



LANCASHIRE LOCAL HISTORY FEDERATION

NEWSLETTER ISSUE NO. 35, MAY 2021

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VIEW FROM THE CHAIR

As we approach the end of lockdown and the easing of restrictions – all being well, as nothing is guaranteed – we can begin to be more optimistic about a return to some sort of normality. For many of us that will mean being able to use archive services and libraries once again, albeit with quite a few limitations as to numbers, opening times, seating arrangements, and so forth. I have a long list of ‘things to do when it’s possible to visit’ because, as we all surely know, there’s a limit to what is available online. We can search the catalogues and identify what we want to see, but often we can go no further because so much that is relevant is accessible only in ‘real life’. Nothing could be further from the truth than (and this is something I am told quite often) “It’s all online now, isn’t it?”. No, it isn’t, and it will be many a long year before that is even halfway the case.

Of course, the pandemic has had other consequences. One of them is the way in which many people – including me - have had to adapt to virtual meetings, talks and events, with all the challenges of muting and unmuting, turning the visuals on and off and, inevitably, making sure that the background is respectable. All those beautifully neat shelves of books, tidy files and well-dusted ornaments and objects are in

marked contrast to what I reveal to the world... books piled on top of other books, papers in heaps, and miscellaneous things I've dumped on top of other miscellaneous things because of a lack of space.

However, meeting by Zoom or Teams has had unanticipated benefits for many organisations, including local and family history societies. I've given talks attended by people in New York, Toronto, New Zealand, California and the South of England - something that is obviously impossible in normal circumstances. And people who are housebound, or can't travel to evening events, can join. But I confess that although the experience of virtual meetings and online talks has been much more positive and indeed enjoyable than I had initially expected, it is still not the same as a real meeting with real three-dimensional people! So, I'm looking forward to the autumn, when talks in village halls, church halls, school classrooms and university and college lecture theatres can resume properly - at least that is what we can but hope.

NEWS FROM ARCHIVES

LANCASHIRE ARCHIVES

The BIG news from Lancashire Archives since the last newsletter is that we are now open again for visitors. We'd love to see you again.

Arrangements are as last year – advance booking and ordering of documents; a limited number of seats, microform readers and PCs; two sessions each day from 9.30 to 2.30 and from 1.30 to 4.30. Since re-opening on 13 April we have been quite busy, so please do look at the website and book in advance, and don't make travel arrangements until your booking has been confirmed. You can find the link [here](#). We are intending to re-open on the second Saturday of each month from 8 May (more details are on the website).

Although we had very few visitors last year and produced only 13.5% of our annual document production target, we did deliver 1792 copying orders (a 40% increase on 2019/20) and there were more than 3.5 million views of our documents on Ancestry - a million more than we might have expected. So we believe that, in spite of the fact that our doors were closed and there has been undoubted inconvenience and disappointment to visitors and volunteers alike, we have managed to support the research interests of a huge number of people.

Jacquie Crosby - Archives Manager

Two large collections of Lancashire Archives records have been added to Ancestry:


Lancashire, England, World War II Home Guard Records 1940-1945 [ref HG].

The database contains 60,000 records and 5,000 images. Home Guard members are listed by battalion; their records contain information such as a person's enlistment, transfers, promotion and resignations. Some records link back to the 1939 Register, thus providing even more biographical details.

Archdeaconry of Richmond, England, Church of England Marriage Bonds, 1611-1861. [The Archdeaconry covers Lancashire north of the River Ribble, and parts of present-day Cumbria.] The collection includes photographs of the collection of marriage bonds and allegations [ref ARR 11]. Bonds were completed by a prospective bridegroom if he intended to marry by licence, generally in circumstances where the couple wanted to marry quickly, were under 21 years of age, or were not normally resident in the parish in which they intended to marry. Bonds usually record names, ages, occupations, residences, condition (e.g., bachelor, spinster) and the proposed location of the wedding. The records can be searched by name, or the images can be browsed by year, with the documents arranged alphabetically by the surname of the groom.

Talks – past and future

**Discovering the Union Workhouse
with Alan Crosby**



(Image from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Cotton Town digitisation project: www.cottontown.org)

Session 1 - Exploring the system
Session 2 - Revealing the documents

These two talks, given online to a large and appreciative audience last month, were recorded, and can be watched at:
<https://www.flarchives.co.uk/events.html>

Lunchtime talks

The popular talks programme continues at 12.30pm on Fridays as follows:

- 28 May: Looking at Jewish archives for Community History month
- 25 Jun: Horrockses and international trade
- 30 Jul: Food related archives

Booking details will be available in *News from the Archives* or email archives@lancashire.gov.uk for further information.

The Friends of Lancashire Archives support and promote the work of Lancashire Archives and encourage the use and enjoyment of archives as well as ensuring that they are safeguarded for the future. For just £10 a year you can join them [Join FLA - Friends of Lancashire Archives](#).

NEWS FROM MEMBER SOCIETIES

HISTORIC SOCIETY OF LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE

Friday 21 May 17.30 The Mike Stammers memorial lecture: Salt, stone and steam: making the Mersey a coastal shipping hub

The Mersey developed as the west coast's major centre for shipping because of its geographical position, and as an outlet for industrial products from the north and Wales. It grew because of its trading links with Ireland and as an Atlantic gateway. The talk outlines how these and other factors contributed to the growth of Liverpool and other Mersey ports. (*Free tickets available via Eventbrite.*)

Wednesday 16 June 14.00 Discovering Coccium: an archaeological account of Roman Wigan. Ian Miller, Lead Archaeologist, Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service, Centre for Applied Archaeology, University of Salford.

The course of the Roman road, 150 Roman miles long from Ravenglass to Whitchurch, outlined in Iter X of the Antonine Itinerary, has long been debated. One of the places mentioned is named Coccium. The first archaeological evidence for Roman settlement in Wigan was not uncovered until the 1980s when the Greater Manchester Archaeological Unit carried out excavations in the town centre. Two subsequent excavations uncovered a nearby Roman bath house; these and further evidence lends considerable weight to the suggestion that Wigan did originate as Coccium. This event presents the current understanding of Wigan's fascinating Roman past. (*Free tickets available via Eventbrite.*)

MANCHESTER GROUP OF THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY



Thursday 22 July: Walking tour of Oldham town centre

Led by Steve Roman for Manchester Region Industrial Archaeology Society (MRIAS). FREE.

