

ARCHIVES

LANCASHIRE HISTORY MAGAZINE

NEW EXHIBITION at
Lancashire Archives
& Local History!

**RESEARCHING
CALDERSTONES RECORDS**
An Ethical Dilemma

SAVING LIVES
Knott End
Coastguards

**PRIDE OF
THE PITCH**

PRESTON'S FOOTBALLING ICONS

NATIONAL
FOOTBALL
MUSEUM

Lancashire
County
Council



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BINCENTENNTIAL



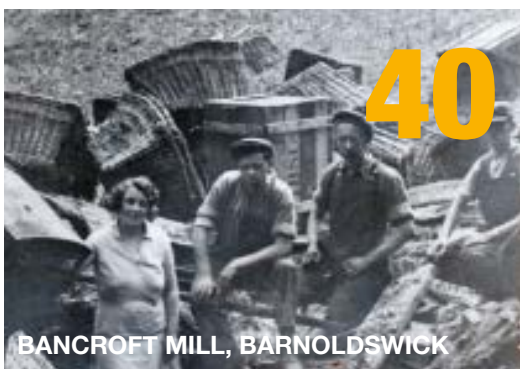
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Nanny Pollard's bonnet

Welcome to our fourth edition

We've raced into 2024 and our first magazine of the year is filled with more fascinating stories from Lancashire's past.

With a big year of sporting competitions we're looking at Lancashire's proud football and cricket heritage, with Stephen Poleon's account of the career of fast-bowler Ignatius St Louis and the new exhibition at Lancashire Archives, *Pride of the Pitch*, a partnership with the National Football Museum. From terrace chants to choral harmony, Michael Banham-Guerrero looks at 100 years of the famous Rossendale Male Voice Choir, and from the hills of east Lancashire to the coast, Angela Norris reflects on the history of the HM Coastguard in Lancashire with former Knott End Coastguard, John Bradbury. Just time to fit in histories of Bancroft Mill and British Velvet and an amazing account of First Lieutenant Anthony Brockholes, Acting Governor and Commander in Chief of New York.

Our thanks are due to the researchers, volunteers, local and family historians and authors who contributed their stories and research to this edition.

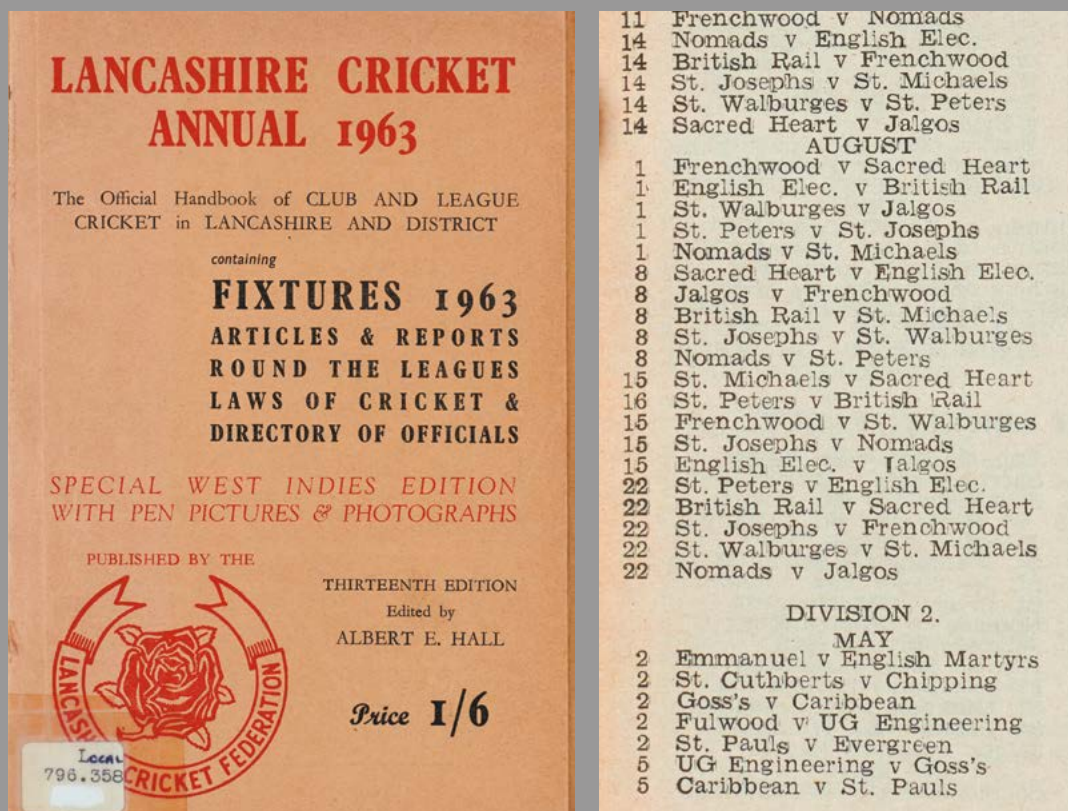
We hope you enjoy reading the stories featured, that you might learn something new about Lancashire's history and that you too feel the urge to put pen to paper and share your local history stories with the people of Lancashire.

Archives Editorial Team, Lancashire Archives & Local History, June 2024.

archives@lancashire.gov.uk

You can find out more about how to contribute to the next edition of Archives on page 39.

Cover image: *Pride of the Pitch* exhibition at Lancashire Archives, images courtesy of Gail Newsham and The National Football Museum.



Left: Cover of the Lancashire Cricket Annual, 1963. The annual includes the fixture list for Jalgos West Indian CC in their maiden season in the Preston and District Cricket League, Lancashire
 Right: Page from the Lancashire Cricket Annual 1970, showing fixtures for both Jalgos West Indian CC and Caribbean CC, then playing in the first and second divisions respectively of the Preston and District Cricket League. Both from the Lancashire Printed Collection W126 LAN (Lancashire Archives & Local History)

IGNATIUS ST LOUIS

By Stephen Poleon

Historians spend their days exploring the past and thinking of ways to bring it to life and share their findings with a wider audience.

This task can be lonely at times but fulfilling. Hours of sifting through boxes of archival materials can be offset by the discovery of a small nugget of information, finding a seemingly unobtrusive piece of data that represents a glimmering light at the end of a long winding road. As this discovery is mined it transforms into a rich seam; as this adventure progresses the excitement builds to a crescendo. Adrenaline flows, heart rate increases, and pulse quickens.

Such a rush can seldom be matched, or can it? The receipt of a voice-note arranging an interview with a legendary fast-bowling Dominican cricketer would prove otherwise.

One morning I noticed I had a voice note on my phone. I pressed play and heard the mesmerizing words informing me that an interview with a living legend was being arranged. I questioned if I was awake or if this was just a dream? A brief pause ensued but felt like an eternity. The clock stood still yet the tick-tock sound reverberated all around. Rewind, play again and listen carefully to the message this time. Yes, it was correct; an interview with fast-bowling cricket legend Mr St Louis was arranged. This was not a fantasy. I would gather an oral testimony from a living legend.

Being in the presence of this man was an honour and a privilege. The first time I heard his name mentioned it was followed up with booming laughter at the memory of opposing batsmen running in terror from the wicket. This tall powerfully built man took a short run up to the crease and unleashed a ball travelling at the speed of light. Visualise a space shuttle re-entering the earth's atmosphere, burning as it hurtles through the skies above. This was the trajectory of a cricket ball as it glided out of this supremely talented Dominican bowler's hand, unleashed on the unsuspecting batsmen of St Pauls at Jalgos West Indian CC's opening match of their maiden season in the Preston and District Cricket League in 1963.

“
This team was full of
Caribbean cricketers who
played with swaggering
style and panache.”

This team was full of Caribbean cricketers who played with swaggering style and panache. Their exploits in the park gave a beleaguered community hope and pride, enabling them to

walk tall and proud through a sea of prejudice and discrimination. Families came to the park in droves to have picnics and socialise with each other. In a team full of heroes the sole Dominican in a squad full of Jamaicans secured legendary status by achieving a bowling average of just 3.16 runs per wicket. This achievement has never been surpassed. A founder member of Jalgos West Indian CC he stayed with the team for one season. A chance meeting with Gladstone Afflick led to this inclusion.

Ignatius St Louis had only been in Preston for three days when this momentous occasion occurred. He was walking along Church Street when Mr Afflick spotted him and asked if he played cricket. Of course, he played this majestic game and did so like a prince amongst men. Cricket meant everything to him and for as long as he can remember he played it. Long hours after school would only be interrupted by darkness, stopping for a meal or tending to the family goats and cows in the pasture. The animals needed to be moved around and protected from the glaring sun. It was commonplace across the Caribbean for children to have this responsibility. Once these chores were finished the more pressing matter of honing his cricket skills could be attended to. This was serious business and not something that was taken lightly. Cricketing acumen could be acquired by playing the childhood game Who Got It Bowling.

This was an individual game in which a bowler attempted to capture a wicket. You could only rely on yourself and if a player scored a wicket he then went into bat and took on the challenge of defending the wicket from opponents. This rugged game was played at a fast and furious pace and in the manner of many childhood games would use rudimentary equipment if the proper implements were out of reach. Balls were made up with various pieces of scrap materials and wood fashioned into a spherical shape resembling a cricket ball. Mr St Louis held the ball with his fore and middle fingers with his thumb wrapped around the bottom holding it in place, thus ensuring a snug fit. Maximum acceleration and supreme upper body strength ensured that the

ball when released flew like a missile, ensuring that other players did not glimpse it for hours on end. These skills were developed in the playgrounds and fields, whilst his physique was sculpted harvesting bananas. This combination played a vital role in terrorising batsmen on the cricket pitches of Preston and bringing joy into the lives of diverse Caribbean islanders living here.

Cricketers from across the Caribbean in Preston were seen as heroes in their community. A wide-ranging colour bar impacting this entire community was in place. Poor housing conditions, difficulties in employment, inclement weather, discriminatory education policies, lack of places to publicly socialise and a hostile police force formed the adverse reality faced by an entire community. Cricketing success across many hot summers was the perfect antidote. Nationally, West Indies players like Clive Lloyd, Viv Richards and Michael Holding have been credited for lifting the mood of their compatriots across Britain, but it was local teams like Jalgos and the Caribbean in Preston that raised the spirits of their community enduring prejudice on a daily basis. Playing for both teams, Mr St Louis played a vital role in this effort.

His sojourn with Jalgos lasted for one memorable season. A mixture of being uncomfortable with the influx of new players and his Dominican friends not liking him playing with Jamaicans resulted in him severing ties here. After a few seasons of playing elsewhere, Mr St Louis joined Caribbean CC and became part of a trailblazing team that regularly swept all before them. They often cleared the board at the presentation night at the Top Rank Ballroom on a collective and individual level. In 1971 the B Team won every trophy available and made national headlines by beating a very strong St Peters side. Caribbean players regularly won solo awards, particularly for best batting and bowling averages. The Tuson Trophy was awarded to players who took ten wickets in an individual match. Mr St Louis won this trophy twice in one season. Indeed Caribbean CC beat one team in particular by scoring seven runs after he had accounted for ten opposition wickets. With a beaming smile and a mischievous glint in his eyes, he recalled the fear he noticed in the whites of the eyes of opposing batsmen. He also flourished with the support of a loyal and exuberantly vocal

following. Sixty-one years after first gracing the local leagues, Ignatius St Louis is still held in high regard by those who remember and witnessed his prowess at the crease and by those fortunate enough to have been regaled with the tales of his legendary exploits.

This ferociously fiery fast bowler arrived in Preston from Dominica in the winter of 1962. On this arrival, he saw pebble-like hailstones falling from the sky and encountered a frozen-over outside toilet. It was no wonder that Mr St Louis had only intended on staying two years. The streets of England were paved with gold and those coming from the Caribbean could easily make their fortune and return home in a few years. In monetary terms, no riches were accumulated. However, being blessed with a loving family, a plethora of trophies from his sporting exploits on display, and memories of capturing wicket after wicket in highly successful teams is an abundance of wealth.

“

His playing days are long gone but Mr St Louis still possesses an aura of greatness.”

His playing days are long gone but Mr St Louis still possesses an aura of greatness. I was humbled, honoured and grateful not only to be in his presence but also to record a small snapshot of his illustrious life.

The Friends of Lancashire Archives

by Dr Sam Riches, Acting Chair



As Acting Chair of the Friends of Lancashire Archives I was delighted to be invited to officially open a photographic exhibition about the fans of Burnley Football Club: I even got to use the big scissors to cut the ribbon! 'BFC & Me' is part of 'Clarets Collected', a treasure trove of football memories that is being made available, and is still attracting new finds, at Burnley Central Library. Football is a key part of community identity in many parts of the county. The Friends of Lancashire Archives Committee was delighted to be asked to help to keep this archive in Burnley, as part of Lancashire Archives and Local History's mission to open up the richness of our shared heritage and bring it back to the places where it matters most. It is great to see first-hand that this new exhibition, featuring photographs contributed by the local community, is bringing that aspiration to life. The launch was really well attended, with a palpable buzz, and it is clear that this new form of outreach work being undertaken by the Lancashire Archives and Local History team is bearing fruit already.

More generally, the Friends of Lancashire Archives is in a period of refresh and consolidation. The Committee has been reviewing our objectives in a post-Covid world, where hybrid meetings are becoming increasingly common and external funding is increasingly difficult to access. Working closely with Alex Miller (Archives & Resources Manager) and the rest of the staff team, we are creating a new approach to Friends public events and our new lecture series. Members of the Friends will be given the opportunity to register before general booking is opened, a real advantage

helping to ensure our Friends can beat the rush. These regular events will be sponsored by Friends of Lancashire Archives as part of our mission to support the work of Lancashire Archives and Local History.

Please look out for updates on our website www.flarchives.co.uk and – if you are not already a member – do join us and help to safeguard Lancashire's precious heritage.

Upcoming talks in the Friends of Lancashire Archives lecture series:

'PC Mebs – Finding Myself', a talk by Mahmood Ahmed on his journey from a shy and timid boy arriving in England, to a career as a police officer, setting him off on a journey of self-discovery and transformation – Saturday 13 July 2024 (afternoon)

Stephen Poleon speaking on using archives to research Preston's Caribbean Community – Saturday 12 October 2024 (afternoon)

For bookings for the talks, please speak to a member of the Archives team or visit lancashire.gov.uk/archives

Future talks will be held at Lancashire Archives on the second Saturday of every January, April, July and October.



**NATIONAL FOOTBALL MUSEUM
BRINGS NEW PRIDE OF THE PITCH
EXHIBITION TO LANCASHIRE ARCHIVES
& LOCAL HISTORY**





National Football Museum are delighted to have launched a brand new exhibition at Lancashire Archives in Preston, dubbed 'Pride of the Pitch'.

Pride of the Pitch chronicles Preston's footballing Icons from the 'Invincibles' team of the 1880s all the way to the mid twentieth century, Dick, Kerr Ladies, and the legendary Sir Tom Finney.

The exhibition is a key highlight of the National Football Museum's 2024 Football Creates programme, bringing football and creativity together through co-curation and local engagement.

CEO of the National Football Museum, Tim Desmond, said: 'This is an exhibition we're very pleased to have worked on in partnership with Lancashire Archives. Preston is a place that the Museum holds extremely close to our hearts, as does the wider football community, and it's clear to see why with such a rich history in the game.'

'As part of our Football Creates programme, we've made it our mission to encourage creativity and community engagement through our work, and with the local area so imperative in the creation and ongoing content of this exhibition, we can't wait for the doors to open.'

As Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO), the Pride of the Pitch draws on the Museum's Football Heritage

Collection housed at their Resource Centre in Preston, enabling local communities to engage with objects and their stories at Lancashire Archives and through outreach events and artist workshops.

Pride of the Pitch is located, developed and co-delivered in partnership with Lancashire Archives, with local experts in the history of Preston such as Gail Newsham, Michael Barrett from Preston North End Community and Education Trust (PNECET) and Lancashire Museums all contributing to its development.

The exhibition is full of photographs and ephemera, alongside digital content to tell a vivid story of pride in Preston. The exhibition will also feature bingo exhibition trails, drop-in craft sessions for families over the school holiday periods and a community net where visitors will be given the chance to write and share their best experiences of watching or playing football in Preston.

Pride of the Pitch is scheduled to run until July 2024. For more information go to www.nationalfootballmuseum.com or www.lancashire.gov.uk/archives ■



Boys at Ansdell Primary School, 1923-1924 (Courtesy of Lytham Heritage Group)

BACK TO SCHOOL: ANSDELL PRIMARY SCHOOL

By Beth Wilson

This is the history of a Lytham St Annes primary school. My involvement was initially as a parent of a child who attended the school. As part of their centenary celebrations in 2007-2008 the school hoped to put on an exhibition and they were looking for a person to undertake some historical research. I was interested in history, I volunteered and started to research the subject. Upon the retirement of the headmaster, I collated all my research and published a book recounting the history of the school. This article is an extract from the book and tells the story of the school's history, the headteachers and the growth of the school between 1907 and 2010. Over that period the school had only had five headteachers – an amazing feat!

Ansdell Primary School, 1907 to 2010

Commonside Lane Council School (as it was called then) was built in 1907 under the 1902 Education Bill and subsequent 1906 Education Act. This legislation enabled Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to develop the already existing elementary school system and made significant provision for secondary schools. The Elementary School Code of 1904 provided an outline and guidelines for the education system well into the 1960s.

There had been an urgent need for a new school in Ansdell, as some children, albeit on a very ad hoc basis, had been attending St Johns in Lytham. A new school for the up-and-coming area of Ansdell had been in development since 1904 when a newspaper at the time stated, '... surely Public Elementary Education is as vital to and should have equal prominence in Lytham.'¹ It was noted by a Councillor at the time that Lytham however, '...should bear three-quarters of the cost of the new school at Ansdell'.²

Even before the school was built, it courted controversy. Unlike most schools in the area it was to be non-denominational and funded from the rates. This meant it was not a church or religious based school, but one for the community run by the Local Authority. The 1870 Education Act established a system of board schools. The boards were locally elected bodies which drew their funding from local ratepayers.

That the proposed school was going to be a secular school outraged some residents, as they already supported denominational schools through churches and thought that local government should have nothing to do with education. Over the next few years, prior to its opening, there were several council meetings and a letter writing campaign, all bringing up the subject of whether or not a school should actually be built in Ansdell or whether one could be justified at all. It is unknown who actually built the school for the Local Authority in Ansdell, but St Annes Council School in Sydney Street was built in 1910. The contractor for that school was Messrs Frank T Salmon and Co, of Cudworth near Barnsley. The two buildings were very similar in design and construction, so it is possible that Ansdell was built by Salmon and Co.



Ansdell Primary School, around 1912 (Courtesy of Lytham's Past website/Author's collection)



Pupils at Ansdell Primary School, 1911 (Courtesy of Lytham Heritage Group)

1907 – The beginnings

Originally called Commonsides Lane Council School, the school finally opened on 6 September 1907 as a Junior and Infants School, with approximately 47 pupils. According to the Lytham Times of that week, 'The opening was greeted with damp weather, but the prospective pupils were full of excitement, which seem to infect the parents as well'.³ The first Headmistress was Miss A Irvin. She was born in Fulwood, Preston in 1879 and was still living in Fulwood at the time of her appointment at Ansdell in 1907. She remained in post for the next 26 years.

In 1909 there were, '107 pupils and 3 teachers and the school had made rapid progress whilst the children are delightfully good especially that of standards I and II, but the school cannot be entirely satisfactory until the school becomes large'. By 1911 the school was known as Ansdell Council School and according to the logbook at the time, '...the school continues to reach a credible standard of efficiency. The instruction is planned with due regard to the needs of the children though more handiwork might be introduced...'.⁴

1920s-1930s

The picture at the start of this article was taken around 1923-1924, at the front of the school, where the woodland garden is now. The boys, from the left, are Wilfred Siddall, Leonard Richardson, Briggs Cartmell, Stanley Brown, Ronnie Clark and Stephen Kitchener. It is thought that the boys are dressed up in sailor suits as there had been a concert at the school and the boys had entertained the audience with their seafaring dances and songs.

In the 1920s teachers' salaries at Ansdell annually, were £70 0s 6d and the wages of teachers, caretakers, NI Contributions and Education Department Wages, all had to be paid out of the Borough Treasury.⁵ In 1922, the towns of Lytham and St Annes, were incorporated into one single borough and looked after their own elementary education. Within the Borough there were eight elementary schools, two of which were 'provided' (run by the council) and six non-provided (Endowed or Church Schools) with a total staff provision of 57 teachers.

In 1927, the roll call of the school was 169 and as a local paper pointed out, 'Ansdell Council School is the youngest of the Borough Schools and serves a very big and growing area west of Lytham... The School has won many scholarships and has a high place in the esteem of Ansdell Parents which continues to this day'.⁶

Miss Irvin resigned in 1933. According to Alderman Wood of the Education Committee, 'He would like to bear testimony to the splendid service of Miss Irvin (sic)'.⁷ According to a local paper of the time she was presented with, 'a chair, cheque, coffee service and cut glass electric lamp by scholars, teachers and friends'.⁸

By the time Miss Irvin left in 1933, the school had 151 children on the roll and four teachers. The new headmistress was a Miss Charlotte Myles. She was the daughter of Thomas Myles, Headmaster of Wrea Green School, and his wife Isabella. Her teaching career started in the slums of the East End of London, before arriving in

Ansdell in 1927 to take up the post of Assistant Head, before being appointed Head in 1933. She was head of the school, until her death in 1964, dying at her home, The Croft, Wrea Green.

In January 1935, as part of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations, the Lord of the Manor at the time, Harry Clifton offered, '...plots of land... Which are for playing fields for the Children of Ansdell... an area of about 2 ¾ acres in extent in Lansdowne Road, Ansdell immediately behind Ansdell Primary School'.⁹ The playing fields are still used by the local community and school today.

The War Years

During the years of the Second World War, Ansdell took in evacuees. The school was closed on '1st September 1939 to be used as a retrieving centre for evacuees from Manchester',⁹ and remained closed until 18 September 1939, when upon reopening, the school was split into a two-shift system in order to accommodate education for the evacuees. According to the school log book, 'Evacuees schooled between 8.30 – 11.30am and local children from 12.30 – 3.30pm'.¹⁰ The evacuees came from Bowker Vale, Manchester and the London Suburbs of West Ham and Plaistow. There are entries in the log book which

start from September 1940 with sporadic entries of admissions right through from 1940 to 1944-1945, some staying for just a few weeks, others for months.

According to the minutes of local council meetings in July 1944, '296 children have been admitted and the limits of accommodation at Ansdell Council, St Thomas CE School and Lytham St Annes St Johns CE Infants School have been reached'.¹¹ The local area struggled to take in more evacuated children and loans of furniture including desks became urgent; even the provision of extra buildings such as the Hewitt Lecture room at the former Lytham Library became inadequate.

Fortunately, the whole area saw little bombing throughout the war years, although Church Road in St Annes was partially destroyed by a bomb in October 1940. The whole area was covered by air raid shelters with precautions and drills commonplace. On 15 May 1940 it took the children from Ansdell school 52 seconds to evacuate the school and they were all in the shelters with 1.5 minutes.

Editor's Note: The second half of Beth Wilson's history of the school will be published in Archives, edition 5. ■

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5. Minutes of proceedings from Lytham St Annes Corporation, March 1926
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Ansdell Primary School Admissions Registers

Ansdell Primary School Log Book

Photographs from Lytham Heritage Group

Barretts Directory of Blackpool and District 1929 in St Annes Library

Minutes of proceedings of both St Annes Urban District council (pre-1922) and Minutes of the Proceedings of LSA Corporation (post-1922) at St Annes Library

History of Ansdell Primary School, 2010, Beth Wilson

THE 1826 WEAVERS UPRISING BICENTENNIAL

By the Weavers Uprising Bicentennial Committee

Handloom weavers in the 1800s were known to be a hard-working and compliant workforce who faced periodic poverty with stoical resilience. In Pennine Lancashire in April 1826 their patience clearly broke. Faced with a perfect storm of high food prices, low or no wages, the accumulative impact of poverty over several years and the introduction of cheaper forms of weaving through powerlooms in the mills, the handloom weavers and other ordinary people felt they had no choice but to respond with protest and rebellion.

The significance of the April 1826 rising has been largely forgotten and the aim of the registered charity The Weavers' Uprising Bicentennial Committee (WUBC) is to work towards the remembrance of this momentous and historically important event. This article is a short overview of the uprising and the terrible tragedy of the Chatterton Massacre, 26 April 1826 and details the work the WUBC has been doing in preparation for the 200th anniversary in 2026.

Context: The Weavers Uprising of 1826

On the morning of 24 April 1826, thousands of people gathered at Whinney Hill, near Accrington, to devise a plan of action in the face of starvation. There had been agitation by starving weavers across the region since February of that year but now was the moment of action. Their mission was clear – to destroy all the powerlooms in east Lancashire without the unnecessary destruction of property or any violence to the person. During the uprising more than 1,100 powerlooms were destroyed by weavers and their associates. From Whinney Hill as many as 10,000 people joined the crowd as it headed west towards Oswaldtwistle and Blackburn. On the following day, 25 April 1826, around 2,000 protestors gathered in Earcroft and marched through Hoddlesden and then over the moors to Helmshore and

eventually Haslingden. Their intent was a focused destruction of the powerlooms as a means of sending a political message about their extreme poverty.

On the third day of the uprising, 26 April 1826, the soldiers were ready for the protestors. That morning a crowd, estimated between 3,000-4,000 people, made their way from Haslingden and Rawtenstall along the sides of the south Pennine moors to Dearden Clough Mill in Edenfield and then down the steep hill towards the mill at Chatterton. When they arrived at Chatterton Old Lane, the local magistrate and the soldiers were waiting for them. Not long before 11:00am, the local magistrate, William Grant, read a short extract from the 1714 Riot Act. The crowd did not disperse.

Shortly afterwards, under the orders of Colonel Kearney, 20 riflemen from the 60th Duke of York Own Rifles, lined up in two ranks of 10 at the bottom of Chatterton Old Lane and opened fire. The soldiers fired 600 bullets into a crowd of 3,000 people over a period of 15 minutes. In the chaos that followed at least six people were shot dead – James Lord, John Ashworth, James Rothwell, Richard Lund, Mary Simpson and James Waddicar – in what can only be described as a massacre. Remarkably, following the killings, the protestors regrouped and continued their quest to destroy further powerlooms. The final day of the uprising, 27 April 1826, started with just a couple of hundred people, but as the protestors made their way from Tockholes to Water Street Factory in Chorley, they were joined by a much larger crowd.

The numbers of people killed or seriously wounded during the uprising remains unclear. Newspaper reports give details of additional deaths at Blackburn on 24 April and further bodies were recovered of those shot at Chatterton on 27 April. Anecdotal accounts, passed down through the generations, indicate that others later died of their wounds, meaning it is possible that the number of dead at the Chatterton Massacre is in double figures. Acknowledgement of the true nature of these events has been largely lacking. Even though there is evidence that the events were called the ‘Lancashire Rising’ at the time, the

language of ‘riot’, obscuring both the motivations of the protestors and the several killings by the state, has come to dominate. There is also evidence that this obfuscation was, at least in part, orchestrated – the inquests were closed to the public and media; popular representations of the events published at the time referred to the protestors as ‘rioters’; and 41 people were convicted under the criminal law and initially sentenced to death (although all sentences were later commuted). This potentially all added to the misperception of what were in effect, anti-starvation protests.

The Work of the Weavers Uprising Bicentennial Committee

In April 2022, following around 9 months of research and discussions with other local people and heritage groups, the Weavers Uprising Bicentennial Committee (WUBC) was launched. This coincided with the start of the inaugural weavers uprising remembrance walk, which started, like the weavers did in 1826, at Whinney Hill, Accrington on the morning of 24 April 2022. The walk covered approximately 45 miles over five days and (broadly) followed in the footsteps of handloom weavers and other protestors 196 years earlier. The inaugural ‘Remembrance Walk’ aimed to shine a spotlight not only on food poverty in the past, but also in the present. Over £1,500 was raised by the inaugural walk, in sponsorship for Ramsbottom Pantry, a foodbank situated near the site of the Chatterton Massacre.

The ‘Founding Document’ of the WUBC was published online on 24 April 2022. The aims largely fall into four categories, and these will continue to be the focus of the registered charity in its work towards the April 2026 bicentennial.

1. Educational Resources

Raising awareness and educating the wider community has been imperative to the success of the WUBC. Since 2022 this has included new research on the death rate in East Lancashire in the years preceding the uprising and those directly after, as well as transcription of all the local and

national newspaper accounts and other materials from Home Office records. In the next two years the WUBC will support the development of educational resources for local schools and colleges, as well as the production of a short documentary by The Open University.

2. Commemorative Events

The WUBC has held an annual public commemorative event at Chatterton Peace Park since April 2022. In 2024, on Sunday April 28 the commemorations included: a walk led by the WUBC incorporating the 'True Levellers Samba band'; the carrying of a handmade coffin filled with bread (an authentic 1826 Lancashire weavers protest); performance of songs written about the Lancashire uprising; readings from testimonies of weavers and mill owners; naming of those who are known to have died and the laying of a wreath. The 2024 Commemoration included musical contributions from the 'Water Brass Band', the 'Ukkes of Hazy' and the 'RamShackle Wailers'. The WUBC are supporting other networked commemorative events and activities across Lancashire in 2025-2026. The WUBC are working with local heritage organisations to host special events related to the Weavers Uprising in the bicentennial year.

3. Artistic Collaborations

It is hoped that by 2026 the WUBC will have developed and supported a number of cultural components to the bicentennial year activities and events. This includes the creation of a 'Rise Up' Banner by well-known textile artist James Fox, a tapestry and the creation of over 1,300 small wooden crosses, both of which will involve the participation of many volunteers from the area. We are currently seeking funding to develop a number of other distinct artistic collaborations, including the commissioning and development of a permanent monument that represents the events. The WUBC plan to create a trail of information boards at strategic places on the route that the weavers uprising walked and to commission new artworks and artistic representations (drawings, paintings, poetry, prose, musical compositions and performance

art, posters, billboards, banners) that represent the weavers of Pennine Lancashire in the 1820s.

4. Sustainable Legacy

The WUBC is in the process of establishing a website and digital record. The WUBC hope to expand on the weavers' remembrance walk so that it can be freely accessed in future via self-guided resources. We plan to link these materials with community walking groups and heritage sites across the region. We hope to contribute to a lasting tribute to the struggles of the handloom weavers and a legacy of their protests. Part of this would be to assist in tracing the genealogy of the families of those killed at Chatterton, the 41 people given the death penalty at Lancashire Assize and others known to have been involved in the uprising. The WUBC's final aim is to bring family members together in the bicentennial year, in order that the events will be commemorated in many years to come. So far, the WUBC has been successful in raising over £50,000, via Lancashire County Council's 'Crowdfunder' scheme, The Open University, Open Societal Challenges, membership fees and individual private donations. The WUBC is currently working on a bid, in collaboration with many local partners, to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, in order to try and secure the additional funds to realise the vision.

