

'e-Owls'



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Oldham & District Newsletter Archives : Read or download back copies [HERE](#)

August 2022

MLFHS - Oldham & District Branch Newsletter

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Branch Officers for 2022 -2023 :

Committee Member : Chairman : Linda Richardson
Committee Member : Treasurer : Gill Melton
Committee Member : Secretary : Joan Harrison
Committee Member : Newsletter : Sheila Goodyear
Committee Member : Webmistress : Sheila Goodyear

Links to the Website :



'Where to Find it'
On the Oldham & District
Website Pages



Newsletter **'Snippets' Page**
Find Articles, Transcriptions and
Gallery Images you missed



*Near Strangeways Bridge
from, 'Old Manchester' by James Croston*

Oldham & District Branch Meetings :

**For current information on all M&LFHS Meetings, and other public activities,
Please check on the Branch website pages for updated information.**

The Society Facebook page [HERE](#) and the Twitter page [HERE](#) will be updated frequently.

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### **Chairman's remarks :**

Hello and welcome to the August newsletter.

I hope you are all enjoying the Summer (such as it is) and managing to get out and about in the fresh air. As I write this, here in Oldham, we have the usual cloudy rainy day but at least the gardens are looking good.

We are still working to improve our hybrid meetings to give you a better experience both in the room and for those people who join us on Zoom.

This month, our speaker is Carol Talbot, a Society member and local author who has written books on Annie Kenny and Mary Higgs, both prominent local women. I hope as many of you as can, will join us to hear Carol's talk on the life of the late James Johnson, an American slave who escaped and eventually settled in Oldham.

Enjoy reading the rest of the newsletter.

Best Wishes

Linda

Chairman, Oldham Branch

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

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Editor's remarks.

Hi Everyone,

As I write this we're all (or mostly all?) just breathing a sigh of relief as the record breaking temperatures of Monday and Tuesday have plummeted to a pleasant few degrees over 20°! It has been a horrifying couple of weeks as we have watched Europe and North Africa suffer blistering heat and flames destroying everything in their path.

Thinking back to Saturday 9th July, and our monthly hybrid meeting, we didn't have the most auspicious start to the afternoon. When we arrived at the Library, we found that, apparently, no-one there had checked the diary and the room wasn't prepared for us with seats and tables; worse, most of the space was filled with the cinema seating (a banked array of upholstered benches that can be folded back, again the library wall). Unfortunately, only designated employees are allowed to do that and no-one was there that day! We had to squash our audience, ourselves and all our equipment into what space was left. All this, of course, took quite a long time but we manage to scramble round and were just about ready by 2pm!

In the Mixed Bag you will find another chapter from the '*Autobiography Of A Manchester Cotton Manufacturer*' and the early chapters of another autobiography. However, this one is a little closer to home and also in time, *A Ginnel to Life - Childhood in a Lancashire Mill Town*. It's the story of Frank Pogson, a boy born and growing up, in Oldham between 1924 and the outbreak of World War II in 1939.

This month, we're happy to say that some emails have dropped into our e-Postbag, with contributions for the newsletter, a couple of which I have saved for the September copy.

Our July Branch meeting was about Manchester from as early as the 1400s so, to complement what was a most interesting talk, in the Gallery we can find several images from the 1700s, including a panoramic view of Manchester in 1728 and the Quay in 1746.

Finally, on a slightly more random topic ... with Scottish ancestry (and love of maps!), I frequently use the NLS maps website and also read the Anglo-Scots newsletter. The most recent one not only shares a link to recent acquisitions on the NLS site but also another to their 20 years of free-to-read digitised and archived biannual newsletters. Along with the usual

information on meetings and events etc., they also include very interesting and useful articles. The Articles, each with their own newsletter link, are indexed in 3 ways : People (alphabetical), Place (geographical - not just Scotland - then alphabetical) and Thematic (alphabetical). There is also a chronological list of the complete newsletters, also with individual links.

NLS website (maps) [HERE](#)

View their latest additions [HERE](#)

Chronological list of Newsletters (Cairt) [HERE](#)

Index of Subjects [HERE](#)

Thank you, Anglo-Scots editor!

Sheila

I am always very happy to receive articles, pictures etc., for the 'Mixed Bag' in the newsletter, copyright is always a tricky issue so do please make sure that you have the right to use any text or illustrations that you send! It is also helpful if you include mention of your source material.

You will retain copyright of any contributions that you send, whilst allowing MLFHS to re-use the material in an appropriate manner.

Editor reserves the right to edit any contributions before publication.

email me at : < Oldham_newsletter@mlfhs.org.uk >

Please note, regarding using the links to website pages or .pdf documents : if clicking on a link when the newsletter is viewed on the internet, without first downloading it onto the computer, the new page opens in the same window so the 'back button' has to be used to return to the newsletter.

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## Oldham & District Branch

### *Monthly Meetings*

Happily, we are now holding our monthly meetings as hybrids ... simultaneously on zoom and in the library. Over the past 20 months or so, we have really appreciated the support that we have enjoyed both from local society members and those from further afield. However, in addition, we have also been able to welcome non-members with an interest in our programme, some of whom, gratifyingly, became members of the society as a result! Please continue to support the Branch, either in person at Oldham Library or on zoom if preferred.

Details, of the full programme of talks, are on the 'Meetings' page of the Branch website [HERE](#) .

\* Booking for an online talk remains free for everyone and is essential on [Eventbrite](#).

\* No need to book if you attend in the library.

For attendance in person, in the library, members are free, non-members £3.

Wherever you live, Welcome!

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Last Month's Meeting ... on zoom

The Area between Manchester Cathedral and Victoria Station

The area between Manchester Cathedral and Victoria Station is the mediaeval heart of Manchester but largely unknown. There is a forgotten school, a lost river, the first site of Manchester Grammar School and a cemetery that refused to stay hidden.

An illustrated talk given by Geoffrey Scargill



Saturday,
9th July
at
2 pm



We knew already that Geoff's talk would be an interesting one as many of us had already enjoyed one of his other talks (about *The Railway King*), that he had given as a speaker, at a Quarterly meeting in Manchester before the pandemic. We weren't disappointed.

He started off his talk by introducing us to that most wonderful of early buildings in Manchester, known fondly as Chetham's or 'Chets', which sits where the old River Irk met the River Irwell. The original building dates back to 1421 and was built to house a college of priests soon after which the old Parish Church was rebuilt as the Collegiate Church of St. Mary, St. Denys and St. George. This was the church which, in 1847, became Manchester Cathedral.

Geoff filled us in with some more general history of Manchester in the 17th century before returning again to Chetham's, and Humphrey Chetham (1580 - 1653). Chetham was a wealthy Manchester business man, who lived at Clayton Hall near Droylsden. It was he who founded the original Chetham's School for 40 poor boys, and for five chained libraries to be kept in local churches. Chetham appointed men, known as feoffees (governors) to create a collection of manuscripts and books that would cover all aspects of knowledge and build into a library that would rival any others in the land. When Chetham died, he stipulated that it should, in essence, be a free library and it has continued, as such, to the present day.

Geoff showed us photos of various parts of the building, including the main entrance, the cloisters, the library and the reading room. In one of the window alcoves of the reading room there is a desk, at which Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx would sit together.

Leaving Chet's, Geoff introduced us to Hugh Oldham, a man born about 1452 in Ancoats, Manchester, who later became Bishop of Exeter in 1505. Throughout his life he realised the importance of having an education and supported a number of institutions. He is remembered, locally, as the founder of The Manchester Grammar School (for boys) in 1515 when he endowed the Manchester Free Grammar School for Lancashire Boys.

Moving on, Geoff touched on Manchester in the Civil War and the support of many inhabitants for the Parliamentarians. A statue of Cromwell was erected, after several years of petitions, in 1875, and was inscribed on the pedestal as, "The gift of Elizabeth Salisbury Heywood to the Citizens of Manchester, August 1875." It was erected near the Cathedral and was the subject of some controversy. It was removed in 1968 and subsequently re-erected in Wythenshawe Park.

Rounding off his fact-filled history tour of this part of Manchester, Geoff drew our attention to two memorials at Victoria Station. One, at Soldiers' Gate, was "*To the memory of the many thousands of men who passed through this door to the Great War 1914-1919 and of those who did not return.*" The second was a memorial plaque, at Platforms 1 and 2 of the station, to the paupers buried at Walkers Croft Cemetery, and reads, "*This plaque marks the location of the former Walkers Croft Cemetery, which opened in 1815 and closed in 1832 in preparation for the coming of the railway. Remains recovered during building work in January 2010 have been removed and interred in Southern Cemetery, Manchester.*"

Many thanks to Geoff who gave us such an interesting and informative talk.

More images of old Manchester in the Gallery.

You can read more about Chets, [HERE](#)

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**August Meeting ... hybrid, in Oldham Library and on zoom**



Saturday,  
13th Aug.  
at  
2 pm



***The Life of the Late James Johnson***

An illustrated talk given by Carol Talbot, author of '*The Amazing Mary Higgs*' and '*Working-Class Suffragette: The Life of Annie Kenney*'

Around Sept 1866 James Johnson arrived in Oldham looking for work. Many people did, but James Johnson was different, he was a slave. James escaped from North Carolina in 1862 during the American Civil War. After many escapades and adventures, he settled in Oldham and found work. He married a local woman who taught him to read and write. He remained in the town until his death in 1914.

Saturday 13th August at 2pm

A hybrid meeting in the Performance Space at Oldham Library and on zoom.

\* Online free booking, for all, for zoom link on [Eventbrite](#).

\* No booking necessary for attendance in the library; members free, non-members £3.

