

# 'e-Owls'



## Contact us :

Branch Website: <https://www.mlfhs.uk/oldham>

MLFHS homepage : <https://www.mlfhs.uk/>

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**MLFHS mailing address is:** Manchester & Lancashire Family History Society,  
3rd Floor, Manchester Central Library, St. Peter's Square, Manchester, M2 5PD, United Kingdom

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

**January 2022**

## MLFHS - Oldham & District Branch Newsletter

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### Branch News :

#### Branch Officers for 2021 -2022 :

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



*Where to find it*

*'Where to Find it'* Page, on the  
Oldham & District Website Pages



*Peace and Goodwill  
for Christmas & the New Year*

### Oldham Branch Meetings :

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

The newsletter will be sent out as usual. Meetings are now in place using the zoom app. The Society Journal will go out to members as usual. It relies heavily on Branch reports and what the Society has been doing at events and fairs etc. However, this sort of news is in short supply! To fill the pages with interesting articles, it's hoped that more people will write up family stories and contribute them to the journal. Please refer to the page, '*Notes for Contributors*', in the Journal, for information on how to send articles, etc.

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

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

Hello and welcome to our first newsletter of 2022 . It was a difficult year last year but we did the best we could for our members in the circumstances the country found itself in. Let us hope that this year will be better.

We have some really good topics for our meetings this year both on zoom and, hopefully, in person at our venue in Oldham Library. I will keep you informed of progress in arranging actual physical meetings as well as on Zoom when I have some news.

The Committee and I really appreciate your support during 2021. Thank you.

A Happy New Year to you all.

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 began to write the newsletter, just a week before Christmas, it was hard to accept that we appeared to be facing yet another uncertain Christmas followed by another challenging year.

Now, on Christmas Day itself, Martin and I are self isolating as our son has tested positive for covid and our family get together has had to be cancelled! Whenever you get round to reading this, I hope you've all managed to have an enjoyable Christmas with your nearest and dearest and are looking forward to a peaceful and more hopeful New Year.

In the 'Mixed Bag' you'll find another couple of chapters from the '*Autobiography Of A Manchester Cotton Manufacturer*' and another couple of trades from the '*Book of Trades*' pub.1827.

There's only been one email, this month (everyone too busy!!) accompanied by a newspaper report about a mill boiler explosion in Oldham in 1852 and so, in the e-postbag, I've also included an email to me that made me think of Christmas festivities in the not so distant past and allowed me to add a few more of my own thoughts.

Still harking back to the past, in the Gallery I've included some illustrations from '*The Christmas Book*', pub.1887 with some extracts from the accompanying text.

Just one minor addition to the website and regarding the ever popular Alan Godfrey Maps ... a link to a street index ([HERE](#)) covering 24 of the maps (15" scale) around central Manchester and Oldham. I've been adding to my collection over the years and one of the jobs on my 'to do' list is to update the index! A large selection of the maps around the Manchester district (2 different scales) are available from the MLFHS shop [HERE](#)

The list of events, from different societies, include some that are programmed to be given in person in a meeting room ... if you plan to attend, please check with their organisers that arrangements haven't changed with regard to new covid restrictions.

It only remains for me, on behalf of the Branch Committee, to hope you have had a happy Christmas, and we hope to welcome you all back in the New Year.

Sheila

Although I am always more than happy to receive articles, pictures etc., for 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](mailto: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.

