

'e-Owls'



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

December 2022

MLFHS - Oldham & District Branch Newsletter

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Branch Officers for 2022 -2023 :

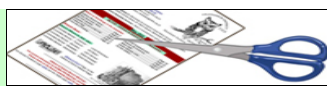
Committee Member : Chairman :	Linda Richardson
Committee Member : Treasurer :	Gill Melton
Committee Member : Secretary :	Joan Harrison
Committee Member : Newsletter :	Sheila Goodyear
Committee Member : Webmistress :	Sheila Goodyear

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



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 :**

As we head towards the end of the year, I would like to thank those who have supported the Oldham & District Branch meetings both in person and on Zoom. We have had some very interesting Speakers over the last 12 months and our meetings have been well attended. Heading into 2023 we have a full programme booked details of which will be on the website but our January and February meetings will be on Zoom only as we were unable to acquire a meeting room at our usual venue. I apologise to those who will miss the first two meetings but hope to see you in March when we will be full steam ahead.

Finally may I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

My Best Wishes

Linda Richardson

Chairman, Oldham Branch

email me at < [chairman-oldham@mlfhs.org.uk](mailto:chairman-oldham@mlfhs.org.uk) >

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Editor's remarks.

Hi Everyone,

As I write this, I'm finding it difficult to believe that Christmas is just around the corner! I normally try to avoid thinking about it until we're into December but, at the moment, I feel as if it's still at least a couple of months off!

In the Mixed Bag, I've rather liked having a book to serialise in the way that I did with the '*Autobiography Of A Manchester Cotton Manufacturer*' which concluded last month. In the Gallery of that November newsletter I included a picture of Garratt Hall and descriptive chapter from *Manchester Streets & Manchester Men* (2nd series) by T. Swindells, pub. 1907 which is available to download as a .pdf from the Internet Archive. There are 5 books in the series, 4 available on the Internet Archive ... however, I have an old print copy of series 3, which is not on the Internet Archive. This particular volume has chapters called, '*High Street Annals*', '*Church Street Annals*', '*Cannon Street*' and '*The Market Place*'. Perfect for serialisation, I thought, as this volume isn't as readily available. I've started with some of '*The Market Place*' chapters ... I hope you find them interesting.

Our last talk in our Branch programme for 2022 enjoyed a full audience in the Library for a talk on *Underground Manchester*. Our speaker had brought copies of his books and sales, afterwards, were brisk. Never able to resist books, I decided that some were going to be my own Christmas presents from family!

Although our Branch don't have a talk in December, we're joining up with Oldham Historical Research Group to have a 'Fun Quiz' ... nothing too challenging and multiple choice answers! Free booking is on either our own Eventbrite page, or on the Oldham HRG Eventbrite (links in the Meetings section of the newsletter). I hope we can welcome as many of you as possible to join us.

The Oldham HRG's November monthly meeting had, as its subject, the centenary election of a councillor to Oldham Council in 1922. Jeremy Sutcliffe gave us his talk on the election of his grandfather, Frank Tweedale. The plan had been to record it for our video pages but, unfortunately, Jeremy had the dreaded technology gremlins interfering with his laptop. However, Jeremy has sent me his presentation to include on the Oldham HRG website which I will upload as soon as possible. I'll create a link to it from our own '[Pictorial Index](#)' page... keep an eye on our updates page [HERE](#)

In the e-Postbag this month we have another contribution from our regular contributor, Julie Schwethelm. In her '*Random Recollections*' she shares memories including growing up near

the Robertson's Jam Works and her enthusiasm for collecting their badges, whilst sensitively noting and appreciating the unacceptability of the 'Golly' caricature. Finally, in the Gallery are the pictures from the transcribed chapters of '*Manchester Streets & Manchester Men*'.

Have a very happy Christmas,
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*

Earlier this year, when the pandemic restrictions were lifted, we held the the majority of our regular meetings as hybrids ... simultaneously on zoom and in the library. We wanted to show how much we had appreciated the support that we had enjoyed on zoom, both from local society members and those from further afield. The bonus was that, 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! The 2023 programme will be slightly different as we were unable to book all the dates in the library, that we wished for, and some of our intended speakers were reluctant to take part in either zoom or hybrid meetings. As a result, hopefully, we are planning to hold 4 meetings as hybrids, 4 meetings only on zoom and 4 meetings only in the library. In that way, our zoom audiences will continue to have free access to 8 of the meetings.

Please continue to support the Branch, either in person at Oldham Library or on zoom if preferred.

Details, of the programme of talks for 2023, will start being added to the '*Meetings*' page of the Branch website [HERE](#) as soon as possible.

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Last Month's Meeting

November Meeting ... only in the Performance Space, Oldham Library



Saturday,
12th Nov.
at
2 pm



***Exploring some of the city's finest underground spaces,
that are shrouded in mystery and myths***

An illustrated talk given by Keith Warrender

"Keith Warrender, an historian, author and publisher, has produced two books on what lies below the Manchester streets. They are sites usually out of bounds to the public, but the speaker has had access to most of them and in his presentation reveals the true stories about these mysterious places. They range from underground canals, air-raid shelters and cold war networks to subterranean mazes."

Sadly, for our regular zoom audience, this meeting was only for an in-person audience in Oldham Library.

Keith kept us fascinated for an hour whilst he gave us an insight into just how much lies beneath the streets of the city. As we watched them, his powerpoint images brought Manchester of the past, and the forgotten world below us, to life again. So much was covered that I can only touch on a few of the things that were mentioned.

He started off his talk with a brief introduction then took us off to the old Granada Studios below which was created the 1100 yards long Manchester and Salford Junction Canal Tunnel. It once linked the two cities via the River Irwell. First envisaged in 1805, construction work wouldn't actually start until 1837 and was opened for canal traffic the following year. It was never to enjoy the commercial success that had been hoped for as the newly arriving railways were spreading across the landscape. In 1875 a part of the canal that linked with the Rochdale canal, was filled in. In 1899 the Great Northern Railway Warehouse was built above the canal and, with hoists constructed down to it, gained a link between the railway and the docks. Despite that, by 1922, as a canal link, it was disused and gradually abandoned.

However, that wasn't the end of its story. Early in 1939, when the possibility of war again loomed over the horizon, and there was a search for suitable locations for air raid shelters, plans for both Victoria Arches and the Manchester and Salford Junction Canal Tunnel were approved and the conversion work was started. The canal had to be drained, and dammed; reinforced dividing walls (to minimise potential bomb damage) and entrances at 6 locations had to be constructed. Seating, beds (bring your own bedding!!), toilet facilities and storage for gas masks and first aid equipment etc., all had to be created.

Then there was mention of the warren of tunnels under and connecting the various Co-op buildings around Balloon Street. The tiled passageways were used for moving goods and valuable items securely. We saw photos of piles of old ledgers and a massive walk-in safe under the Bank building. Built in the pre-war years, the building and tunnels under Dantzic Street had bomb shelters for 4,500 employees and customers. When the later CIS building was built in 1959 it had a nuclear fall-out shelter with survival necessities for 3 days. There were staff and meeting rooms, café and storage areas. One photo brought a laugh ... on stairway landings were lidded bins bearing the legend, '*Interceptor : postal : bomb : container*'.

We heard stories of a group of children who had managed to get into a tunnel and walked for miles, making a chalk mark on the wall, at intervals, so that they could find their way out again! There were clusters of long, skinny stalactites (baby ones!!) hanging from the roof; there was the story of some intruders in a tunnel, who were vandals, but a discarded cigarette, complete with DNA, ensured the vandal was arrested! There were photos of old shops and businesses, even a shooting range and skittle alley, in underground spaces accessed from the surface.

Back to the 1950s, and the years of the 'Cold War', as we learned of a top secret project, a 'War Room', codenamed 'Guardian', as Manchester prepared for nuclear attack. Its purpose was to go underground and maintain communications, by phone, with key locations : London (Kingsway) and Birmingham (Anchor). There were tunnels from it radiating out from the centre

of Manchester to Dial House in Salford, going under the River Irwell (the exit on Islington Street in Salford) and in the other direction out to Ardwick. Constructed in absolute secrecy, involving what looked like the winding gear for the deep shaft of a coalmine which appeared in Piccadilly. It's said that the tons of earth brought to the surface were carted away, in the depths of night, in lorries. There was no nuclear attack in the '50s or '60s and when the threat subsided the project eventually came off the 'Secrets List' and the complex continued to operate as a telephone exchange until 1985.

And there was so much more! All I can add is that the books that Keith brought for us to look at (available on Amazon etc.) are full of detail, images, plans, photos and information and all printed on beautiful glossy paper.

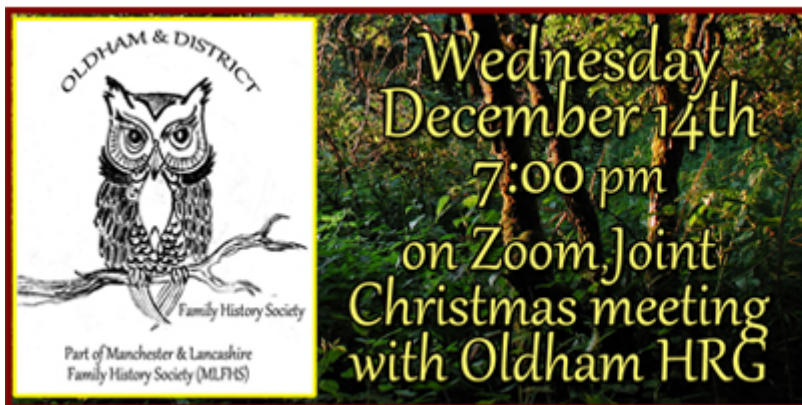
Titles: '*Underground Manchester, Secrets of the City Revealed*', and '*Below Manchester, Deeper Underground*'

Many thanks, Keith, for such an interesting and enjoyable afternoon.

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**December Meeting ... only on zoom**

Please note, this is a Wednesday evening, not our usual Saturday afternoon



An informal evening  
with a fun Quiz -  
about our local history  
(multiple choice answers!!!)  
Enjoy a glass  
of your favourite tippie  
and a mince pie or cake  
by your side!

Joint Fun, Illustrated, Christmas Quiz, with Oldham HRG

**Booking on Eventbrite on either (not both!) :**

[MLFHS, Oldham & District](#)      or      [Oldham Historical Research Group](#)

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MLFHS Branches delivering their monthly meetings and talks

Anglo - Scots ... Saturday, 3rd December at 2pm on Zoom only

MLFHS, ANGLO-SCOTTISH BRANCH MEETING	Saturday, 3rd December at 2pm	The Highland Clearances an illustrated talk given by Michael Winstanley
-----------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Please book on [Eventbrite](#)

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

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**Bolton ... Wednesday, 7th December at 7:30pm**



**In person in the room only**

Bolton Golf Club, Lostock Park, Chorley New Road, Bolton, BL6 4AJ

bookings by email to < bolton@mlfhs.org.uk >

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

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MLFHS updates

Manchester ... No Meetings planned as of this newsletter

Keep an eye on the following pages, 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.

\* New data has been added at [www.lancashirebmd.org.uk](http://www.lancashirebmd.org.uk) as follows:

Added 8,367 Births for Bury RD comprising:

Bury (1976-1982)

Amended 82,595 Births for Manchester RD to include mother's maiden name, comprising:

Hulme (1837-1914)

Added 2,264 Marriages for Bury RD comprising:

Heywood Register Office or Registrar Attended (1954-1960)

Radcliffe Register Office or Registrar Attended (1953-1960)

Ramsbottom Register Office or Registrar Attended (1951-1962)

Thanks to Tony Foster and his team and to my own Manchester MMN indexing team for the above.

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* Another 200 streets and buildings added to the Godfrey Map Index.

From the 1891 Middleton, coloured edition.

kindly indexed by Paul Thomas.

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\* I have just been informed that the MoD's online ordering system for deceased soldiers records has just been opened for applications. The application system is located at

<https://www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records/apply-for-someone-elses-records>

Before you get too excited, be aware that this is NOT a self-contained 'instant response' service. It is an online replacement for the old postal application service.