Meet at Oldham King Street Metrolink stop (OL8 1EU) at 14.00.

The walk will include:

- The Greek revival Oldham Town Hall (1841, J. Butterworth; extended 1879-80, G. Woodhouse and E. Potts)
- Oldham Parish Church (1823-27, R. Lane)
- George Street Chapel (1816)
- Oldham Lyceum and Art School (1856 and 1881)
- Hilton Arcade (1883)
- works by Edgar Wood, Alfred Waterhouse and a stained glass roof by Brian Clarke.

A visit to Gallery Oldham (OL1 1AL) will include the Oldham Panorama (1879), the original plans for the Town Hall and current plans for the Cultural Quarter.

The walk will finish at about 16.00 near Oldham Central and Mumps Metrolink stops. Lunch before the walk can be taken at one of the numerous cafes around Parliament Square. Oldham is a couple of degrees cooler than the Lancashire plain, and there will be some gentle uphill slopes.

Notes (including what to watch out for on the tram ride from Manchester) and maps will be provided if you send your email address to steve.roman@phonecoop.coop.

REGIONAL HERITAGE CENTRE

Online events (Booking essential)

Saturday 15 May 14.00-15.30 Ballad and song in the history of North West England. Four inspiring speakers (and singers!) have recorded their contributions in Lancaster University's new space in Lancaster Castle. Includes bonus clog dancing!

Saturday 19 June Refugees in the North West from the early 20th century to the present.

For more details visit [Regional Heritage Centre | Lancaster University](#)

SKELMERSDALE HERITAGE SOCIETY REBORN: A FIRST YEAR'S JOURNEY



The original society ran very successfully for many years, holding events and managing a website with an extensive archive of photographs and documents. Unfortunately, the society folded in the 2000s as membership dwindled with age and other commitments. Much of the archive was dismantled and distributed among other organisations and the website closed down with the domain name being bought up by an advertising concern.

In 2019 a few interested people gathered together in the Winchester pub to talk about whether it was possible to reinstate the society and from this meeting a committee was formed. Although we had strong interest from the local community our initial path was not an easy one.

We began with an initial sum of just £7, but had enough photographic material and artefacts between us to mount a small display. Our first public ventures were having stalls at Lathom Heritage day and Tanhouse Fun Day which brought in small amounts in donations, and a bucket collection at our local ASDA which raised £220.



We didn't realise how difficult it is nowadays to set up a bank account for an organisation, but after several months of paperwork and problems we succeeded, thanks to the dogged determination of our treasurer who lost a great deal of hair in the process!

Another problem was finding a suitable home for meetings, so that local people could attend events to participate in celebrating the town. Skelmersdale has suffered badly from a poor media image for many years, so as well as conserving the mining history of the town we also wanted to raise the profile of the new town which now has a history of its own after nearly sixty years of development.



*Victoria Colliery
Red Rose Collections (image 227415)
Lancashire County Council*

After various false starts we found a suitable home in the Wardens Club who kindly host our meetings for free in a designated room and have provided a convivial atmosphere for gatherings. We began with monthly meetings with a speaker each time; subjects have included Charlie Mason's lemonade factory and shop, George Orr's Skelmersdale postcard collection and David Ball's company Glassball's images of the new town. These meetings proved so successful that we rapidly outgrew the size of our room at the Wardens and were negotiating to use the larger concert room when along came Covid.

We already had a thriving Facebook page and had instituted a small membership fee which gave access to a monthly newsletter which we filled with articles and photos about the old town and the new, inviting contributions from anyone with a story to tell about the town as well as from our members. In addition our Chairman began a series of 'Skemcast' interviews with various people around the town, talking about their experiences of life in Skem. The regular input from these has enabled us to maintain interest and increase our membership despite being unable to hold meetings or attend events. We were concerned that we would lose members because of the Covid restrictions, but at the end of our first year virtually all our existing members renewed plus a good number of new members joining each month.

Although we lost the regular income raised by raffles, etc. at our meetings, we raised a good sum through the sale of a heritage calendar towards the end of the year. A local printer produced a fantastic design at a very competitive price and the calendars were so popular that we had a second print run just in time for the Christmas holidays. We were especially pleased to be able to support a local business in this way and are planning to repeat the calendar project this year.

We applied for several grants in our first year to help us acquire a projector and screen, scanning and photocopying equipment, and display boards. We received grants from the Eric Wright Trust and West Lancashire Borough Council's Community Chest but have so far been unsuccessful in applications for website funding. However, we are pursuing new opportunities this year and our major aims are to set up and run a website and to recommence meetings when possible.

Since we began, we have made many links in the local community and beyond. We have joined the Council for Voluntary Service, the West Lancashire Heritage Society and of course the Lancashire Local History Federation. We have made links with The Friends of the Tawd (River) and also with local family history societies. Further afield we have links with Glassball, which has created several arts projects in Skelmersdale, and also with the Milton Keynes New Town Federation.

We are now becoming quite well known in the town and several schools have been in contact for information to help them develop projects to teach their pupils about the town's history. Of course, at present we cannot go into schools to give talks but these will be possible once restrictions are lifted. Meanwhile our archive is proving really helpful in enabling teachers to construct suitable programmes. One of our main projects this year is the development of digital presentations on the history of the town that can be accessed by the general public, schools, colleges etc., from the new website. As we progress through our second year, we are amassing a considerable archive, both physical and digital, as more and more people donate photos, documents and articles, perhaps kept in cupboards and garages for many years. These are currently stored in various members' homes and it is a dream that perhaps in the future we could find some kind of museum space to store and display photographs and artefacts permanently.

When we look back to that first meeting in the pub we realise we have already come a long way and we look forward to whatever this year brings with enthusiasm. Our success can be put down to a strong and keen committee enthused by the wealth of support we have received from the people of Skelmersdale and from other organisations.

Carol Fenlon (Secretary, Skelmersdale Heritage Society)

WESTHOUGHTON LOCAL HISTORY GROUP

Dr David Kaye, Chairman of the group, outlines their formation and programme. The activities which they have managed to maintain or adapt despite the restrictions of Covid-19 may give encouragement to other groups. He also gives a brief sketch of the history of the town.

Westhoughton Local History Group (WLHG) joined the Federation in 2014, so we felt it was high time we introduced ourselves and our town.

WLHG was established in its current format in 2005. There had been a short hiatus before that but in essence the group was successor to two earlier local heritage societies of the 1980s and 1990s, which had somewhat different titles and *modi operandi*.