To contact the WUBC for more information, please email:

bicentennialcommittee@mail.com ■



Staff and residents at Burnley Workhouse, around 1905, pictured wearing similar clothing as residents and staff at Chorley would have worn in the period (Red Rose Collections, EBU20180801008).

MINUTE-BY-MINUTE: Revealing Chorley's Poor

By John Morrison

The main aim of the Chorley Library Poor Law Project is to transcribe the names recorded in the minutes of the meetings of the Poor Law Guardians at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The transcribed names will eventually be gathered together in an online collection that will be a valuable resource for family historians researching Chorley roots.

The work of the volunteer transcriber might at first sight appear to be a dry, administrative task – a worthy effort no doubt but perhaps a bit boring? The reality is the exact opposite. These records provide a vivid insight into the lives of the Chorley poor and the work of those charged with relieving poverty in the district. The volunteer's work is rewarded with a set of free history lessons from Chorley's past.

The material for this article is drawn from a single volume recording the meetings of the Chorley Poor Law Guardians over the period May 1916 to April 1917. The Guardians were elected annually to oversee the finances, staffing and general operations of poor relief in the Chorley Union. This covered Leyland as well as the current Chorley borough district.

The first impact of the records is the use of words which a reader today may find quite shocking. Those receiving poor relief are referred to as 'paupers' and residents of the workhouse at Eaves Lane as 'inmates'. People with mental health issues and learning disabilities are referred to as 'lunatics'

and ‘imbeciles’. Frequent mention is made of the county ‘lunatic asylums’ at Lancaster and Whittingham. Such terms are never used in a derogatory fashion. For the record-keepers of those times, they were factual descriptions.

Another striking feature of the records is the amount of time and effort devoted to keeping down the costs of poor relief – and the charge made to local ratepayers. Relatives of persons receiving assistance were assiduously traced and presented with demands for contributions towards maintenance costs. Thomas Blackledge of Whittle-le-Woods was required to pay towards the maintenance of his son in Lancaster asylum. George Swan’s offer of eight shillings weekly was accepted towards the costs of caring for his son Albert in the same institution. The five sons of John Moss, an inmate of the workhouse, were each required to pay 1s 3d weekly. When Alice Rothwell was admitted to Whittingham asylum, her husband Herbert agreed to pay eight shillings a week. If agreement could not be reached, a resort to legal action might be made. When the Guardians accepted that Mary Seddon was unable to make up the maintenance arrears for her husband in Whittingham asylum, her three daughters were called upon to each contribute two shillings weekly. Legal proceedings were authorised in the event of their refusal.

Only the proven destitute received poor law assistance. When Ann Cookson arrived at the workhouse, the sum of 6s 3d in her possession was confiscated and paid into the common fund. The Guardians took steps to collect the annual income of £30 left to Alice Cookson of Withnell, an asylum inmate, in her late father’s will.

Outdoor relief was also granted. It was cheaper, more practical and more humane than requiring the poor to enter the workhouse. Pauper children were usually sent to more suitable accommodation. When Catherine Worden was admitted to the workhouse, her children were sent to the Cottage Homes at Fazakerley. A dim view was taken of the ‘able-bodied’ neglecting their responsibilities. A warrant was issued for the arrest of William James Hodges for the desertion of his wife Mary which had caused her to enter the workhouse.



Outdoor relief was cheaper, more practical and more humane than requiring the poor to enter the workhouse; pauper children were usually sent to more suitable accommodation.”

Accepting responsibility for providing poor relief was not taken lightly. Another dominating theme of the records are the wrangles between Poor Law Unions over a pauper’s ‘settlement’. A union was only required to bear responsibility for someone born in their district or with long-term residency there. In the case of Mary Mills and her children, the Guardians accepted their re-location from the Bolton workhouse because they had been deserted by her husband Thomas, a Chorley resident. It also agreed to the relocation of one Minnie O. from an asylum in Essex because of her prior residence in Adlington. In turn, the Blackburn Union authorised Chorley to pay 3s 6d weekly outdoor relief on its behalf to Elizabeth Tucker. When the Ulverston Union authorised Chorley to pay six shillings outdoor relief to Mary Stanton and her two children, the latter requested an increase to eight shillings and this was subsequently agreed. If Unions could not agree on settlement issues, the matter might be referred to the courts. A justice’s order placed responsibility for James Halton on the Chorley Union even though he was a patient in a Hull asylum.

The Union provided other types of help to the poor. It referred Emily Gorton, 35, to the Manchester Eye Infirmary regarding her defective vision. It approved the Medical Officer of Health’s recommendation for operations to remove the adenoids of the Tootell children from Adlington - Richard (10), Joseph (8) and Mary (4). William Hall was fitted with an artificial leg and Alice Crook, suffering from a hernia, supplied with a truss. Chorley also



Eaves Lane Hospital, Chorley, pictured in 1997 and formerly the Chorley Workhouse (Red Rose Collections, SCH050120070011).

agreed to bear the cost of boarding out Edward Howard from the Liverpool School for the Blind during the summer vacation. Some kinds of non-medical help were potentially life-changing. The supervisor of the Working Boys' Home in West Derby was authorised to spend 30 shillings on tools for Joseph Fowler to enable him to become an apprentice joiner. The public tried to help out too. The workhouse received regular donations of books, magazines and fruit. At Christmas in 1916, gifts included barrels of apples, cases of oranges and grapes, cakes, toys and the loan of a piano and a gramophone for festive entertainment.

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At Christmas 1916, gifts for those in the workhouse included barrels of apples, cases of oranges and grapes, cakes, toys, the loan of a piano and a gramophone.”

Inevitably, at this time, the Great War threw up casualties for the Poor Law to deal with. With her husband at the front, the mother of the Joyce family was judged unfit to have control of her children, James (10), Thomas (9) and Mary (5) and they were sent to orphanages in Preston. Casualties of 'shell shock', or what we would now call traumatic stress disorders, became the responsibility of the Poor Law Unions. Seth Blackburn of the 12th East Lancashire Regiment was transferred from the Mill Road Infirmary to Lancaster asylum. He was discharged three months later. Moses Leigh of Withnell, serving with the 4th Battalion Loyal North Lancashire Regiment, was moved from the military hospital at Oswestry to Whittingham asylum. The Chorley Guardians naturally resented being charged with the care of these soldiers. They agreed a resolution requesting the government to take responsibility for such cases. A copy was sent to, among others, the Secretary of State for War and the local Conservative MP, Sir Herbert Hibbert. The Chorley Guardians also supported national campaigns to relieve the burdens on Poor Law Unions by increasing the pensions of military widows to £1 a week and the Old Age Pension from 5 shillings to 7s 6d.

Of course, these minutes don't record the views of the poor, but they do whet the appetite for further research to try and find out. ■

Sources: Chorley Poor Law Union, Board of Guardian minutes, PUX/1/48, Lancashire Archives & Local History

KEEPING EAST LANCASHIRE IN THE PICTURE

By Dr Carmel Hustler



The Keeping East Lancashire in the Picture (KELP) project has had an amazing start with over 60 volunteers recruited across the four library locations in Accrington, Burnley, Colne and Nelson. The volunteers met together in the week before Christmas to be introduced to the project and the activities involved and returned in January with great gusto. The computers and scanners are installed and the volunteers are busy working with impressive speed through the thousands of photographs, labelling and cataloguing them ready for scanning.

Initial meetings are being held with primary and secondary schools interested in using the photographs to create pupil-led projects and exhibitions and some exciting ideas are being discussed and developed. Collaborations with local community groups are underway and KELP has been working with In-Situ and Building Bridges in Nelson, developing ideas for the 'This is Nelson' partnership programme. Photographs from the Nelson library collection are being used by the 'Stories We Tell' immersive performance walking tour of Nelson, organised by In-Situ in collaboration with Breaking Barriers. Attendees will listen to stories and memories from local people, viewing images of Nelson displayed on local walls and buildings.

Our amazing Keeping East Lancashire in the Picture volunteers!



Keeping East Lancashire in the Picture also attended a talk organised by Building Bridges in Barley Village Hall regarding the life of George Fox and Quakerism in the local area. To support this talk, artefacts held by Lancashire Archives & Local History were displayed for people to view. These included, 'A Book of Sufferings', Marriage and Birth Registers, a Quaker Marriage Certificate, a Women's Preparative meeting book and a list of elders, as well as photographs from the local area, including Quaker Bridge.

We are in conversations with Burnley Pendle Rossendale Community Voluntary Service (BPRCVS), presenting to the 'Burnley Linked In' and the 'People of Pendle' online meetings, developing links with community groups and to encourage volunteers to sign up. KELP also attended a volunteer recruitment fair at the Gannow Community Centre in Burnley along with other community groups to advertise the project and speak to potential volunteers.

Since January 2024, photographs from the collection have been published online on a weekly basis by the Burnley Express, garnering huge interest from readers. The Burnley Express have used the photographs for a 'guess the Burnley location' feature. We have also been in contact with local councils for collaborations on exciting projects that are being planned for some of the current town developments and initiatives.

Already many amazing images have been uncovered, including photographs directly relating to the volunteers! Andrea in Colne found her father in a 1921 photograph when he was a young man volunteering for the St John's Ambulance brigade – she had never seen that photograph before. Michael in Accrington found a photograph of his house before his father bought it when it was a shop and converted it into the family home. He also discovered a photograph that appeared to have been taken from his family's front doorstep, of houses about to be demolished across the street. He remembered his father taking photographs and wondered if this photograph was one of his. He also found a photograph of the pub his grandmother managed in the 1920s. Christine found a photograph of a monument from the

original St. Mary's R.C. church in Clayton-Le-Moors where she married her husband in 1959, later demolished in the same year, after the new church was built and her friend married in the same year in the new church. Michael in Burnley found a photograph of a class at St. John's school from 1948-1949 with his sister Christine in when she was 5 years old. John found a photograph of the school that he attended, St. Mary's School, Burnley. He showed it to his family and on looking closer they discovered he was in the background. Audrey discovered herself in a photograph pushing her daughter in a pram on Hyndburn Road in Accrington from around 1986 as well as her own mum shopping at the butchers in Accrington market in the early 2000's. Michael in Colne found a photograph taken in Foulridge of his wife's grandfather, Jimmy Slinger, as a pupil in school in 1913. He also found a photograph of his wife, when she was younger, participating as a Brownie in a procession with her grandparents stood on the pavement watching the parade. Michael also found a photograph of St. Michael's & All Angels church, where he married his wife in 1981, from when it was being built in 1905.

The volunteers are having great fun and are enjoying participating in the project. They have many exciting ideas about potential exhibitions of the amazing images they have found. Keeping East Lancashire in the Picture is planning to organise public sessions for everyone to visit the libraries to see the photographs and for people to donate photographs to update the collections – watch this space for further updates! ■



Volunteer, Michael, pictured at Colne Library with images from the collection.

CLARETS COLLECTED

By Keith Burrows

This Lancashire Archives and Lancashire Libraries project, involving partners from across Lancashire County Council's Cultural Services and external organisations, is bringing together a fan-led Burnley Football Club Archive at Burnley Library, with the aim of helping to preserve, share and celebrate the Club's story and its place in the town's history. Clarets Collected Engagement Officer, Keith Burrows, shares an update on the project so far.

Clarets Collected at the Burnley Football Club Community Day 2024



School visit to Burnley Library to explore the Clarets Collected collection



From books, magazines, press cuttings, programmes and photographs donated to the collection to architectural plans from the building of Turf Moor, Clarets Collected has something for everyone. Since opening to the public in November 2023 we've welcomed over 500 visitors, many on home matchday Saturdays, when we have lots of items from the collection out for people to see and family activities for visitors.

We have completed an initial sorting of the vast amount of material donated and it would be very slow progress listing it all to help make it accessible without the small army of volunteers who are working with us and who are a vital part of the whole project.

We have played host to several group visits, including one from the Burnley Civic Society. The Society have kindly made available their archive of football related photographs from the Burnley Express.

Our first school visit was held in late November and we have more booked in for the remainder of the year. After spending a couple of hours at the library finding out about the Club's history and taking part in some activities, the children walk down to Turf Moor, furnished by us with maps and photographs old and new to follow whilst on route. There they receive a stadium tour hosted by Burnley FC In The Community, with whom we are working closely on the project.

The project wouldn't have been possible without the generous support of The Friends of Lancashire Archives who helped to fund the Engagement

Officer post, display shelves and equipment, and from the Department for Culture, Media and Sport's Know Your Neighbourhood fund.

A recent highlight was taking part in Burnley FC In The Community's annual Community Day. Helen Gurman, their Chief Executive, invited us down to the Club's Fan Zone where a range of activities took place before the home game against Arsenal. This was perfect for us, using the occasion to share the project with fans and invite them to the library to see the collection.

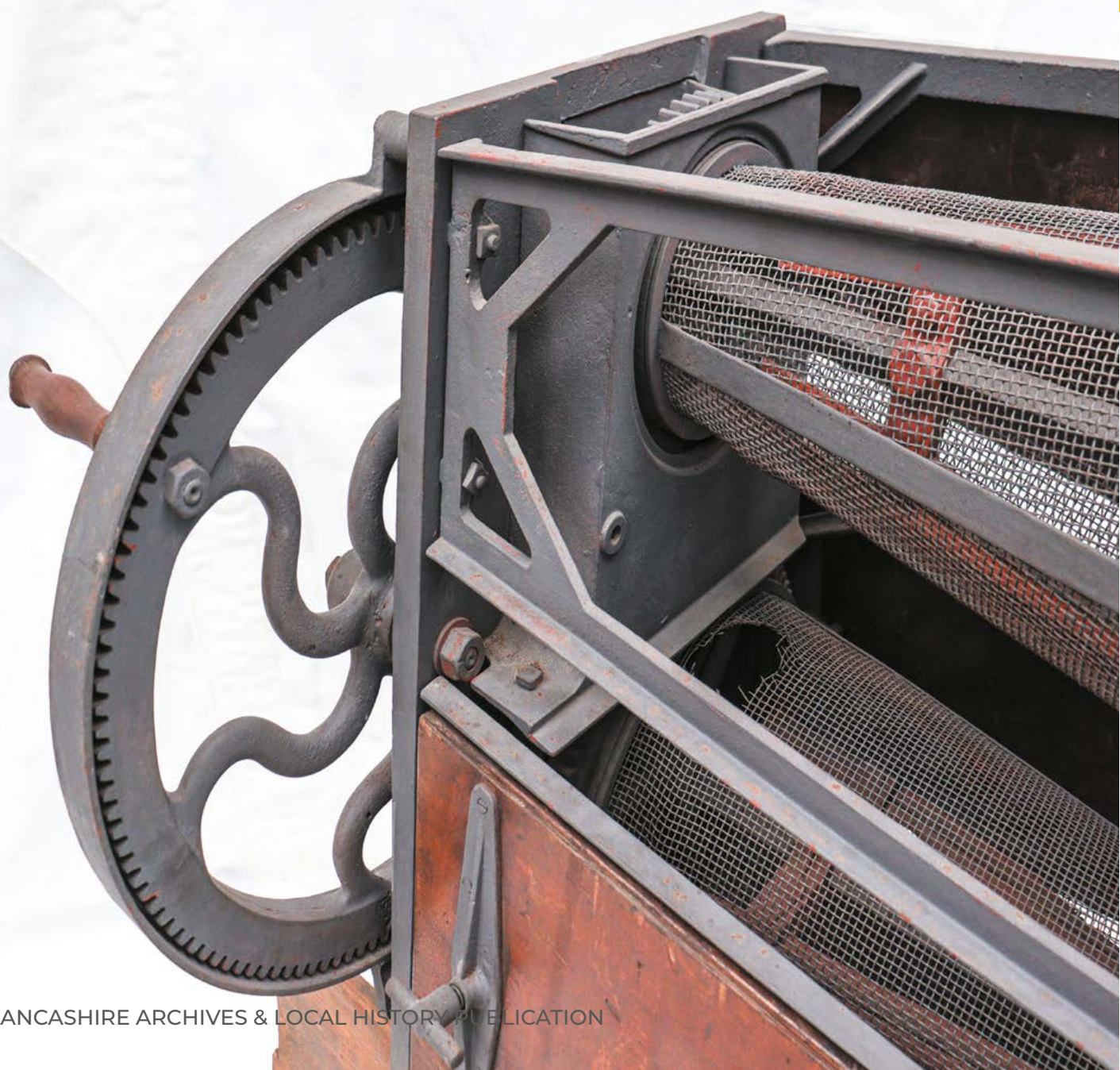
We promoted our appeal for fans to send us their photographs of the ups and downs of supporting Burnley for our new exhibition BFC and Me. Joined by volunteer Alison Hey and Senior Archivist David Tilsley we brought examples of fan images already received. Whilst Alison kept busy facilitating craft activities with our younger visitors, David and I talked to fans of all ages about our collection. It was certainly busy! We interacted with over 150 people on the day and made contacts with an author and a former official club photographer.