It does NOT provide a searchable database from which to select the person whose records you want, NOR does it give any immediate confirmation that they hold the records you are looking for.

However, it is a big improvement in that you don't have to obtain and mail a paper form and also you pay online (credit/debit card) so it is in these respects a big improvement for those based outside the UK and something of an improvement for UK researchers.

John

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* I have added a new memorial to the War Memorial database. This is from the Deansgate Depot of the LNER Railway and has 38 names from the First and Second World Wars. The image was supplied by David Ingleby of the Great Northern Railway Society.

See <https://www.mlfhs.uk/databases/war-memorials/details/1124>

The memorial seems to be lost and this photo, from an unknown publication, seems to be the only record. If anyone has any information as to its location, we would like to hear from you.

John

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\* I have just posted a new document to the society web site. This is a table of key dates for civil registration nationally (England & Wales) and locally (changes to the Manchester Registration District).

The basis of this is a table produced by Birmingham Registration Service, which I have amended for local relevance. This was helpfully circulated on the Salford list by Lynne Klein (Thank you Lynne).

I have linked it to the main menu under Research - Reference but you can access directly at

<https://www.mlfhs.uk/research/reference/civil-registration-key-dates/file>

Hope you find it useful.

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* New data has been added at www.lancashirebmd.org.uk as follows:

Added 2,247 Births for Bury RD comprising:

Bury (1981-1982)

Added 2,459 Deaths for Bury RD comprising:

Bury (1968-1972)

Added 169 Marriages for Blackburn RD comprising:

Blackburn, St Georges Free Church of England (1970-2009)
Darwen, Central United Reformed Church (Duckworth St) (1988-2009)
Feniscowles, Methodist Church (1994-2007)
Blackburn, Revidgefold United Reformed Church (Shear Brow) (1990-2006)
Darwen, Kingdom Hall (Astley St) (2005-2010); Blackburn
St Jude (1997-2010); Blackburn, St Silas (2008-2010)
Thanks are due to Tony Foster and his team for the above.

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\* I have added 6,127 BMD announcements from the Manchester Courier for 1840-41 to the Great Database.

Thanks to Linda Bailey, Laura Lewis, Chris Norcross and Chris Hall for these latest additions.

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* I have added a further 357 records to the Great Database. These are details from a register of children sent to Canada and some other countries by the Chorlton-on-Medlock Poor Law Union. Images of the register are attached to each record. There is a copy of the full index in the Document Collection - Workhouse & Poor Law section.

Thanks to Mark Campbell for indexing these entries.

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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: ... all Meetings on zoom



An informal evening
with a fun Quiz -
about our local history
(multiple choice answers!!!)
Enjoy a glass
of your favourite tipple
and a mince pie or cake
by your side!

Joint Fun, Illustrated, Christmas Quiz, with MLFHS, Oldham & District Branch

Everyone welcome ... More details and free booking on Eventbrite, on either (not both!) :

MLFHS, Oldham & District or Oldham Historical Research Group

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

Please note, this the the 2nd Wednesday, not the 3rd as is usual. Website [HERE](#)

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**Saddleworth Historical Society ... Wednesday 14th December**

**'Early Textile Factory Conditions : An Oldham Doctor and Some Etceteras'**

an illustrated talk by John Fidler

7:30 at the Saddleworth Museum Gallery



At this meeting Society members are free, but a charge to non-members is applicable on the door of £3. All are welcome. Refreshments are available.

Website [HERE](#)

**Saddleworth Civic Trust** has no meeting or event planned in December.

If & when this situation changes members of the Society will be notified directly and through the local Press.

**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."

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Moorside & District Historical Society - no meeting in December

Moorside Cricket Club, Turfpit Lane, Moorside

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**Library Events & Gallery talks at Gallery Oldham; [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'**

In last month's newsletter, I included a couple of images and descriptive text about Garratt Hall from, *Manchester Streets & Manchester Men* (2nd series) by T. Swindells, pub. 1907.

I've found this series of books (volumes 1 - 5) full of fascinating insights into the people and places of a Manchester which is long gone, and will be serialising transcriptions, of a number of chapters, in the newsletters over the next few months. I hope you enjoy them and find them as interesting as I have.

The four pictures illustrating the first 5 parts of '**Market Place**' can be found in the Gallery.

1. opposite p. 137 : '*The Market Place in 1810, showing the Cross and Pillory.*'

2. opposite p. 149 : '*The First Exchange : Built 1729, taken down 1792*'

3. opposite p. 153 : '*The Market Place in 1808 showing Nathan Crompton's Folly*'

4. opposite p. 157 : '*The Second Exchange*'

+ Image Of Title Page & Portrait Of The Author

From : ***Manchester Streets and Manchester Men, Series 3,***

by Thomas Swindells pub. 1907

### PREFACE

THE earlier chapters in the present volume complete the series of articles published in the columns of the "Manchester Evening News," but those descriptive of Cannon street and the Market Place are published now for the first time. In the present, as in the last volume, an attempt is made at continuity, at the same time preserving for each chapter a completeness that makes it independent of the others. Thus the story of the Market Place is told in a number of chapters, any one of which is complete in itself. As in the cases of previous volumes I am again indebted to my friends, Mr. G. H. Rowbotham and Mr. W. Ellis, for invaluable assistance in the matter of illustrations. The list of subscribers which will be found at the end of the volume is proof that there is a demand for volumes of this description, and I should like to feel that such support would be given to further volumes written on the same lines\*. Our city, with its sister borough, has grown so tremendously during the last century that scores of landmarks familiar to our grandfathers have disappeared. Before it is too late some serious effort should be made to trace the growth of every part of the city in the same way that we have dealt with some of our older thoroughfares. It does not appear that anyone else is prepared to do it, and consequently I shall continue the work so long as I can secure the interest and support of a fair number of readers. The next volume will, if printed, deal with Long Millgate, Withy Grove, and Shudehill; but as in the case of past volumes advance circulars will be sent to subscribers, and on the number of favourable replies will depend the question of printing.

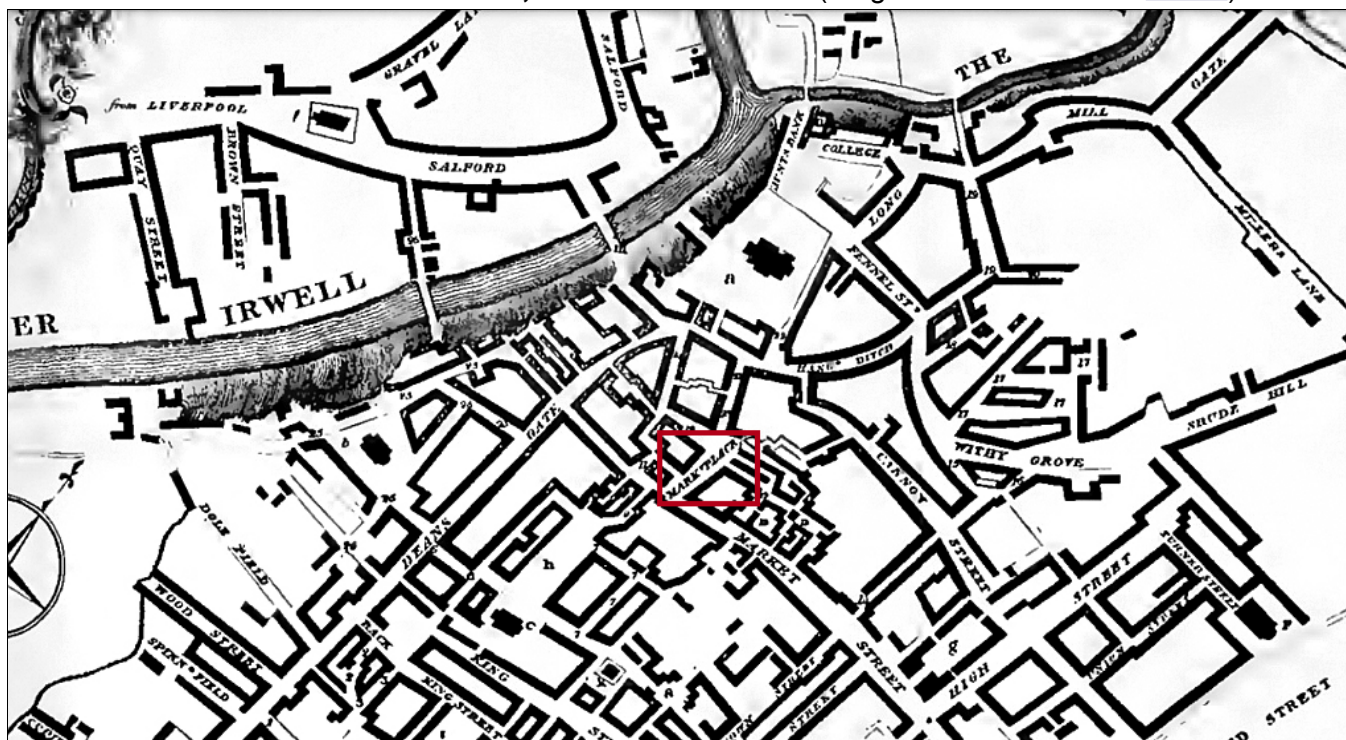
T. SWINDELLS.

Monton Green,

December, 1907.

\* editor's note ... there were at least 5 in the series. Series 1,2,4 & 5 are free to download from the Internet Archive [HERE](#)

**Manchester - Salford 1772, with Market Place** (Larger scale on website [HERE](#))



from: ***OLD MANCHESTER - A Series of Views*** ... Drawn by Ralston, James, and Others  
Introduction by James Croston, Pub 1875

## THE MARKET PLACE.

### PART 1

Before Mamecestre had grown beyond the village stage, it had become a place of some importance, for in a document dated 1359, we read that Roger la Warre held the town, not as a borough, but as a market town; and that it had been so held by his predecessors "*from a time to which memory goeth not.*" This right of holding a market was of more importance to the community than will at first appear to the ordinary reader; for not only was the right jealously observed, but infringements were suppressed with all the vigour that the law empowered. The law stipulated that the Lord of the Manor had power to establish a market and that when such a market had been established another should not be opened at a less distance away than about six-and-a-half miles. The market day five and a half centuries ago was Saturday. To the market place the people from the surrounding country would resort to sell their produce to the townspeople. For this privilege they paid a toll to the owner of the market, the Lord of the Manor; and as the community grew in extent, and the markets grew in importance, their importance as a source of revenue also increased as the Manchester Corporation found when they purchased the manorial rights from the Lord of the Manor. The market place gradually became the most popular meeting-place for acquaintances, who otherwise would have met only very rarely in those days

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of simple life and little travelling. Being the one place of popular resort in the little town we can easily understand how not only were the stocks and pillory erected there, but that in later years Sir Oswald Mosley erected there the first Exchange.

Many are the references to the Market Place in our Court Leet records; and on various occasions the Court evidently had cause to complain of the manner in which their officials neglected their duties. Thus on October 16th, 1555, the Court ordered that :

*"The persons which be appointed to make clean the Market Place, shall have warning by the boroughreeve to amend their doing, or else the boroughreeve, with the counsel and consent of the constables, shall appoint and choose new officers for the same, for seeing always that they make clean the same every Tuesday."*

In 1570 Elizabeth Graye and Margaret Renshaye were appointed "*to make clean the market and five shillings for the profit for the same*" ; and it was further decided that this must be done every Tuesday and every Saturday. Two years later the matter was up again when complaint was made that the streets about the Market Place were "*evil and unclean kept.*" In 1591 two scavengers were appointed and it was stipulated that "*they have for their pain, not only of the coopers and fishmongers, but of all others of everyone, a penny a quarter*" ; so that the officials would have to collect their wages penny by penny from the residents. The rate of remuneration certainly was not excessive, and we can understand how the old difficulty constantly recurred.