Since 2005 the group has grown substantially to the point where, prior to the frustrating cessation of activities as a result of lockdown, attendances at speaker meetings were averaging over 80, despite being one of very few heritage societies to meet *twice* monthly.

Part of an audience for one of the regular speaker meetings

Based at Westhoughton Library (where our archives, merchandise, exhibition materials etc., are housed) our eclectic activities embrace *presentations* (by in-house and guest speakers), a busy and varied *schedule of excursions, social gatherings*, and a proud history of *publications*, ranging from cards and prints, through brochures, booklets and books, to AV items.

We stage regular exhibitions in our base at the library. They frequently mark local, regional or national events and anniversaries.

Part of the exhibition staged in 2018 to mark the centenary of the end of WWI.



The straitjacket in which we have been forced to exist for over a year now has presented challenges which are of course ubiquitous, but we have striven hard to maintain as much momentum and interest as possible amongst our membership. The key 'communication vehicles' in this regard are our website www.westhoughtonhistorygroup.org.uk, our frequent e-newsletter (*The Howfen Herald* - adopting the town's dialect name, a corruption of Houghton) and our closed Facebook group. With regard to the last-named, at the commencement of the March 2020 lockdown, the group was embryonic, with around 50 members, but has now increased well over ten-fold, a development which we feel delivers a number of key messages, not the least of which is that interest in local history is vastly more widespread than attendances at meetings suggests.

Shortly after the first lockdown we commenced fortnightly committee meetings via Zoom (double the normal frequency, reflecting our commitment to implement as many measures as possible to maintain the integrity of the group, and to continue stimulating interest in our local history). In addition, shortly before the end of 2020, we introduced monthly Zoom speaker meetings, the popularity of which has, gratifyingly, steadily increased.

WESTHOUGHTON, a town of some 25,000 souls, is a constituent part of the Metropolitan Borough of Bolton, itself one of 10 boroughs comprising an entity some insist on calling Greater Manchester, and is located approximately midway between Bolton and Wigan. But speak to any true Howfener or 'Keawyed' ('cow head': the derivation of the moniker being a story for another day!) and one will be left in little doubt that Westhoughton is most certainly part of 'deep Lancashire', a contention firmly borne out by the distinctiveness of the local dialect, which has a Lanky pedigree second to none. With the demise of the mills and the mines, the richness of the local lingo doesn't echo around the town as extensively as it once did (who was it who wrote: "*If you want to hear real Lancashire dialect these days, you need to visit an allotment in Blackrod or a pigeon loft in Westhoughton*"?) but its enduring allure is perpetuated in the poetry and prose bequeathed by several Westhoughton notables, including Brian Clare and Ernie Ford.



As with its '*speykin*', Westhoughton's history is also very rich, and whilst it may be stretching a point to claim it started with the Romans, they *were* here (A.D. 79), if only briefly, building a stretch of the Manchester to Lancaster road (now the A6) on their way to points north. But it was not until the 13th century that the area was permanently settled, initially via a manor owned by the Abbots of Cockersand, and for the following 500 years the evolving *Halcton / Westhalcton / Westhalghton / Westhalton / Westhaughton / West Houghton / Westhoughton* developed primarily as an agrarian entity. Accordingly, the population was modest, being no more than 3,000 at the start of the 19th century.

*Town Hall c. 1910 (Image 2002.138)
Bolton Library & Museum Service*

Coal had been discovered (and dug in primitive fashion) in the 16th century (Westhoughton lies in the once-prolific South Lancashire coalfield) and in the Industrial Revolution and beyond was to have a major impact on the town and its people. Deep-mining of coal prospered, and at its peak Westhoughton had around 30 collieries operating almost 100 pit shafts, although the last one closed as long ago as 1936. Prior to that, in common with much of history the world over, it was a tragedy that resulted in arguably Westhoughton's most enduring piece of history – the Pretoria Pit disaster of 1910, when an underground explosion caused the instantaneous death of 344 men and boys.

In addition to coal mining, Westhoughton was in the van of the Lancashire cotton industry; its first purpose-built weaving mill, erected in 1804, was one of the earliest in the country to be equipped with steam-powered looms. But because of the threat to the livelihoods of the multitude of local handloom weavers, the mill was a prime target for Luddite action, and in one of Westhoughton's 'big stories', it was burnt down in 1812, leading to a sorry tale of retribution, which involved hanging and transportation.

This adversely impacted the cotton industry locally for many years, with the next textile activity, somewhat surprisingly, being silk weaving, when John Chadwick bravely erected another mill for this purpose in 1840. Eventually cotton made a comeback and the town once had seven large mills engaged in spinning and weaving before the industry as a whole ended.

Perhaps in a future newsletter we can expand upon the Pretoria story, and also touch on more of our town's historical highlights, which include the eight centuries of the Hulton dynasty, a Civil War skirmish, John Wesley's two sermons preached at Wingates, the close link with the earliest days of the railways via the Bolton - Leigh line (1828), and Wingates Band, one of the UK's oldest and finest, which was established in 1873.

WHITWORTH HISTORICAL SOCIETY The March edition of the newsletter contains several interesting articles. www.whitworthhistoricalsociety.org.uk

Pure and constant – the mantra of Thomas Hawksley FRS Hawksley, a self-taught civil engineer, was one of the people responsible for carrying out huge projects to provide clean water in the 19th century, thus contributing to the elimination in this country of water-borne diseases such as cholera. Rochdale Corporation sought his help in the construction of Cowm reservoir. The account details its construction, a disastrous incidence of contamination in 1975, and its present-day attractive appearance.

The Village Wheelwright An article about the role of the local wheelwright and the skill involved in making a cartwheel.

Bombs fall at Facit An account of what happened when a stick of incendiary bombs fell near St John's church on 20 October 1940.

NEWS ROUNDUP

COMMUNITY ARCHIVES AND HERITAGE GROUP

Friday 21 May 10.30: Digital skills: Getting your collections online

A workshop by Jack Latimer. Subjects will include how to provide online access to collections; whether a digital catalogue is needed and what software options are available. There will be an overview of the process, a discussion of common misconceptions, tips from experienced groups – and a golden rule!

Jack has helped over 150 groups to set up online catalogues and websites for 20 years through his company CommunitySites. He would like to hear from any groups which have online collections who would be willing to share their experiences and the software they use.