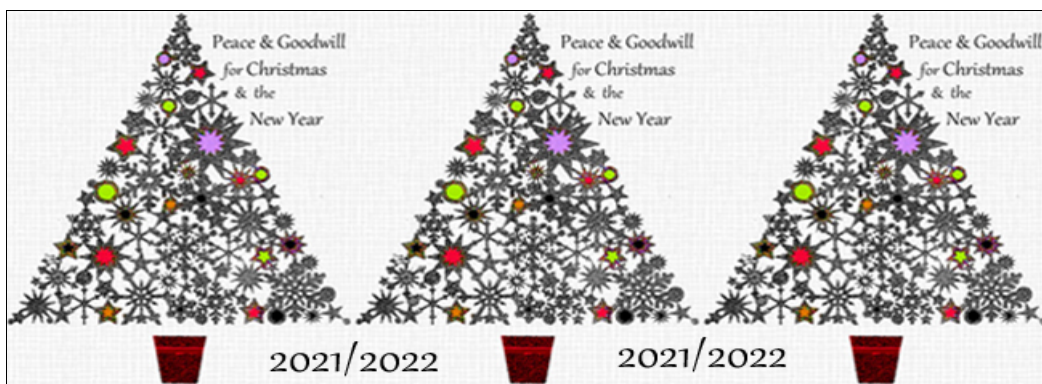
## Oldham & District Branch

### Monthly Meetings

Please continue to try and support the Branch, with your online attendance, whilst we are unable to hold our meetings in Gallery Oldham. The zoom app is free to download and use. Details, of the full programme of talks, are on the 'Meetings' page of the Branch website [HERE](#) .  
**Booking for an online talk is essential** and bookings are on [Eventbrite](#).

**The talks will be free to members and non-members alike.  
Wherever you live, Welcome!**

### Last Month's Meeting ... on zoom NO MEETING IN DECEMBER



### JANUARY 2022 MEETING... on zoom



Saturday,  
8th Jan.  
at  
2 pm



### **'Hanging the Pacifist': Margaret Ashton (1856-1937) Manchester's first woman councillor**

*A short introduction to the life and times of Margaret Ashton. The talk will look at Ashton's extraordinary life, her political career, her involvement in the suffrage movement and, during WW1, her work in the anti-war and pacifist movement. It will look at the story of her lost portrait, rediscovered in 2006, and rehung in the Town Hall - hence the title of this talk ... 'Hanging the Pacifist.'*

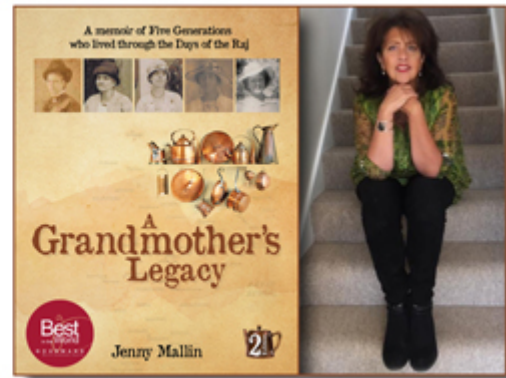
A free, illustrated, online talk, given by Dr Alison Ronan  
Booking and more details on [Eventbrite](#)



## February Meeting ... on zoom



Saturday,  
12th Jan.  
at  
2 pm



### ***A Grandmother's Legacy: the Early Days***

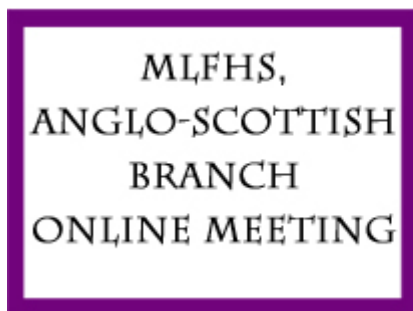
*How Benjamin Hardy in 1798, a seventh generation weaver ancestor of Jenny Mallin from Mirfield in Yorkshire, sails to Madras with his British Army unit, fights for the next 22 years in India and decides to settle his family there for the next five generations.*

A free, illustrated, online talk, given by Jenny Mallin

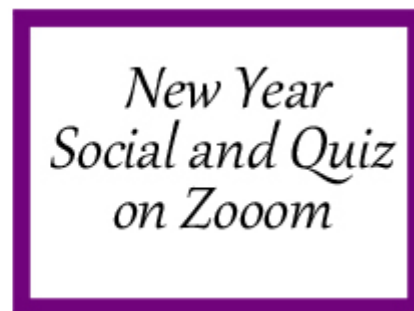
Booking and more details will be on Eventbrite