The foddering of horses and cattle in the Market

#### p.133

Place, or Market-stead or Stid, as it was formerly called, was another matter that very considerably troubled our forefathers. Thus we read that in 1556 it was an order of the Court "*that William Edge and Benet, his wife nor any other for them, shall not suffer any horse, mare, or cattle, to be tied and foddered under or at the house of Francis Pendilton.*"

To what extent this and similar orders passed by the Court during the next quarter of a century were obeyed, we are not told, but it is very evident that breaches of it were of frequent recurrence, for in 1581 a more stringent order was recorded. It ran thus :

*"All those persons that bring any horses to this town shall not fodder their horses in the Market*

*Place, nor in any other place in the town, nor shall not tie the said horses in any streets within the town, but shall place the said horses in stables and rooms in inns within the town."*

The penalty named to be imposed in cases of infringement was fourpence. The order further stated that :

*"the boroughreeve, the constables, or the catchpole, shall cause this order to be published two market days at the Market Cross."*

Not only was annoyance caused to the residents and other persons resorting to the Market Place for business purposes by the feeding of horses, but we read of cattle straying thither, of pigs finding their way amongst the stalls set up for the sale of farm produce, and of cocks and hens being there. These were all offences, and many an owner of an obtrusive porker, or of a rooster spoiling for a fight, was had up before our primitive Watch Committee. Thus we get a few glimpses of our city at a time when it had not emerged from the village stage of its evolution. The

#### **p.134**

honest simple-minded residents were entirely concerned with the parochial affairs. Newspapers there were none, and what limited means of locomotion existed were rarely used. People stayed at home, working, sleeping, feeding, and gossiping. The arrival of a stranger in the village was a great event, and his dress and errand for few travelled for pleasure, would form a fruitful topic of conversation for the housewives of the community for many a week.

There appears to have been some system by which the vendors were arranged in the Market Place. Thus we read that the coopers and dealers in woodware stood at the west end of the conduit, that those who sold apples and other fruit stood in another place, that the butchers stood where the "Old Shambles" is to-day, and that close by were the boards whereon fish was exposed for sale. The records tell us that Smithy Door was a fish market as far back as 1568, when those who offered fish for sale were ordered to fix up their boards over the channel, and not over the footways. One order concerning the vendors of apples, directs that all who offered apples for sale should give out of each pannier of apples so offered, two apples "to the maker-clean of the same place." It would appear as though originally the Market Place was surrounded by dwelling-houses as distinguished from shops, and this idea seems to be borne out by an item to be found in the rental returns of Thomas West, Lord de la Warre, and fifteenth Baron of Mamcestre, made in 1473. We find that John Trafford, Knight, paid a rental of sixpence per annum for: *"one parcel of waste land lying in Mamcestre, near the*

#### **p.135**

*Booths, upon which parcel of land one shop was lately built."*

As this is the first mention that has yet been found to any shop in the Market Place we may assume that it was one of the first, if not the first to be built. The "Booths" to which reference has been just made was an important building; in fact it was perhaps the first public building erected in the town with the single exception of the Church.

### **THE BOOTHS**

The Booths was a building probably of two stories, in the lower one of which were shops, whilst the upper one was a large room which served the purpose of a Court-house, a Sessions house, and a Town Hall. In that room met the Court Leet, and at the meetings held there the resolutions and orders which provide us with so many side lights on the life of the burgesses centuries ago, were discussed and passed. The building stood in the Market Place and covered most of the ground between the Shambles and the Site of the first Exchange.

The Market Place was, therefore, in two sections, the one at the bottom of Market-stead Lane, and the other at the end of Millgate. Connecting these were two narrow thoroughfares, on the



left-hand side Smithy Door, and on the right-hand side another narrow passage unnamed on the plans, but afterwards merged into Market Place. The "Booths" appears to have been a moderately large building, with an internal courtyard.

In 1650 it was called the Sessions House or the Court House, and in later years, when a Sessions House had been established at the New Bailey, it took the name of

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the Long Room, which served in turn as an auction room, a theatre, and a concert room. No date is given for the disappearance, and it seems to have been quietly removed during the first period of street improvement schemes which was inaugurated by the passing of the Act of Parliament of 1776.

## **PART II**

### **THE CROSS, PILLORY, and STOCKS**

#### **Picture 1 in Gallery**

At a point not very far removed from the entrance to the present Coal Exchange building there formerly stood the Market Cross. From the steps of the old Cross public announcements were made from time to time. The old Cross which to-day would have been an object of interest was removed in 1752 to make way for one of more ornate design. The old one was re-erected in High-street, but after providing favourable opportunities for the boys of the neighbourhood displaying their agility in climbing it was pulled down and removed. The more modern Cross was built by Oliver Nab, and in design approached the gothic. It was surmounted by some curious iron work and a gilt crown. It was removed in 1816. Immediately adjacent to the cross was the pillory. One who saw this form of torture in operation has left us a graphic account of it which I cannot do better than reproduce. He said:

*"In those 'good old days' when George IV. was Prince Regent, I saw a Reformer, a poor shabby-genteel man in seedy black clothes and whitey-brown necktie, stuck in the pillory, a sort of movable platform, about ten feet from the ground, on which was erected a plank with three holes in it, the middle one for the neck and the side ones for the wrists., It opened with a hinge at one end, and when the neck and arms were properly adjusted it was*

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*fastened with a staple and padlock. The poor victim, let him struggle as he would, could not withdraw his head or hands. He had to stand there for an hour, from noon to one o'clock. This hour might have been chosen in order that the working classes might have the pleasure of pelting the poor wretch with mud and all kinds of filth including rotten eggs, dead cats and rats. This took place opposite the Bull's Head gateway, in the Market Place, in the presence of some of the leading people of Manchester who had turned out of the Exchange to see the fun - which grew more fast and furious as the hour of one approached, when the factory bells would ring - and the mob have to run off to work. Then Joe Nadin's runners released the victim, who looked more dead than alive, and took him back to the New Bailey to undergo the remainder of his sentence. I, along with the rest, thought this all right and proper, for was not the man a wretch of a Reformer, who had had the impudence to assert publicly what most right-minded people thought privately, that the revels carried on at Carlton House were anything but creditable to the nation, or likely to content the people who were wanting bread for themselves and their crying children - fourteen pence being at the time the price of a loaf."*

This account by an eye-witness will serve better than any words of mine could do, to convey a good idea of one side of the social life of a century ago. Leaving the pillory we may turn our attention to the stocks that formerly graced, or otherwise, our Market Place. It will not be necessary to describe them. The specimens that survive in some of our rural districts, and the

pictorial

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representations that have been published in so many books, will cause their appearance to be familiar with most of my readers. The stocks were intended as a punishment for all who came under the very general and comprehensive designation of rogues, vagabonds and sturdy beggars. The law directed that for the punishment of these offenders stocks should be erected in every tything, and it penalised any tything that failed in the matter, in the sum of five pounds. The word, tything, perhaps requires explanation. It takes us back to Anglo-Saxon times when the population was small and when houses were thinly scattered over the country. A tything, or tithing, originally comprised ten men and their families, and the area for which they were responsible was the land occupied by their respective holdings. For other purposes these tithings were further combined into hundreds; the Hundred of Salford representing the holdings of one hundred men in Saxon times. The Hundred boundaries then made have been since observed, although their original meaning ceased to exist centuries ago. In Court Leet days, not only were Hundreds recognised, but the minor term of tithing was also used; consequently our forefathers were instructed to see to it that stocks were erected in every tything. Therefore, it was that stocks were placed in the Market Place. A word should also be said as to the offenders who were to be punished in the stocks. An Act of Parliament of the First James comprises in the list,

*"all proctors of spittle houses, patent gatherers, or collectors for gaols, prisons or hospitals, fencers, bear-wards, common players of interludes, minstrels wandering abroad, glassmen, sailors, soldiers, scholars, and all other idle persons which go about begging."*

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It would take up too much space to explain all these terms, many which are obsolete, but it may be taken that all men rambling through the country without visible means of subsistence were candidates for the stocks. The stocks would appear to have been first erected in 1569, for in the records of the meeting of the Court Leet held on April 4th of that year we find that, *"The jury doth request Mr. Steward for, and in the name of the lord, to make a pair of stocks and butts for the inhabitants of the town with speed convenient."*

They were therefore erected in the Market-stead near to the Cross and remained there for nearly two and a half centuries. An anecdote is told of a droll fellow, a saddler, who some years ago when drunkenness was punished by confinement in the stocks, having created a disturbance in the streets, was put in the stocks. Whilst sitting there a friend passed and asked him what he was doing there. "Why, do you see," he answered, "I've got married to Miss Wood here, and that fellow there," pointing to a prisoner standing in the pillory, and who was being whipped by the beadle, "is come to dance at my wedding." For well over two centuries the youth of the time enjoyed themselves from time to time at the expense of the occupants of the stocks, on whom they bestowed many attentions which were not asked for and certainly not enjoyed by the victims. When they were removed in 1816 along with the cross and the pillory, Aston noted the fact in his *"Metrical Records of Manchester"*,

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*"In the autumn this year was remov'd a disgrace,  
Which for ages had stared this large town in the face;  
The Stocks and the Pillory were found in decay,  
And without a renewal, were carried away.  
Since this time the rascals condemn'd to be whipt,  
Upon a cart's bottom have bellowed and skipt;  
And those who've been framed with their heads set in wood,*

*Have received in those carts their allowance of mud."*

Another form of punishment in vogue a century ago may very well be dealt with here; and again I shall give without comment the experience of one who saw it inflicted. The writer says:

*"The next thing I saw of a similar nature to the pillory was a public whipping. A young man had stolen some lead from a cistern in the yard of a large house in Bridge-street, at the corner of Dolefield. He was sentenced to some months' imprisonment and to be publicly whipped. He was accordingly brought from the New Bailey in a cart properly rigged up for the occasion, and when opposite to the house from which the lead was stolen, he received from the hands of big Booth (one of Nadin's runners), four and twenty lashes on the bare back, deliberately given. Booth ran his fingers through the bloody tails between the strokes, while the young man was wrestling and yelling and his poor mother screaming out to them to have mercy on her son, and trying to mount up by the wheel of the cart, but two or three of the runners who wore brown coats with red collars prevented her. Her efforts to reach her unfortunate son continued during the whole operation, which lasted fully twenty minutes between the hours of twelve and one, for, of course, the working classes must not be deprived of a sight so likely to lead*

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*to their civilization and the improvement of their morals; besides to flog a man before the house where he had committed a robbery was, they might possibly think, some compensation to the occupiers, as the family could see the sight without the trouble of leaving the house."*

Such is a glimpse of punishment in the "good old days."

### **PART III**

#### **THE CONDUIT**

For more than two centuries Manchester's principal water supply was a conduit which stood in the Market Place, and owned its origin to one of the town's worthies. Isabel Becke, a wealthy widow, was daughter and heiress of Roger Bexwicke, to whom Manchester is indebted for the beautiful carving on the south side of the choir of the Cathedral. About 1550 she caused the water then to be found near to the corner of the present Spring Gardens and York Street to be conveyed by means of pipes down Market-stead Lane to the Market Place Stead, where she also caused a conduit, fitted with taps, to be erected. Not only did she do this, but she endowed the conduit with certain houses in St. Mary's Gate, the rents from which were to provide for its maintenance. Like many other ancient endowments the property was diverted into other channels, for about twenty years later the Court Leet requested John Gee and George Pendilton to declare,

*"whom they think hath any money or lands for the repair of the conduit."* Aston, writing a century ago said, *"If the town has not received for the last thirty years the benefit from the legacy; which the donor intended, perhaps in justice the boroughreeve and constables ought to have the rents arising from the land, to apply to some other purpose."*

Harland was of opinion that this referred to the houses in

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St. Mary's Gate. This was perhaps the case, but it might probably refer to property that was erected on the site of the conduit itself, for when Victoria-street was made about seventy years ago a portion of the old piping and the foundations of the conduit were discovered on a portion of the premises now occupied by Messrs. Muirhead and Willcock at 4 Victoria-street.