We launched Clarets Collected with the display Up for the Cup!, telling the story of Burnley's sole (so far!) FA Cup win of 1914; now on display is a new exhibition of photographs from BFC and Me.

Whilst alas it can't be said of the actual team at present, Clarets Collected continues to go from strength to strength, with exciting times ahead and hopes to be able to put more of our collection on open display. ■

LANCASHIRE IN 50 OBJECTS

To celebrate 50 years of Lancashire County Council, the Cultural Services, the Museum Service, Archives, and the Music Service are looking back through their collections. Over the next twelve months we will be telling the story of **Lancashire in 50 Objects**, chosen to represent the county's history, geography, and people. They will range from Viking treasure to Victorian weaver's tools, celebrating the wealth and diversity of our heritage.





Lancashire in 50 Objects will reveal interesting facts and hidden histories. For example, did you know that just before the outbreak of the First World War, **Lancashire's** woven cotton cloth production stood at 4.5 million miles of cloth? That's nearly nine times the distance to the moon and back!

Or that **Lancashire** cheese was 'invented' by a Lancashire County Council food inspector from Pilling?

Queen Elizabeth II even packed Lancashire cotton dresses made by specialist Preston wholesaler Horrockses Fashions for her six-month tour of the Commonwealth in 1953-1954.

These 50 objects will be revealed each week over the coming year starting with the launch

on Wednesday 22 May 2024, so keep watching the Lancashire County Council Museum Service website: **lancashire.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/museums**

Some of the objects will also be on display in our museums and libraries across the county, for you to take a closer look at some of the highlights of our collections.

There will also be a chance for you to tell us what object you would choose to represent Lancashire in time for us to include some of them before the end of the year.

For more information on the 50 anniversary events: **lancashire.gov.uk/50years** ■

First Lieutenant Anthony Brockholes:

Acting Governor and Commander in
Chief of New York By Mike Malley

Right Hon^{ble}

As the Loadstone attracts Iron so
your acknowledgement to pursue favours
the which am in some measure guilty of but dare not
demean any further having so lately recd so great a
share of your bounty which I deserve after to all to be
left I have room in these parts and with my wife
to make retaliation for your finding me in the way
I part with I am troubled at to please to command what
kind I am on the way to be on the score till
my end and think my wife honored to have y^e
to subscribe my wife

Your Serv^t &c

Letter signed by Anthony Brockholes to Governor William Penn, New York, 1 May 1683.
Permission to use courtesy of Will Steere at Seth Kaller, Inc. USA, who are offering it for sale at \$40,000.

Antho: Brockholes

Anthony Brockholes was from a modest background in rural North Lancashire, yet he was involved in monumental events in the history of America. In the early 1680s his two years as Acting Governor of New York were sandwiched between those of two titled individuals, both staunch Royalists with vast soldiering and diplomatic experience. Under the direction of his patron, the Duke of York (later James II), Brockholes carried out the same duties as his eminent colleagues, but his background seems undistinguished by comparison. In reality his advancement came about from his family's distinguished service to the Stuart cause.

The Conquest of New York

The Dutch colony of New Netherland in America was established in the 1620s. Later it was expanded to include New Amsterdam, present-day New York City, and parts of Long Island, Connecticut and New Jersey. In the 1660s it came under English control and although regained by the Netherlands in 1673, in the next year it was recaptured by the English. Charles II gave this colony to his brother the Duke of York. The Duke garrisoned the colony and appointed Major Edmund Andross as its first Governor in 1674. A staunch Royalist, Andross was previously commander of the Barbados Regiment of Dragoons; his troops there included a 'Lieutenant Brockells'. The Duke instructed Andross to raise a Company of Foot Soldiers for the defence of New York and Andross became the Governor of Long Island, New York and adjacent territories. In the same instruction the Duke noted, '...my will and pleasure is that Lieut. Anthony Brockholes, shall succeed you in the government of New York, Long Island and the rest of the lands under your trust and care'. Previously the Duke had appointed Brockholes First Lieutenant of Major Andross' Company of Foot, noting, 'I have thought fitt (sic) out of the good opinion I have conceived of you'.

Andross was knighted in 1678 but was recalled to London because of colonial grumbling and disgruntled merchants. In May 1681 and just prior to leaving, the Duke of York reminded him, 'at your coming away... you may commit the care of your government to your Lieutenant Brockholes', and for a period of two years Brockholes was Acting Governor with the same authority as his

predecessor, carrying out the instructions of his patron and earning his respect. In August 1681 the Duke of York wrote to Brockholes addressing him as Commander in Chief and signing the letter, 'Your loving friend'. Nevertheless, in 1683 he was replaced by an experienced soldier from the Irish landed Gentry, Colonel Thomas Dongan, later Earl of Limerick. Like Andross he was from a staunch Royalist family with vast experience of the military in France and diplomacy in Tangiers.

Brockholes' Duties in America

One of the instructions placed on Andross gives an idea of the Duke's priorities. It stated he was to, 'seize the opportunities which may arise of purchasing great tracts of land from the Indians for small sums', in order to compensate him for, 'the great expense and trouble of protecting the Colony'. Native American populations had been decimated by European diseases and many lost tribal lands due to sham sales and illegal land grabs by colonists. On one occasion Brockholes troop assisted friendly Mohawk Indians to attack the hostile Indian Chief, King Philip and his Indian Confederation, who around 1675 were in rebellion against the colonial Massachusetts authority in a last-ditch effort to avoid recognizing English authority and stop settlement on their native lands. Quelling threatened and real uprisings took him to Albany, 150 miles north of New York. It was on the Hudson River where he endeavoured to counteract the French influence on the local Indians. On another occasion he was directed to march 400 miles to the North East to Pemaquid, now called Bristol in Maine, to negotiate a peace with the indigenous tribes. His troop also had involvement

in the repair of Fort James on the southern tip of Manhattan; this was the administrative headquarters for British rule and also used to protect the Duke's interests against the pirates who infested the coast.

Perhaps as important to the Duke of York was settling boundary disputes and one settler who seemed to have a special warm relationship with Brockholes was William Penn, who together had finalised the boundaries of Pennsylvania. A letter dated 1 May 1683 highlights the close relationship, and confirms a gift received by Brockholes from Penn, possibly a horse. This is probably in recognition of him upholding Penn's claim to disputed lands because it follows an instruction Brockholes made in November 1682, commanding all the Duke's officers in Delaware to acknowledge the grant of that territory to Penn and controversially directing them, '...to surrender territory to him'.

Another gruelling issue faced by Brockholes was negotiating and collecting customs, duty and taxes from merchants and traders. Not only did this issue account for the recall of Andross, but also the charge of High Treason against the Receiver General who was responsible for collection. Brockholes took over this role in August 1681, but only a month later he wrote to Andross complaining of merchants refusing to pay duty, of courts being scared to act and general confusion and disorder. At the heart of the dispute was the same issue which led to the American War of Independence 100 years later, 'No Taxation without Representation'. Although the Duke called Brockholes his, 'Comandr in Chiefe at New York', with such an issue Brockholes did not possess sufficient authority, which led to Dongan's appointment in January 1683 and arrival later that year.

Following Dongan's arrival Brockholes continued in various roles in New York. Following James II Coronation in 1683 he was appointed a member of the Kings Council, but following the Glorious Revolution of 1688 his Catholicism cost him his position. He did however continue to serve on New York's Provisional Council and commanded the garrison of New York till 1690, around which

time he was addressed as Major. To satisfy the new administration in 1696 he pledged allegiance to the Protestant rulers, at which time he was said to be a considerable freeholder of New York, but from that point onwards his life again is shrouded in mystery.

These facts confirm Brockholes was intelligent, a capable soldier and a budding diplomat who could form good relationships, in particular with his patron the Duke of York, but as can be seen from the backgrounds of Andross and Dongan, authority and respect was the preserve of men with titles and status. The only record of Brockholes' background prior to joining Andross' Regiment states he was, 'a gentleman formerly of the Duke of York's own troop of the Horse Guard'.

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The only record
of Brockholes'
background states
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There were ten soldiers of higher rank than him and a further ten with equal rank in Andross' troop in Barbados. Although the Duke would have previously seen Brockholes as a soldier, to promote him over these persons, some of whom were well connected, seems to be a huge leap of trust. There is another reason that accounts for the Duke's faith and it is the same attribute that applied to both Andross and Dongan, that is having previously provided a service to the Stuarts, in this case it relates to the part played by Brockholes' father in the English Civil War.

The Ancestry of Anthony Brockholes

The surname Brockholes has been associated with Claughton, near Garstang since the 1300s and the family has a substantial collection of documents in Lancashire Archives. A comprehensive family tree over several generations gives no references to Anthony Brockholes. This is puzzling, because surely with such notoriety any family would have been proud to include him as a family member.

A starting point for his identification is to make some assumptions about his age and identify which branch of the family he was from. If we assume he was in his late twenties when he went to Barbados around 1670 he would have been born in the early 1640s. At this time besides Claughton the family held another substantial estate at Heaton on the banks of the River Lune and at Torrisholme, both near Lancaster, and Chaigley, Longridge, plus property and land elsewhere in Lancashire and beyond. All branches

of the family were staunch Catholics and following the Civil War three members of the family, any one of which may have been Anthony's father, were convicted for having taken up arms for the King.

The first was Thomas Brockholes of Claughton. As the eldest son he had inherited his father's estates at the start of the conflict in 1643, aged about 29. The second was John Brockholes, he held land in Claughton, Lancaster and Torrisholme on lease from the previous Thomas Brockholes, his elder half-brother. The third was Thomas Brockholes of Heaton Hall, he was uncle to Thomas Brockholes, of Claughton and he held an estate on lease from his nephew; he was roughly the same age as his nephew.

A record of John in the Civil War shows him to be a Captain in a Horse Regiment but lacks further information. More enlightening are the records relating to the two Thomas Brockholes, they identify one fought in the North of England the other in the South of England, but unfortunately it does not categorically identify which is which. However, the Thomas who fought in the south



The Brockholes family crest on a stone plaque in Claughton, cc-by-sa/2.0 - © Karl and Ali - geograph.org.uk/p/3974491



The Golden Ball (Snatchems) - Heaton with Oxcliffe, Lancaster. Heaton Hall is on the hill on the left (Red Rose Collections, NLA20180406007).

had very strong links to the Stuart family and provides a connection between this provincial family and Royalty, because this Thomas was a Captain in the elite Queens Regiment Of Horse, commanded by Queen Henrietta Maria, the wife of Charles I.

At the start of the war she was in Holland selling and pawning the Crown jewels to raise money to pay for arms. As a prelude to the start of warfare she returned to Yorkshire by sea in 1643 with weapons and professional soldiers and marching at the head of her soldiers, she headed south, meeting her husband to spend autumn and winter of that year in Oxford. Her regiments contained many soldiers raised in Lancashire and they were said to be almost exclusively Catholic. They were an elite formation and fought in a good number of battles and skirmishes between 1643 and 1645, including Basing, Newbury and Naseby. The latter was perhaps the decisive battle of the Civil Wars, fought in June 1645 in Northamptonshire; Parliament's New Model Army destroyed King Charles' main field army. Around 4,000 Royalists escaped the field, most of whom were either cavalry or senior officers. Soldiers present at these major battles saw bloodshed on an epic scale.

Although Charles I was executed in 1649, the fighting continued on a reduced scale, but following the death of Oliver Cromwell the

monarchy was reinstated in 1660. During the Commonwealth a price was paid for being on the losing side of the conflict and because of their Royalist support and their Catholicism all three Brockholes were fined and had land confiscated. It is a court record in 1656 that reveals Anthony Brockholes was son of Thomas Brockholes and his wife Mary, nee Wright, from Heaton Hall. The case related to a dispute regarding forfeited land and between 1650 and 1654. Thomas and Mary were the plaintiffs. It identifies that Thomas had been imprisoned for two years in the late 1640s in a debtor's gaol at Marshalsea, Middlesex.

The story now shifts to London where Charles II was crowned King in 1660, he was joined by his mother Queen Henrietta and his brother the Duke of York, who was by then an experienced soldier. After the restoration London was seething with ex-royalists looking for Royal patronage, one of whom was Thomas Brockholes of Heaton. He must have returned to London in the first months of the new monarchy because in a list of former Royalist Officers one Thomas Brockholes records his abode as being Middlesex. Charles II provided £60,000 to be shared between army officers who supported his father in the war. It noted the money was to be:

‘...distributed amongst Such TRULY LOYAL and Indigent Officers who have had Real Command of Soldiers according to their Several

Commissions, and who have never Deserted His Majesty nor His Blessed Fathers Service During the late times of Rebellion and Usurpation’.

Anthony must have created a favourable impression in the Duke of York’s Troop of the Horse Guard with the Duke’s appraisal of, ‘...the good opinion I have conceived of you’.

The distribution of the money was to end in 1662. In the following year a list was printed identifying the claimants and giving brief details of their service, including their rank, county of residence, the commander of their regiment and whether they were mounted or foot troops. It is in this list that Thomas Brockholles (sic) records his residence to be in Middlesex and he was a Captain in a horse regiment under the command of Colonel Lord St. Albans. The latter was known to be the Queens’ favourite and as Brockholes commanding officer would have been a most influential contact after the restoration.

Substantial payments were subsequently made to the ‘Indigent Officers’ which would have included Thomas. By late 1661 and with a healthy bank account, it is easy to envisage Anthony joining his father in London. Perhaps a first step would have been organising him additional tutoring, then being introduced to his father’s former colleagues, no doubt including Lord St. Albans and with Thomas’ loyal service an audience with the Queen Henrietta and the Duke of York would perhaps have followed. Anthony must have created a favourable impression to be enrolled in the Duke of York’s Troop of the Horse Guard and the Duke’s appraisal of, ‘...the good opinion I have conceived of you’, began his noteworthy service in America. ■

Notes

The information regarding Anthony in America is drawn from 30 original documents to or from him recorded in: ‘Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New-York, Volume 3 (London documents, 1614-1692), <https://archive.org/details/documentsrelativ03brod/mode/2up>

The information regarding Anthony Brockholes’ ancestry is an amalgam from the as yet unpublished article ‘The Brockholes Cavaliers’, by the author.