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MLFHS Branches delivering their monthly meetings and talks

Anglo - Scots ... No Meeting in August

Anglo-Scottish Website Pages [HERE](#) for more information and booking details

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**Bolton ... August Meeting**

|                                                        |                                                        |                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>MLFHS<br/>Bolton Branch<br/>Hybrid<br/>Meetings</b> | <b>Wednesday<br/>3rd<br/>August<br/>at<br/>7:30 pm</b> | <b><i>Was my grandfather<br/>a professional<br/>footballer?<br/>given by<br/>Peter Holme</i></b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

A hybrid Meeting on zoom and at  
Bolton Golf Club, Lostock Park, Chorley New Road, Bolton, BL6 4AJ  
all bookings on [Eventbrite](#)

**Bolton Website Pages** [HERE](#) for more information and booking details.

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MLFHS updates

Manchester ... No Meetings planned in August

At Manchester Central Library.
Keep an eye on the MLFHS Events Page or Eventbrite Bookings page, as some meetings may be added at short notice.

MLFHS Manchester, Website Events Page [HERE](#) MLFHS Manchester, Eventbrite Bookings [HERE](#)

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**MLFHS Online Bookshop:** [HERE](#).

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

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MLFHS Manchester & Branch e-Newsletters

MLFHS Manchester and each of the MLFHS branches publish a monthly e-newsletter which provides useful news items and articles etc. The e-newsletters are free and available to both members and non-members of MLFHS Society. Members receive the Manchester newsletter automatically and non-members can browse the archive and download any they wish. You can sign up to receive the Branches' newsletter links monthly, by following the links, below. To sign-up, for a Branch newsletter, to be emailed each month, simply click the appropriate link below and complete the short form on the e-newsletter page, where you will also find copies of all past issues to browse.

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

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**MLFHS Updates to the Great Database** (located in the Members' area of the Website)

**Emails to the Members' forum**, from John Marsden (webmaster), listing the updates.

\* I have just added 2,026 of names and addresses of those on the 1966-7 electoral register for Openshaw (currently Districts A-C with more to come). These have been transcribed from the originals at Manchester Archives.  
Thanks to Joe Hilditch for these.

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* New data has been added at www.lancashirebmd.org.uk as follows:
Added 14,671 Births for Bolton RD comprising:
Bolton A (1992-1994)
Bolton B (1992-1994)
Bolton C (1992-1995)
Bolton D (1992-1993)
Thanks are due to Bob Winder and his team for these.

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\* I have uploaded a further volume of 68 admissions covering 1881-1893.  
Thanks to Jim Chadwick and his team (Marie Collier, Karen Hugill, Shirley King, Janet Moores, Chris Norcross) for this latest addition.

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* I have now added an index to the 548 streets and named establishments which appear on the

Alan Godfrey Map for Bolton in 1908.
Thanks are due to Graham Holt for this index to one of the more densely developed areas in the Godfrey series.
There are still quite a few maps which remain to be indexed. If you have any of the maps not shown as completed (coloured in) or in progress (marked with a coloured dot) on the overview at:
https://www.mlfhs.uk/?view=article&id=346&catid=9?from_builder
and would be prepared to create an index, please contact me direct and I will let you know what is involved.

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\* I have added street and building index entries for the Bolton (NE) 1908, Alan Godfrey Map, to the online index.  
This area generates only 106 index entries. Although today, densely built-up, in 1908 this area largely consisted of farmland.  
Thanks to Graham Holt for this latest addition

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* New data has been added at www.lancashirebmd.org.uk as follows:
Added 702 Marriages for Blackburn RD comprising:
Darwen, Methodist Church (Spring Vale) (1998-2012)
Blackburn, St Albans Catholic Church (2010-2010)
Blackburn, Zion Pentecostal Church (Wensley Rd) (1974-2000)
Darwen, New Methodist Church (Blackburn Rd, formerly Railway Rd) (2004-2010)
Blackburn, Wesley Hall Central Mission (Feilden St) (2002-2002)
Blackburn, St John Vianney's Church (Livesey Branch Rd) (2003-2010)
Witton, St Luke with St Phillips (1967-2010)
Blackburn, St Michael with St John & Holy Trinity (1954-2006)
Blackburn, Church of the Saviour (1995-2009)
Darwen, St Barnabas (2010-2010); Blackburn, Holy Trinity Worship Centre (1984-1995)
Blackburn, Christ Church (with St Matthew) (1975-2010)
Thanks are due to Tony Foster and his team for the above.

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\* Indexes to seven more maps (827 street and building references) have now been added covering:  
Whalley Range 1916  
Urmston 1926  
Flixton 1904  
Trafford Park 1905  
Eccles 1905  
Walkden South 1908  
Chorlton cum Hardy South 1905  
Thanks to Hilary Hartigan for these.

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Meetings and Talks at other Societies &/or Venues

Please note ...
Please check society/group websites or organisers for updated information

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**Oldham Historical Research Group: ... Meetings continue on zoom**



Wednesday  
17th  
August  
at  
7 pm



***"The Ballarat Goldrush - the Gold Nugget"***

a free, illustrated presentation, on zoom,  
given by Carol Talbot, author of,

*'The Amazing Mary Higgs'* and *'Working-Class Suffragette: The Life of Annie Kenney'*

Everyone welcome ... More details and free booking on Eventbrite [HERE](#)

Your support for our meetings is appreciated and, if you would like more information, please email me at < pixnet.sg@gmail.com >.

Website [HERE](#)

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Saddleworth Historical Society ... Please note that there is no meeting in August.

Website [HERE](#)

Saddleworth Civic Trust has no meeting or event planned in August 2022.

For both societies :

Please note that if there is any upturn in the state of the ongoing Covid Pandemic, any or all of these meetings might be cancelled. Members of each Society should check with any Committee member, at the Museum office, if in doubt. You may be asked to wear a mask.

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**Library Events & Gallery talks at Gallery Oldham; Curator talks** [HERE](#)  
on [Eventbrite](#) and [Instagram](#)

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Family History Society of Cheshire : Tameside Group meeting.

See their website [HERE](#)

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**Tameside History Club :**

Meetings on zoom.

Website and programme

&

**Tameside Local Studies and Archives - Regular Sessions and Events**

Website and programme [HERE](#)

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Regional Heritage Centre :

Website [HERE](#)

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**'A Mixed Bag'**



**'Autobiography Of A Manchester Cotton Manufacturer : Or Thirty Years' Experience Of Manchester ', pub. 1887.**

Originally published anonymously, later research showed that it was written by Henry S. Gibbs. The reviewer had given it 5 stars, as had others who had read it.

The author used pseudonyms throughout ... actual names, where discovered, in the footnotes.

**Serialised in the newsletters :**

The earlier chapters and an introduction can be read in previous months' newsletters, starting in October, and downloadable [HERE](#)

**Transcript: Chapter XV**

**THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR AND THE COTTON FAMINE**

THE little mill prospered. During the operation of replacing the old looms with new ones, which was a slow and tedious process, man of our workpeople left us and did not return. It was a considerable time ere we were fairly afloat, but as the looms worked well and the yarn was good, a liberal "turn-off" of cloth resulted, and simultaneously our people were in receipt of better wages than they had hitherto known. The knowledge of this state of things soon became circulated, and resulted in weavers flocking to us from all quarters for employment. It was a glorious time. We had every loom running, a respectable body of satisfied weavers (numbering many "warblers") and overlookers; a production averaging fifteen tons of calico weekly from our four hundred and eight looms, and customers who took every yard as it was made. Mr. John Rathway, who was the head of the office and warehouse, and who had occupied an important and honoured position with our firm for many years, worked like a Trojan, revelling in the increased activity of the establishment. Had we continued much longer in this greed of production we must have ended in a smash of some kind. It generally happens that

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such a combination of favourable circumstances as those enumerated is not of long continuance, and a "breakdown" of some kind occurs, either through a deficiency of the raw material, the fracture of a driving wheel or a boiler plate, or a fiasco by that *bete noir* of the manufacturer, the sizer, who too often works for present considerations apart from those of the future. We were affected by these troubles, more or less, which in their turn relieved the pressure of work. Had it been otherwise a greater mishap might have overtaken us in the breakdown of our old engine. It was found necessary to provide for an increase of motive power, which, when effected, enabled us once more to take Time by the forelock, and we went ahead, making cloth. Presently Lancashire began to look grave, and with good reason. Matters which would most certainly affect the price of cotton, assumed a serious form in America. There was intense excitement at Charleston and in the States, and by the election of Abraham Lincoln to the residency. This was in 1860. On the 20th of December of the same year South Carolina seceded from the Union. The Civil War broke out in April, 1861.

There were many sinners, manufacturers, and merchants who thought the conflict would be of short duration, and that the South would be speedily subjugated by its more powerful Northern neighbour in its efforts for independence. The sincerity of such was made apparent in their refusal to secure increased supplies of the raw material whilst prices remained somewhat normal. When, before the year had closed, prices had

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advanced considerably, the indisposition to lay in stocks increased yet more with many, and there being no corresponding advance in cloth, there was a resort to "short time," and eventually the closing of many mills followed. It was a time of perplexity, and demanded the

utmost caution. When the cheap supplies were exhausted and it became necessary to replenish or “stand,” one was confronted with such figures as had never before been associated with anything made of cotton. Before the end of 1862 our material had advanced three hundred per cent. To continue purchasing when such stupendous figures- had been reached seemed contrary to reason and propriety. Through the stoppage of looms, however, cloth had become scarce, and rose greatly in value. There was, therefore, some justification for following the market. Moreover, there was a reaction in the public sentiment.

Many persons who at the commencement of the struggle expected that the Southern States would be promptly cudgelled into submission took extreme views in a contrary direction after the severe defeats sustained by the armies of the North. Mr. Gladstone, who at that time was Chancellor of the Exchequer, stated publicly that he could no longer shut his eyes to the fact that the Southern Confederacy had not only succeeded in forming an army and a navy but it had also established a government. This utterance was regarded by Northern and Southern sympathizers respectively with hope and fear that the Confederacy would be recognized by our Government. In consequence of this revulsion of views many of the previously

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timid operators appeared upon the scene, and bought cotton for 2s. 3d. per pound which they had previously declined purchasing at 10d. As the demand for cloth had increased, and prices continued to advance through growing scarcity, the inducement to purchase the raw material in excess of immediate wants was sufficient to justify the course we pursued, the result being that on one occasion we made the unprecedented profit of 1s. per pound on a delivery of cloth. In August, 1864, we sold Domestics at 2s. 3d. per pound. This was the highest price we obtained for an article which in ordinary times sells for 7d. or 8d.

