policy.

Sources: *The Reporter*, *St James' Logbooks*, and local memories.  
Thanks to Mr and Mrs Jack Roberts for the photographs.

**Kathryn Booth**

### **Can you help?**

I would be pleased to hear from anyone who may have information about lampposts that were erected in Ashton-under-Lyne to commemorate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.

**Susan Knight, Chairman, Ashton-under-Lyne Civic Society**  
**susan.knight8@ukonline.co.uk**

## Extracts from the Old Chapel, Dukinfield Burial Register

**10 June 1795** - May wife of James Hague buried in Pew Number 2. Died of a violent choleric, ill for 8 days and nights – 37 years.

**13 July 1797** - Samuel Dean a poor man's child died upon the road in its mother's arms – buried close to the wall aged 8 weeks.

**30 November 1806** - James Newton of Denton died suddenly near the tunnel Marsden, Yorkshire – south side of Father John Newton's stone laid upon his wife and 2 children.

**28 August 1809** - 45 year old woman, Ann Nicholson of Fairfield killed by lightening.

**21 April 1812** - Thomas Reece of Newton killed by a large farmer's roller going over him, 7 years.

**10 October 1812** Jonathan and Hannah Andrews of Dukinfield in a double grave, both buried on one day. He was in the 73<sup>rd</sup> year of his age, she was in the 69<sup>th</sup> year of her age. They had been married together 51 years and upwards.

**17 April 1814** – Joseph Bayley of Stayley Bridge in his vault. He was killed in his factory on 13 April by a strap taking him up belonging to a blowing machine – he was interred in the forenoon aged 41 years.

**2 December 1814** – Edward Baker, potter of Dukinfield found drowned – he had been missing 5 weeks and 3 days, aged 35 years.

**15 October 1815** – Jeremiah Woolley son of John Woolley of Godley killed by a cart with the two horses taking fright at a paper kite at Gee Cross.

**28 June 1822** – Charles son of Edward Vaudrey. He was drowned at Castle Hall, Dukinfield in a stone quarry. 6 years.

**31 June 1825** – Francis Dukinfield Astley Esq. of Dukinfield Lodge in this township. He was found dead in bed at his brother-in-law's house in Derbyshire aged 44 years.

**1 June 1827** – William son of the late James Priestley – he was bit by a mad dog May 2 and died May 28 of the hydrophobia – 6 years.

**19 May 1837** – George Frederick Cheetham Cotton Master, Staley Bridge. He was drowned in the Reservoir belonging to the above G F Cheetham aged 30.

These are just a few extracts from the registers. There were lots of other drownings, pit deaths, killed by a cart etc. and these would not have been reported elsewhere. There were no local newspapers at this early date, and it was before official death certificates were issued from July 1837.

These extracts were taken from the Old Chapel CD, produced by the Dukinfield Group of the Family History Society of Cheshire.

**Gay Oliver**  
**Family History Society of Cheshire**

## Memories of Hyde Theatre Royal

Anyone know the name **Ken Hadley**, from the theatre's golden days? Ken sent the following to the **Old Theatres** magazine, the edition which followed the one with the Theatre Royal featured in it. Ken wrote:

As well as being a choir boy and a scout in the 1950s my father contacted Albert Breakey to ask me if there was anything I could do at the Hyde Theatre Royal to keep me off the streets. I was thirteen at the time and quite small, however Albert introduced me to his colleague (whose name, I think, was Jim Proctor) and then to the wonders of the projection and re-wind rooms.

**First Duties:** First duties were re-winding the films and taking time to brew up. I can remember going home with plasters on my fingers 'til they toughened up to the film splices. Being small, I was not tall enough to see through the observation window or to monitor the carbon brushes in the projectors so, after a few weeks (presumably delayed on purpose for Albert to see if I would stay!), he quietly made me a crate to stand on so I could see through both. My world opened up! Not only could I watch the films free, but gradually I was taught how to adjust the carbon rods and, later, the magical reel changing.

**Sitting in the Gods:** Albert must have sensed I was getting a bit fed up of the re-winds, whilst he and Jim enjoyed a smoke and read the paper, so he introduced a system of taking it in turns with the re-winds. (I could always go in the *Gods* between reels and watch the film.) I vividly remember one event. On reel changes, the first thing the *take-on* operator did, by looking through the observation window, was to adjust the screen focus by rotating the lens on the projector.