LANCASHIRE ARCHIVES DIGITISATION SERVICE

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Calderstones - 2000. Prior to demolition of most of the site: services continued as a low and medium secure unit (Courtesy of Calderstones Partnership NHS Foundation Trust).

RESEARCHING PERSONAL ARCHIVES: It is legal - but is it ethical?

Dr Nigel Ingham

The subject of my research is a man born in the early 1900s. Almost exclusively, the main source material comprises files held by Lancashire Archives. Given his date of birth was over 100 years ago his personal records are legally accessible by the public. However, researching this man's life story has generated profound ethical disquiet. In unpicking my unease, this article highlights issues which may resonate with other historians - amateur or professional, family or academic.

In order to write freely about unresolved ethical concerns, I have given the individual at the heart of this article a pseudonym: 'George'. George lived in Calderstones, a former large long-stay institution for people with learning disabilities.¹ Located near Blackburn, it opened in 1921, and at its height had well over 2000 residents.

Dying in the mid-twentieth century, George remained in the institution all his adult life. His remains, along with those of over 1100 of his peers, are buried in its cemetery, sold by the NHS in 2000. Since then the graveyard has had numerous private owners, all its headstones removed and been left largely in a state of woeful neglect. In recent years, tensions have arisen over plans to build a crematorium; The Friends of Calderstones and Brockhall Cemeteries being a strong critical voice in response to these proposals.²

The Friends have been researching the names and lives of those interred; emphasising that remains of real people are buried in what appears to be an abandoned field. Bearing witness to individual identities, even if only with a name, can be a powerful humanising act – acknowledging that an unmarked plot contains physical traces of a real person, with a life, with a story: like you, like me. Naming challenges anonymised, congregate institutional perspectives, which 'others' and

dismisses individuals. Having a name has enabled descendants to visit a grave, paying homage to the memory of a forgotten relative. The drive to humanise has been further enhanced by developing individual pen-portraits. George – using his actual name – is intended to be one of these and added to those published online.³

“

Bearing witness to individual identities, even if only with a name, can be a powerful humanising act”

The Records

For George's pen-portrait I am heavily reliant on information contained in his Calderstones' institutional files. These bureaucratic documents, never intended for public consumption, reflect de-humanising, controlling learning disability discourses and practices of the Mental Deficiency Act era.⁴ George's voice is effectively absent or silenced. Those shouting the loudest in his files are the decision-makers and foot soldiers of his enforced stay at Calderstones.

The officious, demeaning tone of George's records was anticipated. My discomfort is triggered by unexpected distasteful dimensions. Spanning decades, his notes are littered with references to poor self-care. Perhaps more disturbing, staff with whom he had daily contact consistently portray him as a bully of more vulnerable residents.

The Challenges

Researching George's files threw up two immediate issues. Firstly, his own voice is almost entirely missing; secondly, as a deceased individual, he is unable to consent to research into

his life. These two elements run counter to my ethos as an oral historian; one who endeavours to 'stand with' people with learning disabilities. The focus is often on history as advocacy – enabling hidden voices to be heard, with scope for consent.

I have been determined to explore ways of using George's personal records. If we ignore these unsatisfactory traces of this man's life, then there is a danger of complicity in keeping a history in the dark. Such a stance could merely re-inforce the marginalised status of people with learning disabilities, whether past or present. It would also avoid confronting an uncomfortable institutional past. From flawed records is it possible to construct a respectful and dignified account of George's life? Crucially, is it possible to do this using his real name? In other circumstances anonymisation could be employed, but not for the purposes of this research.

Wanting to 'stand with' George as I try to write a brief life history, there is scant sympathetic material with which to work. Oral historical and written accounts support the view that bullying between institutional residents was not uncommon. Taken at face value George's files could be seen as reflecting such an unpleasant reality.

“George's voice is effectively absent or silenced. Those shouting the loudest in his files are the decision-makers and foot soldiers of his enforced stay at Calderstones.”

I am working hard to discern glimpses of an alternative vision of George. There appears to be a caring family story, for instance, with family letters and references to regular visits throughout his time at Calderstones. It is implied that he was blighted by severe mental and physical illness, with questionable levels of institutional care. Finally, his resourcefulness and frustrations can be inferred from an escape attempt lasting nearly three months. However, these hints of other possible interpretations are few and far between when set against a relentlessly bleak picture of George's abilities, character and behaviour.

Ethical Issues

Painting an authentic picture of George's life is almost impossible to achieve from the available records. Yet these, especially if juxtaposed with those of his peers, provide key insights into the nature of this former large long-term institution. The message from his files is that the 'care' and legal system failed both George and those, it is claimed, he bullied on the overcrowded, under-staffed, segregated male wards at Calderstones. Although institutional oral historical accounts include examples of humanity, overwhelmingly during his life-time Calderstones was a brutal custodial environment for both residents and workers alike. Those authoring George's files worked within their own ideological and pragmatic constraints, and so we need to be circumspect with our condemnations.

Nevertheless, my focus is on penning a succinct pen-portrait of George; it is not primarily an account of the institution or its policy context. These aspects are integral to his story, but the priority is to breathe life into the memory of an individual whose interred remains lie in a neglected institutional graveyard. Crucial is the need to name George - without that any account lacks impact or credibility.

In summary, researching this man's files raised numerous questions:

- Why research these files? What am I aiming to do? Am I trying to tell a story which respects the individual, their peers and the context of the time?

- What right have I tell this story?
- Am I questioning or accepting at face value what is said in these records?
- How would the subject of the files feel? If they were alive, do I have any idea of whether they would consent to what I am doing?
- How would I feel if this was a close relative of mine?
- How would living relatives feel if they happened upon my account?
- How would I feel if these files were about me?
- Do I need to name the person?
- Do I need to name others who appear in the personal files?
- Is it possible to tell important but sensitive aspects of this story in anonymised ways?
- What is risked or lost in not telling George's story?

Reflections

Underpinning concerns about researching George is a belief that a researcher has a duty of care to the deceased and their descendants. Legally there is no issue with accessing this man's records. Discussed here have been my ethical struggles surrounding these personal data, particularly when they can be construed as derogatory. The issues are heightened when naming the individual is viewed as pivotal, but arguably is still pertinent if anonymised. I am sympathetic to the assertion that the deceased have rights, especially reputational ones, similar to when they were alive.



Calderstones Cemetery, looking towards its entrance, September 2022 (Courtesy of author).

One writer claims that the deceased have the right for their heritage and memory to be safeguarded, and their privacy to be respected.⁵ However, taken to its logical conclusion this could mean that research into the deceased becomes a no-go or over-sanitised arena; quite a blow for historians of any hue.

How to proceed with the institutional files of George and others? Perhaps it requires a collective response, involving interested parties coming together and grappling with the issues covered in this article. People with learning disabilities, researching their own history, could be at the heart of such a process.⁶ Lancashire Archives, partnered by the NHS, has already modelled a comparable approach in relationship to mental health records with its 2023 Change Minds project.⁷ Increasing numbers of personal records are becoming legally accessible; we need to find ways of responding to their ethical challenges.

Thanks to Dennis Buckley, David Tilsley, Anne Girardot and Liz Tilley. The views expressed and any errors are entirely my own. ■

1. www.lancslearningdisabilityinstitutions.org.uk/

2. www.calderstones-cemetery.co.uk/

3. This article is written as an independent researcher, not as a member of the Friends.

4. www.lancslearningdisabilityinstitutions.org.uk/content/history/institutions-historical-overview

5. Antoon de Baets, 'A declaration of the responsibilities of present generations towards past generations', *History and Theory*, Number 43, December 2004

6. For example, Owen Barden, 'Getting inside histories of learning disabilities', *Education Action Research*, Volume 29, Number 4, 2021, pp. 619-635

7. www.lscft.nhs.uk/news/change-minds



Sandra McArdle (front right) in 2013 visiting the grave of her aunt, Josephine Middleton. Behind Sandra is her sister, and on her left her niece. (Courtesy of Mel Diack & Sandra McArdle)



F J SOBEE

By John Grimbaldeston

Pilling Historical Society founder members investigating Kate's Pad at Iron House Farm, Out Rawcliffe.
Back row: Dick Ronson, Maxie Parkinson, John Cottam; Front Row: Hugh Sherdley, Headlie Lawrenson.

In country villages in the 1800s there were arguably three types or classes of people who were able to influence the local population.

There were the traditional two, the local landowner, 'I'm in't Big 'Ouse', and the parson. The local vicar continued a thread going back generations; the local landowner was changing as the traditional squire was replaced by industrialists who wanted to buy into the world of the gentry, acquire a country seat and set about bestowing their benevolences on the local population or 'Hodge', the slightly derogatory generic stereotype.

Recent celebrations of Catforth school's 150th birthday reminded those who attended of a third: the village schoolmaster. Catforth was lucky to have the Danson, Allen and Standen families at the heart of fetes, war work, charities and local institutions. This year marks the seventieth anniversary of a landmark left by another Fylde headteacher, Mr F J Sobee, who published *The History of Pilling* as a mark of respect for the Queen's Coronation. People from Pilling are not over-awed by royalty, so Mr Sobee put her name on the cover and sent her a copy.

Frederick James Sobee wasn't actually from Pilling. He was born at Rainhill in 1898, though early in life the family moved to staff quarters at the newly opened County Asylum at Winwick, near Warrington, opened in 1902, where Mr Sobee senior was Night Supervisor.

He attended the Boteler Grammar School in Warrington, now the Sir Thomas Boteler Church of England High School. He was a sergeant in the school's cadet force and during the First World War he volunteered aged seventeen and a half, and served with the Manchester Regiment, finishing as a second lieutenant. He served in Flanders and came through the war unscathed.

After the war he went to Manchester University and graduated with a BA in History in 1922. He trained as a teacher and after four years in schools in Warrington, he married Anna Cooper Shaw in 1927 and was appointed Head Teacher of St.

John the Baptist School in Pilling. There he spent the rest of his working life.

“He created a village of historians; his and their work on the ancient wooden trackway of Kate's Pad is of national significance.”

He made his mark immediately. He was responsible for the lighting and scenery in a memorable Nativity Play put on at St John's in February 1928 which featured a real live donkey. He threw himself into the life of the village and over the years took on many responsibilities outside the school. Various he was secretary of Pilling Choral Society, he was 'People's Warden' of St John the Baptist Church, a position he only relinquished in 1954, though he continued to be Superintendent of the Sunday School, a position he held for nearly thirty years. He was Chairman of Pilling Historical Society, in particular investigating archaeological remains of Kate's Pad, an ancient trackway across the moss, and organising an exhibition in March 1950. Other officers of the Society were Mr J Cottam (vice-chairman), Mr H Sherdley (secretary) and Mr W Stafford (treasurer). Sobee was a member of Pilling's Oddfellows, though most of the men of the village seemed to be members and his not being a member would probably have been more remarkable.

He was for a time Clerk to the Parish Council and helped advocate for the area to be connected to the electricity supply. He was at some time band master of the Pilling Silver Jubilee Band and also played the euphonium.

During the Second World War, Mr Sobee ran a National Savings group, '...of which most of the people in the village are members.' He also

organised the children of the village to collect scrap paper which they gathered, ‘...in the schoolyard, where many a schoolboy ‘scrap’ has taken place,’ remarked the Fleetwood Chronicle reporter. The money raised was then used to buy wool so the Pilling ladies could knit, ‘war comforts for local lads who have joined up.’ With a Miss I Morley he started a National Savings Group for Pilling Girls and collected £1000 in the first five months. These efforts even made the national press, giving Mavis Curwen and May Parkinson their moments of fame in the Daily Mirror of 17 April 1940.

Inevitably he joined the Home Guard. He was in the 5th County of Preston Battalion, “A” Company, Headquarters at White Bull Cottage, Great Eccleston. The Commander was Captain Guy Clifford, well-known in the area as a breeder of poultry and of prize-winning Pointer dogs, an interesting chap in his own right. Mr Sobee had charge of Number One platoon, Pilling, along with T Houghton.

As might be expected he was a busy, pro-active teacher. He organised funds for pupils to have a change of clothing for when they arrived wet to school. He regularly arranged visits for his pupils and had a particularly strong interest in linking the school to the outside community: the Fleetwood Chronicle of 23 March 1945 reported on a lesson at J E Cross’ farm at Smallwood Hey, Pilling in judging Ayrshire cattle.

When Royalty visited Fleetwood he took his school charges to see: in May 1937 he managed to find excellent seats near the Marine Hall for the King and Queen’s visit. Trips were more frequently of a historical nature: during 1951 he and his pupils visited Cockersands Abbey, Lancaster Castle, Kate’s Pad and took a pleasure boat (The Spindrift) to sail over King Scar, one of the possible sites of Portus Setantiorum.

From the distance of 50 years, it is this ability to inspire others to be interested in the history of his adopted village that makes Mr Sobee so remarkable. He helped to create Pilling Historical Society, still going today, was an early member of Wyre Archaeology, and had the almost mystical ability to persuade hard-headed farmers to join him and his friends in digging up random bits of their land. He casually mentions Mr Ronson of Moss Cottage Farm, John Rossall of Bradshaw Lane and many others and interests them in his finds. He created a village of historians, and his and their work on the ancient wooden trackway of Kate’s Pad, twelve feet below the peat and the subject of an exhibition in March 1950, is of national significance.

Brian Marshall in his introduction to the reprinted edition of A History of Pilling remembered Mr Sobee:



Mr and Mrs Sobee and family at Winwick, Lancashire. Back row, left to right: Sarah Elizabeth Moss, Samuel Frederick Sobee, Unknown; Front row left to right: Jane Moss, Frederick James Sobee, Anna Cooper Shaw.

‘He was a man of great stature in the village whose folk he served for more than three decades, and he is remembered by many... To some he is the village schoolmaster, firm but fair, to others he is Commanding Officer of the local Home Guard Unit during World War II. There are those who knew him as conductor of Pilling Jubilee Band or as a founder member of Pilling Historical Society. This was a man of many parts and boundless interests.’

Eighteenth century poet Oliver Goldsmith also described him, sort of:

Beside yon straggling fence that skirts the way
With blossom'd furze unprofitably gay,
There, in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule,
The village master taught his little school...
...And still they gaz'd and still the wonder grew,
That one small head could carry all he knew.

Thanks to Bob Dobson, Brian Hughes, the Carroll branch of the Sobee family, Wyre Archaeology and several Pillingers for permissions, information and help with this article. ■

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Have you got a story to tell or some research to share? We are looking for submissions that relate to the history of Lancashire, its people, or places – from ancient history to the present day. Find out more at: lancashire.gov.uk/archives

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The copy deadline for submissions for the next edition is 1 August 2024.

A CENTURY OF BANCROFT MILL, BARNOLDSWICK

By Ian McKay



Workers at Bancroft Mill in the aftermath of the 1932 flood.

Bancroft was the thirteenth and last weaving mill built in Barnoldswick. Prior to 1914, James Nutter had a vision of making a commercial success of Newfield Edge Mill, eventually to be called Bancroft Mill. He bought land from Bancroft Farm, recorded on the 1895 OS map as 'Bancrofts' but on the 1849 survey called 'Bank Croft', which is a farmstead on a hill and is an appropriate name. The newer version 'Bancroft' is an Old English name derived from bean (beans) and croft (a smallholding). Perhaps it was a couple of fields in which beans were grown; the modern name is less fitting than the older version but we won't see it changed now!

Going to war

Construction started in 1914, possibly with earlier preparatory works, and did not finish until 1919, the war delaying completion. The original idea was to call the two cylinders of the engine 'Patience' and 'Perseverance' because it had taken so long to build, but at the last Nutter's daughter Eliza said, 'No, I want the engine named after Mum and Dad' (who both had died during the war) and so it was.