Tumbleton was generally opposed to purchases beyond immediate requirements. He was one of those who favoured the prospects of the North at the outset, but, like many others, transferred his allegiance to the South for the time being. We worked very little “short time” during the period of the American war, and never closed the mill entirely. Gradually, great distress spread itself over Lancashire as the mills closed, and the people suffered much in our own immediate neighbourhood. The enterprising and indefatigable rector of the parish inaugurated sewing classes and other organizations for the benefit of the daily-increasing numbers of those who were no longer in receipt of wages. It was during this critical time I made his acquaintance. Though an active man myself, I was impressed with his powers of toil and endurance. My work ceased at six o'clock, or earlier, every evening, but his exertions seemed to go on for ever. Night and day he went amongst the people, irrespective of

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creed, alleviating distress. If the receipt of funds from outside channels was low he did not hesitate to draw upon his own resources. I was inspired by his zeal and animated by his example. Though I had started life on the principle of devoting a tenth portion of income to those who needed it, and fully carried out the observance, yet in the contemplation of a man who was parting with at least half of his revenue for charitable objects I felt how little I had done comparatively. The rector had no difficulty in enlisting and utilizing my services, such as they were, and from that time until the day when, through shattered health, he resigned the living, I was ever ready with my services of assistance in whatever form they were required by him. Previous to the cotton famine he formed a committee of influential persons for the object of erecting a commodious parish church. In this, as in other matters which he took in hand, he was successful. He raised the necessary funds, purchased the land, and at the time of the distress the architectural plans were under discussion. The parish was one of the largest in Manchester, containing, in those days, thirteen thousand persons, composed chiefly of workpeople.

My reverend friend deplored the indifference to the spiritual wants of the operatives on the part of many of the employers, who generally resided at a considerable distance from their works. Now that the physical wants of the people were pressing and widespread, he attacked the millowners, machinists, and the general public, vigorously and successfully, with the result that money flowed

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into the exchequer, and was judiciously distributed and utilized. Often when his work lay in the neighbourhood of my office he would snatch a few minutes for a short rest, and tell me of some sad case just come under his notice, of poverty and want in a hitherto well-to-do household. At such times I have looked at him with love and admiration, whilst he has wiped the dust from his massive, intellectual brow. But even these five minutes must be turned to account. He is probably going to "address a few words" to a newly-formed sewing class of unemployed women, and wishes me to accompany him. I readily comply, and become a glad listener to the earnest words that are spoken to them. I never met him without delight, nor parted from him without regret. Although he had received a military education, and had served with distinction in the army, the beneficial results of his clerical labours will remain for all time; and for myself, the hours spent with him in parish work will ever be remembered as some of my happiest. He left us with the grief of a parent separating from a family; but he had an exalted opinion of the clergyman who would be his successor, and whom he described to me as a man after my own heart, and one who would continue the good work with much vigour and ability to which my friend was now unequal.

The period of the American war had been one of considerable prosperity to our firm, and Mr. Tumbleton was not slow to appreciate the benefits it had conferred upon it. He became liberal in the bestowal of large sums applicable to the building of churches for the religious body to

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which he belonged. This was the principal channel for which his benevolence found an outlet that I could ever discover. The result of his benevolence was a collection of silver trowels with ivory handles, numbering something like a dozen, and each one commemorative of his act in laying a foundation stone. It certainly was a unique collection. It formed an attractive feature in his dining-room, and he doubtless frequently contemplated it with complacency. On one occasion, when he gave a supper party at his house, which included a large number of ministers, this collection became the object of general attention. They reposed side by side in all their lustre and suggestiveness on the well-polished mahogany sideboard, and around them were gathered the reverend gentlemen present, who naturally, especially the more youthful of them, regarded the display with admiring eyes. Many were the congratulations and complimentary remarks passed upon Mr. Tumbleton's devotion and liberality, each reverend gentleman having something to say in a neat concise manner eulogistic of the self-sacrifice and overflowing goodness which had resulted in deeds of which the elegant display before them was the expression.

When all had spoken but myself, it was expected I should say something. What could I say? What I did say was something like the following: "Gentlemen,- On behalf of our worthy host, who perhaps you are not aware is my partner in business, thank you for your appreciation of these grateful tributes of his large-hearted and spirited acts of benevolence. I can only regret that whilst

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receiving your homage, which he so justly deserves, my partner did not disclaim appropriating it entirely to himself, remembering as he does, that without the efforts put forth by the person now addressing you, this superb collection could not have existed, in its present grandeur. The fact

is, gentlemen, when I tell you it was I who provided the means, and our worthy friend who had their disposal, I think you will agree with me, that 'Tumbleton and Company' are the deserving parties."

The joke was an effective one. The old ministers held their sides to prevent dissolution whilst the younger ones, probably for the same object, though with less decorum, roared with laughter, and Tumbleton laughed the most of all. His health soon after began to give way. He came seldom to look at us at the mill, and I began to think the loss of his wife was telling upon him. I received a letter one morning in which he appointed a time for an interview: he had something to communicate. I found him weak and feeble, and he told me he had been suffering for some time, and feared he would not get better. His object in sending for me was to mention the altered state of health in which he found himself; and also to inform me of his intention to retire from business that I might provide another partner to take his place in the firm. After this unexpected announcement I lost no time in communicating with such persons whom I conceived eligible to replace my partner, but as capital would be required, in addition to manufacturing proclivities and capabilities, I failed in my efforts, and there remained only one

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man who entertained my propositions. I had known him for many years in Mr. Thornton's mill, as a careful, industrious fellow, and for a time I hoped he would join me. He visited the mill, and gave anxious heed to its "rocking" propensities. He stood on the top of the staircase with fear and misgivings, and examined the rods and bolts with painful care and doubt. It was in vain I told him how well we were working, and what advantages we possessed, of our excellent weavers, of our popular makes of cloth, of our fine array of customers, and lastly of our large profits. These all fell idly upon him. He heard my words, but they were without effect. He could see only the mill rocking to and fro "like a ship," he thought, with the certainty it must be only a matter of time before it would tumble over. When I laid before him an array of quarterly balance sheets, the last four of which, in Tumbleton's own figures, showed the year's profits to have exceeded £8,000, in addition to interest on capital and allowance for depreciation on machinery, and told him of the probability of a continuance of similar prosperity, his manner changed, and now he regarded the subject so favourably as to say he would consult his "wife," and let me know the result. His wife had had little experience of "rocking," there being only one child, and he declined my offer. I regretted this decision. Had he joined me, our interests would have been equal, and he would have been a worker, whereas Tumbleton was receiving a disproportionately large share of the profits, and did no work. I could not help myself, however, and

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failed to find another partner, and events went on as before.

Tumbleton visited his newly-discovered hydropathic establishment at Matlock, which accorded more with his views and feelings than that of Malvern, and the old love was forsaken for the new. He visited Blackpool also, long and frequently. The hotel there to which he resorted had evidently considerable attractions. It was a favourite place for well-to-do people from all parts of Lancashire, and he liked the society he met there. I saw very little of him now, and our communications were carried on by letter. Business continued more or less profitable, but attended with considerable excitement. When a great battle was fought between the contending armies in the States the price of cotton was seriously affected. In the event of a Northern success it frequently fell very considerably, the prospect of peace being supposed to be accelerated thereby. When a success of the Southern army was announced a contrary effect was produced, the prospect of peace being then considered more remote, as also a restoration of cotton cultivation. At one period, however, the reverse of this was the case, the opinion being

firmly held by many that the Southern States would achieve their independence, and therefore a victory on the part of their armies indicated a nearer approach to peace, and consequently lower prices. The war, however, lasted between four and five years. When the supply from North America had nearly ceased, and there were only a few bales in Liverpool and very little known to be on the water,

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we naturally looked to our Indian possessions, where there was a great increase in the cotton cultivation. Notwithstanding the aversion felt by the workpeople towards "Surat," the poor despised article was eagerly bought by spinners at fabulous prices for want of better material. At a prayer meeting held in one of the small Lancashire towns where the mills were well nigh all closed, and the people dependent on the welcome aid offered by the Cotton District Relief Fund, one of the members, in offering his petition, implored the Almighty, in pathetic accents, not to forsake the community, but that in His merciful providence He would grant that the people might be reinstated in their industry, and that He would in His good time supply them abundantly with the article upon which the success of the industry depended. Another member instantly took up the petition, and added with impressive earnestness, "But not Surat!" This incident spoke volumes for the low estimation in which that quality of cotton had been held.

It was hoped, in contemplation of the scarcity, that some substitutes could be provided, and jute and other fibres were frequently hailed as the coming article. Much dissatisfaction was manifested that the India dependencies did not improve the quality as well as the quantity of the coveted fibre, and much dissatisfaction also was expressed towards Sir Charles Wood, who was Secretary for India under Earl Russell's administration. Things became so bad, a deputation of Lancashire operatives waited on the Minister to represent their grievances. They afterwards paraded the streets

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of the Metropolis with banners, on one of which was inscribed the following lines : -

They talk of substitutes for Cotton,  
No substitutes are good -  
The India Board is rotten;  
We want a substitute for Wood!