In 1570, the Court Leet, having evidently failed to trace the responsibility for the maintenance of the conduit, appointed a committee of seven men with William Radclyffe as "overseer," or chairman, *"to gather charity of well-disposed persons, the which they shall bestow for the minding and upholding of the said conduit."*

Another difficulty with which our forefathers had to contend, as have water committees in our own times, was a shortage in the water supply. The committee to which reference has just been made, consequently received further instructions in 1573 as will be gathered from the following entry in the records:

*"Whereas the Conduit of Manchester, a special ornament of the town, doth divers times lack water, the which by the good furtherance of well-disposed persons, may be brought to such perfection that at all times hereafter there may be sufficient water to serve the town withal; in consideration whereof the persons whose names follow are appointed by the Jury to gather and collect the charity of well-disposed persons for the amending of the same, the which must be by bringing of other springs to the same, and not without great cost and charge."*

Our worthy forefathers who thought it a great thing to connect springs in adjacent fields with the one that formed

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their principal source of supply would have been appalled at the mere suggestion of bringing water from Woodhead, to say nothing of Thirlmere.

In 1579 consequent probably upon the limited supply of water, the Court found it necessary to pass an order that :

*"no person hereafter shall bring to the conduit any kind of vessel of greater value (capacity?) than one woman is able to bear full of water, and but one of every house at one time, and to have their cale (turn) as hath been accustomed; William Radcliffe, gentleman, only excepted."* Two years later another appeal was made to the benevolence of well-disposed inhabitants *"for the repair of the conduit;"* and it was further announced that *"no person shall convey any water between nine in the evening and six in the morning from the said conduit."*

In 1586 John Wilton was appointed to keep the keys, and he received fresh instructions as to the supplying of water. In the winter months the supply was limited as just stated, but in the summer the actual supply was confined to nine hours per day. With one further extract from the records we will close our reference to this very interesting subject. The quotation is somewhat lengthy, but for various reasons it is well worth reproducing. It ran thus :

*"Whereas there have been divers orders heretofore made touching the overseers of the conduit, as also the keeping of the key of the same, and yet hitherto the key could not be had, but detained. Therefore, the Jury order that the inhabitants thereabouts shall contribute, at the discretion of the overseers of the conduit, towards the buying and making of a new key, and the same to be delivered to Edmund Mossley,*

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*whom the Jury hath appointed for this year to have the keeping of the key, and the opening and locking of the conduit at convenient and usual times, and he to be duly recompensed for the same. And that any in- habitant shall not open the conduit at any time, nor draw water there, but when the said Mossley shall open the same at times 'heretofore limited.'*

That great importance was attached to this resolution is evident from the fact that the penalty to be imposed in cases of non-observance was twenty shillings.

For well over a century the water supply seems to have been maintained, but about half-way through the eighteenth century the supply became gradually reduced, and by 1776 the water had ceased to flow into the conduit. This is accounted for by Aston by the sinking of wells in the neighbourhood of Spring Gardens. Many of these wells were connected with the houses which about that time commenced to spring up in this fashionable residential district. The building of Manchester's first Theatre Royal in 1775 probably had much to do with the disappearance of the spring from which the conduit had been supplied, for when the building was pulled down in



April 1869 an interesting discovery was made. Under the stage, about half-way between Milk-street and Spring Gardens, and above fifteen feet below the street level, a well was discovered. The water in it was said to be from fifteen to sixteen feet deep, and was used for some time by the workmen engaged on the site. This was in all probability the spring from which, thanks to the public spirit of one of

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her worthies, the people of the town drew their principal water supply for about two centuries. Mention has been made of William Radcliffe. He was a resident of considerable importance in the town of those days. His residence, Radcliffe Hall, a fine moated grange, stood behind where the "Manchester Guardian" buildings are, and has been already referred to. Mr. Radcliffe is said to have founded the St. George's chantry, afterwards the Chetham Chapel in the Collegiate Church. His name appears very frequently in the Court Leet records. Thus we find that in 1586 it was complained that he had "encroached the Barkehouse Hill and the Ducking Stool Pool." These names take us back to the days of long ago. Barke-house Hill points to a tanner having erected his bark house thereon, and we know that the ducking stool was for many generations situated on a pond that occupied a portion of the site of Cross-street Chapel, and its graveyard. Mr. Radcliffe evidently owned land in the Market Place, for we find that in 1568 he was ordered by the Court Leet to pay a third portion of the cost of filling up a hollow place near to the Conduit, and this would probably account for an exception being made in his case in connection with another resolution previously referred to. On another occasion, in 1562, he was ordered to "*make a sufficient concourse so that the water that courseth down the Market-stead Lane or elsewhere, that has been accustomed to pass the Booths may pass.*"

This is a reference to the ditch that formerly ran down the Lane through the Market Place, along Millgate, and into the Hanging Ditch, which Mr. Radcliffe had evidently been

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interfering with. At another time complaint is made about the condition of the path from his land to the Ackyres Mydinge, and in 1599 he was ordered to replace the ducking stool in the "*old accustomed place.*" He evidently did not care to have this institution situated so near the windows of his mansion. The final entry was made on March 27th, 1600, when we read that William Radclyffe, gent, had "departed," and that his son, William Radclyffe, was his heir and of full age.

## **PART IV**

### **MANCHESTER'S FIRST EXCHANGE**

#### **Picture 2 in Gallery**

When Dr. Stukeley published his "Itinerarium Curiosum" in 1724, he gave some account of our town and its people as they appeared to him. Some of his remarks are worth reproducing, and we can safely do that, seeing that no member of the present generation need feel annoyed at any opinion expressed by the learned doctor:

*"Manchester," he says, "is the largest, most rich, populous, and busy village in England. There are about 2,400 families. Their trade, which is incredibly large, consists much in fustians, girth-webb, tickings, tapes, &c., which are dispersed all over the kingdom and to foreign parts. Then they have looms which work twenty-four laces at a time which were stolen from the Dutch." The inhabitants are 'of a good sort', being pretty much of the Old English temper, hearty and sincere in their affections and expressions, given to hospitality, very kind and civil to their friends, but very stiff and resolute against their enemies, well disposed to religion and very zealous in whatsoever they engage. Like the Athenians they are very much inclined to hear and tell news.*" It is very evident from this that so early as 1724, Manchester, although only a village, had created for itself a reputation as a manufacturing centre. It is, therefore, not surprising to find

that within five years, Sir Oswald Mosley, the Lord of the Manor,

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had conceived and carried out the idea of erecting an Exchange wherein chapmen and others might meet for the transaction of business. In 1729 the building was opened. It was a two-storied erection, the bottom portion being open like a Market Hall, and the upper portion consisting of a large room, which was used for a variety of purposes. It stood on land now forming a portion of the street, and faced the old buildings that occupied the site of Exchange-street. The front extended from a point near to where the big lamp is at the corner of Victoria-street in the direction of Market-street Lane, the opening to Smithy Door being on the one side, and the approach to the Market Place being at the other. How long it successfully served the purpose of an Exchange we do not know, but the opinions of another traveller who visited the town in 1764 are very interesting reading. He informs us that before the Exchange was built there stood near the conduit in the Market Place *"A very large cistern or reservoir, containing many tuns of water,"* which reservoir was *"about forty years ago taken away in order to stick in its place a building called the Exchange."* This reference to a reservoir at the bottom of Market-street Lane is very interesting, as there have survived very few of such notes. The Exchange, however, he describes as being very inconvenient for the purposes intended, for *"instead of affording a convenient walk for the merchants, it is crowded with butchers' stalls, and blocks up the road."* We are not, therefore, surprised to find that in 1792 it was pulled down. Aston's reference is to the point. He says : *"In 1792, the centre of the town was*

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*further improved by taking down the Exchange, which had seldom been used for the purpose its name seems to designate, but was a harbour for vagrants and dirt."*

Although a failure from a commercial point of view, there were associated with it a few incidents that should not be overlooked. There exists a play-bill dated 1743 announcing the production of a comedy entitled *"The Recruiting Officer,"* together with a pantomime called *"Harlequins Vagaries."* The charges for admission were, to the pit, eightpence, and to the gallery one shilling. A footnote says *"To prevent complaints or inconvenience from late hours we are determined to begin punctually at six o'clock."* In 1746 the heads of Captain Deacon and Adjutant Syddall were placed on the spikes on the roof of the Exchange, as a warning to all who might at any time feel inclined to follow the example set by the jacobites in 1745, when Charles Edward paid his unfortunate visit to Manchester on his way from the North, to London. The heads were afterwards secretly removed by Mr. Hall as has already been described. It is believed that the noted Charles Macklin was here in 1750, for at that time he was travelling through the North with a strong company, and in that year a number of dramatic performances were given at the Exchange. These included *"Macbeth,"* with all the original music, songs, dances, &c., the performance to be concluded with *"The Cheats of Scapin."* The tragedy of *"Cato"* was given on other evenings in the same room. Another variety of entertainment was provided there when Mr. Stevens lectured on *"Heads and Head-dresses,"* in 1773. The lecturer, who was well known in the town, was very

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much concerned with a matter which sounds curious to us. There was only one entrance to the room, and as he was afraid that it would be inconvenient for ladies and gentlemen to wait whilst gold was weighed, he therefore *"hoped they would bring silver or tickets."* The clipping of gold coins was of so common occurrence that it was advisable, wherever possible, to weigh gold when tendered in payment. Hence Mr. Cooper's concern. In September, 1773, the famous *"Breslaw"* and his new Italian Opera company performed in the room for the benefit of the Infirmary; and in 1775 Dr. Katterfelto, an eccentric mountebank, was here and stayed for a week, astounding the simple-minded burgesses with his conjuring powers. Enough has been

said to show that although the building may have failed as a commercial rendezvous, the upper room was of use for entertainment purposes. In 1792 the Exchange was pulled down and the site that it had covered was marked by raised stones, and in the corner nearest to Market-street Lane, a curious obelisk was erected which became known as "*Nathan Crompton's Folly*" ; Nathan Crompton, the boroughreeve of the town in 1792, having been responsible for its erection. In the Chetham Library is a water-colour drawing depicting it and its surroundings as they appeared in 1792. I give a reproduction of that very interesting picture, which will give the reader a better idea of what the Market Place looked like at the close of the eighteenth century, than would any amount of word description. It will be observed that on the pillar were fixed four of the curious oil lamps that were used for street lighting purposes prior to the introduction

**Picture 3 in Gallery, opposite p.153**

of gas. Above the four pillars which formed the body of the obelisk, was a block of stone which bore on the side facing down St. Mary's Gate, a list of the Court Leet officials of the year, "*and on the opposite side,*" says Aston, "*was a clock which we are told never pointed to truth.*"

Looking to Exchange Street corner was the Manchester Coat-of-Arms, whilst the King's Arms faced into the Market-place. The obelisk and the posts which stood at the corners of the site became the resort of the ne'er-do-weels and the won't-works of the town, earning thereby the unenviable designation of "Pennyless Hill." In 1816 the site was cleared and added to the Market Place.

After the pulling down of the old Exchange, and prior to the building of the second one, where did the business men of the town meet for the transaction of business? The question has often been asked, and by way of reply we are assured that they met on the covered space now known as St. Ann's Passage, but known by the older name of Old Exchange. Such, of course, is quite possible, but the fact that business men used the site at the opening of the last century did not originate the name as some people imagine. In the Palatine Note Book is an extract from the will of Henry Booth, of Hoghton,

County of Lancaster, gent., made January 23rd, 1741-2, to this effect : "*Whereas I am seised in fee simple of one moiety of a building in King-street called the Exchange, which lies open and is used as a footway or passage, for all persons passing and repassing for King-street, and the New Church in Manchester with a chamber or room over the said way or passage now used for an assembly*

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*room, now in the occupation of Robert Booth.*" It is a reference to the room built by Lady Ann Bland for the purpose of holding assemblies. Her ladyship died in 1735, and the part ownership of the property appears to have passed to Henry Booth. In any case the place name of "Exchange" existed nearly half a century before the building in the Market Place was demolished.