**The Screen went Red:** On this occasion when Jim was *take-on* and, on switchover, the screen suddenly went red followed by a scream. Jim was jumping up and down and holding his hand and the blood was everywhere. Instead of getting hold of the lens rotator, he had stuck his fingers into the gate which had promptly chopped off half of his finger!

Albert arrived and, seeing what had happened, quickly found the first aid box, gave Jim some cotton wool, put his hand in his pocket, extracted a box of matches and put the finger end in it. They obviously had to disappear to get Jim to hospital. In doing so I, aged thirteen, was on my own, Number One and chief projectionist. Of course, Albert was back within five minutes; however, that five minutes and the preceding events will be with me forever. Just a pity there was no one else to see me. Shortly after, the shows started. I remember *Carousel*, *Zip Goes a Million* and *The King and I*.

Duties then increased to setting up of the stage sets and, despite my pleading, I was too small and forbidden to climb the ladders to assist in the setting up of the overhead stage lighting.

**Albert's Crate:** My disappointment was soon forgotten, when I was able to reach and man the switchboard for the stage and background lights, with the use of Albert's crate. That was not all! I was eventually trained to man the star

spotlights located in the projection room. Once again I was the proudest man in the theatre; unfortunately, there was still no one to see me.

So pleased to share my memories with you.

### **Ken Hadley**

**Old Theatres** magazine is a must and such good value; it is also supporting us to the hilt. So if you have memories, get them sent. For your copy of **Old Theatres** magazine, please send a cheque for £6 (includes UK postage and packing) to OLD THEATRES, 20 Rife Way, Felpham, Bognor Regis, West Sussex, PO22 7BW. (Cheques should be made payable to TG Kirtland) [www.oldtheatres.co.uk](http://www.oldtheatres.co.uk)

### **Friends of Hyde Theatre Royal**



### **Medlock & Tame Valley Conservative Association**

Conservation means preservation and protection of our marvellous earth but which we may lose 'tomorrow' unless more people take an interest in them.

The problem of conservation in the world has arisen because people are using the world's natural resources in greater quantity and variety than at any time before. As the world's population grows, and as more people live at a higher standard, there is a greater demand for resources, but these resources must be 'conserved' so there will be enough for the future.

The MTVCA aim is to preserve wildlife and habitats as well as the use of all natural resources in their small corner of the world in 5 Oaken Clough Terrace and in the Medlock and Tame Valleys.

Could you help us by joining us? There is so much needing to be done to preserve our woodland and valleys for future generations.

If you would like to have more information, then please visit our website at: [www.medlockandtame.org.uk](http://www.medlockandtame.org.uk) or telephone Susan (Secretary) on 07989 147095.

**Susan Stewart**  
**Medlock and Tame Valley Conservation Association**



## Dr Thomas Keighley FRCO, FRMCM (1869–1935)

### Albion Church Organist

**Early Life:** Thomas Keighley was born in Stalybridge in the year 1869. His parents are named on the census as Fox and Maria Keighley. Fox Keighley was a mill worker, although for a short while, in 1881, he was a greengrocer living on High Street, Dukinfield. There were in all seven children, Thomas being the second child. The family was by no means well off: indeed, when Thomas was only a baby, his parents took in a lodger whilst living on Canal Street, Dukinfield. Thomas attended St John's day school, Dukinfield, and upon leaving began working in a cotton mill: some reports state him as commencing work as a *little piecer*, but the census of 1891 shows him at the age of 21 to be a clerk in a cotton mill.



Thomas Keighley took up music at the age of thirteen, by the age of eighteen he was appointed organist at Christ Church, Stalybridge and a few months later was appointed to a similar position at St John's Church, Dukinfield. He joined Ashton Philharmonic in 1889. He passed the Associate of the Royal College of Organists ARCO examination in 1891 and the Fellow of the royal College of Organists FRCO examination two years later. In January 1895 he entered **the Royal Manchester College of Music**, having been recommended by none other than Charles Hallé. The letter is quoted below:

*'Greenheys, Manchester, 9 January 1895. To T Keighley*

*Dear Sir, I have much pleasure in sending you the enclosed admission to the rehearsals.*