Tragically on 18 January 1921 an incident caused the death of a weaver, Elizabeth Brown, 'It appears that two large iron fire-proof doors had been left in the warehouse awaiting erection between the warehouse and the shed, and were leaning against a stack of pieces in the warehouse. As the deceased entered the warehouse to obtain a supply of weft, the stack suddenly collapsed and Mrs. Brown was knocked down, her head coming into violent contact with the floor, and the iron doors, weighing approximately 10 cwt. falling across both her legs. She was extricated in an unconscious condition and removed home, where death took place about two hours later from a fracture of the skull'. The inquest returned a verdict of accidental death. Elizabeth goes down in history as Bancroft Mill's only known fatality; her grave is in Ghyll cemetery. Her husband, Herbert, remained a weaver at Bancroft for many years.

Back in March 1925, when the paint can have hardly dried on the mill floors and the ink on the deeds, there was already disquiet in the cotton industry. The Beamers and Twisters demanded nationalisation of the cotton industry in 1919. The cotton trade declined significantly in the 1920s and 1930s. Total exports of cloth plummeted from 7,075 million linear yards in 1913 to 1,448 million in 1938. We know that Bancroft survived the great depression, which closed many of the mills in Lancashire. It survived the Barnoldswick flood in July 1932. This flash flood caused havoc in Barnoldswick. The workers at Bancroft had to be brought out of the mill yard on the backs of lorries.

In 1936 the insurance inventory shows that they had about 1,152 looms. Trading was buoyant enough that 21 additional workers were taken on in 1937. The mill was no doubt hopeful that the

1936 and 1939 Cotton Industry (Reorganisation) Acts would help to redress the disastrous state of the cotton trade, with the 1936 Act generating income to be reinvested in the industry and the 1939 Act scrapping redundant capacity and setting production quotas. But it was not to be. The outbreak of hostilities prevented the 1939 Act from being implemented.

Winning the peace

Bancroft Mill probably began the war without any real sense of desperation or urgency. No one at that stage had any real idea how long the war might last or what impact it would have.

By November 1939 many mills worked at less than full capacity due to shortages of imported raw cotton and the loss of their workforce into the armaments industry. Unusually, Bancroft did not get turned into an arms factory – it kept weaving throughout the war. The Essential Work Order prevented certain workers from leaving their jobs to go elsewhere. There began a long-running correspondence between Bancroft Mill and the authorities, one using the National Service (Armed Forces) Act of 1939 to try to conscript the mill employees into the services and Bancroft trying to persuade them that these same employees were essential to the continuance of the Mill's war production. All the employees were eventually classed as essential workers. As far as we can ascertain there were 221 persons employed by Bancroft Mill in 1941 and this figure was maintained until 1949. They had a Christmas party too!

In mid-1939 there had been a million textile employees nationwide; by mid-1944 it was 620,000. Imports of cotton were 600,000 tons before the war and 440,000 tons in 1944 with exports of cotton piece goods being 1,386 and 374 million square yards respectively. About one third of the cotton industry capacity was closed by Government order rather than by voluntary action. By 1943, 50% of the labour force in textiles was employed on fulfilling Government orders. The war came first: the Fine Spinners and Doublers made inflatable decoy tanks and 20 million yards of floating rope for the navy and air force.

By 1947 we were told in government messages that 'Britain's Bread hangs by Lancashire's Thread'. Cotton was lagging behind its best. With only three workers where before the war there were four, about one third of the spindles and looms were idle. In 1937 there had been 4124 million yards of cloth made by 187,000 employees operating 485,000 looms. By 1950 output had fallen to 2830 million yards, made by 137,000 employees on under 358,000 looms. Yet, there was optimism and initiatives like the More Looms system offered hope. Even with this system, which gave improvements in working conditions as well as wages, there was an undercurrent of disquiet.

Bancroft Mill must have been well aware of the parlous state of the industry. However, on 19 August 1958, Wilfrid Ewart Nutter died at the age of 75.

He was one of the founding Directors of James Nutter and Sons in 1907 and became Chairman in 1949 and then Managing Director. He was a well-known and well-respected figure in the cotton industry; his death brought to an end the era of Nutter control of Bancroft Mill.

Losing the battle

After Wilfrid Nutter's death, the Mill was sold to K.O. Boardman of Stockport.

This company occupied Kingston Mill (now demolished) on Chestergate in Stockport. Boardman's were described in 1950 as manufacturers of cotton goods. In 1953 in Kelly's Directory they were listed as offering dyed and printed dress goods, shirtings, interlinings, furnishings and spun fabrics. Bancroft offered printers and raising cloths, sateens and shirtings. Presumably

Presumably, Boardman's saw Bancroft as offering a useful addition to their product range.

During the 1960s and 1970s, mills were closing across Lancashire at a rate of one a week. The cotton industry was dying on its feet and there seemed to be nothing that could, should or might be done to prevent it. Boardman's went through a series of mergers and name changes and ultimately it was K.O. Boardman (International) Ltd., who on 6 December 1978 deposited material

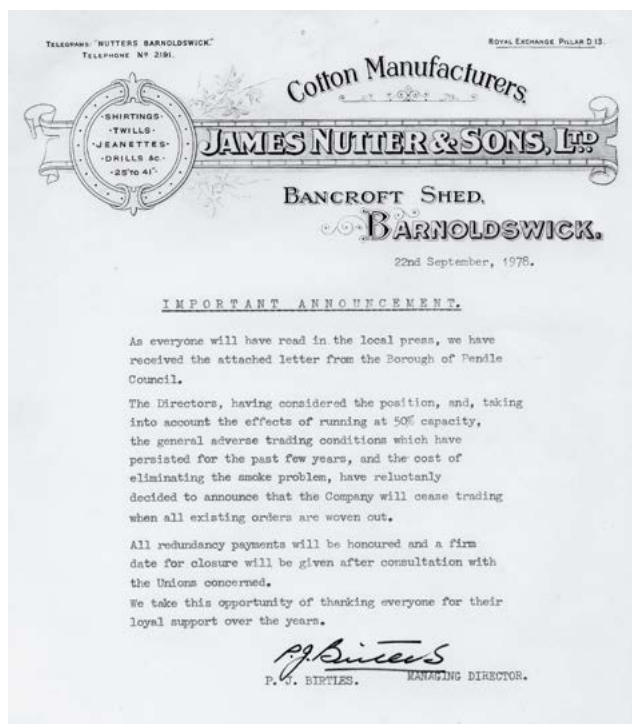


Bancroft Mill, 1941 Christmas party

relating to Bancroft Mill at the Lancashire Records Office.

The Clean Air Act (1956) stated that emission of dark smoke was to be an offence. It was in Bancroft's interest not to make dark smoke – dark smoke is indicative of inefficient use of fuel. Mill owners knew to the penny how much coal it took to produce cloth and no doubt if the figures looked wrong, they'd be giving the Engine Tenter, Firebeater or the weavers some grief or they'd be on the phone to the coalman! Coal burning boilers were still a well-established method of generating steam for stationary engines. Some of the surviving mills went over to electricity, which was an option never taken up by Bancroft. Had it been, the engine – now Lancashire's biggest – would have gone and been replaced by electric motors. The museum as we see it today would never have existed.

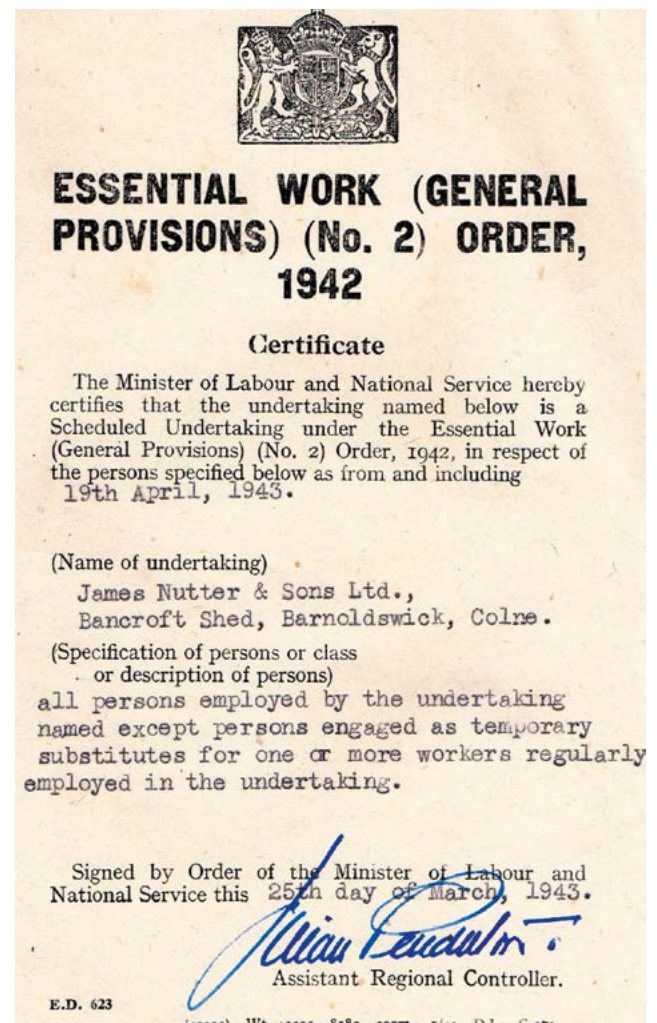
In its heyday, the mill produced 200,000 yards of cloth per week, around 10 million yards per year. The 1963 return to the Board of Trade gives a figure of just under 5 million yards, which were sold at a price of £278,836, so Bancroft was running at only 50% capacity. This remained until 1978 when the Directors finally threw in the towel.



Notice sent to employees upon the closure of Bancroft Mill, 1978

They wrote to the employees on 22 September 1978 and said that the mill would weave out and the company cease trading. The last weavers ended their work in December of that year, bringing to a close the ambitions of James Nutter who on some date before the first World War must have had thoughts something on the lines of, "If I build my own mill I shall make money, become well-respected and a pillar of my community, of which I am proud." And he did. Bancroft Mill Engine Museum is here today to bear witness to his efforts, tenacity and determination and we hope that you will come to see his engine running on steaming days and think of how much we all owe to James and Mary Jane. ■

For information about Bancroft Mill Engine Museum, visit <https://bancroftmill.org.uk>



'Bancroft Mill, Essential Work Order, 1942



SAVING LIVES: JOHN BRADBURY'S 50 YEARS OF RESCUE WORK

By Angela Norris

Knott End Coastguard volunteers at the Coastguard Station with former leader Ramsay Taylor, second right (Courtesy of Blackpool Gazette)

There are few people who know the tides and the sands of Lancashire's coast as well as former Knott End Coastguard station officer John Bradbury, who in half a century of co-ordinating river and sea rescues, has helped to save hundreds of lives.

John stepped down from his role after timing his retirement to coincide with the 200th anniversary of HM Coastguard, the UK's national maritime service, operated by 3,500 volunteers. In a fitting send-off to his long and distinguished career, he was recently presented with a long-service medal and certificate by the UK's Chief Coastguard, Peter Mizen.

Lancashire has four Coastguard Rescue Teams, based in Knott End, Fleetwood, Morecambe and Lytham St Annes, working closely with other teams further up the coast in Arnside, Furness and Millom.

John joined what was formerly the Knott End Coastguard Auxiliary in 1972. In those days the service operated from a corner of Knott End Café, where owner Ramsay Taylor combined his role as lead coastguard with running his cafe. Things changed in 1980 when a new coastguard station opened in Knott End, becoming the prototype for other stations across the country.

After Ramsay's death in 1984, John took over as station officer, continuing in this role until relatively recent years. For a time, he also took interim charge of Morecambe Coastguard.

John, who combined his role with his 'day' jobs as a teacher of technology at Fleetwood High School and part-time (evening) lecturer at Fleetwood Nautical College, has seen many changes in rescue work over the years.

At one time the coastguard was predominantly a coastal watch service, monitoring boats going into and out of the River Wyre and Morecambe Bay. The decline in the fishing and boating industries rendered this element of the job virtually redundant.

The fishing industry declined during the late 1970s and 1980s, with the last trawler leaving Fleetwood in 1982. Only inshore fishing boats remained. A further blow for the port came in 2010 when the last of the Stena Line cargo

ferries between Fleetwood and Northern Ireland withdrew.

A boom in leisure fishing and sailing during the 1980s and 1990s saw a rise in the number of incidents involving fishing boats, yachts and jet-skis operating from the Knott End ferry slip. Capsized dinghies, boats venturing too far out, sailors going out ill-equipped or unaware of the vagaries of the tide, and fishermen becoming trapped by the tide or getting stuck in the mud featured among the tally of call-outs.

In recent years leisure boating declined, triggered in part, John recalled, by a fall in fishing stock, new rules governing cockling and fewer younger people taking up sailing. As a result, the number of boat-related call-outs has plummeted.

Today searches for missing people account for between 85-90% of call-outs. Coastguard crew frequently find themselves racing off to Blackpool or Morecambe to search for someone reported as missing or in distress. Because of the nature of these call-outs, the ten crew members who make up the Knott End team receive training in dementia awareness and mental health, alongside core skills, such as first-aid, boat-craft and mud rescue work.

John describes how the role of the coastal rescue officer – as the volunteers are now known – has become much more technical, involving ongoing training and assessment in a range of skills. Equipment has become much more advanced too. As well as rescue vehicles, the coastguard team has a specialist Argo cat, multi-role vehicle capable of travelling on all terrains, as well as various mud rescue devices.

Many incidents stand out in John's memory, including the Morecambe Bay cockling disaster in February 2004, when the bodies of 23 Chinese cockle-pickers were recovered from the sea off the coast at Hest Bank. John worked through the night alongside rescue teams from the RNLI,

police and neighbouring coastguards, and two helicopters, searching for missing Chinese workers trapped by the incoming tide.

Anyone familiar with the bay will be aware of the deadly quicksand that lurks along the coast. Over the years quicksand incidents have accounted for many tragedies in the bay, with coastguard teams battling in vain to rescue people trapped in the jaws of the shifting sand. John remembers one such case involving a man who drowned after becoming trapped in quicksand beyond Fluke Hall, Pilling, after trying to retrieve his motorbike.

“
John worked through
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incoming tide.”

Today quicksand rescues are easier to deal with, thanks to the array of equipment coastal rescue officers have at their disposal. The Knott End Coastguard team, working with colleagues from Arnside, were instrumental in developing some of the earliest quicksand rescue equipment. This included the development of a wooden platform with a square cut-out for helping casualties to stay above the level of the sand. A fire extinguisher was used to pump water below the trapped person's feet, to help fluidise the quicksand.

This paved the way for the development of moulded platforms made from fibreglass, together with specialist water injection extinguishers. Coastguards are equipped with 'mudder' footwear – boots with flaps that splay out when walking on shifting sand. These, along with dry suits, sledges and harnesses, have made mud rescues more efficient and less hazardous for crew members.

John was awarded the MBE from Prince Charles, for services to maritime safety in 2006, but this wasn't his first time he'd rubbed shoulders with royalty. In 1985 he was invited to support the Queen's Guide, the late Cedric Robinson, in escorting the then Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Philip, by horse and carriage across the sands of Morecambe Bay.



Coastguard crew on a sea rescue exercise (Courtesy of John Bradbury)

Ten years later, when invited to represent HM Coastguard at a reception at Buckingham Palace attended by the Queen, Prince Philip and the Princess Royal, he and the duke were able to share their reminiscences of the historic royal crossing.