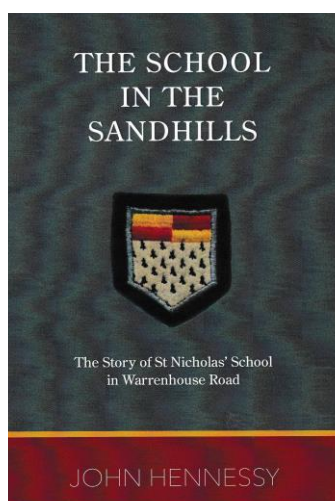
Contact Jack for further information jack@communitysites.co.uk

A new web resource has been created by archive professionals at Gloucestershire Archives

The online training covers aspects of collection care, collections management, digital preservation and oral history interviewing. There is advice on storage and packaging; how to organise and catalogue items; and necessary procedures when taking in new material for the archive. It also contains non-technical, down to earth advice on how to keep digital records safe into the future, and sets out how to capture memories as spoken histories. There are also sections looking at how copyright and data protection affect archives. Each section ends by flagging up other sources of information so that the topic can be explored in more detail.

[Heritage Hub online training - Heritage hub](#)

PUBLICATIONS OF INTEREST



THE SCHOOL IN THE SANDHILLS The story of St Nicholas' School in Warrenhouse Road

John Hennessy

£9.95 + £2.00 p&p (1 copy); £2.50 (more than one)

Send a cheque (together with your name, address and phone number) to John Hennessy, 3, North Road, West Kirby, Merseyside, CH48 4DE

The school originated in the early 1850s in the cottage of a local woman living in the tiny hamlet of Brighton-le-Sands, in north Liverpool, before moving to a new building in Warrenhouse Road in 1856. That building also served as a church, dedicated to St. Barnabas, until the present St. Nicholas church was consecrated in 1874, and continued as St. Nicholas School for over one hundred years, providing an education for generations of young people. The book tells the fascinating story of the school's journey from those early beginnings, through two World Wars, to the late 1960s when it moved to its present premises in Nicholas Road, Blundellsands. It places the school within the context of the fast-changing socio-economic structure of the district during that period.

Old St Nickians is a group of former St. Nicholas pupils who attended the Warrenhouse Road School. John Hennessy, the author of the present book, is a member of the group, which produces a regular newsletter, meets for lunch twice a year (Covid-permitting), and has built up an extensive photographic archive. Membership details may be obtained from the secretary, Jeanette Smith – email merseygirl11@gmail.com.

[A large number of former St. Nicholas pupils went on to Waterloo Grammar School. The history of that school, 'The school that would not die', written by Peter Sleeman, was publicised in the February newsletter – Ed.]

VICTORIA'S RAILWAY KING

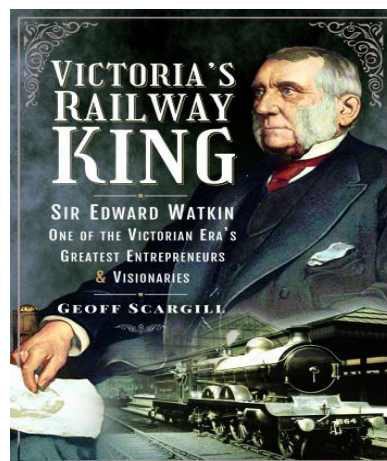
**Sir Edward Watkin: One of the Victorian era's
greatest entrepreneurs and visionaries**

Geoff Scargill

Pen & Sword, 2021 ISBN 9781526792778

Hbk 216pp.

£19.99. Use code AUTH30 to obtain a
30%discount. www.pen-and-sword.co.uk



Sir Edward William Watkin (1819-1901) is most famous for his enormous contribution to the growth of the railways, but he should also be remembered for his work for the betterment of the lives of people in the north west. At one time he was the Liberal MP for Stockport. As early as 1867 he was one of 78 MPs who voted to extend the franchise to women. He lived at Rose Hill, Northenden (and is buried in the churchyard of St Wilfrid there).

He was active in the campaign for Parks for the People in Manchester and Salford and founded the *Manchester Examiner* newspaper.

The man later to be known as the Railway King in 1864 became Chairman of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway – the Great Central Railway with its terminus at Marylebone in London. He was responsible for extending the line to Grimsby and Cleethorpes, enabling the former to greatly expand as a fishing port, and the latter to become a popular holiday resort.

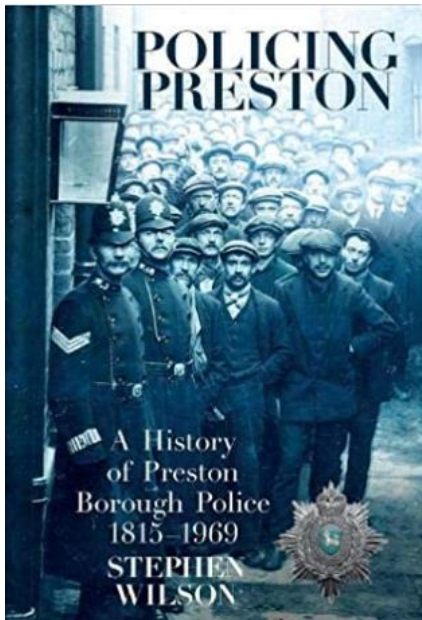
Watkin envisioned a high speed railway between Manchester and Paris, and took part in the abortive 1880 attempt to build a channel tunnel.

He expanded the Metropolitan Railway (the first to be built as part of what became London Underground) to Wembley Park – now the site of Wembley Stadium.

Another major achievement was in taking over the bankrupt Grand Trunk Railway in Canada, which became the longest railway in the world. At the request of the British government Watkin took part in confidential negotiations which eventually led to the formation of the Dominion of Canada.

It is easy to see why he was also nicknamed 'Nimble Ned' when considering, in addition to what he did achieve, some of his ideas which were not put into practice – he proposed a canal East-West across Ireland; a railway tunnel linking Ireland and Scotland; and two-storey railway carriages to increase capacity.

The author is chair of the Watkin Society, so has been able to write an authoritative and detailed account of the life of a very remarkable man.



POLICING PRESTON
A history of Preston Borough Police
1815-1969

Stephen Wilson

Stephen Wilson Publishing, 2021

ISBN 978-1916424739

324pp Ill. Indexed.

Pbk £20; Hbk £25 post free from the author:
info@stephenwilsonpublishing 01772 687197
Payment can be made by cheque, bank
transfer or PayPal. Also available from Amazon.