*With regard to your future studies would it be possible for you to enter the Royal Manchester College of Music as a student? I should advise you to make the Organ and Harmony your principal studies; you would get into the highest class for Harmony (this so-called Owens College class) which leads up to the taking of degrees, and I should willingly recommend you especially to Dr Hiles.*

*The next term of the College commences on Tuesday next the 15<sup>th</sup> and you could learn all particulars from the Registrar.*

*Yours very truly, Charles Hallé.'*

Two years later, he passed the examination for Associate of the Royal College of Music, London and the following year that for Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music, London. On 14 September 1897 Dr Keighley took the position as organist at **Albion's new church, Ashton** (opened 1895 and having a Lewis organ), being highly recommended by JW Kenworthy of Hurst Hall. In 1898 he

completed the course for the degree of Mus Bac at the Victoria University. Also in this year he was appointed a teacher of theory at the Royal Manchester College of Music.

Dr Keighley's period as a teacher at the Manchester College began in 1898 when he succeeded Dr Hiles, the very person he had originally been recommended to in 1895 by Charles Hallé. On the retirement of Dr Watson he took over further classes and in 1900 was appointed lecturer in singing at the University, and to these appointments were added later the direction of the harmony and composition sections, the organ professorship and the course of training for teachers in music.

In 1901 he completed the Mus Doc course. The census shows that he was still living at home, 32 Buckley Street, Stalybridge, with his father, mother, and his three, younger sisters. Thomas is shown on the census as teacher of music and his young sister Bertha is a teacher at a National school. Thomas' father by this time is aged 62 and still working as a 'cotton mixer'.

In 1902 Thomas was elected to the distinguished position of a seat on the Council of the Royal College of Organists, a position he retained up until his death. It was also in 1902 that Thomas married **Edith Harrison, of the Mount**, Ashton, youngest daughter of the late George Oxley Harrison, owner of Harrison's Drapery Stores, Ashton-under-Lyne. Edith's maternal grandfather was Mr Sunderland, principal and founder of the famous Academy for Boys, Ashton. The marriage took place at Albion Congregational Church, Ashton, where Edith's family had long-standing connections and where Edith herself was an active member. As organist and conductor of the choir, Dr Keighley and his new wife were presented with a gift of a costly music cabinet from the choir members.

For several years Thomas acted as examiner in the higher examinations of the Trinity College of Music, London, the Incorporated Society of Musicians, and the Royal College of Organists. So enthusiastic was he to teach and inform that he would often become grossly involved in his subject which one year led to the following newspaper item:

***FORGOT TO GIVE MARKS.** The Absent-Minded Music Judge: At Millom (Cumberland) music festival last night Dr Thomas Keighley of Cheadle, was so engrossed in demonstrating how 'The Moonlight Sonata' should be played that he walked off the platform after his solo forgetting to state his awards. The audience laughed and he came back to announce them.*

Dr Keighley achieved a well-deserved reputation as a choral trainer. He took charge of the Stockport Vocal Society in 1913 and in 1916 succeeded Mr Herbert Whitaker as conductor of the Manchester Vocal Society. In 1920 he was appointed conductor of the Oldham Musical Society.

He took a practical interest in the development of music in the **elementary schools** and wrote a number of theoretical treatises on musical subjects. Although he wrote some original pianoforte pieces and an orchestral overture in B minor which were performed with some success, Dr Keighley was less well known as an instrumental composer than as a composer of part-songs – such

things as his '*Leprechaun*', '*King Arthur*', '*Minka*', and '*All in a Garden Fair*' were favourites with many Lancashire choirs.

He worked for the **brass bands**, which at that time were usually shunned by the prominent musicians, and he composed several works for them, one-piece '*Lorenzo*' being a test piece at one of the famous contests. His broadmindedness in music also extended to the cinema organ of which he was a keen supporter, as he considered they had a great and good musical influence, apart from finding valuable openings for organists.

At the beginning of the scheme for educational work for adults in the prisons, work at **Strangeways** was arranged and carried out by the University Extramural Committee, until it reached a stage when it was possible to make it more continuous and systematic and to include more classes, when it was then taken over by the Director of Education in Manchester. Dr Keighley himself gave weekly lectures to the prisoners during the experimental scheme.