## **MLFHS Branches delivering their monthly meetings and talks on-line**

### **Anglo - Scots ... January Meeting**



Saturday,  
15th  
January  
at  
2:00 pm



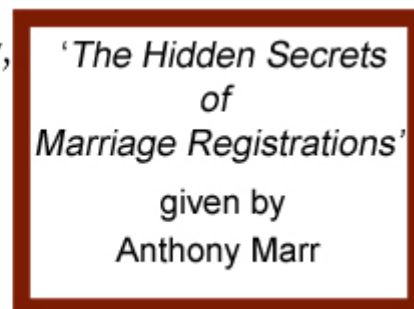
on zoom ... bookings on [Eventbrite](#)

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

### **Bolton ... January Meeting**



Wednesday,  
5th  
January  
at  
7:30 pm



on zoom ... bookings on [Eventbrite](#)

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

## **MLFHS updates**

**The MLFHS Family History Help Desk ...  
is now open again**

**As the situation can still change, there is no certainty of anything!  
For updated information, please check the website [HERE](#)**

## MLFHS, Manchester Ancestors, on-line talks :

### Manchester ... January Meetings



on zoom ... bookings on [Eventbrite](#)

Saturday, 29th January, 2022, at 2pm, ***The 1921 Census : What can we discover?***

Wednesday, 2nd February, 2022, at 7:30pm, ***Exploring the 1921 census***

Unfortunately, both the 1921 talks are already fully booked.

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

MLFHS Manchester, Eventbrite Bookings [HERE](#)

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**MLFHS Online Bookshop: Is OPEN for business again [HERE](#).**

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

### ~~~~~ MLFHS & Branch e-Newsletters

MLFHS Manchester, and each of the MLFHS branches, publishes 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 MLFHS newsletter automatically; non-members can find them 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](#)

[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.

\* Another useful addition to the Great Database - this time 1,586 more burials for **St. John, Pendlebury 1889-1907**.

Thanks to Mark Harrey for these

### ~~~~~ Meetings and Talks at other Societies &/or Venues

**Please note ...**

**Please check society/group websites or organisers for updated information**

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**Saddleworth Historical Society Wednesday 12th January 2022 at 7.30pm.**

The Illustrated Presentation is entitled " *Edwardian Saddleworth - A Pictorial History.*"

Presented by Michael Fox.

at the Saddleworth Museum, Art Gallery, High Street, Uppermill.

Society members free but a charge to non-members on the door of £3.

All welcome. Refreshments available. Masks should be worn.

Website [HERE](#)

**Saddleworth Civic Trust** No meetings planned until February

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



Wednesday  
19th  
January  
at  
7 pm



***'Northerners: from the Ice Ages to the 21st Century'***

given by Brian Groom

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

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

Website [HERE](#)

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

on [Eventbrite](#) and [Instagram](#)

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**Moorside & District Historical Society**

**Moorside & District Historical Society**  
*We are back, assuming the current regulations hold true.*  
**Monday 17th January 2022.**

**"Miscellany"**  
Catch up on the past two years missed happenings.  
Plus a talk on local historical Miscellaneous events etc.  
illustrated presentation by Mike Smith

**St Thomas' Church Tower Cross**

Left: The old 1872 well weathered iron cross.  
Right: The new 2019 Stainless Steel cross.

To be held in the Moorside Cricket Club, Turfrit Lane, Moorside.  
7-30 p.m. all are welcome.  
Note: Other meeting planned for 2022 if all goes well for the third Monday of the month. Except for the summer break July & August = December. £1.50p including refreshment.

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at 7:30pm all are welcome.