Review by Bob Dobson

This book should not be seen solely as a history of Proud Preston's police force, for the author's coverage of events such as strikes and riots at local and national level also amounts to a history of the town itself. Much coverage is given to murders, acts of bravery and the Guild. The Preston-born author's parents and brother all served in the borough force. He did not serve in it, but worked throughout Lancashire during his police service between 1979 and 2007. He has spent much of his spare time since retirement in researching the borough force in Preston's Harris library and the county's archives.

He starts with an explanation of the history of law and order from the reign of King Alfred the Great, when the Saxons used a system involving the populace by dividing the country into shires and tithings, and placing responsibility for maintaining the law on local sheriffs in the hundreds into which each county was divided.

This system was fine-tuned after the Norman Invasion in 1066 by the new legislators setting up local administrators called constables and magistrates with responsibility for the keeping of the King's Peace – the state of affairs in which the laws of the land were maintained and safeguarded by the citizens acting for the common good. In 1285 larger towns were given authority to employ night watchmen with powers to arrest law-breakers and present them before the local magistrates for punishment.

Preston's elder statesmen took action to control lawbreakers as early as 1800, and in 1815 benefitted from an Act of Parliament which permitted the town to appoint people to '*light, watch, pave, cleanse and improve the streets, highways and places in the borough and to provide fire engines and firemen for the protection of the borough*'. It is regarded as the first such Act to be passed to police any town in the county, pre-dating the county and the Metropolitan Police. Thomas Walton was appointed to superintend the statutes and borough bye-laws. The men subordinate

to him were known as police constables. By 1832 the force comprised six PCs. Walton died in 1835.

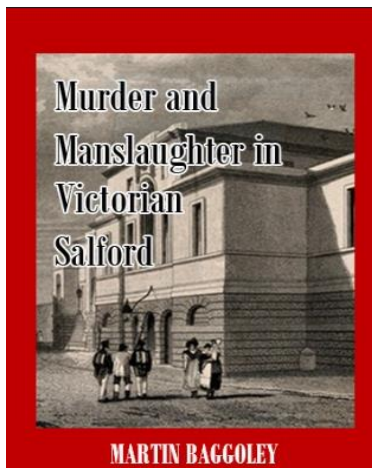
Having described the early days of the force, the author details the next 135 years in chronological order, with chapters for the tenure of each Superintendent, later called Chief Superintendent. The term 'Chief Constable' did not come until 1882 when the sixth chief officer was appointed. He was the first with a military background and one of 44 applicants for the post. The author records the shortlist of each of the ten applicants for the position following Walton, along with the town's population and the strength of the force. He emphasises the control of the force by the Corporation's Watch Committee.

I was struck by the author's meticulous research, as evidenced in the footnotes, lengthy bibliography and list of suggested further reading.

It came as a shock to me to learn that the force had no motor vehicles at the time of the General Strike in 1926. And it was not until the 1930s that a system of police box pillars was installed to allow the officers working the 22 beats to be contacted at these points; the public could also use them to contact the police station.

The Corporation's Watch Committee did not want their force to be amalgamated with the Lancashire Constabulary and the other forces within the county on 1 April 1969, but the Home Office over-rode its wishes.

The author provides a list of the 283 bobbies and 34 civilian members of staff serving on the appointed day. They, and the members of the Special Constabulary, were proud of Preston's force and had every reason so to be.



Murder & Manslaughter in Victorian Salford

Martin Baggoley

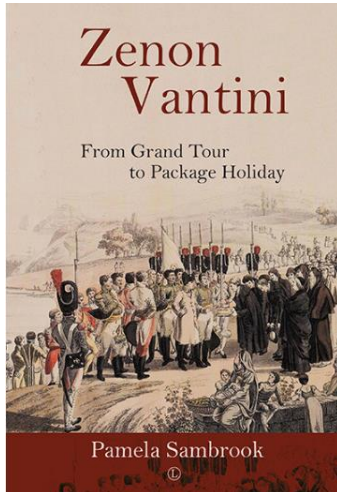
160 pages

Lulu Press; ISBN 9780244557096

£1.99 (eBook)

The latest work by Martin Baggoley, a Federation member, is available as an eBook. Each of its nineteen chapters explores different aspects of the darker side of society, with details of particular crimes.

Issues covered include domestic violence in a patriarchal society, youth crime, illegal abortions and contemporary attitudes towards mental health. One chapter examines the murder of his entire family by a husband and father. Another looks at a crime of historic significance: Salford Barracks was bombed by Irish nationalists in 1881, killing a seven year old local boy. This event marked the beginning of the four year campaign by Fenians against the British state.



ZENON VANTINI: FROM GRAND TOUR TO PACKAGE HOLIDAY

Pamela Sambrook

Pbk; b&w and col. ill; ISBN 9780718895761

£20.00 Lutterworth Press, May 2021

Dr Sambrook is a former museum curator and retired National Trust consultant; she is an Hon Research Fellow at Keele University.

Zenon Vantini served with Napoleon's Imperial Guard at Waterloo. Later he played a crucial role in the growth of British tourism, as manager of Fleetwood's North Euston hotel. He contributed to the development of specialist hotels and catering in the formative years of the railway network in England and France. He believed that the mobility afforded by railway travel would change Europe fundamentally, and thus was a component part in the very early years of an industry which arguably changed England and Europe more than did even his hero, Napoleon.

ASPECTS OF HISTORY is a new website and magazine dedicated to history and historical fiction, publishing and promoting established and new authors.

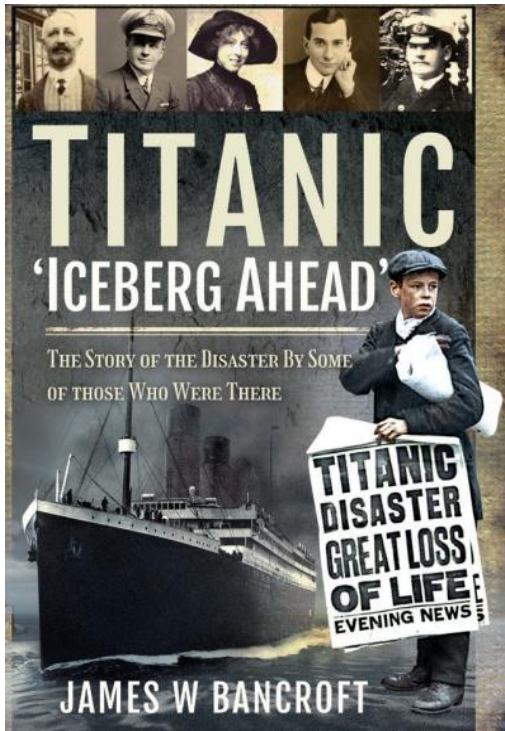


It will organise writing competitions, and have special offers on books. An annual subscription to the bi-monthly magazine costs 9.99. Signing up to the mailing list entitles readers to receive three free history books.

www.aspectsofhistory.com. The book club begins with the author Simon Sebag Montefiore.