In the midst of his troubles the Lancashire man abounds in wit and humour!

~~~~~

In last month's e-Postbag, I'd posted an email that our Chairman (Linda) had posted from a reader in Suffolk, Mike Hoddy, who was looking for Hoddy, Mortimer and Widdop families who had lived in Oldham and had links with Suffolk. Mike had further conversations with Linda in which he offered to send her a manuscript, written by an old friend of the family who had been deceased for some years but had expressed a wish for his story to be published in some way. This manuscript was an account written by Frank Pogson of Oldham that describes his life in Oldham from the early 1920s to 1939. It was mostly around the Derker area and the 3rd Oldham Boys Brigade at Hope Congregational Church. Mike's own family members had been associated with the BB since 1904.

We're happy to serialise Frank's story, in the newsletter, over the next few issues.

A GINNEL TO LIFE
Childhood in a Lancashire Mill Town
1924 - 1939
by Frank Pogson

PREFACE

Memories dim with the passage of time and we are liable to become more selective in what we recall, remembering only the good times and sometimes getting them confused with others. The period through which I have lived has been one of the most amazing, if not the most amazing, in the field of technological achievement and advance, from wire and fabric aeroplanes to space programmes. The speed of it all makes it hard to appreciate that we lived in a vastly different world only a little over half a century ago.

Before my memory fades, I feel moved to set down an autobiographical account, not because anyone is likely to be interested in me, but because of the back-drop to my life which has been set rich in depth and colour and, above all else, in experience, from which I continue to draw.

Early days were confined to a narrow environment. A day at the seaside was as much as most of my peers could hope for in any summer. Holidays abroad were beyond comprehension yet, despite the limitations, we learnt, grew and developed in every way. All our life lay ahead as we made our way through the ginnel of childhood to the brightness and the promise beyond.

A ginnel in Oldham was, and probably still is, a narrow entry between buildings, or sometimes a passageway through them which enabled pedestrians to reach their destinations without having to make long dreary detours around terraces or larger buildings. Many people tramped through the ginnels which became, at times, funnels of humanity in the more thickly populated areas. Like the Market Place, if one waited long enough, everyone, and just everyone, would pass through.

The analogy is not inappropriate. Although confined by today's standards, the experience gained prepared us well to cope with the demands and the responsibilities of adult life.

Frank Pogson

Macclesfield

December 1980

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CHAPTER I IN A MANNER BORN

My advent was not at all considerate in my mother's life of unfailing routine. Monday, as washing and ironing day, was sacrosanct and my untimely arrival on that Monday morning in 1924 must have upset my mother for the rest of the week. To my father, my arrival marked the end of an anxious period with relief. He feared the ribbing he would have suffered from his workmates had I been born a day later on 1st April. He spoke in gear ratios as he urged my mother, when it got to 30th March, to "get the little pulley on".

With expert skill and many earlier successes, Nurse Billington, the local midwife, eased my passage into life as I gave my first gasp in the same rented terraced cottage in which my father had been born well over thirty years before. It was into a world in which, only six years before, had seen the end of the war to end all wars. Few families had been left untouched by the horror and loss of loved ones. The economy was uncertain but had picked up as hundreds of employees were encouraged to invest their savings in the mills in which they worked in the hope of ensuring the future prosperity of the cotton industry. The new world was not so very brave as it struggled with the peace left by the men of Versailles.

My father was the youngest of a family of eight children, three of whom had died as children. As the youngest, he was 'favoured' and given the opportunity of entering a trade and as a mill mechanic in the cotton industry; he had been exempt from military service. He had remained at home with his widowed mother until she died and only just before, did he marry the girl in the

next street.

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My parents inherited the 'sticks' which were left and the tenancy of a two-up/two down terraced cottage, with attic, shared yard and outside toilet, in Stoneleigh Street, Oldham. Instead of investing a small legacy in property as had been considered, father bought 700 shares in the Bank Top Spinning Company where he was employed in Lees, near Oldham. Experience of life had taught both my parents that epidemics and the 'will of God' usually carried off some children of every family to 'realms above'. Whether it was an indication of their responsible attitude at a time of economic uncertainty, an act of faith or, their inability to produce another child, the nett result was an only child who was precious indeed.

Father was a quiet, rather timid, man who was afraid of infants without ever appreciating just how resilient and strong they are. Later, I was to repair to my Uncle Stanley, to be thrown about in a more boisterous fashion, which was not permitted at home. Father's main function, apart from providing the necessities of life, was to remove offending corners from certain articles of furniture lest little Frank should stumble and fall against them. Fortunately, mother was more realistic and unafraid of chastising me when I stepped out of line. A back-hander from mother was something to be reckoned with.

I awoke in my cot. It was still dark. Something was approaching down the street which made a terrifying rattling noise which increased in volume as it drew near. I wanted to cry out for mother but held back, fascinated by my own infant fantasies. As the 'monster' was about to strike, I buried myself under the bedclothes. The thing passed and silence returned only to be broken by the first pair of clogs moving down the street, then another and another until a crescendo was reached of iron shod clogs clattering on the pavements. Finally, the odd one or two pairs as late risers ran fearful of being locked out of the mill with the loss of half a day's pay. The hiss of steam as the mill engine started before settling down to the steady hum of men and machinery at work.

Most working class areas of Oldham were served by their own private 'Watch'. My parents were members of the Greenacres (pronounced Grinickers) Watch. For a modest outlay of fourpence per week, the home acquired the protection of an area watchman. There was little enough worth stealing from the rows of terraced houses and that is why, perhaps, the watchman was known for his more functional role as "t' knocker-up".

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They were a strange breed these men of the night. Perhaps pausing occasionally for a lonely woodbine or exchanging the time of day with a friendly Bobby on his nocturnal beat. They could have only been paid a pittance but the nature of the work seemed to suit them. Most augmented their income by 'carrying' for local undertakers each afternoon of the week.

There were no electric or radio-alarms and while some families had wooden bound alarm clocks and others may have had the cheaper tin-cased version, no one really trusted them. It was a sin to be late for work. So, each evening could be seen in the windows of many a house, a board or slate which proclaimed the time at which the occupants wished to be awakened, be it 5am, 6am or 6-30am. The less aesthetic chalked the time on the wall of the house alongside the front door.

Years later, when I arose very early preparatory to a school excursion, I actually saw the knocker-up. There he was in the street with his long bamboo pole with stout springy wires on the end rather like an oversized grass rake. No monster he but a very ordinary man performing the simple, but vital, service of rattling the wires on the bedroom window panes to ensure that the members of the Watch were not late for work.

I developed and grew in an atmosphere of love and security but with an inner feeling of superiority which can only be experienced in that way by an only child. Therein lies a strength and a weakness for, unless one is introduced to the reality of life, one is liable to develop as a spoiled and obnoxious child relying on fond parents to be extricated from scrapes while beginning to demand, rather than seek to earn, further indulgences or favours.

By the time I was ready for school, Wall street had crashed. Father's investment had disappeared and along with it, his job. The reality of life was before me as I well knew our financial position without being told. With full emotional security, however, I somehow knew that I could look forward to better things. Long term, I was quite confident in my own ability without knowing whether or not I had any. I was later to discover that, as an only child, I was well equipped to cope and live with myself when necessary and well able to draw on my own resources when required, as I often had done as a child. Being an only child can be a very positive and good experience.

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CHAPTER II

AT MOTHER'S KNEE

Between Freud and Spock, much has happened in the relationships of parents and children and the development of the latter. I cannot imagine, however, that developing children are any better or worse off than I was. In fact, like all children, I was for a time completely self-centred, believing that the whole universe revolved around me. This was briefly reinforced, as will be related in a later chapter, when on one never to be repeated social occasion, practically all my aunts, uncles and cousins, both maternal and paternal, together with many neighbours and family friends gathered at a particular function.

Despite the difficulties of the times, on marriage, mother gave up her work as a weaver in the local mill where she had first commenced as a half-timer. That was for a period working in the mornings and then returning to school in the afternoons. She firmly believed that a married women's place was in the home and that all men should work and be paid sufficiently well to enable this to be so. Career women did not enter into her scheme of things at all. It was all so simple to her, the more married women at work, the less likely it would be for employers to pay men a living wage. Despite her theory, because of the stringencies of the times, many wives and mothers had traditionally continued to work in the mills. The difference with today lay in the structure of the communities. People lived in closed promimity to relatives and

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there was always a spare granny, aunt or other mother-substitute available when the children returned from school.

My world began to expand but not quite so rapidly at first. Within the district, I had a number of aunts and uncles and cousins, of whom, without exception, I was the younrest. I could command their protection when I required it, thus confirming my uniqueness. In all and through all, however, mother reigned supreme and was without doubt, infallible. Out side in the big world, things were happening and technology was advancing but the benefits were slow in reaching the masses.

Much of that which had lasted, was handed down and I inherited some toys which had escaped destruction at the hands of some of my older cousins. Among these was a small Meccano set in its original tin box comprising of plain metal parts as they first had been made, without any enamel. In addition was a heavy cardboard model stage which was referred to as a 'Panorama'. Set coloured pictures could be wound from one side to the other and to each panoramic view I was taught to sing what was considered to be an appropriate song. "The Soldiers of the Queen"

as the picture, illuminated from the rear by flashlight, of marching grenadiers came into view; a picture of the Pyramids brought forth the song, "The Sheikh of Araby" with "London's Burning" accompanying a picture of a horse drawn fire engine racing to a distant but visible fire. The fact that all the pictures were out of date did not seem to detract from the pleasure for we no longer had a Queen on the Throne and I never saw a horse-drawn fire engine in action.

Singing was very much a part of everyday life for me. While my mother had never received any formal training in music, I owe much to her for my interest in music, limited though it is. Mother spoke of the Boer War as if it was yesterday and so, besides all the popular songs of the Great War, I learned to sing such songs as "The Boers have got my Daddy" and, "The Baby's Name", which song included all the names of places and people made famous in that war. The jingoism was there and while I knew nothing of the real story of the Boer War, I firmly believed that, as a Briton, I belonged to the greatest nation on earth. The map of the world with the British Empire marked in red simply confirmed it.

My social training went ahead as mother talked to me and I gradually learnt what was acceptable and what was not. I must cover my mouth if I coughed and must never lend my handkerchief to anyone. I must

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keep away from dirty children and must never pick my nose since, for some reason never explained, I would get 'sore feet'. I must never pick up anything in the street which might be edible, even though wrapped or, play near to grids in the 'cart-road'. A puzzling exhortation was to avoid 'bad men' who, apparently, were 'about'. Apart from tramps, all men looked more or less alike to me and so I tended to associate 'bad men' with tramps since I had no other criteria to work on.

It is often supposed that, because they are so young, children are not aware and are not able to perceive changes in the emotional atmosphere. Young children, like some other beings, are limited in their means of communication and so tend to depend very much on the use of feelings. I well recall my parents being very upset. It was not a 'row' but, although I was but a toddler, I was aware that recriminations were flying about with some regrets and tears. I continued to play but was conscious that I was aware of something I was not supposed to be aware of in my parents current relationship. Fortunately, all quickly returned to normal and I never learnt the cause of the upset and, of course, I never ever could ask about it.