Despite all these commitments, Thomas still found time to give regular organ recitals at Manchester Cathedral and was especially invited to give an inaugural recital on the occasion of the renovation of their organ. As an example of his workload, a page from his notebook shows the distances he travelled on almost a daily basis, always travelling on his bicycle. Some examples are 7 June (no note of the year) he travelled to Bowdon and back 30 miles, and on 5 July a trip to Alderley and return, a distance of 40 miles. On 2 August he travelled 20 miles to Woodhead and return, then on 4 August he travelled 86 miles round trip to Liverpool.

It was J W Kenworthy who first appointed Dr Thomas Keighley to be the organist at **Albion** and he took up his appointment in 1897. Three years later he became Albion's Choirmaster but in 1911, in consequence of his appointments at the University and the Royal Manchester College of Music, Dr Keighley resigned and was presented by the congregation with two handsome, polished mahogany bookcases (both with brass plaques giving details of the event), 36 volumes of Dickens' works and other books. However, two years later, in 1913, Dr Keighley was reappointed to Albion as the organist and remained until March 1932, when he moved to Holy Innocents, Fallowfield. His association with Albion Church covered a period of 33 years and again, on leaving, he was presented by the choristers with a silver salver, the gift being handed to him by Mr Kenworthy who remarked that Dr Keighley's charm and excellent control of the organ had pleased not only their own congregations but also visitors from far and near. Dr Keighley, his wife and daughter, Elizabeth, resided at the Mount, Caroline Street, until moving to Cheadle shortly after his leaving Albion as organist.

Dr Thomas Keighley died, on 16 November 1935, aged 66. At the Albion Church evening service, lead by Revd HJ Coxon, the choir sang one of Dr Keighley's compositions, '*Saviour Breathe an Evening Blessing*' and '*O Rest in the Lord*' and the congregation stood reverently whilst Mr WA Connell played Chopin's '*March Funebre*' on the organ.

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

## The Bright Shop, Park Bridge

The Bright Shop at Park Bridge Ironworks was completed in 1907 on the site of the Wellington coal pit. Iron and steel bars from the rolling mills of the Bottom Forge, black and covered in scale, were cleaned and finished in the Bright Shop. Some bars were cleaned in turning machines that skimmed off the surface scale and reduced them in size. Turned steel bars went to companies such as Rolls Royce and Ford



for manufacture into components for the motor trade or Phillips' bike manufacturers. Other bars were lowered into tanks of boiling sulphuric acid in the Pickling Shop to burn off the scale, plunged into limewater and then drawn through a die to the required thickness. Some drawn bars were machined in the Roller Shop at Park Bridge and others were sold to textile machinery firms such as Platts of Oldham and Asa Lees.

### Pickled iron

Chris Brown, who was a lorry driver at Park Bridge ironworks for sixteen years, remembered the Pickling Shop:

*In the Bright Shop they had wooden cases, about two to three foot wide and about two foot deep and over twenty foot long and they were made out of top quality wood, ash or oak or something like that and they made pickling vats. The black steel, what come from the forge, it all had scale on it, you know, from being rolled and everything but they were put in acid, in these acid baths. They were great big heavy wooden baths, all sealed and everything. The acid ate the metal away, cleaned the metal. The bars were about twenty foot long. They dropped the bars in on cradles and they stayed in there so long, how long I don't know. Then they took them out of there and dropped them in boiling lime to kill the acid and also it put like a powder coat on.*

### No protection

Henry Maskery, who worked on a draw machine in the Bright Shop in the late 1950s, recalled the dreadful conditions in the Pickling Shop:

*As the steel came up from the forge it was plunged into acid baths in the Pickling Shop. When you walked in, it took your breath away. You could feel it in the back of your throat. If you wanted to get the grease off parts of a cooker or anything you could just hang them over the acid bath for a couple of hours. The men had no protection from fumes, no masks or anything. After the bars came out of the acid they went to the Bright Shop, where the bars were polished, then sent to the*

loading bay to go out on lorries or the railway. A lot were sent to Bombay. It was real heavy manual work.



### **A dreadful accident**

Albert Warren remembered his brother having a terrible accident in the Pickling Shop at Park Bridge:

*On New Years Day 1940, I think it was the first time they had worked on a New Year's Day, Danny had a terrible accident. Iron bars were being swung into a vat of vitriol by crane, when Danny was knocked into the acid. The bars fell on top of him and he lay in the acid for fifteen minutes before they could get him out. All the flesh from his neck to his heels was burnt. He was taken to Oldham hospital, where he lay naked on his stomach in a cage, until he died eight weeks later. My mother went up every day to see him despite the winter snow.*

The jacket that Danny Morrison wore when he came to work on that fateful day in 1940 was never removed from the hook where he had hung it, until the ironworks closed in 1963.