Questions for him should be emailed to history@aspectsofhistory.com

A History of Blackburn Town and Parish, by William Abram, published in 1877, has been digitised by Google and can be found by following this link <https://bit.ly/2PJ6OGi> It is taken from a copy in Harvard College Library (deposited in 1938). It may not be easy to navigate, and is several hundred pages long, but for anyone who wishes to read the book who does not have access to a printed copy, it may be worth persevering.



TITANIC – ‘ICEBERG AHEAD’
The story of the disaster
by some of those who were there

James W Bancroft

ISBN 9781526772060 £20

Frontline Books, 2021

www.pen-and-sword.co.uk

James Bancroft has produced more than 100 books and articles reflecting his varied interests. He has contributed a number of articles for The New Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. His JWB Historical Library, compiled over four decades, is one of the largest private collections of its kind in the world.

Review by Marianne Howell

The first part of this handsomely presented book has an account of the background to the ship's construction; the mishaps which had previously befallen its sister ship *Olympic*, launched in June 1910, which gave rise to misgivings about *Titanic* before its launch; the fateful first voyage and the aftermath. This tale has often been re-told, but what marks this telling as especially interesting is the liberal use of quotations from letters, diaries and accounts by passengers and crew, helping to paint a vivid picture of people's excitement, apprehension or wonder at the ship's magnificence.

The appendix details the often contradictory accounts of the disaster, especially in some American telegrams and newspapers. For example, there were reports stating that Captain Smith shot himself, although the consensus is that he simply went to the bridge and waited for inevitable death.

The second part has biographical details, in alphabetical order, of 49 of the passengers and crew who sailed on *Titanic* (when mentioned in the first half, their names are marked with an asterisk to show that their biographies follow). These brief life stories help to remind us that each of the people involved had a unique life, came from widely differing backgrounds and, no doubt, had hopes for a future which in some many cases was taken from them, or altered beyond recognition.

The vivid details of the astonishingly varied lives of the passengers and crew are brought to life by the author's research, which includes diary entries, letters and newspaper articles.

Small details are often what help to show individuality and the poignancy of lives lost or irrevocably changed: John Butterworth had red hair; there is a description of what John Clarke was wearing when his body was recovered, and the possessions

recorded, which included eight shillings; Frederick Fleet committed suicide in 1965; a married woman, Elizabeth Anne Wilkinson, joined the ship on a joint ticket under the surname Faunthorpe, travelling to their honeymoon with her 'husband' Harry who drowned. Despite her deception, her husband Sam Wilkinson accepted her back.

The biographies also bring to light the surprising extent to which people a century ago moved around the country. This is of course to be expected of those who served on board, who expected to go where there was work, but many of the profiled passengers also moved within Britain and, of course, many were seeking a new life in the new world.

A large proportion of the people profiled had north west connections, either by birth or later residence. Perhaps the most famous is the bandmaster, Wallace Henry Hartley, who perished with the other band members. He was born in Colne, moving to Didsbury when he was 15. Astonishingly, his violin was found and has been authenticated recently.

I feel the work would have benefitted from an introduction and an explanation of how the 49 profiles were chosen.

The monochrome illustrations are well reproduced, and include some less well known images. (I can find no list of sources or acknowledgements.) There is an index and a list of bibliographic and research resources the author has used.

Anyone fascinated by this most famous of maritime disasters will find much that is new and interesting in this latest work.

REQUESTS

From Dr Christopher Stray, Department of Classics, Swansea University

I am writing an account of the early education of **William Whewell** (1794-1866), the polymathic historian of science who was Master of Trinity College, Cambridge from 1841 to his death.

His father John Whewell was a house carpenter with property in Brock and Lucy street in Lancaster. William first went to a private school run by Thomas Bond in Lancaster, then on to the Blue Coat (charity) school there, followed by Lancaster Grammar School, and finally Heversham Grammar School near Kendal, before entering Trinity College in 1812.

I would welcome any information on his schooling, especially on the first two schools he attended (Bond's and Blue Coat), for which I've found very little evidence
c.a.stray@swansea.ac.uk

From Roger Smalley

I am trying to find out more about the **Blackburn Branch of the Independent Labour Party** in the 1930s.

In particular, information about Johnnie Duxbury, Mankie Cohen and Bob Parker would be especially welcome. They led resistance to the British Union of Fascists' 1935 recruiting campaign in the area.

If readers have relevant material and are willing to share it, please contact me:

Email: barbsandmike@gmail.com or telephone: 01539 621280

HAWKSHEAD GRAMMAR SCHOOL MUSEUM AND LIBRARY

The school, founded in the reign of Elizabeth I, and whose most famous pupil was Wordsworth, seeks volunteers for a project working with books in the library. Joanne Heather, clerk to the HGS Foundation, explains the background.

The school was founded in 1585 by the then Archbishop of York, Edwin Sandys, a scion of the local Sandys family who still reside in and manage the Graythwaite estate south of Hawkshead. Archbishop Sandys was a Protestant church leader who narrowly escaped being put to death during Mary Tudor's reign and later rose to prominence under Elizabeth I. HGS was one of many grammar schools founded in the north west and across the country at this time to educate the sons of local families. The dissolution of the monasteries was followed by the dissolution of the chantries under Edward VI; a secondary role for chantry priests was to provide education for the urban poor and rural residents. By Elizabeth's reign, the higher clergy were keen to restart schools to improve the educational standards of their priests and to spread literacy through the population, both of which would support countrywide adoption of the new, scripture-based religion.

The school continued to thrive through the 17th and 18th centuries, reaching a peak of around 100 pupils in the late 18th century. This was when its most famous pupil, William Wordsworth, attended, and the museum is often visited by Wordsworth enthusiasts on tours of the Lakes. During the 19th century, Hawkshead itself went into a slow decline having been bypassed by the railways, and the school roll fell. The final nail in the coffin was the 1902 Education Act whereby county councils ran secondary schools.