Little boys are often entrusted to the care of 'big girls' who, like many adults, often think that little boys are not aware because they do not know what 'big girls' know. In consequence, little boys often see and hear all sorts of interesting and exciting things which, if not immediately understood, can be stored in the memory for future reference. While in my cot, I had a sexual fantasy person who came to me and comforted me in those moments before sleep overtook me. Her name, believe it or not, was 'Big Girl'. For a time, until I discovered other distractions, big girls in gymn slips remained very attractive to me indeed. I do not recall being troubled by any oedipus complex for, even at an early stage, my sexual fantasies were not centred on my mother but, of course, the Freudians have the last word. I can only write of my conscious and not of my unconscious at that time.

At the age of three years, I made my first real friendship as distinct from friendship with cousins and cousins' friends imposed upon me by parents and relatives. There, outside the backyard, Fate, was a very dark haired little boy with a large ball. Gordon remained my best friend throughout our years at school and, at times, we were inseparable despite some parental incompatibility. We shared our infantile fantasies and involved ourselves in each others which, at

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times, included his knitted 'Jumbo' and my teddy-bear. They fought alongside us in imaginary trenches, helped us drive tramcars or collect the fares.

The friendship was initially shortlived as I developed whooping cough, which is not a pleasant experience for anyone to have. Daily, my mother forsook her chores to take me in the crisp winter air by the Strinesdale reservoirs where it was believed that the clear air would help.

Later, an open-air school was built in that area so perhaps it was not just another 'old wives' tale. With the onset of each spasm, mother would grip me tightly by the wrists until it passed.

On the way home, we would call and see mother's sister, Auntie Ruth, who kept a chip shop and mixed business on Greenacres Hill. Auntie Ruth took great delight in pressing sticks of liquorice upon me when mother was not looking. This, I discovered was in the hope that I would get it all round my face and in other places in which it was not supposed to go. She was endearing to me if not always to my mother.

The days of comfort and security with mother at home were fast drawing to a close as fond adults frequently reminded me that I would soon be experiencing the joys and mystery of school life. I was told that I would sit at a little table and would learn to read and write and do all kinds of exciting things. I did not exactly enthuse for already, I had discovered that adults were sometimes less than honest. That "medicine slipped down without tasting bad", for example. I had survived bad tasting medicine so, no doubt, I would survive school despite the fact that I had already met some of the kids I was likely to meet at school. There were some to be avoided and some who actually smelled.

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CHAPTER III

A MIXED INFANT

It was Monday again, in the Spring of 1929, when I was taken by mother to Derker School. I was handed to Mrs. Davies whom my mother knew through church connections. That seemed to make everything all right so far as I was concerned but I failed to understand completely why some new pupils, as well as their Mums, were crying. I was led by the hand to a large classroom in the corner of the hall and introduced to Mrs. Morgan, who was in charge of the 'baby-class'. I recall little about her except that she seemed to be a rather regal lady and quite formidable. For once, I found that what I had been told by adults had been correct. There were little tables each with two chairs of similar size. Why was it, in those days, that teachers always wished to pair off little boys and girls in the baby class only to do their damndest to keep them segregated for the rest of their school careers?

I think that I exercised some choice in the matter of with whom I sat. May was a neatly dressed little girl with short dark hair, clean and sweet smelling. Vital essentials so far as I was concerned. For the short time we remained in the class, May shared a table with me except for a very short time when I fell for a flashy blonde. I installed Amy at my table at the end of one particular playtime. May looked forlorn as I tried hard to discard her like the proverbial worn shoe, until the teacher intervened to sort out the eternal triangle. There was an early lesson in it somewhere for me. My initial judgement was correct. In adult life, I know that I would have had much more in common with May than with Amy. I became wary of flashy blondes.

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Mothers can be very embarrassing to growing school boys and mine was no exception on my first day at school. At play-time', there she was by the side gates to the playground with a pot of warm milk in her hand. I pretended not to see her but other children can be so helpful when you do not want them to be. I was never keen on warm milk at the best of times but to be shown up in this way was just not on. Thank goodness it was not laced with 'Atora' beef suet which at

times had been forced on me. I drank it dutifully but as quickly as I could. I cannot remember whether or not it came the next morning but somehow I got the message over to mother.

A man has got to do what a man has not to do. Most of the children in the School came from homes without indoor sanitation and so were not at all put out to find the lavatories at the bottom of the school-yard. There stood two batteries side by side, the girls and the boys. Often, the weather was inclement and so most of us were discouraged from asking to leave the room during lesson time. In the infant school, the sexes were not segregated at playtime and so it was that most lads were confronted with their first manly challenge. Who could pee over that discreetly high dividing wall which separated the boys from the girls? Many attempted but many failed and it remained a challenge. The very first step it was to sorting out the men from the boys.

Toys were available in the baby class but we never seemed to have long enough time in which to play with them and, rarely was I successful in getting the toy I would have preferred. I was tested with a slate on which had been placed some white sand. I was required to describe in this the vowels, and so I moved on to the first class proper with Mrs. Davies. We increased our ability to read and write, we sang songs and played games in the hall and in the yard as the playground was better known. We had periods of free drawing on green boards with chalk. I always wanted to produce a startling art form but always failed, drawing instead, houses, lorries or trains like all the other lads. Many of the girls proceeded to completely fill the board with tiny circles. I thought they were daft and have often wondered since what it was that motivated them in such an unimaginative effort.

We combined with other classes for dancing in the hall. Teachers, who in the main had been local young women whose parents had sacrificed much that their daughters might go to college, were distinctly superior beings. We performed a flax-gathering dance which, to the teachers,

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was both cultural and clear. Most of us had no idea what flax was and, being Townies, what was meant by threshing. I did, however, enjoy the percussion band when I got one of two trumpets, although I would have preferred a drum. We marched enthusiastically around the hall while a teacher played the Cornish Floral Dance on the piano. It must have sounded lousy.

Sex had almost ended when we left the baby class as girls were soon to be avoided like the plague because they were silly anyway. I must confess that I still looked longingly at one or two of the girls whom I found to be particularly attractive, but I dare not reveal my interest to anyone. It was, strangely enough, Mrs. Davies who excited the little boys, usually at story time, when she sat on top of one of the vacant front desks with her feet on the seat facing the class. Every kid enjoys a story and we were no exception. However, the stories were from time to time interrupted as Mrs. Davies reached for a handkerchief from a pocket on the long leg of her knickers. Devastating, but just another example of the assumption that little boys of tender years are either not interested or are immune to such things.

And so to crime. One rainy playtime many of us remained in the classroom and did not venture out even to the 'shed' in the yard. One naughty boy looked into a little girl's desk and found some biscuits which he promptly shared round with the other lads. Never did I regret so much my participation. The girl quickly complained and the guilty boys owned up and were ordered to make reparation. The hardest bit was telling mother. That afternoon, the little girl finished up with more biscuits than she knew what to do with although, arrowroot fingers are still not very exciting.

There were comparatively few kids at school whose parents owned their own house. A few seemed to be slightly better off than the majority. These included a publican's son, a mill manager's son and a few shopkeepers' children. They were the few who regularly went away

for a week in the summer holidays either to North Wales or to the Lancashire coast. At the other end of the scale came the kids from the slums or poorer homes and quarters of the district. They tended to be more aggressive but not exclusively so. Bullies there were and bullies there will be for, after all, boys are reputed to be made of "snaps and snails and puppy dogs' tails". I hated election times for the bullies had a field day. They demanded to know your political allegiance and you had three chances, Tory, Liberal or Labour, to be wrong, which you inevitably were. I remember being floored and thumped by a big aggressive lad who lived two streets away from me. It made me angry as it was so unfair but I never have been a pugilist. Years later, the same lad was to become a

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Methodist lay-preacher and a local Councillor before becoming Mayor of Oldham. I am sure that Jack Armitage has long since forgotten the incident but I have long since forgiven him.

I shall never know why I failed to come up to standard. I console myself that I was a late developer since I then found myself suddenly demoted to a 'B' class. My parents were not given to reading much and it is a fact that I did not discover the treasure trove of the public library until I attained to the awe of twelve or thirteen years. Parental example and encouragement remains of untold worth to growing and developing children. It looked as if I was destined to become a hewer of wood and a drawer of water after all. I also found myself separated from my bosom companion, Gordon, as I moved into Standard 1B.

My teachers in the infant school were undoubtedly good teachers who gave time to the preparation of work. However, I was once bitterly disappointed when a pupil teacher took us for handicraft, one of my favourite subjects. We took old felt hats to school from which, after drawing a pattern, cut out a perfect bedroom slipper. Though the teacher remained for sometime, the lesson never continued which might have been all right had we all been one-legged kids. Another young teacher, whose name I fail to recall, went to a lot of trouble to embroider a map of the world on a piece of hessian. On a particular afternoon each week, we sat around this 'magic carpet' and were transported across the sea to exciting far off lands. I think that I learnt a lot from that teacher but, if I did not at the time, she held my interest and I enjoyed it. I feel that there is so much to be learnt that young people are liable to be confused and it is often years later before the facts become crystallised in the mind. The best teachers stimulate interest.

My final year as a mixed infant, although it could possibly have been my first in the Junior School, was in Class 1B. A forceful and somewhat unusual teacher for those days, Miss Phyllis Bennett was eton-cropped and 'different' and known to smoke cigarettes. Wary of her, we nevertheless respected her. Her personal friendship with that nationally-known character and intellect, Joyce Grenfell, was not at all surprising. Apart from breaking my arm during this period, I recall little except that the schools were moved round the campus and the following year, I found myself back in the same building in which I had commenced as an infant. I actually finished at the 11+ stage in the very same classroom in which my school career started in company of May and the blonde, Amy.

On certain high days, all three schools, the Infants, the Junior and

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the Senior, would be assembled in one place. Traditionally, the Mayor visited all the schools in the Town on Empire Day and granted the afternoon as a holiday to resounding cheers. As an infant, I still had two older cousins in the senior school. On one such assembly, I felt proud when my cousin Sidney winked at me for he was approaching 14 years of age and I, a mere six year old.

Derker Infants was a happy school under the leadership of Miss Whalley, the Headmistress, although I can recall little of her. The few years as an infant sped quickly and inevitably, I had to move upwards to the Junior school.

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## From the e-Postbag

I've had two emails from Julie Schwethelm, in Germany ... I'm including one here, but the second I'm saving for next month.

### *Random recollections*

#### ***Getting the Bus to Ashton***

Before I started school, on Wednesday afternoons, when our local shops had their "half day closing", my mother would take me on the bus to Ashton-under-Lyne. At Edge Lane we could catch the 216 which ran between Manchester and Stalybridge, or the number 6, the limited stop bus to Glossop. Both went via Ashton. Because they were Manchester buses they were red, whereas Ashton buses were blue and cream. To me that was a significant difference and I always felt more affinity towards Manchester buses, as we lived, according to our official postal address before postal codes were introduced, "Near Manchester" rather than just in "Lancs." The Local Government Act of 1972 would of course shift boundaries so much that we were shunted into the newly created Tameside Metropolitan Borough without physically moving an inch. My first swimming certificate was issued by Lancashire County Council, my GCE certificates by Tameside, all without my having to move anywhere at all.