### **The Bright Shop Today**

The Bright Shop was demolished in the 1990s and has been claimed by nature. It is a fully accessible site and demonstrates how, in a relatively small area, it is possible to create a variety of wildlife-friendly habitats and features. These places provide food, shelter and breeding spaces for a whole host of birds, insects and small mammals. It is hoped that as you stroll round you can take home ideas that will encourage a more diverse variety of wildlife into school grounds, community spaces and gardens. Look out for the wildflower meadow, pond and bog area, dry stone features, a living willow tunnel, log habitat piles and insect homes.

### **The Tameside Countryside Ranger Service**

Article taken from ***Park Bridge Remembered***, available at the Heritage Centre.

**Lancashire's Romantic Radical:  
The Life & Writings of Allen Clarke/Teddy Ashton**

By Paul Salveson

Hardback £25, Pbk £15, plus postage £2.50  
Little Northern Books, 90a Radcliffe Rd, Golcar, Huddersfield HD7 4EZ (2009)

Charles Allen Clarke, to give him his Sunday name, is truly in the first team of writers in and on Lancashire. It is amazing that there has been no previous book about him since his death in 1935, but it does not surprise me that Paul Salveson is the author of this first work, because of his interest in dialect, socialism and social conditions. Perhaps he is Clarke reincarnated – not only is he interested in Clarke's interests but, like Clarke, he has taken up the role of publisher too. There are other similarities – for instance they are both sensitive Bolton chaps.

Salveson is the authority on Clarke and gives much of his knowledge here. There is coverage and analysis in depth of his writings (novels, socialism, local history), of his career in journalism and publishing and of his links with cycling, rambling, healthy living and literary/debating societies. His role, as founder of the *Lancashire Authors Association* (LAA) just a hundred years ago and his subsequent fallout with his fellow founders, is covered for the very first time. He is revealed as a leader, mainly through his pen, in the fight to make the public aware of the iniquities of child labour.

Salveson reveals Clarke as an early exponent of making (Lancashire) working people the central figures in his fictional writing in books, magazines and newspapers. His dual personality is revealed, 'Allen Clarke' when writing serious stuff or 'Teddy Ashton' when writing to invoke laughter. Salveson gives plenty of examples of use of dialect in the speech of the characters. Without saying so, he reveals that Clarke is a Boltonian, or possibly a Wiganer, when he quotes the line '*it's a bitter pill for t'swallow*' – the rest of Lancashire doesn't use '*for t'fert t*'. Salveson gives a balanced judgement on Clarke's skills and shortcomings as a writer, realizing that he is a regional, not national, front-runner.

Wisely, not listing all of Clarke's many pen-names but giving some, Salveson also gives evidence of Clarke's coining of place-names such as *Trottertown* (Bolton), *Drivenden* (Darwen), and *Brunborough* (Burnley) These names occur when the reader gets introduced to Bill Spriggs and his wife Bet of *Tum Fowt* (Tonge Fold) who Teddy uses as his main line of communication with his readers. He was truly a master journalist with his knowledge of how to reach the market. Who else could attract, in 1901, ten thousand people to a Bolton suburb for the *Teddy Ashton Picnic*?

Cleverly, hinting at Clarke's belief in spiritual matters and using good old Lancashire speech, Salveson becomes Clarke on the last page when he writes a *postface*, (the opposite of a preface) from the grave. I think it would be improved



if he had used the capital 'A' instead of a small one in the word 'aw', meaning 'I', which makes it clear that the word being used is not 'all'.

Sometimes repeating himself, at times Salveson uses devices such as 'see page 6' 'see chapter 3', 'see below' and 'which I will refer to later'. I found this unusual but helpful, giving the reader the impression that the writer is talking to him/her. He also tells of some personal preferences, such as when he gives a recipe for potato cakes, or recalls that he found the smell of girls, just out of the spinning room or weaving shed, 'incredibly sexy' when queuing in a chip shop.