John was born in Oldham, moving to Knott End as a child. Since playing on the sands as a young boy, he has watched the coastline change dramatically over the decades. Nowhere is this more striking than in the Wyre estuary, where rising silt has changed the topography of the river, rendering it virtually unrecognisable from Fleetwood's trawling heyday when the river mouth was regularly dredged to allow vessels smooth passage in and out of the estuary.

He illustrates this by describing how the channel leading to the former Fleetwood docks has become blocked with silt. In another instance, silt accumulation has led to the formation of a sandbar at the mouth to the Wyre estuary. But it is the emergence of an 'island' at Kingscar, off the coast of Fleetwood, that offers perhaps the most visible example of the way the sands are rising.

As if further proof was needed, he points to Admiralty charts showing how the sands close to the Knott End slipway have risen by three metres over the past 100 years. John says the growth of spartina grass (an invasive species) close to the top of the ferry slipway is fuelling further siltation, by taking root and causing land **underneath to solidify**.

'They say the east coast is tipping in and the west coast is tipping up, and there does seem to be some truth in this statement', he says.

Since retiring from the coastguard service John has continued his work as a part-time lecturer at Fleetwood Nautical College. He often finds himself being called upon to give advice about the sands or tides. One task he particularly enjoys is advising organisers of the Lancashire Landings – the annual charity event which sees light aircraft land on the beach at Knott End – on suitable tides.

But he admits there are some things he doesn't miss:

'Looking back, I've really enjoyed the work and I think I did well to push on until I was well into my seventies. But I've probably reached a point now where it's nice not to have to get up and dash off in the middle of the night, particularly on the days when you know you have to be up for work early the next day.' ■



Former Knott End Coastguard station officer
John Bradbury (Courtesy of author)

Take a look inside the best of *British Velvet*



VELVET DAYS IN PRESTON

BY MICHAEL AKERS

Say the word slowly, velllllvetttt. Now imagine the palm of your hand gently brushing the nap (that's the fuzzy raised surface of the fabric), first one way and then the opposite. See how the rich colour of the material appears to subtly change in hue; is it a variation of the light, or is there a hint of magic at work here? That's velvet, a fabric that looks great and feels great. A touch of velvet may well be feast for the senses, but for centuries it was difficult and time consuming to make, and very expensive. Originally made from silk, velvet was a luxury item in medieval Europe, reserved only for the elite. Exclusive and desirable, royalty, nobility and the church all fell in love with this distinctively soft textured material. Then came the industrial revolution. Once requiring very skilled and labour-intensive techniques, production now became mechanised and used cheaper fibres, especially cotton. Velvet ultimately became affordable, accessible and popular and for sixty years this fabric was manufactured in a cotton mill in Preston.

The company responsible began life in 1884 as J. R. & A. Smith Ltd., cotton manufacturers. Founded by two Bolton born brothers, John Robert Smith and Arthur Smith, they acquired Manchester Mill on Mosely Street in Preston in 1892 and a year later Peel Hall Mill on Fletcher Road. There was an early, and not untypical, setback when part of Manchester Mill was destroyed by fire in 1903, but they rebuilt. Records at Lancashire Archives show specifications and receipts for a new steam engine purchased from the Vulcan Boiler Company of Manchester in 1906, as well as early order books, and company accounts. The business enjoyed success, employing up to 1000 workers, and John Smith became an alderman and a magistrate. In 1922 he presented a recreation ground and bowling green to the town, which still survives as 'Smith's Rec'. He also presented his collection of fine porcelain to the Harris.

Manchester Mill remained the company's primary manufacturing base for over a century but in 1932 J. R. & A. Smith switched to manufacturing velvet. A company within a company was born, the British Velvet and Plush Company Ltd., and specialised looms were imported from Germany. Unlike other fabrics, velvet is not flat-woven, and needs more yarn and more production steps. To make velvet two layers of cotton fabric are woven simultaneously, with a pile (another word for the nap) in between. The two pieces of the 'sandwich' are then cut apart to create the pile effect. Velveteen, velour and jacquard are all produced from variations of the same technique. Plush comes from the French peluche (a teddy bear en français is an 'ours en peluche'). Plush velvet, often used in upholstery, has a much higher pile (in velvet it does not exceed 3mm).

A move to manufacturing velvet was an unusual step for a traditional cotton manufacturer and the venture wasn't without risk, evidenced by a news cutting from 1936. Entitled, 'A Go-Ahead Velvet Firm', it is a fascinating insight into the early days of velvet production in Preston. British Velvet, according to the Guardian report, were 'responsible for creating an entirely new industry in Lancashire, the production of warp-pile fabric which up to a few years ago had been almost

entirely imported from the continent' – warp-pile fabric is velvet. Furthermore, this was 'one of the most difficult sections of the trade and one where foreign competition is particularly murderous.' On a tour of the site the reporter was very impressed by the 'rows of large, brand new warp-pile looms, the wide spacing of the plant and the general spotlessness of the shed.'

“
A Go-Ahead Velvet Firm - British Velvet were responsible for creating an entirely new industry in Lancashire.”

The article has a humorous tone, not all of which might be appreciated today. The reporter, for instance, says the company wishes to be anonymous, so instead of using the Smith name, a pseudonym is used, Jones – a joke that has been around the houses more than a few times. He's also particularly struck by the 'trim appearance of the women workers' concluding that 'not only were the girls nice looking, but they had the pleasant smiling expression of people who are happy in their work'. He then jokes (I think) that the, 'only serious labour trouble was a fairly heavy loss through marriage'. When the report does return to the velvet trade, we learn that 'the bulk of the looms were making warp-pile for furnishing velvets and plushes' but that there were 'sundry other uses such as the toy and artificial flower trade'. I'd love to know more. Finally there's a hint of movie industry glamour in the revelation that the company is providing the, 'highly lustrous warp-cloth for film studios, where it is used as a background during the shooting of films'. I'd definitely love to know more.

The 1940s brought new challenges. When Manchester Mill was needed for the war effort,

J.R. & A. Smith founded their family company nearly a century ago, specialising in the export of quality velvets to the industrial north of England.

In 1932 the company established The British Velvet and Plush Co Ltd in Preston to concentrate exclusively on the manufacture of velvet using a revolutionary new process.

Continuous up-dating and modernisation of equipment, incorporating the very latest technological developments, led to a major expansion of British Velvet, and a move to larger, more modern premises in 1955.

Today, as the result of massive investment, British Velvet boasts one of the most technologically advanced weaving plants in the world, producing high quality products at a competitive cost.

And, although British Velvet has come a long way since those early days, we are still a family company who pride ourselves in offering every individual customer the finest personal service and unsurpassing quality at all times.

INTERNATIONAL REPUTATION

British Velvet has dramatically expanded its export markets in recent years, winning the company a reputation for quality and value throughout Europe and world wide.

In 1979 the parent company was awarded the International Export Association Gold Award for export achievement — a testament to British Velvet's success in the world market.

We have provided quality velvet curtains to decorating clients in many countries, for the House of Commons in Parliament, Palaces of Royalty and leading Hotels throughout the world — the list is endless.

WIDE RANGE

British Velvet produces chiefly high quality colour curtain velvet, but we also specialise in the manufacture of pile fabrics for many different industries and applications, including: clothing, wall coverings, paper polishing cloths, powder puffs, and seed sowing equipment.

There is a huge range of colours in various widths (up to 190cms) and a comprehensive range of plain velvets with printed or embroidered designs in a wide choice of colours continually up-dated to keep abreast of fashions in the latesting trade.



CUSTOM MADE

British Velvet is always pleased to meet exact customer specifications, and we can chemically treat fabrics for fireproofing, crease resistance, or water repellency.

In other words, whatever your individual requirements, British Velvet will provide the perfect fabric for every application.

ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY

The success of British Velvet has always depended on the employment of the best technology available.

That is still true today, and that's why you will find only the most up to date equipment in British Velvets, Manchester Mill.

Keeping costs down and always improving quality, that's the secret of our success.





SO ENTSTAND UNSER ERFOLG

Vor fast einem Jahrhundert, im Jahre 1896, gründeten J.R. Smith und A. Smith das Familienbetrieb — J.R. & A. SMITH LTD — in Textilverbunden, das sich auf das technische Weben von Qualitätsstoffen im industriellen Norden von England spezialisierte.

Im Jahre 1932 gründete dann das Unternehmen SMITH LTD einen weiteren Textilvertrieb in Preston, nahe der Stadt Manchester, der sich ausschließlich auf die Herstellung von hochwertigen Baumwoll-Curtains unter Verwendung der neuesten revolutionären, neu entwickelten Produktionsverfahren konzentrierte.

Durch ständige Aktualisierung und Modernisierung unserer Produktionsanlagen auf das jeweils neueste technische Entwicklungsniveau, schaffte BRITISH VELVET sehr schnell zu den bedeutenden Summproduzenten im Jahre 1955 wurde die gesamte Produktion in ein größeres, modernes Fabrikgebäude verlegt, ebenfalls in Preston.



BRITISH VELVET darf sich heute zu den schnellsten modernen Baumwoll-Textilverbunden der Welt zählen mit ihren qualitativ hochwertigen Textil-Erzeugnissen in kontinuierlichen Preisen.

BRITISH VELVET steht somit auf einer kontinuierlichen, erfolgreichen Entwicklung zurück. Als Familienbetrieb geführt, dessen wichtigstes Besondere es ist, jedem Kunden beste persönliche Beziehung zu gewähren und hinsichtlich des bewährten und bekannten BRITISH VELVET Qualitätsstandards, keine Kompromisse zuzulassen.

BRITISH VELVET — EIN UNTERNEHMEN MIT INTERNATIONALEM RUF

BRITISH VELVET konnte ihren Erfolg in den letzten Jahren vor allem dem verdienstvollen Baueinsatz von Dekorationen, außerdem werden Spezial-Gewebe verschiedener Art für die Sportbekleidung und Technik hergestellt. Solche Baumaterialien werden in verschiedenen Breiten gefertigt, von 120 bis 190 cm. Die schicksten Stoffe, wie z.B. Druck-Stoffe und Plüsch-Samt und reichhaltigen Farbspektrum, der ständig auf den jeweils neuesten Farbtrend für Heimtextilien aktualisiert werden.

BRITISH VELVET — SPEZIALSAMTE

BRITISH VELVET ist nicht nur ein Unternehmen, das gewerbliche Kunden wie folgt chemisch behandelt liefert, sondern auch ein Unternehmen, das in der Lage ist, wasserabweisend, mit anderen Worten BRITISH VELVET liefert das perfekte Material für den gewöhnlichen Einsatzbereich.

MODERNSTE TECHNIK

Der Erfolg der BRITISH VELVET hing stets von der ständigen Verbesserung der Maschinen und der ständigen Verbesserung der Produktion. Die ständige Verbesserung der Produktion ist ein wichtiger Faktor für den Erfolg der BRITISH VELVET. Die ständige Verbesserung der Produktion ist ein wichtiger Faktor für den Erfolg der BRITISH VELVET.



BRITISH VELVET — LEISTUNGSFÄHIGKEIT

Die Leistung unserer Betriebsabläufe und die ständige Verbesserung der BRITISH VELVET Qualitätsstandards sind die Basis unseres Erfolges. Nur durch unsere Kunden eine hochwertige Qualität zu einem vernünftigen Preis zu liefern.

BRITISH VELVET QUALITÄTSBAUMWOLLSAMTE

Für jeden Auftrag gilt eine strenge Qualitätskontrolle — je jeder Produktionsprozess — so soll der BRITISH VELVET Kunde darauf verlassen können, dass nur Produkte erster Qualität zur Ausführung kommen.



Advertising brochure from the British Velvet Archive, DDX 2148/8233 (Lancashire Archives & Local History)

velvet production ceased, and the looms produced essential cloths. At Peel Mill all production was halted in August 1941. A short letter sent to all staff explains that the closure was, 'in accordance with Government Decree through the Cotton Control Board', and that regrettably the mill was 'one of the casualties of the war'. Employees, however, were assured that work for some weavers could be found at the sister mill, and that everyone should 'check the list in the Gatehouse'. I imagine this was a very stressful time for everyone. Peel Mill was subsequently used by the Ministry of Food, presumably as a storage facility. It re-opened in November 1946, but closed in the 1960s when all velvet production was concentrated in one mill. After the war many cotton mills looked to boost production. Finding they were short of labour, they introduced so-called 'housewives' shifts'. These were aimed at young married women who had left the mills because they had children to look after during the day; the shifts were typically

6:00pm to 10:00pm. Manchester Mill, where a 24-hour three shift system operated, was no exception. Unfortunately, there appears to be little archival evidence specific to J. R. & A. Smith relating to the actual work force and their working conditions. There are no registers of employees and only fragments of evidence regarding wages. Hopefully someday more information will be deposited to give a more complete picture.

In 1959 the company became simply British Velvet, and they opened the Velvet Curtain Centre at 99 Friargate in the town centre. Preston-made velvet furnishings, especially curtains, now began to find their way into elegant hotels and even the House of Commons. Other uses of velvet ranged from fashion to polishing cloths, powder puffs and seed sorting equipment. By the 1970s the company had replaced the shuttle system looms and invested in the latest rapier type looms, once again from Germany. This new technology had a big impact on the speed of production and British Velvet went global.

On the cover of a glossy brochure produced at the time, a pair of gorgeous, burgundy-coloured curtains are being drawn apart revealing the caption, 'Take a look inside the best of British Velvet'. An export boom meant the company were now trading in Australia, New Zealand, the Middle East, parts of Africa, across Europe, and even Hong Kong. The future did indeed look good, with the company, understandably, trumpeting an International Export Gold Award in 1979. Perhaps velvet and the glamour aesthetic of the 1970s were a perfect match. Was this the heyday for velvet? A Lancashire Evening Press report certainly thought so. They quoted John Smith, the founder's grandson and later managing director, '...it is a highly specialised technique and velvet is a particularly difficult product to make. We are one of only four companies in the country which make it and this specialisation is perhaps the secret of our success.'

When the 1980s began they employed around 150 workers and were the only remaining family owned mill in Preston, but a deep economic

recession in 1981 hit the manufacturing sector across the whole of Britain. With unemployment rising to 3 million nationwide, the number of employees at British Velvet fell. In 1982 a temporary three day week was introduced to get the company through the downturn, with employees getting 50% of their wages on non-working days. By 1984 there had been some recovery in the markets and British Velvet was able to enthusiastically celebrate 100 years of J. R. & A. Smith. An exhibition of artefacts was held, new rapier machines – capable of producing extra wide cloth – were officially switched on, and staff were given a shuttle as a memento. There was renewed optimism, but as with so much of British manufacturing in this period, the end was already in sight. On 31 March 1994 a management buy-out ended the Smith family involvement in running the company, but this change in leadership was to no avail. With losses continuing to mount, British Velvet and Manchester Mill sadly closed forever in 1996, finally bringing the curtain down on velvet production in Preston. ■



Fabric samples from the British Velvet Archive, DDX 2148/8233 (Lancashire Archives & Local History)

Sources

Records of the Lancashire Textile Manufacturers' Association, DDX 3617/ACC13110/250, Lancashire Archives & Local History

The Marjorie Amriding Photographic Archive, DDX 2652/ACC10267/BOX17, Lancashire Archives & Local History

Records of British Velvet DDX 2148/8233, Lancashire Archives & Local History

‘Attaining the Unattainable’:

100 Years of Rossendale Male Voice Choir

By Michael Banham-Guerrero



The Rossendale Male Voice Choir

In 2024 the men of the Rossendale Male Voice Choir will celebrate their centenary, recalling the extraordinary achievements of their forebears. The choirs' centenary performances will look back with pride at the hobby which for 100 years has delivered performances to the highest of standards, with one competition adjudicator commenting, 'they have shown, and continue to show, all that male voice singing can be and should be, often attaining the unattainable'.