## **PART V**

### **MANCHESTER'S SECOND EXCHANGE**

Twelve years after the first Exchange was demolished, a movement was set on foot for the erection of a second one. It so happened that a number of old buildings standing in the Market Place, at the corner of Exchange-street were falling out of lease, and the owner, Lord Ducie, was induced to offer the site for the purpose. A subscribers' list was immediately opened, and in a very short time four hundred shares of fifty pounds each were taken up. Lord Ducie gave 592 yards of land without charge for street improvements, and the subscribers rented 1,200 yards on a chief rent of ten shillings per yard per annum. On July 21st, 1806, the first stone of the building was laid by George Philips, and early in the summer of 1808 the portion of the building opening into Ducie Place, and allotted to the Post Office was opened. The main portion of the building was opened in the following January, and in the course of the year the ground rent was

purchased from Lord Ducie, the land costing £12,000. At first it appears to have been intended that a tavern should be an important feature of the institution, and it is recorded that Richard Gristie was appointed bar-keeper on condition that he paid £40 per annum. Soon afterwards trouble arose, a manager having been appointed. A contemporary writing in 1816 refers to "*the bar of the tavern*"

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*originally intended to be appendant to the Exchange,"* inferring that the two had been separated. Early accounts of the building point to the primary importance of the news-room, the provision of a "*great variety of London and Provincial newspapers*" being held out as a great inducement to business men to become subscribers. In 1816 there were sixteen hundred annual subscribers at two guineas and one guinea. The two guineas was charged to subscribers resident within six miles of the Exchange, but those who resided beyond that radius with a warehouse in town were charged one guinea. The porter of those days was resplendent in a uniform, a description of which is on record. The resolution authorising the investment says "*That the porter's dress be provided at the expense of the fund, to consist of lac'd cock'd hat, a staff with silver head, on which shall be engraved the Manchester Arms and the words 'Manchester Exchange,' a dark blue cloak-coat with gold lace at the collar and gold twist at the button-holes to be made under the direction of Mr. Railton and Mr. John Walker.*"

Before leaving the earlier years of the Exchange some verses, written by James Watson, and published in "*The Spirit of the Doctor*," may be quoted.

**"MANCHESTER EXCHANGE."**

Sung by Mr. Barnes at the Theatre Royal, Manchester, in the course of an Evening's Entertainment by desire of the Subscribers of the Exchange, April 21st, 1809.

**Picture 4 in Gallery, opposite p.157**

Tune : "*Drops of Brandy*"

Scene : An exterior view of the Exchange, which changes to an interior.

What exchanges there are in this life,  
From this thing to that, and the other;  
Who would not exchange a bad wife,  
To better himself with another?  
Since Creation exchanges have been,  
Foul weather will change to the fairest,  
"But of all the exchanges I've seen,  
The Manchester 'Change is the rarest.  
Men meet here of various professions,  
To bargain and study the news,  
To add to the list of their possessions,  
And sometimes themselves to amuse;  
Here they settle the debts of the nation,  
From subject to subject they range;  
For business and recreation,  
Who can't but admire the Exchange.  
What exchanges by actors are try'd!

We thus our exchanging begin ;  
You've seen your Exchange's outside.

(Scene changes here).

By exchanging you see it within.  
Thus nightly your time to beguile,



Our motley tribe here will arrange;  
Bestow but your fostering smile,  
And we'll give you our thanks in exchange.

In 1812, when political feeling ran high, and when poverty and starvation were the lot of the working classes, a scene was witnessed at the Exchange which showed what opinions were held by the workers of Manchester. Untaught by innumerable warnings, a number of burgesses called a public meeting to be held in the Exchange Dining Room, on April 8th, to thank the

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Regent for retaining his father's ministers in office. The general feeling was that these men, owing to their policy, were directly responsible for the misery the country was enduring. Opposition to the passing of the resolution was announced, and the meeting was abandoned by poster on the morning of the eighth. Regardless of this, crowds began to assemble at nine o'clock in the morning, and later in the day took possession of the Exchange, smashing the furniture and doing other damage before the arrival of the-military when they dispersed.

Twenty-two years later another exciting scene took place. The Anti-Corn Law League had not yet come into existence, but the agitation against the Corn Laws was taking definite form. One day in March, 1834, the attention of Mr. Wrigley, the "Master," was called to the fact that a gentleman was making a speech in the room. In view of the position ultimately attained by John Bright, Mr. Wrigley's account is worth repeating. He wrote in his report : *"On Tuesday, at about five minutes after one, and during the crowded time of 'Change, my attention was drawn to the room, from which proceeded very great noise and disorder. Instantly went into the room, where I perceived a gentleman (whose name I was afterwards informed was John Bright, of Rochdale) standing on one of the seats and addressing the subscribers. I immediately approached Mr. Bright, and intimated to him that his mode of proceeding was an infringement of the laws of the institution, and requested him to desist from speaking in the room. He took no notice but proceeded with his*

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*address, amidst cries of 'Go on!' 'Turn him out!' ' Pull him down! Finding that I could not be answerable for the consequences if he were allowed to proceed, I took the liberty of removing him from the seat on which he was standing. I had no sooner done this than I was elbowed and pulled about by Mr. Bright's friends, who advised him to proceed. Mr. Bright still attempted to go on with his address, and I then informed him that if he were still determined to proceed, I must give him into the hands of the police. This latter threat had the desired effect, and a cry of 'Adjourn!' was raised, Mr. Bright and his friends leaving the room (in the rush to get out breaking a window), and addressed the people in Ducie Place from a staircase window near the 'Times' office."*

The building was twice enlarged. In 1836 it was proposed to absorb the Post Office, and a few years later this had been done, the size of the room being increased to 812 square yards, and the Post Office being removed to Brown-street. In 1845 further extension became necessary, and when in 1849 they had been completed the area of the room had been increased to 1737 yards,

and was said to be the largest covered space used for exchange purposes in the world.

It was in this room that Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort were welcomed, by John Potter, the Mayor of the City, who was at the same time knighted by the Queen. It is said that Her Majesty was very much impressed by the size and appearance of the room and said to her husband, "What a magnificent room." A few weeks later a letter was received from Sir George

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Grey in which he intimated Her Majesty's pleasure that the building should in future be known at

the Manchester Royal Exchange.

An educational movement associated with the building should be mentioned. In 1840 the Victoria Gallery for the Encouragement of Practical Science came into being, and met in the dining-room of the Exchange. Its objects were: (a) The formation of a collection of models and apparatus in illustration of arts and manufactures, (b) To afford demonstrations in a practical way of such scientific principles as admitted of direct application to the useful arts, (c) To make known the progress of science in its application to productive industry, (d) To stimulate research and foster inventive talent by honorary and pecuniary rewards, (e) To attract the younger members of the community to the acquisition of useful knowledge by affording them pleasure in the pursuit of it; and the superintendent and lecturer was William Sturgeon. In the winter of 1841-2 a course of twelve lectures was delivered and other valuable work was done; but no great amount of success attended the efforts of those who were responsible for this early movement in the direction of technical education.

In 1864 it was once more evident that further extension was imperative. The number of subscribers had risen to 5,520 and the list was still growing. A proposal that had been mooted twenty years before was again revived. A number of merchants urged that a site nearer to Mosley-street would be more suitable for the purposes of an Exchange, and as stated in a previous volume, land in King-street was ultimately purchased.

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This opposition was overcome, and the Exchange Committee having obtained Parliamentary powers to extend the building to Cross-street the matter was taken up with spirit. The extension meant the absorption of two thoroughfares - Ducie Place and Crow Alley; and the disappearance of the famous Newall's Buildings. Plans were invited and over fifty architects sent in sets; but those submitted by Mr. A. W. Mills, who had designed the extensions of 1838 and 1847, and his partner, Mr. Murgatroyd, were accepted. On October 2nd, 1871, the first portion was opened, but it was three years later when the building was completed. The area of the present room is 4,465 square yards, a vast area when compared with those of its predecessors.

The building in the Market Place that has served the purposes of a Coal Exchange and Cotton Waste Dealers' Exchange, was erected on the site of the covered fish market. The latter building was opened in 1828, and was built upon land that had hitherto been used for open butchers' stalls, or shambles, from which the street name is derived, the word "old" being added to distinguish them from the more modern ones erected in other parts of the town by the Lord of the Manor.

*to be continued next month*

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From Mike Hoddy (see August newsletter for first chapters and more details)

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 B.B. 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

CHAPTER XI

ROYAL CONNECTIONS

If I said that I felt as though I had grown up with the Queen and Princess Margaret, I would not be telling an untruth. Despite their distance, it means that for me and many others like me, they were real and are real indeed. Pictures of the two little princesses graced the walls of many homes in Oldham. Women spoke of them kindly for they epitomised innocence, purity and hope for the future. The progress of Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret Rose (always with the 'Rose') was avidly followed and upon mention of the latter little princess came the maternalistic sound of "awwww.....". In homes generally could be found pictures of many members of the Royal Family and in "Gift Books" which had nothing to do with coupons or catalogues. Souvenirs of Royal occasions were in evidence as were pictures of the reigning Monarch in many homes. We had a souvenir ash tray with the portrait of HRH The Prince of Wales on it. It was never used as an ashtray even when cigarette smokers visited us. I was very conscious that the veritable father-figure, King George V was on the Throne and that the Prince of Wales was a popular figure. Subsequent reading has led me to believe that much was kept from the masses. Everyone knew their station in life and if we were poor, we at least had the security of knowing where we stood.

The first Royal visit I recall being made to Oldham was on the occasion of the opening of Higginshaw Gas Works, then thought to be the last word in coal gas production. I was quite young and for some reason was taken by an uncle to wait in the crowd-lined streets. I was lifted up in time to see a large dark limousine go by. I failed to see HRH Prince George, later to become the Duke of Kent. I had to wait until I could see a picture in the next day's Oldham Chronicle.

By the mid-thirties, many homes had home-built wireless sets which operated from a mixture of dry batteries and wet accumulators which required to be recharged from time to time. This advance in technology undoubtedly brought the Royals nearer to the masses. Among the women, excitement grew as news and pictures appeared in the newspapers of Princess Marina. She was a real Grecian Princess who was soon to marry Prince George. By then it was a far

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cry from Higginshaw Gas Works. We were told that the most fashionable colour that season was Marina Blue, not that it affected most women in Oldham who could not afford to be fashion conscious for themselves. This Royal mid-week Wedding was the first ever to be broadcast by the British Broadcasting Corporation. School children were given a day's holiday and across the town, women gathered around primitive wireless sets to hear the voice of the young Princess say, "I will." The womenfolk discussed at length afterwards and some said that she sounded nervous but, no matter how she had sounded, it was an outstanding success. Despite the privations of the times, there appeared to me to be strong royalist support.

King George V was the first Monarch to speak to his subjects on Christmas Day and his speech became a must for everyone. Most people seemed to believe in the 'Greatness' of Britain and its Empire and here was the voice of the King to confirm it. We were very simple and unsophisticated folk in those days.

In 1935, the Nation celebrated the Silver Jubilee of the reign of King George V when, in addition to a day's holiday from school, each child received a commemorative box of chocolates and a specially designed propelling pencil with the Royal Crown on the end. The day dawned glorious and sunny and was far too nice for me to stay indoors to listen to the Royal progress to St. Paul's Cathedral and the Service of Thanksgiving which took place there. Instead, Gordon and I walked to Strinesdale Reservoirs playing our penny whistles as we went along. Next day we

saw the pictures of the Royal Procession in the paper and on our way to school we recounted the experiences and scenes we had witnessed locally the day before. Many local streets had been decorated in red, white and blue bunting and local street festivities varied although none was held in ours. I managed to persuade my mother to let me fly the Union Jack from our front bedroom window for the day. For the older folk it seemed to be a time to give thanks for 17 years of peace although I am not sure that all would have seen it that way in the mining towns of South Wales or on the streets of Jarrow on Tyne. To many, however, it was an excuse to celebrate something in what were still rather dreary days.