A chronological table is used for events in Clarke's life. This was useful but I felt that some of the entries were not very important. It highlighted too that, for instance, when referring to the deaths of his children, we had been told very little of Clarke's domestic life. I would have liked to have seen more of Clarke's poetic output. A prolific rhymester, not all of his work was noteworthy but I think that, in addition to **A Gradely Prayer** being included, **A Lass fro' Chorlah**, a fine poem, could have been used to tell that his second wife came from Chorley.

The book is not indexed, but does have a contents page. There are very few biographies of Lancashire writers – this is a very useful study of a chap who would otherwise not have received the plaudits he deserves.

**Bob Dobson**



The advertisement for Printerbase features a stylized background with a large, light-colored arrow pointing from the top left towards the bottom right. In the top right corner, the 'printerbase' logo is displayed, consisting of a cluster of dots of varying sizes to the left of the text 'printerbase' in a bold, sans-serif font, with 'printer specialists' in a smaller font below it. To the right of the text, there is an image of a printer with a photograph of a globe on its output tray. The main headline, 'Outstanding Prices on Printers and Consumables', is written in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below this, a sub-headline reads: 'With a wide range of business and personal printers we have an expert print solution to suit your needs'. At the bottom, a dark grey banner contains the text: 'For more choice on printers, consumables and accessories visit [www.printerbase.co.uk](http://www.printerbase.co.uk) or call 0161 308 5848'. Below the banner, it states 'FREE Delivery on orders over £100 ex VAT'. At the very bottom, in a smaller font, is the address: 'Printerbase Limited - Britannia House - Hertford Street - Ashton-under-Lyne - Lancashire OL7 6TJ'.

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printer specialists

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## Casualties of War

In **Hyde Cemetery** there are a number of War graves. My curiosity aroused, I decided to investigate and checked out the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website. It holds a wealth of information on individuals and cemeteries and also records information on civilian casualties. There is an A to Z list of countries where cemeteries and war graves are found, amongst other statistics and explanations of their work and how they are funded.

Looking at the records for Hyde Cemetery, there is a record of a member of the Home Guard and also a list of civilian casualties buried there. The records also show the name of a Sapper of the Royal Canadian Engineers, who is buried in St Mary's churchyard, Newton.

I decided to investigate further and looked up copies of the **North Cheshire Herald** at Tameside Local Studies & Archives Centre and discovered the following information:

**William Robinson** was a corporal in the Bredbury and Romiley Home Guard. He lived in Werneth Avenue, Gee Cross. He had served in the Welch Guard during the First World War and was amongst the first to enlist in the Home Guard, when it was formed in 1940. He had gone to Hazel Grove Greyhound Track to take part in a tug-of-war with the Police. He had taken part in one pull, had rested and appeared well, but, after a second pull, he collapsed and was rushed to Stepping Hill Infirmary where, sadly, he died.

I had always been under the impression that people buried in war graves had either been killed in action or had died as a result of injury or illness as a consequence of taking part. Attending a talk given by the Commonwealth War Grave Commission at Ashton Town Hall, I was to learn that anyone serving at the *Home Front*, dying as a result of accident or illness, is commemorated.

**HV Arnfield**, a Sapper of the Royal Canadian Engineers, was originally from Newton and had emigrated to Canada fourteen years previously. Leaving his wife there, he returned, as many Canadians did, to serve and help defend this country. He was on leave and had gone to spend it with his brother and family, and they had all gone to visit their sister, who lived in Liverpool. Sadly, six of them were killed in an air raid on Merseyside. The Canadian service man was buried, along with his brother and sister in St Mary's churchyard.



On the 22 December 1940, an **air raid** took place at some unspecified place in the North West. The bodies of the victims are buried in Hyde Cemetery. The newspaper states that houses in the middle of a row received a direct hit and two little brothers aged five and six years were killed, whilst their playmate, a little girl, escaped injury. Their father was slightly injured but their mother received bad head injuries. Outside, a number of people were also killed, amongst them a young courting couple, who were found with their arms still linked. More people,

who were returning home after attending a church service, were also killed. The names of some of these casualties are recorded in the **civilian section** of the records of Hyde Cemetery on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website. The Commission states that, when they are informed by the authorities, they list and record each civilian casualty. They have approximately 67,000 civilians recorded but there may be more. Most of these were casualties of the blitz and some, very sadly, are of complete families.