From its humble beginnings, this choir of men from the mills – most of whom could not read music – went on to win the National Eisteddfod an unprecedented four times. The choir has competed and performed nationally and internationally and had multiple appearances on radio and TV.

For the ordinary chaps who have been part of the choir these 100 years, it has been a life changing experience, bringing musical, cultural and life opportunities which for many would otherwise have been unimaginable.

Even a brief delve into the choir's 100-year history reveals an astonishing story of the triumphs and adventures of a community of men, bound together by camaraderie and a love of choral singing. It is a fascinating insight into local culture and social history.

How it all started

On 14 March 1924, a couple of dozen men responded to an article in the Rossendale Free Press and met at Spencer's café at 99 Bank Street, Rawtenstall. It was resolved that, 'the Goodshaw Glee Union be disbanded and that the new choir be named the Rossendale Male Voice Choir'. Fred Tomlinson was appointed temporary conductor, 'until we get someone proper'; he was to remain as the choir's conductor for the next 52 years!

In his warm Rossendalian accent Fred said, 'All I want is somebody that has a voice, wants to use it and is willing to be shown the best way to use it.' The scene was set, and Fred quickly set about preparing the men for the festivals and competitions, 'The best thing we can do, if we want to get anywhere at all, is to go into competition against other choirs.'

Within 6 months the choir came third at Colne and in 1926 took first prize at the Wallasey Festival. On their next outing they got trounced, with one adjudicator commenting on the choir's performance of the test piece, '...at least they got to hear how it should be sung.'

Many successes followed, with more than 40 competition wins under Fred's leadership. The pinnacle was the unprecedented three consecutive first places at the Llangollen International Eisteddfod (1952-54) and a fourth in 1958. Coverage followed in the national and international press and back in Rossendale the Parks Department created a 3000-flower tribute in Rawtenstall's memorial gardens. The Borough Council provided official recognition of the choir's achievements on behalf of 'the valley' with dinners, ceremonies, and the presentation of a wonderfully inscribed and illuminated Freedom Book.

With a further 30 wins under the leadership of the other conductors, especially Beatrice Wade, the choir has continued to maintain its reputation as one of the best in Britain.

Celebrity Concerts

In 1936 Fred established a 40-year series of Celebrity Concerts, bringing musicians of international fame to perform in Rawtenstall. Stars like Geraint Evans and Owen Brannigan performed at the Picture House between engagements at venues including Covent Garden and the Royal Opera House. Associate members paid 2s/6d for entrance to three concerts a year. By 1937 the number of Associate Members had grown to 1,168 and it was proving difficult to find sufficiently large venues. Such was the success of these concerts that in the late 1930s Fred exchanged letters with the Hollywood film star and world-famous bass baritone Paul Robeson, but a busy schedule prevented him from coming.

TV, Radio & Film

In 1932 the choir made the first of over 30 BBC radio appearances and sang in the BBC documentary film *The Waters of Irwell* in 1958. By the 1960s the choir's reputation marked it out as one of the most highly respected in the country, so when the BBC organised broadcast performances of Berlioz and Mahler in 1962 and 1964 at Liverpool Cathedral they chose the voices of the Men of Rossendale to sing alongside no less than three massed orchestras. Heady days.



The Rossendale Male Voice Choir, travelling by Aer Lingus 737 to the Koorsfestival in Holland, 1973

The 1970s brought TV success for three consecutive years on the BBC's A Grand Sing competition, and in 1978 BBC Radio Lancashire broadcast a one-hour special called The Men from The Valley. Fred's youngest son, Fred Jr, sang in the choir for several years and went on to form the Fred Tomlinson Singers, writing and performing the choral pieces in The Two Ronnies and Monty Python's Flying Circus. Fred Jr was responsible for classics like The Lumberjack Song and Spam. Michael Palin was amongst the mourners at Fred Jr's 2016 funeral.

International Festivals

The choir have travelled widely to perform and compete. In 1963 two DC3 Dakotas were chartered to transport the men to Cork for the festival, which they won, and in 1973 the choir travelled to the Koorsfestival in Holland. The choir sang one of Fred's favourites, The Two Roses, on the tarmac, but because the pilot had not heard it there was a repeat performance at 20,000ft! Many other exciting and memorable trips followed, including Killarney in Ireland and to our twin-town in Bocholt, Germany. In 2007 the choir was honoured to give a moving performance of Ave Maria at the Menin Gate in Ypres, just before the playing of The Last Post.

Changing Times

As the swinging 60s merged into the psychedelic 70s, the choir entered a period of change and challenge. Fred Tomlinson MBE, who had worked all his life at Ilex Mill and was the founder conductor with over 50 years of service, handed over to his son Ernest, himself an internationally acclaimed composer and conductor.

Audiences changed too. Home TVs were the norm, top pop bands regularly featured at local venues like The Astoria, and blockbuster movies drew in big audiences. Interest in the choir's traditional celebrity concerts dwindled, with the last being in 1967.

But the choir has endured. Almost certainly because it strives for high standards, but also because it continues to mean something, to have value.

Today's Choir

Winners of the inaugural Lancashire Choir of the Year competition in 2022, today's choir has almost 60 members, with a broad repertoire ranging from choral classics to Oasis. We are a true community, where fun and laughter sit comfortably alongside hard work and commitment. Many of our members cycle, golf, walk or meet up for a chat just because we are mates. There is a lot of talk about mental health and wellbeing these days, and the male voice



Fred Tomlinson, 1892-1985

choir is a place where there are clear positive benefits.

The choir performs and competes locally and nationally, in a variety of venues from the Bridgewater Hall to valley churches, pubs and supermarkets, often as charity fundraisers. In March 2023, the choir was honoured with the award of a Certificate of Achievement, presented by the Mayor Councillor Anne Cheetham in recognition of the choir's 100 years of success. The award celebrates the choir's role as ambassadors for Rossendale and its contribution to the valley's cultural life. It is a wonderful privilege for the men of today's choir to be able to honour the incredible achievements of their forebears and to launch the choir onward into its second century.

Fred Tomlinson

Fred was born in 1893 and an enthusiastic singer from an early age. On his return from service in the First World War he joined the Goodshaw Glee Union and was a founder of its offspring The Glen Quartet. Fred led the choir for more than 50 years, gaining the Freedom of Rawtenstall and an MBE for his Services to Music. He had an instinctive understanding of the correct shaping and expression of words, achieving a deeply moving tonal quality which he drew from the men with, 'those persuasive, expressive hands.' Fred, an ordinary man who worked at Ilex Mill all his life,



Beatrice Wade

achieved so much through a love for music and the vigour with which he inspired the choir. He was, in the words of his son Ernest, 'a genius'.

Ernest Tomlinson

Ernest Tomlinson MBE was a professional composer and arranger, whose work brought him to the notice of the BBC in 1955 where he began broadcasting with his own light orchestra. Ernest's career drew international recognition and two Ivor Novello awards. His work still features regularly on radio and on film and TV. He took over the leadership of the choir from his father in 1976 and his high standards brought three consecutive wins on BBC TV's A Grand Sing. Ernest leaves a legacy of over thirty arrangements written specially for the choir, some of which feature on the choir's Valley of Song CD.

Beatrice Wade

Beatrice was an accomplished singer and music teacher, winning over 200 prizes at festivals. She revered words and would invest time researching each piece to find the perfect 'word colour' to express the musical intent of the arrangement. Beatrice knew how to get perfect voice production from the choir and would often implore, 'Nothing louder than beautiful, gentlemen.' She took the choir to over 30 more festival wins whilst also leading the Rossendale Ladies and Festival choirs.

Dorothy Stoddard

Dorothy succeeded Beatrice, with over 30 years' experience as an accomplished singer and highly respected music teacher. She sang with the Halle choir for nine years, retiring in 2007 having led the men to further competition success and a memorable visit to Belgium. Dennis Kay followed in 2008 and his fourteen months with the choir brought First Prize success at the Hazel Grove Festival.

Kate Shipway

Kate spent a very productive six years with the choir from 2009, winning the Hazel Grove and Biddulph Festivals twice each, recording a CD and two Christmas Day concerts for Radio Blackburn, and baking lots of cakes. Kate's time with the choir coincided with welcoming the Olympic Torch to Rawtenstall. Kate saw the choir join the memorial services for both Beatrice Wade and Ernest Tomlinson. She led the choir to both the Albert and the Bridgewater Halls and celebrated the 90th anniversary of the choir with a cake that made the papers!

Matthew Thomas

Matthew took the reins in 2015, and soon claimed prizes including Best Conductor and Song of the Competition in the Cornwall International Male Choral Festival, 2019. The choir's repertoire now includes upbeat contemporary pieces alongside sea shanties and soaring traditional male voice classics. Matthew's vision for the future is of a choir that continues to flourish, entertaining and representing the people of Rossendale at home and abroad.

Michael Farnworth

One of the longest-serving members, Michael Farnworth followed his father and grandfather into the choir at the age of 16. Already a prize-winning pianist, he only sang with the choir for a year before quickly becoming the choir's accompanist, a post he held for 53 years.

To find out more about the choir and its exciting plans for centenary performances during 2024, visit the website

www.rossendalemalevoicechoir.org.uk ■



Presentation made to the Choir by the Borough of Rawtenstall, December 1953.



EXPLORING GAWTHORPE TEXTILES COLLECTION

By Jane Hellebrand

The new Gawthorpe Textiles Collection store



Early Victorian bonnet ©GTC 18309, 1959/42

This early Victorian mourning bonnet was donated to Gawthorpe Textiles Collection in 1959. It dates from 1848 and is in very good condition considering it is now over 175 years old. Donated by Mrs Houlgrave of Padiham, the label says that it was, 'ordered for the funeral of James Pollard (who with John Robinson were the 1st Unitarian Ministers in Padiham) Worn by Mr Pollard's daughter.' Mrs Houlgrave was James Pollard's her great granddaughter.

This provenance, recorded by the founder of the Collection, Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth, enabled us to trace the history of the object, both the people connected with the bonnet and it's social history. The bonnet features in an interview with Rachel in the Burnley Express, 9 April 1960: 'Black crepe such as that which Queen Victoria wore for so long after the Prince Consort's death – is rarely seen today.' It is made of black crepe and black silk

sateen; the main body is loosely pleated sateen with a crepe brim. Bent cane strips provide shape and support the crown. The canes are each covered by a crepe ribbon, the front one also being plaited. There is a black sateen and crepe edged frill at the nape and rosettes of crepe on either side of the bonnet with long silk ties to fasten under the chin. It was most likely made by a local milliner in Padiham or Burnley. This style of bonnet was worn well back on the head, probably worn with a black veil over the face, pinned to the brim.

The bonnet continued to be worn by Mr Pollard's daughter after the 1848 funeral; the edges of the cane strips are visible at the back where the fabric has worn through. Funerals were a regular occurrence, and women would spend a significant part of their lives wearing mourning dress for their relatives. The closeness of the familial relationship dictated the length of time spent wearing mourning, and in more prosperous families, there was an expected protocol to be followed.

The local newspapers were an abundant source of information about Rev. James Pollard. The Blackburn Standard, 25 October 1848, recorded his death: 'Mr James Pollard, who, on Thursday morning, went out of his house, apparently in his usual health, but on his return complained of indisposition, and on proceeding to bed, fell upon the floor and expired. Deceased was 82 years of age, and had been a Unitarian Minister for upwards of forty years...'

James Pollard, who was born in 1766, was remembered and still respected over thirty years later in a long article in the Burnley Gazette, 26 February, 1881, 'Mr Pollard was always of a religious turn of mind even from childhood. He became a local preacher in the Wesleyan body at the age of 16... He lived so pious and gentle a life that the question "Is he as good as old Pollard?" became quite proverbial.' The article reported that both John Robinson and James Pollard were hand-loom weavers as well as ministers and founded the first Unitarian meeting place in Padiham in 1806. They were followers of Joseph Cooke, a Methodist minister in East Lancashire, who had become disillusioned with established Methodism: '...they were able to satisfy the spiritual

needs of the little Cookite congregation that met every Sunday in a small upper room in Back Lane (now called East Street) and by their homely eloquence they led many souls to God’.

Mr Pollard and Mr Robinson were among the Committee Trustees appointed for the building of the Nazareth chapel in West Street in 1822-1823, at a cost of £350. Building work did not go smoothly, and frequently walls built during the day were kicked down overnight. The Chapel was eventually completed but as the congregation continued to grow, the old West Street chapel was replaced in 1874 by the much larger Unitarian Nazareth Chapel, Knight Hill. There is a memorial window dedicated in 1888 to James Pollard and John Robinson - ‘the founders of Unitarianism in Padiham’.

What of the woman who ordered and wore the bonnet? She was Nanny Pollard, later Pate, and she was probably born about 1801 - but it is difficult to confidently identify her in the baptismal registers owing to the large number of Pollards in the area. The death notice for Nanny Pate in the Burnley Express, 26 April 1890, reads: ‘PATE – On the 19th inst., Nanny Pate, 6 Basket Row, Padiham, 89 years’. The marriage registers record that Nanny Pollard married James Pate, in Padiham on 12 August 1822. James was a Bookseller, but by the time of the 1851 Census, he is listed as a Barber. The donor was their grand-daughter, Claudina (1880-1962), who married Herbert Houlgrave in 1921.

In February 1949, the Burnley Express interviewed Mrs Houlgrave about her poetry. She had just, ‘...received acknowledgement from Princess Elizabeth of verses she had written welcoming the birth of Prince Charles of Edinburgh.’ The article continued: ‘Mrs Houlgrave was born at Padiham 68 years ago in Remington Row (now demolished)... It was at the Primitive Methodist Chapel at Crawshawbooth that Mrs Houlgrave, at the age of 11, recited her own verses. She received little education, but was taught to read and write by her mother, who passed on to Claudina her love of art and literature. “By reading books” Mrs Houlgrave told our reporter, “I educated myself, and am still doing so”. She is

also a painter of no mean ability. A number of her pictures, in oil and watercolours, have been hung in Towneley Art Gallery... Mrs Houlgrave would have liked to devote her life to art and literature, but sadly she remarked, “I had to go out and earn some money.” She spent several years in the tailoring trade.’

In the column to the left of this article is an advertisement for Flacks of 17 Market Street, Burnley – “Burnley’s New Fashion Centre... Famous for Value, Foremost for Fashion”, which also states, “Mourning Wear Always Available”. It would seem that nothing much had changed in the intervening century!

Acknowledgements: With grateful thanks to Freda Whittle, Committee Secretary, for allowing access to the Unitarian Nazareth Chapel.

News from Gawthorpe Textiles Collection

This renowned collection of textiles comprises over 30,000 items and owes its existence to its inspirational founder Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth. The collection is wide ranging, containing lace, embroidery, weaving, printing, costume and accessories, with examples of excellence from around the world and throughout history.

Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth had a lifelong passion for collecting textiles and became well known for teaching and lecturing on the value of crafts. The collection is now an accredited museum, owned and operated by an independent charity. It continues Rachel’s vision to this day by making the items available for study and exploration through talks, workshops, public events and community projects.

The collection has recently moved to a new fully fitted out studio space and store in Northlight, Brierfield which can be visited by appointment. Displays of selected items from the collection will also continue to be shown at Gawthorpe Hall, Padiham. Visit our website to find out more information about the collection or book a visit and sign up to our mailing list to hear about forthcoming events www.gawthorpetextiles.org.uk . ■

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