Lancashire set up Ulverston Victoria Grammar School and HGS closed in 1909, with the creation of a charity to run its remaining endowments. Since then, the Trustees have run the old school building as a small museum, and it looks much as it did in Wordsworth's day.

The school library, containing some 1600 books, reflects the 300+ years the school was open. A small number date from the early days of the school in the 16th century, roughly two-thirds date from the 17th and 18th centuries and the last third from the 19th century. The books are in Latin and English, with a lot of material that can be described as theological (reflecting the origins of the school's founding and the focus of education in the 16th and 17th centuries), as well as works of history, classics, geography/travel, literature and science/mathematics. The library has been described as "*an extraordinary survival of a grammar school library that remains in the building in which it was used for over three centuries.*" Although a few other grammar school libraries still exist, these are largely now held in university special collections and very few remain in situ in their original buildings.

The books have been preserved remarkably well (the library is not open to the public). However, it is clear to the Trustees that more could be done both to conserve the collection and to share it more widely with the world. Last summer, the museum remained closed due to the difficulties of operating under social distancing restrictions, and this freed up the curator to compile the first digital shelf-list of the entire collection. We then commissioned a book conservator, Caroline Bendix, to review the library and make recommendations regarding conservation and exhibition. That in turn led to a visit from David Pearson, a renowned rare book expert and historic librarian, who gave further recommendations about opening up the library and sharing the collection more widely with museum visitors and scholars.

Rare book research today is focused on provenance and what is known as copy-specific information: in an era when most texts, old and new, are digitised and freely available on websites such as Google Books or Project Gutenberg, there is still great interest in copies of books which are unique because of specific features: the inscription page, the binding, annotations in the margin etc. In the grammar school library these are often schoolboy scribbles or sketches, in one case a caricature of the headmaster. The wealth of recommendations was initially overwhelming; however, we are now embarking on one of the key proposals and are seeking interested volunteers.

The project will include cataloguing book condition and undertaking minor stabilisation repairs. You don't have to be interested in book contents; book repairs benefit from manual dexterity and cataloguing requires a methodical approach and attention to detail. There will be a two day training session in July (date TBC) run by Caroline Bendix that all volunteers will be asked to attend, and the project will then continue over the summer and autumn months. You can devote as much time as you can spare, and that would be very welcome, but as a minimum the conservator recommends that at least one day per fortnight or 2-3 days per month are required in order to develop your dexterity, skills and experience handling rare books.

If you are interested in learning more about the volunteer project, please contact Joanne Heather, clerk to the HGS Foundation (hgsfclerk@gmail.com).

RESEARCH ARTICLES

HANDLOOM WEAVERS' COTTAGES IN LANCASHIRE

Dr Geoff Timmins

This article follows on from an online lecture given by Geoff as part of the 2021 Federation AGM. He has incorporated some information in response to questions posed by listeners. We hope to be able to host lectures such as these on the Federation website in due course.

During the closing decades of the eighteenth century and the early decades of the nineteenth, tens of thousands of cottages were specially built in Lancashire for handloom weaving. Only a small proportion has survived, but they can often be identified because they contain a room displaying a long row of windows which provided good natural lighting. This room was used as a loomshop and could be sited in upper storeys, at ground floor level or in cellars. (The online illustrated lecture contains discussion about the varying design of these cottages.)

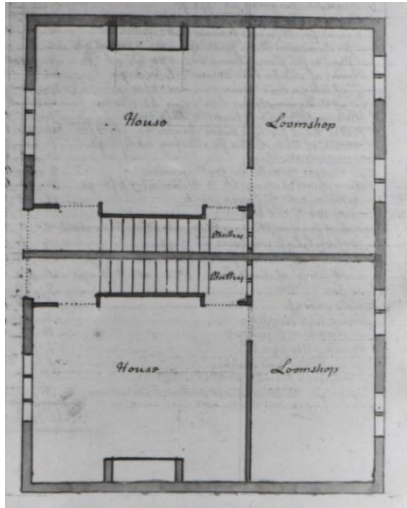
One listener asked about the premises in which handloom weaving took place before purpose-built cottages were provided. Prior to the late 18th century, space for a single loom might be found within a cottage or an outbuilding, with a loom for weaving wool, linen or cotton cloth being placed beside a window so that the maximum amount of natural light fell onto the cloth as it was being woven. The weaver would have been seated at one side of the loom. However, according to William Radcliffe, a handloom improver and businessman based at Mellor in Derbyshire, the unprecedented growth of British cotton manufacturing between 1778 and 1803, which he termed 'the golden age' of the handloom weaving trade, brought a marked change. Writing in 1828, he remarked:

The fabrics made from wool or linen vanished, while the old loomshops being insufficient, every lumber-room, even old barns, cart-houses, and outbuildings of any description were repaired, windows broke through the old blank walls, and all fitted up for loomshops.

Of course, handloom weaving may have long continued in such adapted premises, as well as in ordinary cottages, with much depending on family circumstances and preferences. Equally, as has been noted at Blackburn, a loomshop might be built as an extension to a cottage. Peter Bamford provides the interesting example of his great grandfather, a farmer and weaver at Penwortham, occupying a plot described in an 1838 tithe apportionment as 'House, Shop & Garden Orchard and Fold'. He observes that the reference is undoubtedly to a loomshop. Perhaps it was adapted from another building or was purpose built; it may have been attached to the house.

The key point to note from these observations is that handloom weaving took place in differing types of premises capable of housing varying numbers of looms. And the point is reinforced when the cottages in the rural lowlands on either side of the

Ribble valley are taken into account. Following on from Peter Shakeshaft's reminder about examples in the Fylde area, it is clear that there is more to be learned about how the considerable number of vernacular cottages surviving there, not least those in Kirkham and Freckleton, were linked with handloom weaving. And the same is true for North Meols. It may be that by following the routes taken by mid-19th century census enumerators, more of these cottages can be identified (despite alterations having been made to them) and their layouts and loomshop capacities determined. A key point here is that the enumerators would have had to work systematically to undertake their work effectively within the limited amount of time available to them. Old photographs of the cottages may help, too, of course.



With regard to recognising purpose-built handloom weavers' cottages, not all contained rows of windows. In common with the cellar loomshop shown in the lecture, pairs of windows may have been preferred, with a loom being placed alongside each one. Such windows commonly appear in the upper storey of weavers' cottages in the Burnley area, for example. They could also comprise the back downstairs room of two-up, two-down cottages, giving space for two looms; in effect, a loomshop replaced a scullery (back kitchen). A plan of two such cottages is shown here.