**My own paternal grandmother** was one of those casualties. She was a widow, who had raised a family of eight children after her husband had died. Her family had persuaded her to leave her home in South East London and go to live with one of her daughters, who lived in Somerset, in the hope of escaping the worst of the bombing. She returned to her home in order to visit her youngest son, my father, in hospital. He was a casualty himself, having received serious, life threatening, injuries during an earlier air raid. There was a direct hit on her home and she was killed. I found her record on the Commission's website.

It is sad to reflect on:

- the two little boys, no doubt looking forward in eager anticipation to Christmas and also on the young couple aged eighteen and twenty years, linking arms.
- the Home Guard, having survived one conflict, unexpectedly dying whilst taking part in an event hoping to bring some light relief and perhaps helping to alleviate some of the stress and anxiety of those times.
- the young man taking the opportunity to visit his relatives during a short leave from the Canadian army.

Each of the above cases represents a tragic, individual story of the horror and pity of war.

**Valerie Bowker**

**For more information see:**

**Commonwealth War Graves Commission Website: [www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)**

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## Memories Inspired by the 'Flying Dentist'

The Article in Issue Four of *History Alive Tameside* concerning Tony Brooks, 'The Flying Dentist', brought back many memories of my early life and, in particular, my teenage employment.

Having left Ashton Grammar School in 1949, I joined the newly nationalised British Railways as a very junior clerk, at Ashton Oldham Road goods yard. This site is now occupied by the Ikea Building. Just prior to being called up for National Service in the Royal Air Force in 1952, I remember a great deal of interest being caused in the goods yard by the arrival of a goods wagon labelled for Mr Brooks of Dukinfield. This wagon contained a very sleek, shiny, racing car. This beautiful machine was in the livery of British Racing Green and looked very much like the cars in the photograph which accompanied the article. I honestly cannot remember if I took the chance of sitting in the car but I would have been very sorely tempted! Can you imagine a present day Ferrari or McLaren machine being transported in this way today?

In the early 1950s, many interesting things arrived by goods wagon at Oldham Road, including animals for the circus held at the Theatre Royal on Oldham Road, and props and luggage for the various variety acts which appeared there. These were all delivered by horse and cart, as very few motor lorries were in use at that time; in fact, I seem to remember only four or five Scammel three wheelers, nicknamed *Iron Horses*, which pulled carts around the town.

The horses were stabled in a building, across Oldham Road now occupied by a Bingo Hall, and some of them were characters in their own right. One great, big horse was called *Blackie* and he had been in the Manchester Blitz where a incendiary bomb had burned a long scar on his back. You can imagine that this had not improved his temper and I always gave him a wide berth, if he was in the yard when I arrived at 6.45am.

I worked in the offices attached to the large warehouse in the yard. These were lit by gas light even in the 1950s, as the Railway Company had signed a 100 year contract with the gas company. When the gas failed, we had Tilley lamps on our desks. (Health and Safety had not been invented then!)

My first job was in the delivery office and I started at 7.00am, the first task being to light the office fire. Then I wrote out several hundred delivery notes for the deliveries to local firms and shops. I must have written thousands of notes to the National Gas & Oil Engine Company, to JC Carlson and to Gartsides' Brewery. My handwriting has suffered ever since!

The Chief Clerk was a man called Frank Gartside, who was known as *Ticker Gartside*, due to his habit of checking his watch to make sure that we juniors didn't slope off early. The man in overall charge was Alfred Shirt, the Goods Agent, and he was addressed as 'Sir', if ever we had cause to speak to him.

The goods yard had its own entrance onto Oldham Road, controlled by traffic lights. A weighbridge weighed every cart in and out of the yard: the horses seemed to be able to know when the lights turned to green and would set off, sometimes without the carter.

Coal was also brought in by train and stacked in great heaps in the yard. The Co-op had its own offices there and their representative was a man called Martin who drove around the town in a *Bee Backed* Austin from the 1930s era.

I left in 1952 to carry out my National Service in the RAF. When I returned in 1954, I spent only a few weeks working at Ashton and Dukinfield, before being transferred to the *Big City*, Manchester Victoria. Life in those offices above Victoria Railway Station was totally different to my happy days at Ashton Oldham Road and I missed the very many characters, the carters, the checkers, and the horses. I found, however, that most delivery work in Manchester was carried out by horse and cart and that 250 horses were stabled underneath London Road Station even in the mid 1950s, but that's another story.