By the time King George V died, we were all avid listeners to the BBC. We listened to live variety shows, including the dancers, and the dance band was with us which I preferred to listen to rather than the very middle-class presentation of Children's Hour with which I could not identify. The Royal death hit us hard for immediately, all BBC programmes were cut except for news bulletins, religious broadcasts and interminable chamber music. The authorities knew what was good for us but to me they really overdid it. The funeral was heard live and at school we learnt of the

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traditions of our Royal heritage. "The King is dead. Long live the King".

I was in Senior School when rumours began to circulate concerning King Edward, who had not yet been crowned, and an American divorcee, Mrs. Wallis Simpson. Those of us with relatives in the States received copies of the American newspapers which were not quite so reticent or restricted as ours appeared to be. It seemed to me that the older folks were shocked. It was not cricket. As the news broke, it detracted from the worsening situation in Europe as Hitler continued to assert himself. For youngsters, the whole period of the mid-thirties was confusing and disturbing. Teachers tried to explain why we had come off the Gold Standard. To us simple souls, it all sounded bad. The Peace Movement was campaigning against rearmament and yet the war clouds were gathering and we were all conscious of that fact. In and between lessons, some of the more artistically inclined pupils began to design postage stamps for the Republic of Britain.

Suddenly and much to everyone's relief, it was all over. King Edward had abdicated and the noble Duke of York was to become King. Our two, now not so little princesses would then be in direct line to the Throne. The fact that King George VI had a speech impediment and had not been groomed for this kind of stardom seemed to immediately endear him to everyone. Once again a Sovereign was on the Throne and we could all begin to feel secure again. Or, could we?

Just before the war, King George VI paid a visit to Oldham but the reason for the visit escapes me. We were each given a handkerchief to wave when we reached the position allotted to us opposite to the Town Hall. The school party was instructed to assemble in the Central Gas Works Yard and so it was, my second viewing of Royalty in the flesh was to be associated with a gas works. I think that it was the king's cosmetic make-up which impressed itself most vividly upon me, perhaps tending to detract a little. We are now so used to the necessity for make-up for the stars of screen and television, performing as they do under strong lights, but in those days the solar brightness in Oldham was no greater than it is today.

Today we are familiar with the sight of famous people and royalty on our television screens but my Royal Connections no longer seem to be as strong as they did when I was a lad in Oldham. No doubt my imagination then was larger than life whereas we now see the Queen as a human being like ourselves. With full exposure, her task must be increasingly difficult.

CHAPTER XII

PLEASURE AND LEISURE

In the depression years, there was plenty of leisure time for many but not much pleasure in the sophisticated way we have come to expect it of more recent years. Much of what was done as leisure activity was self-generated either by individuals or groups of people. I was always attracted to a notice in the local press which was headed, Oldham Flying club, until I realised that it referred to pigeon fancying and not, as I had fondly hoped, to aeroplanes. Other men raced whippets which was a sort of poor man's greyhound. Simple, unfenced tracks without any of the trappings of a modern dog-track were in use in certain parts of the town. The YMCA Gymnastic Team gained renown while Oldham Police gained honours with a water polo team. Field and track events took place and were well supported as I remember when I once was taken to watch Rochdale Police Sports on the Rochdale Hornets Rugby League Ground.

Oldham was fortunate to have a number of public swimming baths situated in various quarters of the town, all provided by the Corporation. For an inland town of its size, quite a high proportion of its population could swim at an early age as we were offered lessons in Junior School. At the Lowermoor Baths, I took my first instruction under the tuition of a man who was widely known throughout the town and who rejoiced with the name of Professor Onions. Hardly of present day Olympic standards, the Baths were rigorously controlled. In addition to facilities for swimming, slipper baths were available since the majority of homes were without bathrooms. Usually the only opportunity at home was the use of a galvanised tin bath which might hang on a nail in the backyard until required on a Friday night. Some public baths had facilities for laundering of clothes. For a minimal charge, a woman might take her dirty linen to the Wash-house where limitless supplies of hot and cold water were available. Unfortunately, the water in the plunge, as the swimming pool was known, was not as frequently changed as it would require to be today. Consequently, there was a descending tariff as the week wore on. By Friday evening and Saturday morning, boys could enter for as little as three half-pence. By

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that time, the water bore a close resemblance to pea soup but I never learnt of anyone catching anything more dire than verrucas.

Ladies could only go bathing on certain days during the earlier part of the week except at the Waterhead Baths. Here, though far from the topless beaches of today, on Tuesday afternoon and evening ladies could actually bathe at the same time as men, in the same pool. Males were permitted to attend only when accompanied by a female. Lone males were not admitted and only full costumes could be worn by both male and female although, for females, nothing else then existed. The dressing cubicles, male on one side and female on the other, were hung with heavy curtains. In addition, the entire pool was enclosed round the edge with a similar heavy waterproof curtain. My father did not swim but my mother did and so occasionally, I was able to show her my progress in swimming. Only since leaving Oldham have I appreciated how well blessed we were in those days to have such facilities for indoor water activities.

Fêtes and carnivals were regularly organised by churches and other bodies including the local Co-operative Society. Tickets for the latter could be obtained by any child at a highly subsidised price from the Co-op Library. On the appointed Saturday afternoon, hordes of children assembled in Greenwood Street. We loved joining in processions and so we marched off to the strains of a Brass Band through Clarksfield where, on reaching Lees Road, we were joined by a contingent from Lees which was headed by Zion Methodist Scout Military Band. We progressed to Mumps and then turned up the main road towards Greenacres Hill and on to the Borough Ground, now the home of Oldham Cricket Club, at Watersheddings. There, besides our fond parents, we found refreshments which had been prepacked. Races were held, the bands

played and a display was given by Miss Lancashire's Nippies, a local troupe of girl dancers, as distinct from the clog dancers previously mentioned. It was an occasion which helped to brighten up our lives considerably.

Oldham (Rugby League FC) and the 'Latics' (Oldham Athletic AFC) had their supporters but there were also many Junior Continuation Leagues in both codes as well as the Sunday School League. Football pitches did not all come up to Football Association standards but nobody seemed to mind. Oldham Cricket Club had a lovely ground and shared dressing room facilities with the Rugby League Club whose ground was adjacent. I never understood, as a lad, why that magnificent cricket flat with a classic cricket pavilion, had to give way to a dog track. I was, however, to see the rather rough Borough Ground gradually transformed into a worthwhile, though rather more exposed, cricket ground after the Club moved to Broadbent Road, Watersheddings.

Hiking and cycling increased in popularity as the thirties advanced and it became a common sight at weekend as male and female hikers in khaki shorts and boots made their way towards the moors and packs of cyclists passed

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through the town with various Touring Clubs. Oldham was also a hive of activity in a number of back-street gymnasia where boxing, weightlifting and wrestling were practised. Professional boxing contests were regularly promoted by a well known local furniture dealer, Mr. Joe Diveney.

Bands were legion as almost every church or chapel had its Scout or Brigade Bugle Band. Brass Band Clubs flourished and names like Waterhead, Glodwick, and Oldham Rifles, all Prize Bands in their Class, immediately spring to mind although there were many more. It was always told of the Glodwick Prize Band, which had become known as the Shamrock Band, that after playing at an Irish function, the players ate the table decoration with their salad tea. I well remember visiting the band room at Glodwick since at one time, Gordon's father had played a B flat Bass with the Band.

Operatic and dramatic groups performed throughout the town and various churches and schools were renowned for their high standard of musical comedy or Gilbert and Sullivan productions. Choirs and musical societies gave concerts while pantomime was presented in almost every church hall at one time or another during the winter months.

In addition to the more musically inclined groups came the Dinky Jazz Bands with drums and cazoos and somewhat garish uniforms. Like most other pursuits, these jazz bards have now developed their own cult and can still be seen and heard at most big carnivals today. All groups met a need in the community.

Not everyone was inclined to participate in activities themselves but a high percentage of the populace regularly turned out to watch other people perform. Any parade, be it Scouts, Brigades, Territorials, Churching of the Mayor or Remembrance Day, brought crowds onto the streets in a way that does not seem to happen today. I suppose that it was free entertainment and everyone took full advantage of it.

The professional stage was not neglected in Oldham. Long before the Coliseum Theatre became the Repertory Theatre Club where many budding stars commenced their stage careers, I remember being taken to see a production there entitled, "The Baby in the Coal Scuttle". I have not the faintest idea what it was about. The Grand Theatre, which later became the Gaumont Cinema, regularly staged musical comedy, plays and pantomimes in season. Taken to see "The Girl Friend", I was not impressed with the idea of a blue room where he could smoke his pipe all day, so much as the back end of an American railcar which protruded onto the stage. If I was lost in the fantasy of the show it was not the plot but the disappearance

from the stage of that rail coach, to the accompaniment of railway engine noises off. The Palace Theatre, later to become the Odeon Cinema, The Theatre Royal and the Empire, all contributed something to the town's culture and entertainment. Many famous names of Vaudeville had appeared on those boards before I had been born. Most 'Theatricals' as the stage people

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were known, lodged in the Greengate Street area of Oldham. There was great interest aroused in the boys of the Central School when it was learnt that a troupe of girl dancers, who were performing in the town that week, had arrived at the Council school on the level below. There was much peering over the wall into the girls Playground but our interest did not lie in their academic well-being. One wonders what sort of education those young itinerants gained in the long term for the week after, they were gone. It was sad, however, to see the theatres close one by one as Hollywood took over.

Talkies first arrived in Oldham at the Grosvenor Cinema on Union Street but, as a small child, the only cinema I had known was the Savoy Cinema on Greenacres Hill. Even on the hill and well out from the town centre, there were then two cinemas. The Star Cinema was in Greenwood Street but was later converted into a terrace of houses. The cinema pianist was still around as I saw my first Tom Mix cowboy films and those of Rin Tin Tin, the wonder dog. Soon the pianist gave way to selected gramophone records played from a curtained off corner of the balcony. The Savoy was unique in that, at the planning stage, the architect had forgotten to provide stairs to reach the Gallery. It was not until construction had begun that the omission was discovered. It was quickly remedied but stairs then provided would never have been adequate in an emergency. As a result, at the end of each performance the fire escape doors were opened so that the audience might disperse more quickly than would otherwise be possible. I always tried to engineer that we sat on that side of the balcony as I regarded descent of the fire escape part of the treat.

The first talkie film I saw was "The King of Jazz" which began with a coloured cartoon which I preferred to the film itself. The climax came as John Boles sang the "Sons of the Dawn". Many people were transfixed by the silver screen and completely lost in its images. To some, it became a live show. My uncle Joe was taken to see his first musical film by my father and was so moved by the singing of Laurence Tibbett that he broke into spontaneous applause and cries of "Champion." Charlie Chaplin was already well known from the silent days when children could be heard calling out, "Behind you, Charlie" as the villain crept up upon our hero. Every new Laurel and Hardy film became a must, as did many others. British films had not yet made the grade and so the silver screen was dominated by American cowboys, gangsters and Broadway. The greatest cartoon character in those early days was, of course, Felix the Cat. According to the song about him, "He kept on Walking" in days long before Walt Disney had thought of Mickey Mouse. We were hooked on the new opiate of the silver screen.

Most cinemas held children's matinees on Saturday afternoon when admission was 3d for the Balcony with the two penny rush downstairs.

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It was possible to gain admission for as little as one penny at some back-street cinemas. Known as Bug-houses, it was said that it was guaranteed that one would come out scratching. All local chip shops advertised the cinema programmes each week and for this, the proprietor of the business received a free pass for himself and his family or tickets which enabled the bearer to attend for one penny and the pass. Aunty Ruth passed many such tickets on to my father when he was out of work. They, at least, got him and some of his friends out of my mother's way for an odd afternoon now and again.

One wet Saturday afternoon, Gordon, George and I decided to visit the Cosy Cinema, later to

become the Labour Club, in Bridge Street. We each had three pence and, clearly a decision had to be taken. Should we go on the tram to Rhodes Bank and go in the tuppennies, or should we walk all the way and go in the Thripennies? Popular vote decided in favour of the former and I found myself paying a half-penny fare on the tram before finding myself on the front row of the cinema in the midst of coughing, smelly kids with a crick in my neck as I tried to follow the plot on the screen. I did not enjoy that afternoon one little bit and was very glad to board the tram for Asa Lees's Foundry and home.