The trolleybus era, which had begun in Manchester in 1938 and in Ashton even earlier in 1925, would come to an end in December 1966, but I clearly remember the untidy overhead network of wires. Although the buses ran fairly quietly by comparison with later back engine double deckers, they used to flash and hiss, and on numerous occasions the bus de-wired and came to a standstill and the conductor would have to jump off the bus and use a long pole to reconnect the trolley poles to the overhead line.

The walk "on to the Road", meaning to the nearest bus stop on Manchester Road, took us up Palm Street, across Nelson Drive, then up Dawlish Avenue and across Manor Road. Windsor Road runs parallel to Dawlish Avenue and still has its mixture of semis with gardens on one side and older red brick terraced houses with back yards on the other. Edge Lane Methodist Sunday school was at the top of Windsor Road. Now, even the adjacent church, whittled down in size to adapt to a waning congregation, has been wiped off the map completely and replaced by a row of look-alike town houses. At the corner of Dawlish Avenue and Manor Road there was a toy shop, which somehow survived into the seventies.

Our bus stop, which had as a shelter one of those ugly thick concrete monstrosities with permanently smashed windows, stood at the other end of a passage, or ginnel as my friend Linda used to say, linking Manor Road with Manchester Road. Dark terraced houses loomed on either side, and there were so many potholes in the gloomy narrow passage that we would dodge from one dry bit to the next to avoid landing in a huge puddle. The puddles seemed to be a permanent feature, even in otherwise dry weather. Those houses must have been damp....

We would ride straight along Manchester Road through Audenshaw, past the Snipe pub and Ashton Moss pit, the last of the many coal mines around Ashton to cease operation. Although it closed in 1959, the slag heaps, buildings and machinery remained standing for many years, a silent witness of the long history of coal mining in the south-east corner of the Lancashire Coal Field. The bus journey continued past Ashton Baths in Henry Square at the top of Stamford Street, one of the first-ever municipal swimming pools to be built in Britain, opening in 1870 and still standing derelict, although a Grade II listed building, since its closure in 1975, when the

more modern baths opened. I went there with my father once and remember how anxious my mother was about me having to get myself dried and dressed all by myself. I think she thought I would never be dry again. Her fears were unfounded. But I was never going to learn to swim there. It was much too awe-inspiring a place with its Byzantine style architecture, its tall soot-blackened tower-like chimney, elaborate hammer-beam roof, the gallery which enhanced the frightening echo around the pool, slippery stone steps down into the water and the words "DANGER DEEP END" in big letters. All that scared me. To make things worse, I had heard that the lady who was supervising or teaching children to swim, or whatever task she had, was known as "the dragon". Not good prerequisites for the launch of a swimming career. I did learn to swim, but at Eccles baths, a more modern place with a more easygoing swimming instructor. We would go there one evening a week on two buses and it was always quite an outing, ending with a cup of indefinable soup from a machine. I had swimming lessons with a small group of girls. One of the girls had curly black hair and had had polio as a small child which had left her legs crippled, so that she struggled to walk, dragging one leg behind her. I admired her very much for her courage in the water and was amazed that she was the first one of our little class to swim a width. The polio vaccination had come just that little bit too late for many children of my generation and children limping along with little thin legs encased in heavy callipers, as the iron leg braces were commonly known, were a common sight in those days.

The good news about the old Ashton Baths is that in 2014 a specialist developer took the plunge and acquired the building, which is to be transformed into a £3m business hub. Fortunately its uniqueness is to be preserved. Hopefully it will not scare future generations so much in its new role.

The bus stopped in Ashton just at the back of the market, or was it somewhere else? The bus station perhaps? I know our bus back home stopped at the top of Stamford Street on its way back from Stalybridge, past Stamford Park. Stamford Street was lined with lovely shops selling high quality goods on display in the windows and protected from the sun by transparent amber coloured blinds which always reminded me of the cellophane wrappers on Lucozade bottles, only thicker. Clarence Arcade, a wonderful Victorian covered shopping arcade built in 1894, was one of the most prestigious shopping locations in Ashton. Further up Stamford Street was The Lounge, a tea-room with waitresses in their black and white uniforms, serving chocolate éclairs and pots of tea. People who bought their home furnishings from classy Leigh and Arden's probably had afternoon tea there. Whether you were needing a bicycle, a settee or a wedding dress, you were sure to find it on Stamford Street.

Ashton-under-Lyne has been carved up so much since the redevelopment began with the construction of the precinct in 1967 that it is hard to remember how it used to be. At the top of Old Street was Harrop's the herbalist with their little wooden drawers full of things you bought by the ounce. It smelt of dandelion and burdock and a pot-pourri of herbs, and although it was a bit gloomy inside it had an unmistakeable olde worlde charm which it retained into the late seventies. I used to buy my henna powder there by the ounce, and the first ever dried herbs I proudly emptied into my Habitat spice jars in my early student days came from Harrop's.

One of the stores that became a victim of the demise of Stamford Street was Arcadia, the Co-operative department store. The most intriguing part of shopping at Arcadia was paying for something. The assistant would put your money into a brass cylinder which would whiz off via a network of pipes into the unknown. Your change, receipt and Co-op stamps would be whizzed back via this pneumatic system. My mother always redeemed her stamps, or claimed her "divi" as it was called, at Arcadia, often in the form of bedding.

Sometimes we would walk down Market Avenue past Lumb's that sold handbags and umbrellas, the florist, Dando's the jeweller, the cake shop with its wonderful arrangement of

birthday and wedding cakes in the window, and cross Old Street, arriving at the market.

Ashton outdoor market was famous for its celery, something I didn't like eating at the time although I quite liked the smell. We had a dedicated cut glass vessel that to me was a vase, where the fresh green celery sticks were arranged for the Sunday salad tea. What I liked most about salads was the boiled egg and Heinz Salad Cream, which was so acidic it made your mouth pucker. It wasn't so much eating as slicing the egg that I enjoyed. The egg slicer was the only kitchen gadget you could play like a harp.

You may still find celery on Ashton market, but there is nothing to compare with Sowerbutts celery direct from Ashton Moss, that haven of market gardens and nurseries. My father always bought his bedding out plants for our back garden from Arthur Gent's on Ashton Moss. I loved accompanying him on a Saturday morning. The soil was dark and rich, the vast area was a mass of colour with its vegetables, plants and blooms. This splendour however was not destined to survive into the twenty-first century. It underwent a transformation first into a sea of mud and then without further ado into the M60 with one of those faceless just-off-the-motorway retail sites and a cinema complex. Ashton Moss has become Junction 23.

Many thanks for this Julie ... such a blast from the past for me, particularly! It's 62 since I lived in Ashton but your recollections brought everything back so vividly. I too remember the herbalist's. It was where I would persuade my mum to take me for a glass of sarsaparilla, drinking it sitting on a little bench and wondering what was kept in all those little drawers and breathing in the mixture of herbal aromas. My grandmother lived on a farm, on Edge Lane, until the early 1900s and I can remember being taken by her to a church sale of work, when I was staying with, her one weekend, as a child. She gave me 6d to buy the tiniest imaginable toby jug (just an inch high but perfect) to take back home as a present for my mum. She kept it safe and only returned it to me in the days before she died in 1983. I now still have it kept safely. How precious are our family memories. Thank you again, Julie, for bringing my own back to the surface.

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Another welcome contribution from our reader Glyn Collin :

Hi Sheila

I went to Barnsley Archives yesterday to look at the Oldham workhouse records, which have been digitised and can now be viewed on Find my Past. The info. is very scant. I am a support worker for people with learning disability so it got me thinking about my own relative and I put his story together.

MENTAL HEALTH

We are hearing a lot about Mental Health nowadays. At one time, not so long ago, it was a taboo subject and people with mental issues were put away from society in asylums and institutions. I took a job in a mental hospital after twenty years in a textile factory, it seems someone in Indonesia could do my job more cheaply than me. One of the first tasks at the hospital was to read the clients' clinical notes to learn about them. The notes were written by the consultants and were very shocking; the language would be unacceptable today, people with Downs Syndrome being described as 'particularly ugly mongols!' They described home conditions and the parents' intelligence or lack of it.

Find my past has recently added Oldham Workhouse Records to its catalogue and I have looked up my grandfather's elder half brother, Fred, although the details are very scant. Fred was admitted on Monday March 8th 1897, "born 1870; calling none; class 2 diet; number on clothes 246; by order of Dr Halkyard, 'Insane'."

In those days if you were not sane, you were insane. I had visions of a raving lunatic but luckily

I had contacted Fred's niece who remembered him well. Fred suffered with learning and other difficulties but could hold a conversation. As children, they were taken to visit their uncle Fred in the workhouse on a Sunday afternoon and the inmates had to get into bed to receive visitors, like hospital patients. They wore cotton fustian uniforms which were well washed but clean. During the week Fred was allowed out and would be seen walking around Oldham with a peculiar shuffle and would visit relatives who gave him a meal. During the summer, the workhouse took people out for a drive, on Sunday afternoons, up to Saddleworth and Fred would go with several others and call at his sisters at Springhead.

In 1903 Fred went to Strinesdale Sanatorium at Moorside, for chest complaints and TB. He was admitted back into the workhouse on May 8th 1903 on men's plain diet and remained there till his death in 1934 aged 63 after 37 years in the workhouse.

Years later, when the niece had grown up, she came to realise that Fred was the family 'skeleton in the cupboard'. Fred had worked as a carter for the railway and the mill. In those days, if you couldn't work to support yourself, it was the workhouse. Fred was kept at home until his father died then, it seemed, his siblings did not want him. The eldest brother, Robert, would be responsible for him but he ran off to Peterborough, with another woman, leaving a wife and two children and his responsibilities.

When Fred's youngest brother, James, was widowed in 1951, the niece became responsible for him. She pressed him about how Fred got in the workhouse. His response was that he was in the best place, then fed her a 'cock and bull' story that he was a little bugger, mad on horses and, when he was eleven years old, a horse and cart was stood outside the house. Fred was at the window shouting, "Back! Back!" The horse heard him, backed into Bank Top lodge and drowned. His father was so mad, he hit him and Fred banged his head on the stone window sill. Neighbours sent for an ambulance and the Infirmary transferred Fred to the workhouse, but the records have shown this to be untrue, a fabrication to ease their conscience.

I now work in supported living, supporting people to live the life they want in their own homes. The modern thinking is that these people have done nothing wrong and should not be shut away from society; we have come a long way from Fred's day.

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MLFHS FACEBOOK PAGE

**A short selection of entries from the MLFHS FACEBOOK PAGE [HERE](#) ...**

since the last newsletter :

\* Gooldens Buildings in New Islington ..... Lost and now rediscovered  
[HERE](#)

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* Rare 'time capsule' cobalt mine abandoned over 200 years ago is discovered in Cheshire
[HERE](#)

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\* Railway Work, Life & Death project.  
[HERE](#)

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* The Great Flood of 1872
[HERE](#)

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\* A proud heritage The Bridgewater Canal is sometimes described as England's first canal  
[HERE](#)

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* The Proceedings of the Old Bailey, 1674-1913

[HERE](#)

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\* GARDENS THROUGH TIME ... Could your ancestor have been a gardener?

[HERE](#)

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* British Library ... If you have a Reader Pass you can access a number of our electronic resources on a personal device, wherever you are, and we're regularly adding to this list

[HERE](#)

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\* Lancashire's Roman Roads

[HERE](#)

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* Explore the Tunnels, Passageways and Bomb Shelters of Underground Manchester

[HERE](#)

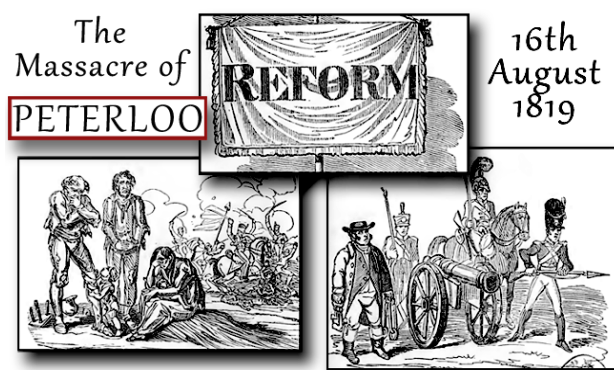
~~~~~  
\* Greater Manchester Past Revealed - Clayton