### **Albert Cooke**

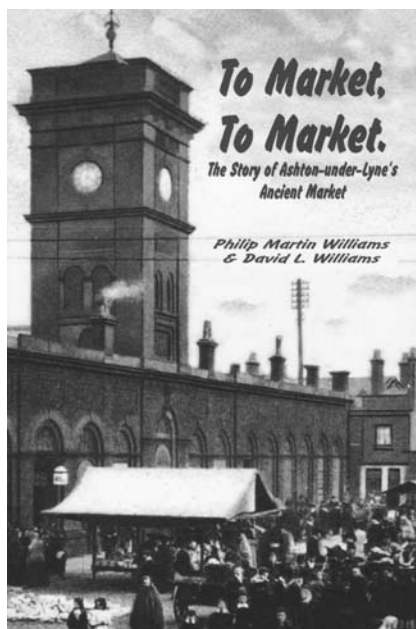
Thank you Albert for responding to Valerie's article. Editors.

### ***To Market, To Market. The Story of Ashton-under-Lyne's Ancient Market***

by PLand DL Williams, 148pp. 2009 £12.50

The Williams brothers wrote their first account of Ashton market in 1994, which was so popular that it was reprinted twice by 1998. The fire of 2004 and the subsequent rebuild of the market hall opened a new chapter in the story, and the authors took the opportunity of revising and enlarging their original account and bringing it up to date, as well as adding more illustrations. The result is both lively and wide ranging: the story of an institution that has been at the heart of Ashton life from 1413 to the present. Included is much valuable information about the physical changes in the town centre over recent years, information not easily obtained elsewhere.

### **Alan Rose**



## Jack Patterson 1926–2009

Jack Patterson of Sunnyside Grove in Ashton had a great interest in local history. He and his wife Janet were early members of Tameside Local History Forum and Ashton Civic Society, as well as founding the Currier Lane Area Residents' Association, of which Jack was Chairman.

Jack trained at the Royal College of Art and worked as an art teacher at Oldham College of Art and Oldham Tech for thirty nine years. He was secretary of Oldham Society of Artists and knew LS Lowry and Alf Ackrill.

He and Janet were canal enthusiasts and he served as Chairman and Secretary of the Tudor Cruising Club for ten years.

Jack's enthusiasm, artistic talents and outgoing personality were known to all in the Forum. The beautiful and striking banner he designed and created for the Forum will stand as a fitting tribute to him at all Forum events.

### Jill Cronin

See back cover for a photograph of Jack, plus the artwork for our banner, and our magazine launch last year, the Forum banner is in the background.

## Anniversaries in Tameside 2010

Years Ago	Date	Event
10	2000	Formation of Audenshaw Local History Society
20	1990	Formation of the Tameside Archaeological Survey
40	1970	Audenshaw Junction railway accident-2 killed, 13 injured
50	1960	Opening of George Lawton Hall Mossley Publication: Mrs Bowman's <i>England in Ashton-under-Lyne</i>
60	1950	Murder at the Strangler's Arms, Ashton
65	1945	The last SHMD tram operated just 4 days after VE Day
80	1930	Ashton Board of Guardians met for last time
85	1925	Ashton to Oldham Trolleybus service inaugurated
100	1910	Opening of Stalybridge Central School The Ridgehill Murder Two murder trials of the Gorse Hall Accused – both acquitted First Labour Exchange in Ashton Opening of Canon Johnson CofE Primary School Ashton Girl Guide Movement began in England Robertson's <i>Jamworks</i> first used the <i>Golliwag</i> symbol Max Aitken (later 1 <sup>st</sup> Baron Beaverbrook) elected MP for Ashton
125	1885	Licensed Buffet Bar opened on Stalybridge Station
190	1820	Opening of Taunton Sunday School, Ashton
200	1810	Foundation of Haughton Green Methodist Church Birth of JF La Trobe Bateman-engineer of local reservoirs





**Jack Patterson  
1926–2009**



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## Images of Stamford Park



Stamford Park has received a grant of £3.95 million from the Parks for People programme funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Big Lottery Fund. This funding in addition to capital funding from Tameside, will be used to restore the park and provide high quality new facilities befitting the borough's premier park.