The cinema had come to stay but we did not go so frequently for us to lose the sense of occasion when we did. The recession was easing but economic constraints remained and money was just not available. In the main, pleasure and leisure remained simple and often home-made activities.

to be continued next month

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## From the e-Postbag

Another most welcome contribution from our regular contributor, Julie Schwethelm. In these *'Random Recollections'* she shares memories of growing up near the Robertson's Jam Works in Droylsden, her enthusiasm for collecting their badges and then, as a student, her experiences of working there in vacations.

### ***Golden Shred and Christmas Puddings***

At the beginning of the autumn term, when the more often than not wet and miserable summer gave way to balmy mid September days, we would be sweltering in our nylon school blouses with the classroom windows open. Fairfield High School for Girls is just a stone's throw away from where the jam works used to stand. Wasps taking a break from the attractions provided by masses of sticky fruit at the factory would swarm across the canal into the classroom and disrupt our geography or Latin lesson. Several years later many of the then twelve year olds would have grown up into college students, braving the descendants of those wasps, as summer workers at the jam works during the vacation.

Robertson's Jam Works was a significant employer in the area where I grew up. The factory was established in 1891, on the banks of the Ashton Canal, on Ashton Hill Lane. At its peak it employed around 1,000 workers. The 'Golly' symbol, introduced in 1910, became synonymous with Robertson's Preserves, and is especially remembered for the brooch collector scheme begun in 1928. With hindsight, we now understand and appreciate that such caricatures are not acceptable. But we shouldn't pretend history didn't happen and obliterate it from our memory. Instead, we should take a critical look from today's perspective, which is – fortunately – very different from the days not only of colonialism but also of my childhood. It's now understandable to see such caricatures with today's eyes as a racist representation. One lives and learns. Well, maybe some don't, but that's a wider story.

To get your badge, you would collect the paper tokens that came with each jar and when you had amassed ten of them, you would painstakingly stick them onto a special form from the grocer's and send it off to Robertson's stating your choice of enamelled badge or plaster figurine. I was a badge collector and I remember that my very first one was the guitarist character which I called the Beatles. Although I had many others, only this very first badge remains clearly in my memories of my badge collecting career.

Amazingly, this became the longest running collector scheme in history, not finishing until as late as 2001, when the 'Golly' was replaced by more acceptable Roald Dahl characters. That collectables scheme ended in 2006. Since 2010, Robertson's features the fictional Paddington Bear – famous for his love of marmalade – on its jars of Golden Shred marmalade.

One summer in the seventies, when my badge collecting days were a vague childhood memory, I was to get to know that Golden Shred world from the other side of the red brick factory wall as a summer student. In order to give us the benefit of the doubt when we were too slow, too clumsy or simply didn't understand the orders, management had decided to render the female summer students easily identifiable by making them don a pink turban. This in itself was something of a challenge. Despite having mastered the art of the perfect knot in a neck tie after seven years of school uniform, where not even the top collar button was allowed to remain undone, we were not acquainted with binding turbans out of large cotton squares. The "ordinary" workers, and most worked part time on either the morning or the afternoon shift - "You couldn't stick it here all day" - wore white turbans. The supervisors wore bright red ones, frequently reflecting their temperament. Red turban wearers were not to be argued with.

Each morning we would turn up for work, change into our white cotton overall, bind our pink turban and expectantly though not entirely eagerly wait for directions. They moved us around as needed so this meant that you more or less got to work in every nook and cranny of the factory. Working in the export department was one of the few jobs that was neither loud nor sticky as it mainly entailed wrapping and packaging goods. It was something that a summer student could get the hang of without too many regulars rolling their eyes and shaking their heads.

My first contact with jam was in "Acid Fruit", next to the Juice Room. It was strawberry jam time. The strawberries came in two states, frozen but still clearly recognizable, and floating in large barrels of some dubious acidic concoction, pale squashy fruits which were barely recognizable. It was the fumes that were most unpleasant. What exactly was in the barrels was one of those secrets, anyway you didn't ask questions like that if you were wearing a pink turban. One glare from a red turban would instantly divert your mind to other things, like getting on with the job you'd been assigned.

A young student with asthma not surprisingly had a severe attack on her first day on Acid Fruit and had to be escorted to the Nurse. I was sent to see the Nurse once when my hands came out in a rash while pushing orange peel through a shredder. Only Nurse was on holiday that week. They must have put me on another job but I don't remember, something drier most likely. Was it listening for stones in currants?

Listening for stones in currants is probably the funniest job I've ever had. You sat alone in a glass walled cubicle next to a vibrating metal belt along which currants, they were imported from Greece, would rattle by comfortably. But normally currants don't make much noise, currants are squashy, they don't rattle, or do they? The slightest sign of a rattle was the cue for action. As soon as you detected a rattling sound you stopped the belt immediately and diligently launched the search. You would then run your outstretched hand carefully across the currant-coated belt, gently wobbling the currants until you had isolated the offending stone. The stone was then dropped ceremoniously into a plastic basin. At the end of the day the red turban would critically inspect your basin and woe betide you if the stones barely covered the base.

Did we rinse the drained fruit with a hosepipe to wash off the acid, or was it something else we did? Probably inhaling those Acid Fruit fumes simultaneously effaced any memories of the work. To counteract the effects of the acidic fumes everyone working in that department was given a cup of milk. Just get it drunk and stop moaning. They were those thick chunky white earthenware cups they used to have at British Rail station buffets. The milk was of course tepid and reminded us of school milk, only this time we were being paid while drinking it.

The Picking Room was definitely a better place to be. This was where the mincemeat was being made in the summer months. You were allocated to a particular station: apples, peel, raisins, sugar, suet, spices. The apples were loaded onto a conveyor belt from outside and made their appearance through a hole in the wall. Then they would come thundering down onto

another belt before making their way to the chopper and ultimately the scales. One of the jobs on apples was to inspect them as they came tumbling down and immediately make a grab to remove any rotten ones, while trying to cut out as many bad parts as possible in the rest. This was indeed one of those acquired skills and the regulars did it with great dexterity, like every other job done by women wearing white turbans.

“Peel” was the most wasp-intensive of the jobs in the Picking Room. The orange peel came as a jellied mass in metal trays like the ones we were familiar with from school dinners, and was emptied into the large mixer with all the other ingredients at each round. The trick was to upturn the tray at exactly the right moment and angle so that the peel didn't land on the floor. Many a wasp breathed its last in a tray of Robertson's peel. If you were very quick you would try to extrapolate any such foreign bodies.

Suet was greasy work but required fewer skills. It was already cut into chunks and just needed to be weighed and then emptied into the mixer, two movements which any pink turban could master in the course of a day. There was no suet of course for mincemeat being manufactured for export to certain countries. We had a batch of Israeli mincemeat while I was there, so the suet station remained unmanned. Or unwomanned. The men, especially the male summer students, seemed to get the easier jobs and spent a lot of time standing around doing jobs such as waiting for a batch of Christmas puddings to be taken out of the oven with the help of a pallet jack.

Sugar was even more pleasant than suet. It wasn't even greasy. It was much more sustainable, though, as the sweet smell lingered in your nose and on your clothes. There were white turbans who firmly believed that just working in a sugary environment prevented you from losing weight, so diets were useless anyway. An original excuse.

Chuckling in raisins, currants and spices, a secret mixture in a plastic measuring jug, was another activity which only required basic concentration. But it was important that each post did their correct weighing and released their ingredients on the word GO as the mixer started to wheeze and another round of mincemeat was to be produced and sent on its journey into the filling room.

At the end of the afternoon shift all the machinery was hosed down. The suet and sticky fruit remains that had got away were washed onto the flagged floor, turning it into a skating rink. Almost all the regular women and girls wore clogs, the Lancashire kind with wooden soles and full leather uppers that tied up. They even sold clogs at the factory. There were not many places you could purchase a pair of good old Lancashire clogs by the mid seventies. Whether or not they were safer on that greasy wet floor is another kettle of fish altogether.

I dreaded having to work on the filling line because this was where you could make the maximum mess with the minimum effort. Whatever was in the machine and being filled into jars (jam, marmalade or mincemeat) or basins (pudding mixture) came out of the machine with uncompromising regularity. That's what being a machine is all about. But if you have never done this kind of job then you tend to be one step behind the machine. This is a sure recipe for a Big Squelchy Mess. The regulars on this line were usually younger girls who knew no mercy. I remember one afternoon two girls had a fight, nothing to do with pudding mixture oozing out of the nozzles onto the conveyor belt instead of into the basins, more of a private affair, probably a boyfriend issue, but I was shocked. I had never seen girls fight before. It was a good idea just to keep a low profile and try hard not to make a mess.

Sometimes we would be sent to the laundry or the jar wash. While the laundry was quiet, almost meditative, the jar wash was incredibly loud, as hundreds of empty jam jars rattled against each other. The hall looked directly onto the canal and I remember it being quite light in there, but the extra portion of daylight by no means made up for the overdose of noise. It was



the summer that the disco song “Car Wash” by Rose Royce was in the charts, so we would sing

“Working at the jar wash  
Working at the jar wash, yeah  
Come on and sing it with me, jar wash  
Sing it with the feeling now, jar wash, yeah”

But the jam jars definitely won in the competition for more decibels.

In the pudding room, rubbing out was quiet but rather boring. Actually it was recycling bits of Christmas pudding which had been subject to some mishap, for example not being shaken out of the basin properly, resulting in a crumbled mess. Waste not, want not. Anything that didn't make the grade of a Robertson's Christmas Pudding (except those that had fallen on the floor) ended up in a large bin and was grated manually to crumbs which then found their way back into the pudding mixture.

Shaking Out required considerable dexterity and was one of the more interesting jobs because you worked with a partner. Mine was Lynn, a tall girl with dark curly hair and considerably more experience in shaking out than I had. We enjoyed the occasions when we were both assigned to Shaking Out together. Once the steamed puddings were ready and had been taken out of the oven, the tower would be left for cooling and then we would systematically work our way down the stack, tray by tray, overturning in unison each pudding in its basin. Then came the most important action and the one which gave the task its name: when all the contents of a tray had been upturned we would grab it at each end and vigorously give it a couple of hefty shakes to loosen the puddings. The next step was whipping off each basin, carefully stacking it inside the previous one so that you ended up with a neat row of upturned dome shaped puddings, which looked like Christmas puddings, and one tall stack of empty basins.

Well that was the general idea. It took a great deal of practice to make sure the pudding stayed in one piece when you upturned it, and even more experience and speed to whisk off the basin. If you managed not to massacre any puddings and get all your basins in one pile without dropping any then you could boast that you had mastered the task of Shaking Out. It didn't help that the puddings were still piping hot and the basins greasy. Just to add to the comic effect, we wore oversized white cotton gloves for this task to protect our hands from the heat and for a better grip. We would occasionally, when there were no red turbans about, perform a little dance routine, waving our comical oversized cotton gloves in front of our faces.

Robertson's Jam Works in Droylsden closed in 2008 and the buildings were demolished in 2010. After a hundred and forty four years on the shelves, the complete range of Robertson's jams was phased out by the owners, Premier Foods, leaving only Golden Shred Marmalade as an iconic reminder of the legendary brand. In Droylsden absolutely nothing remains of that great era.

Many thanks, Julie, for sharing yet more memories. Keep them coming!

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MLFHS FACEBOOK PAGE

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

since the last newsletter :

* National Archives Blog - 17th-century manorial records: An unexpected find
[HERE](#)

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\* A journey into the dark heart of London - The Match Girls  
[HERE](#)

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* Grace's Guide To British Industrial History - Richard Johnson and Nephew of Bradford Ironworks, Manchester, and Ambergate Wire Mills, near Derby

[HERE](#)

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\* Working Class Movement Library - Welcome to one of the most unusual libraries in the world. Discover the stories of working people's struggles to be heard. Explore the past, change the future...