It is taken from an account book compiled by James Brandwood of Turton, which was compiled around 1800. To maintain loomshop humidity, the cottages did not have a back door. They are particularly difficult to identify since, over time, one of the window openings is likely to have been made into a doorway.

Also lacking in rows of windows, as well as having direct external access, as Peter Houghton observed, are the cellar loomshops in the long row of early 19th century cottages at Fox Lane (formerly Union Street), Leyland. At the front, the cellars in their original form were reasonably well-lit, having a centrally-placed door and a window at either side. The Historic England website, which shows several images of the cottages, notes that the cellars could also be accessed through rear doors, so two rooms were available, and that some had an earth floor, a common characteristic of cellars used for handloom weaving. Steps to the rear of the houses allowed cellar windows to rise above ground level. That the cellars were not originally accessed from the rooms above shows they were designed as separate dwellings that, in terms of size and position, were much inferior to the five-roomed houses above them. Census schedules record several cotton handloom weavers living in the cottages, with quite a number of relatively small households, probably mostly occupying the cellar dwellings.

Unusually, the four-pot chimney stacks are located in the front part of the roof rather than astride it. Were three fireplaces located in the three front rooms, each in a slightly different position in order to accommodate three separate flues, and one in each of the back downstairs rooms (the kitchen/living room) of the superior dwellings? Was the front part of the cellar a living room/kitchen and its rear room a cellar loomshop? And were there *originally* rear doors into the cellars?



*Red Rose Collections (image 240199)
Lancashire County Council*

Closer investigation of the cottages will produce more details of their original features. Again, working out the route that mid-19th census enumerators took in collecting information about those who lived in the cottages and, in this case, how they distinguished the cellar dwellings from the upper houses, should help further in understanding their form and functions.



Finally, a question was asked about cellar light wells. A reconstructed example, which can be found in Duncan Street, Horwich, is shown here. An alternative arrangement may have been to place a metal grid over the opening. Clearly, some form of safety barrier was needed.

Further reading and illustrations

The English Heritage record of the Fox Lane houses can be viewed on line at [10-60, FOX LANE, South Ribble - 1210556 | Historic England](#)

D. Hunt, *The History of Leyland and District* (Carnegie Press, 1999), pp. 80-8.

Google Maps street view enables both the front and rear of the Fox Lane cottages to be viewed.

Many known examples of former handloom weavers' cottages are listed in Mike Rothwell's *Industrial Heritage* volumes and J. G. Timmins, *Handloom Weavers' Cottages in Central Lancashire* (Centre for North-West Regional Studies, University of Lancaster, 1977).

JOHN EATON AND SONS, ASHTON ARCHITECTS

The various lockdowns of the past few months have given us all the chance to get to know our own towns better as we take our daily exercise walks. This can lead on to curiosity about local architects and their impact on the townscape. We at Tameside Local History Forum thought readers might be interested in this article by our late member Sheila Blanchard, which first appeared in HAT Magazine in 2009.

Two stained glass windows in the north transept of Christ Church, Ashton-under-Lyne, commemorate John Eaton (senior) and his family, and were given in 1914 by his two surviving daughters. Georgina and Margaret Marjorie are remembered in a third window on the north aisle - the Faith and Hope window. Outside the windows is a memorial cross marking the Eaton grave. But who was John Eaton?

John Eaton (senior) was born in Brechin, Forfarshire, Scotland, in 1810 (d. 1876). His father James was a stonemason. In 1839 he and his wife Margaret, together with their family which included his one-year-old son John (junior), travelled down to live in Ashton-under-Lyne. Here John worked as a mason but by 1851 he was a builder and architect, employing 44 men. In 1871 he is described as a Master Mason.

Young John Eaton (later Colonel Eaton), born in 1838, served his apprenticeship with his father. At the Manchester School of Art he studied freehand and watercolouring and received a bronze medal in 1858 for his work. He was articled to the architects Moffatt Smith, before joining his father's practice in Ashton.

After his father's death, John and his brother James continued the business, which John carried on alone after the death of James. In 1882, he was admitted as a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Architects (FRIBA). Evidence of Eaton's work still surrounds us today, and other buildings, since demolished, are easily called to mind. His work includes Hurst Cross, Thompson Cross in Stalybridge, Ashton Library, Hartshead Pike, Christ Church schools, the lych gate at St Paul's Stalybridge, St Stephen's Flowery Field, St Luke's Dukinfield, Christ Church Denshaw, and the hospital for Ashton Union workhouse. An extension and improvements to Ashton Market Hall by Colonel John Eaton date back to 1881, including the Fish Market. In 1930, his grandson Leslie was responsible for the extension with the lions on top and the large stained-glass fanlights.



Christ Church Schools in about 1910 (courtesy of Tameside Local History Forum)

The jewel in his crown is probably Dukinfield Town Hall, which was described at the opening in 1901 as, 'not equalled by the municipal buildings of any town for miles around'. Over 100 years later, now restored, the building still looks outstanding.



Dukinfield Town Hall in about 1900 (*courtesy of Tameside Local History Forum*)

For four generations, the Eaton family was connected with Christ Church, Ashton. John Eaton (senior) was listed as a subscriber to the fund to build the church in 1848. He was a church warden, as was Colonel Eaton. The Eaton name was always prominent at church meetings and bazaars etc. Colonel Eaton's grandson, Leslie, was connected with Christ Church scouts for many years.

John Eaton (junior) was also connected with the Ashton Volunteer Movement which was established in 1859. He joined as a private, was gazetted captain in 1870 and by 1887 was Hon. Colonel. In 1888, the Ashton Volunteers became the 3rd Volunteer Battalion, Manchester Regiment. At the outbreak of war in South Africa in 1899 he was instrumental in raising 109 men and six officers for the front, including his eldest son. Colonel Eaton was awarded the Coronation honour of Companion of the Bath and was invested at Buckingham Palace in 1902. The award was no doubt due to his lengthy service in connection with the Volunteers and the town's response to the call for auxiliary soldiers. He also possessed the long service Volunteer decoration. When Colonel Eaton died in 1905 there was a military funeral at Christ Church, Ashton. The road from Strathdene, his home on Taunton Road, to the lych gate on Oldham Road, was lined with mourners. He was buried with full military honours.

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