[HERE](#)

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

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

PETERLOO : the Bi-Centenary



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Visit the website for **The Peterloo Project** with particular reference to Oldham, people, accounts, life at the time and more ... at [Peterloo-Manchester](#)

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Although the long-anticipated Bi-Centenary has come and gone, there are some Peterloo websites still active with history, news, photos and reports.

You can make searches on websites such as :

Manchester Histories - Peterloo 1819 ... Manchester Histories have created a website which publicises all that is happening, or has happened, around the region.

Visit their website [HERE](#)

Need Help!

Oldham Local Studies and Archives is open

Our opening hours are as follows:

Monday, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 10am-5pm; Tuesday 10am-2pm; Saturday 10am-4pm.

Although it will not be essential to book your place as has been the case over the last few months, we encourage you to consider booking in advance as this enables us to get everything ready in time for your visit, particularly if you wish to view archives. To order please visit:

https://www.oldham.gov.uk/forms/form/891/en/local_archives_document_order_form

If you wish to use PCs to access family history websites or to use microfilm readers, we advise you to book a place by contacting us at:

archives@oldham.gov.uk or telephone 0161 770 4654.

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

Archives are unique, original documents created in the course of everyday activities. Oldham's date from 1597 and cover an enormous range of subjects and activities :

- Hospital records
- Poor Law Union records
- Coroners Court records
- Local Authority records including Chadderton, Crompton, Failsworth, Lees, Oldham, Royton and Saddleworth
- Schools and education records
- Records for statutory bodies like the police force
- Church and religious records
- Business records
- Solicitors and estate agents records
- Trade unions and associations records
- Co-operative Society records
- Sports, entertainment and leisure records
- Personal, family and property records
- Society and Association records
- Records of Oldham communities

There is no charge to look at archival records although you would need to bring proof of your name and address (e.g. your driving licence) to do so.

Most archives can be produced immediately, with no advance booking required. However, some archives are stored off-site, in which case at least 2 days' notice is required in order to see them.

Other archives may be closed due to their fragile condition, or because they contain confidential information.

[Oldham Council Heritage Collections](#)

There are regularly changing displays in the Local Studies Library.

[Opening hours](#) and contact details.

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## Website Links

### Other Society Websites

Catholic Family History Society – [www.catholicfhs.co.uk](http://www.catholicfhs.co.uk)

Cheshire Local History Association – [www.cheshirehistory.org.uk](http://www.cheshirehistory.org.uk)

Chadderton Historical Society (archived website) – [www.chadderton-historical-society.org.uk](http://www.chadderton-historical-society.org.uk)

Lancashire Family History and Heraldry Society - <https://www.lfhhs.org.uk/home.php>

Lancashire Local History Federation – [www.lancashirehistory.org](http://www.lancashirehistory.org)  
Liverpool and South West Lancashire FHS – [www.lswlfhs.org.uk](http://www.lswlfhs.org.uk)  
Manchester Region Industrial Archaeology Society – [www.mrias.co.uk](http://www.mrias.co.uk)  
Oldham Historical Research Group – [www.pixnet.co.uk/Oldham-hrg](http://www.pixnet.co.uk/Oldham-hrg)  
Peterloo - [Peterloo-Manchester](http://Peterloo-Manchester)  
Ranulf Higden Society (Latin transcription) - [Ranulf Higden Soc.](http://Ranulf Higden Soc.)  
Royton Local History Society – [www.rlhs.co.uk](http://www.rlhs.co.uk)  
Saddleworth Historical Society – [www.saddleworth-historical-society.org.uk](http://www.saddleworth-historical-society.org.uk)  
Tameside Local History Forum - [www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk](http://www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk)  
Tameside Local & Family History - <http://tamesidefamilyhistory.co.uk/contents.htm>  
The Victorian Society - [Manchester Regional Website](http://Manchester Regional Website)

### Some Useful Sites

GENUKI - [Lancashire](http://Lancashire)  
Free BMD - [Search](http://Search)  
[National Library of Scotland](http://National Library of Scotland) - Free to view, historic, zoomable maps of UK :  
1891 - Oldham and locality [HERE](http://HERE)  
Online Parish Clerk Project : Lancashire - [HERE](http://HERE)  
British Association for Local History - [HERE](http://HERE)  
and for their back issue journal downloads - [HERE](http://HERE)  
Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, website, [HERE](http://HERE)  
and for their back issue journal downloads, website, [HERE](http://HERE)  
Internet Archive ... The Internet Archive offers over **24,000,000** freely downloadable books and texts.  
[HERE](http://HERE) There is also a collection of 1.3 million modern eBooks that may be borrowed by anyone with a free archive.org account.  
Made in Greater Manchester (MIGM) [HERE](http://HERE) and Research guide [HERE](http://HERE)  
Historical Maps of parish boundaries [HERE](http://HERE)  
Regiments & Corps of the British Army (Wayback machine) [HERE](http://HERE)  
Special Collections on Find My Past [HERE](http://HERE)  
FmyP - The Manchester Collection [HERE](http://HERE)  
Goad fire insurance maps of Manchester [HERE](http://HERE)  
Cheshire Parish Register Project [HERE](http://HERE)

### Some Local Archives

Barnsley Museum & Discovery Centre – [www.experience-barnsley.com](http://www.experience-barnsley.com)  
Birkenhead – [Local & Family History](http://Local & Family History)  
Bury – [www.bury.gov.uk/archives](http://www.bury.gov.uk/archives)  
Chester - [Cheshire Archives & Local Studies](http://Cheshire Archives & Local Studies) (linked from Discovery at the National Archives)  
Derbyshire - [Local & Family History](http://Local & Family History)  
Leeds - [Leeds Local and Family History](http://Leeds Local and Family History)  
Liverpool Archives and Family History – <https://liverpool.gov.uk/archives>  
Manchester - [Archives & Local History](http://Archives & Local History)



Oldham - [Local Studies & Archives](#)

Oldham - [Oldham Council Heritage Collections](#)

Preston – [www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives](http://www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives)

Stockport – [www.stockport.gov.uk/heritage-library-archives](http://www.stockport.gov.uk/heritage-library-archives)

Tameside Local Studies and Archives - <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/archives>

York – [www.york.ac.uk/borthwick](http://www.york.ac.uk/borthwick)



## For the Gallery

To add to the write-up about Oldham & District's July Meeting about the history of early Manchester ... a few more pictures from:

### **Memorials of Manchester Streets by Richard Wright Procter, pub. 1874**



Viewable digitally without loss of quality at 200%

### **The South West Prospect of Manchester in the County Palatine of Lancaster**

"Manchester is neither Borough nor Corporation, but a spacious, rich and populous Inland Town in the Hundred of Salford, and South East part of Lancashire, Situate upon a Rocky Cliff at the confluence of the River Irk, & Irwell, bounding it on the North West add much pleasure to its healthfull Soil, which is most part Gravelly. It is a Mannour with court Leet, & Baron, which, at the decease of the present Lady Dowager Bland will devolve to S<sup>r</sup>. Oswald Mosley Bart. 'Tis governed by two Constables, annually chosen in the Court Leet at Mich<sup>s</sup>. 'Tis Famous for the Woollen, Linnen, & Cotton Manufactories, whereby it's immensely enriched, and many 100 poor Families employ'd from several Counties. This Town is adorn'd with many noted Buildings, such are the The Collegiate Church in its lofty Pile and fine tower, built after the Gothick manner. The new Church in the Modern taste; The Free School, founded by Hugh Oldham Bp. of Exeter, A.D. 1510. The Hospital for 60 Boys with a Noble Library generously endowed by the founder Humph<sup>y</sup>. Cheatham Esq<sup>r</sup>. And with handsom broad Streets both New & Old; And a large Bridge over the River Irwell which joyneth Salford, a populous, Beautiful Town, giving name to the hundred, and Seemeth as a Suburb thereto. The Exchange now building by S<sup>r</sup>. Oswald; and the River



Irwell, falling into the Mersey, communicateth with Liverpool; which / by their expence & Labour / hath gained a considerable progress, & is soon expected to be made navigable.

[we can see - list underneath image] 1. Salford Church 2. The Hospital 3. The Collegiat Church 4. The Bridge 5. The River Irwell 6. The Boathouse in n<sup>th</sup>. is a curious Bath 7. St. Ann's Church  
S & N Buck 1728"

[note: spelling and punctuation as printed]

Accompanying and describing the map :

"South-West Prospect of Manchester, 1728 . . p. 204

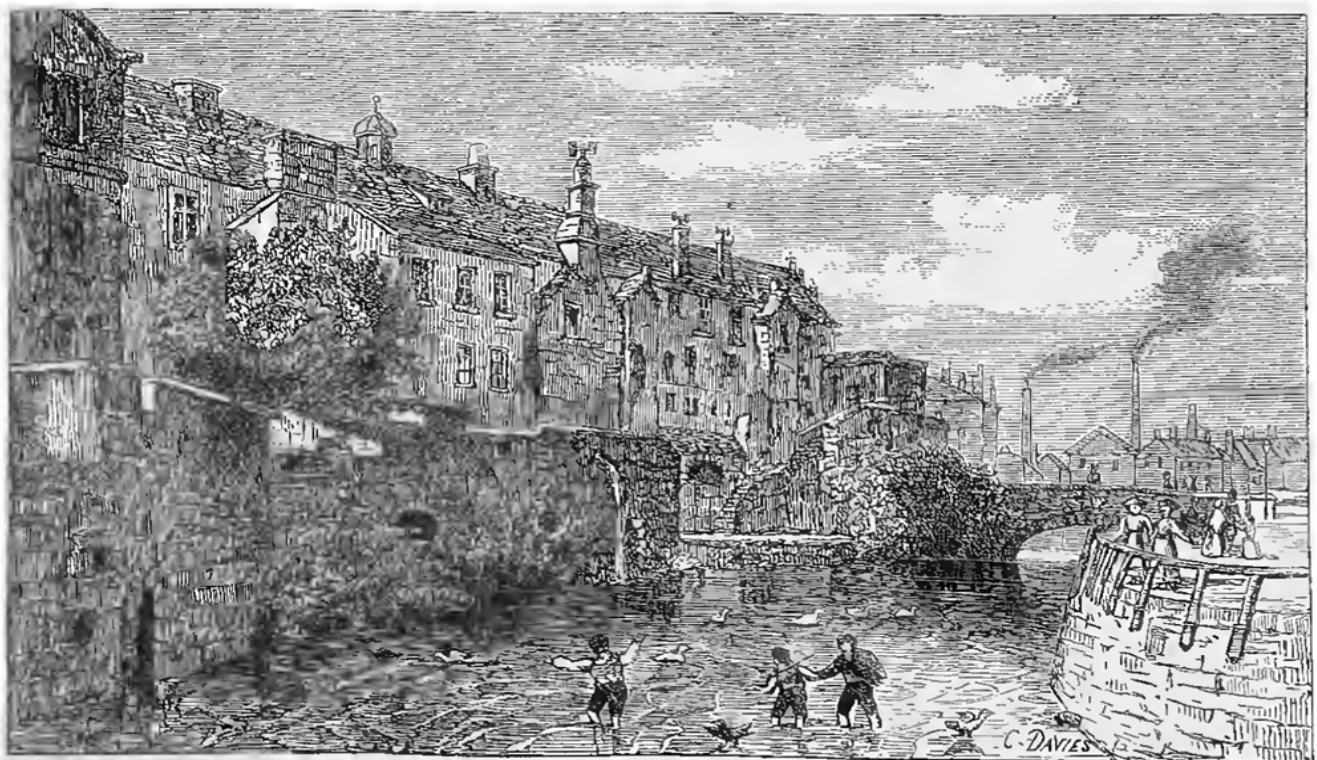
By Samuel and Nathaniel Buck. Photo-lithographed by Alfred Brothers.

The chief feature of this rare and interesting view is the clear, winding Irwell. The past and present appearance of the river has been thus contrasted by a local minstrel :

" Whoe'er hath seen dark Irwell's tide.  
Its sombre look and sullen glide,  
' Would never deem that it, I ween,  
Had ever brighter, gayer been. . .  
When Irwell rolled by feudal tower.  
By shady grove, and fairy bower;  
When on her banks so oft was borne  
Sweet music of the hunter's horn. . . .  
Forests are here, but not of trees ;  
Forests are here, the homes of men ;  
Mancunium's sons are as the leaves  
Which bloomed upon the forest then."

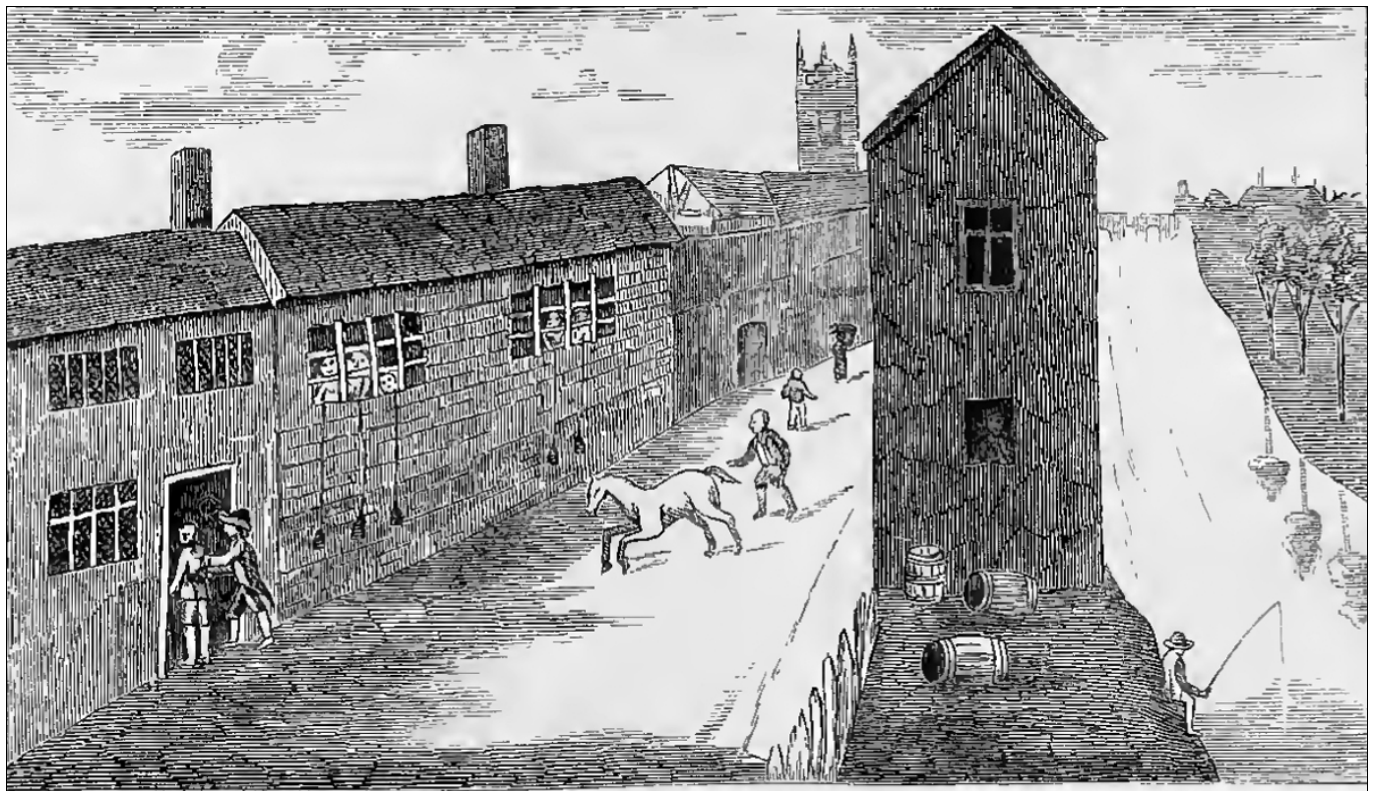
Joseph Anthony.

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THE CHETHAM LIBRARY. 1797.

Chetham Library and River Irk 1797



HOUSE OF CORRECTION, HUNT'S BANK. ABOUT 1776.

House of Correction, Hunt's Bank, about 1776



COLLEGE OLD GATE AND GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

College Old Gate and Grammar School



THE KEY (QUAY). 1746.

The Quay 1746