[HERE](#)

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* Manchester Museum to reopen with 'ordinary folk' co-curating new gallery

[HERE](#)

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\* Macclesfield silk mill

[HERE](#)

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* Ancestral Memory Is It Fact or Fiction?

[HERE](#)

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\* The 11 Most Haunted Places In Greater Manchester

[HERE](#)

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

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

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**PETERLOO : the Bi-Centenary**



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

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Although the long-anticipated Bi-Centenary has come and gone, there are some Peterloo websites still active with 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](#)

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**Need Help!**

## Oldham Local Studies and Archives

### 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 previously, 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 archives please visit :

[https://www.oldham.gov.uk/forms/form/891/en/local\\_archives\\_document\\_order\\_form](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](mailto: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

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

Some Useful Sites

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

Some Local Archives

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

Derbyshire - [Local & Family History](#)

Leeds - [Leeds Local and Family History](#)

Liverpool Archives and Family History – <https://liverpool.gov.uk/archives>

Manchester - [Archives & Local History](#)

Oldham - [Local Studies & Archives](#)

Oldham - [Oldham Council Heritage Collections](#)

Preston – www.lancashire.gov.uk/libraries-and-archives

Stockport – www.stockport.gov.uk/heritage-library-archives

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

York – www.york.ac.uk/borthwick



For the Gallery

From: *Manchester Streets and Manchester Men, Series 3,*
by Thomas Swindells pub. 1907

1.

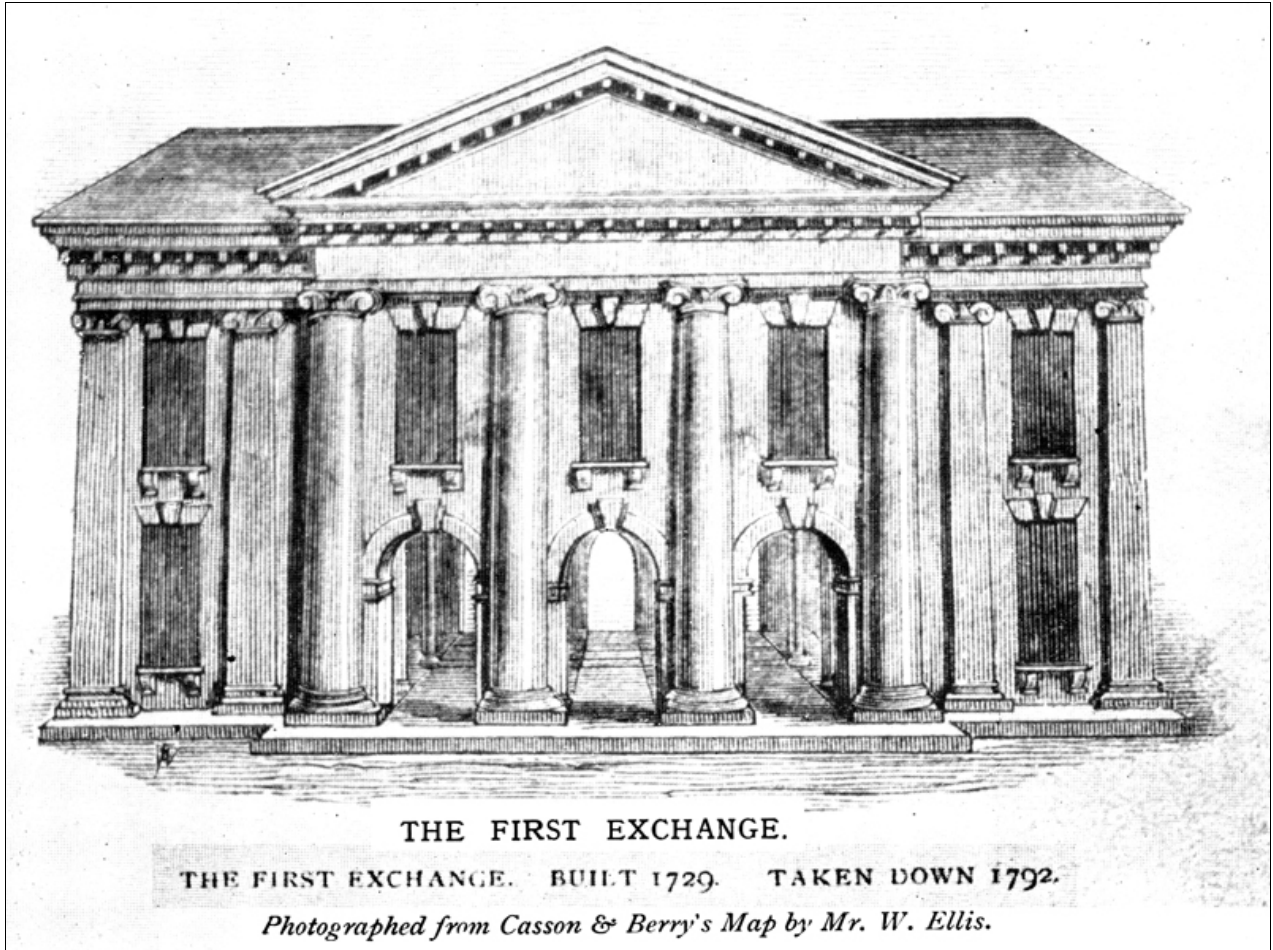


THE MARKET PLACE IN 1810, SHOWING THE CROSS AND THE PILLORY.

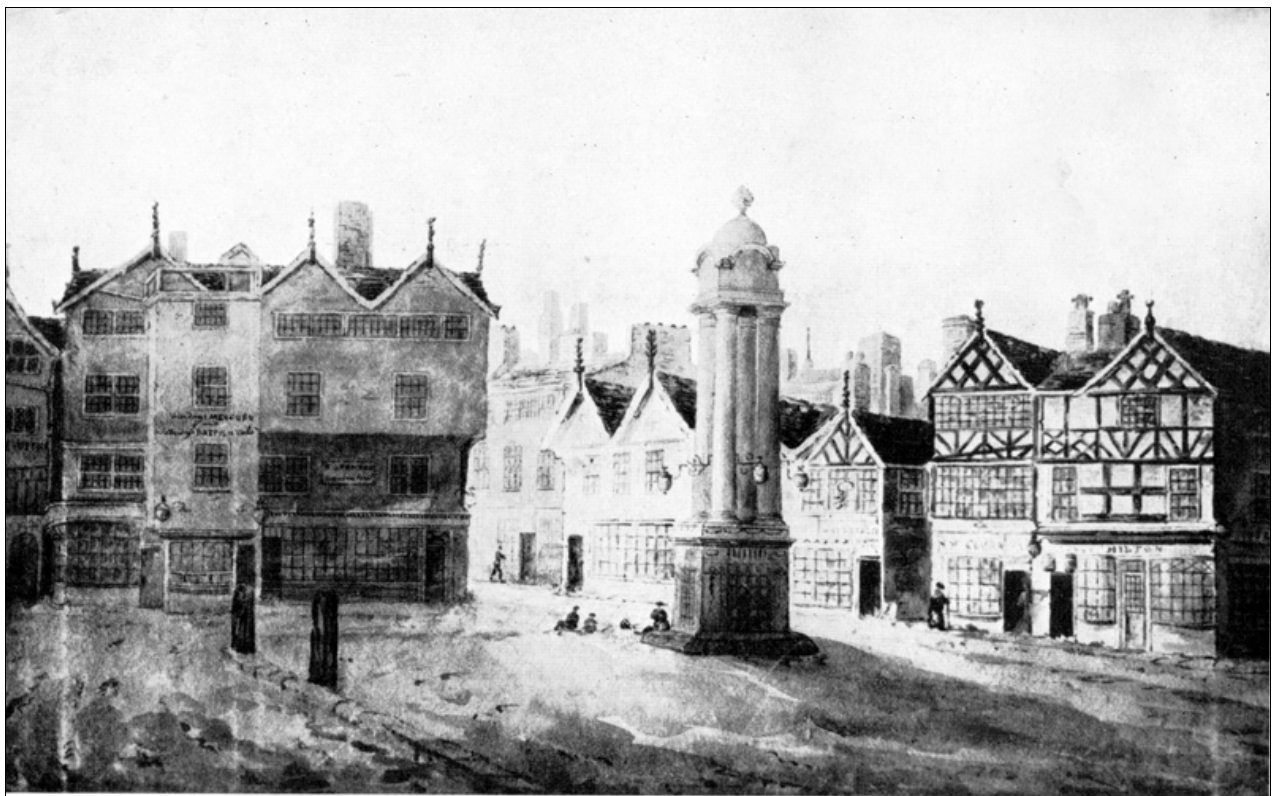
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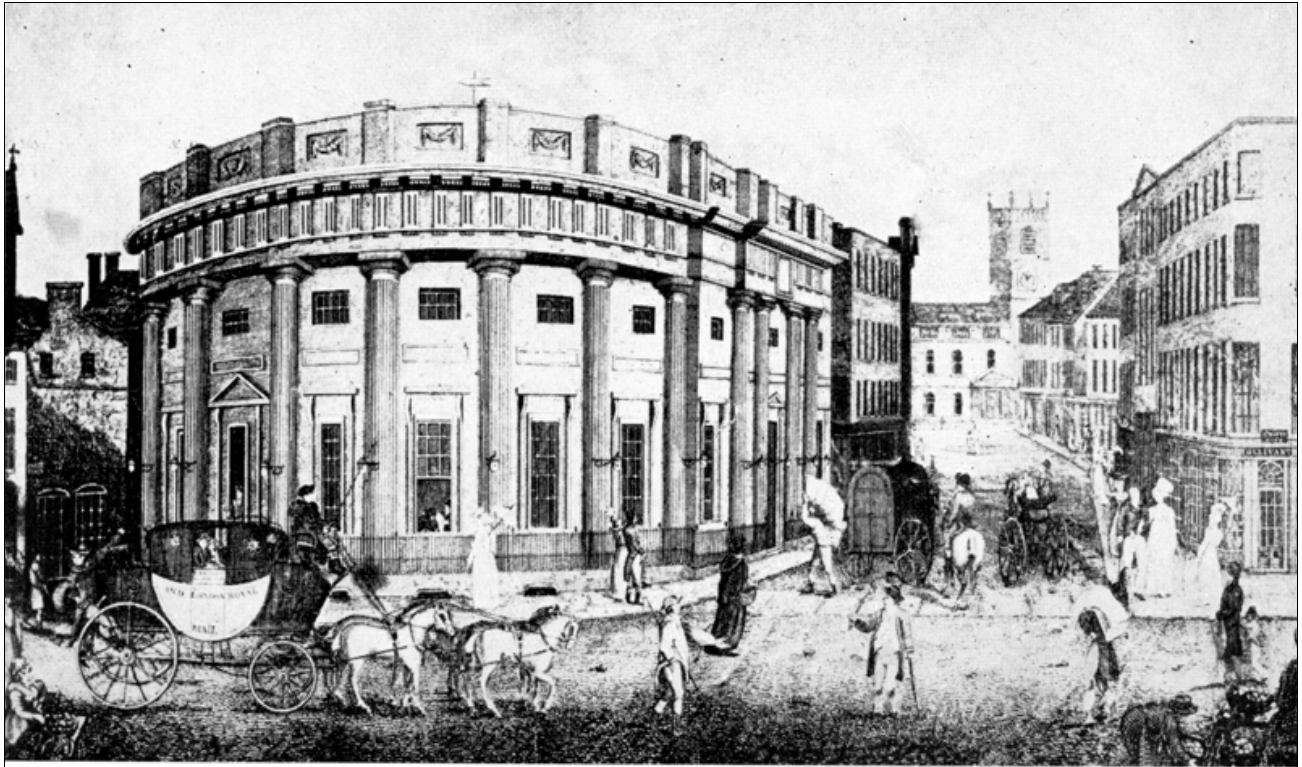
Photograph by Mr. W. Ellis

2.



3





THE SECOND EXCHANGE.

Photographed from an Old Print by Mr. W. Ellis.



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