£1.50, including refreshment

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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 [HERE](#)

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

Website and programme [HERE](#)

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## **Regional Heritage Centre :**

Website [HERE](#)

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### **'A Mixed Bag'**

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

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

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

#### **Serialised in the newsletter : Part 4**

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

#### **Transcript: Chapter VII**

#### **FOREIGN CUSTOMERS - VISIT TO A COUNTRY MILL**

SOON after this period, a prominent merchant, who was one of our Levant customers, called with a pattern of an article which, if we could produce, he informed us that he and many others would take in large quantities. The pattern was left with us. Knowing it could not be produced at our own mill at Kearsley, we immediately communicated with a maker of similar cloth, who gladly offered to make it for us in unlimited quantity, and at a price which was satisfactory. Orders were taken, given out, satisfactorily executed, and a profitable business resulted.

The manufacturer belonged to the old school, and though very wealthy, was primitive in his style and manner of doing his business, which was extensive, being the production of six mills which he owned in the country, and where he turned out unlimited quantities of cloth. We became busy. Unfortunately our warehouse had no back entrance, and when large luries arrived laden with these goods, they had to be unpacked in the street, and passed into the cellar, the door of which opened from the main street, and under our office window. This was dangerous, as the Greek merchants were continually passing to and fro. They were active men, and their bright eyes appeared to see everything. If they should happen to recognise the cloth, and glance at

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the maker's name and address, which were conspicuously marked on the lurry, it would immediately be known we were neither the makers nor the agents, but simply "middlemen," who are regarded by merchants as an expensive nuisance. They would then deal direct with the maker, with advantage to themselves. We were perplexed, especially as we could not have the deliveries made in early morn or late at night. The heavy loads always drove up in mid-day. We escaped detection for a considerable time - much longer than we ventured to hope for - but the end of our thriving transaction came at last. The article went out of demand, but not before we had made a good show.

Rarely a day passed that we had not the satisfaction of a visit from one or more of the handsome-featured, lithe-of-figure, and well-dressed Greek merchants - men with interminably long names - who doubtless regarded us with satisfaction whilst we supplied them with the coveted article. We had done a large business with the Greeks, whom we found honourable and high-minded men. My view of their integrity was not altogether shared by themselves. After making a morning's round of visits to my customers, on one occasion, I found myself in the office of one of these lively gentlemen. Whilst sitting in a luxurious arm-chair, with my swarthy

patron lying at full length on a couch in front of me, smoking a cigarette, I was asked for some information, which I frankly gave. It was not, however, received in good faith. My interrogator shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, and

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plainly said he did not believe me. Of course I was hurt in my feelings when I found my veracity thus impugned. Had he ever known me to tell him a falsehood? "No," was the reply, "but you have done so much business with Greeks, who are the biggest liars living, that you must have become one yourself by this time." I stood up for all those, without exception, whom I knew, in spite of this expression of opinion. A year or two later this vilifier of his countrymen absconded from the city, and I read his name and the description of his person, in large placards, on the walls of Manchester.

The manufacturing firm with which we did this satisfactory business has been for some years extinct as a firm. The proprietor, even so long ago, was approaching the allotted threescore years and ten. He had six grown-up sons, some of whom had families. They were all active men and engaged in their extensive business. From his frequent visits to our warehouse for the purpose of collecting accounts I became intimately acquainted with the youngest of the brothers, W. Renshaw. He managed the finance department of his father's firm. He was one year younger than myself - to my mind the best of all the brothers - certainly the best-looking, best educated, and the most agreeable in his manner. Moreover, he was a man of an open and generous nature. After seeing him so frequently, we, as might be expected, became friends, and he expressed a wish to introduce me to his parents and relations at home in the country. One Good Friday morning, when sitting alone at my

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lodging, undecided how to pass the day, and whether I should go to church or not, a handsome four-wheeled drag, with equally handsome horse, driven by a well-dressed man, suddenly pulled up in front of my window. I recognized my new acquaintance. It being a holiday, he had come to ask me to accompany him to his home. I gladly responded to his request, and in a short time we were bowling along at fourteen miles an hour. I soon discovered he was a skilful driver. The day was frosty and fine, and the journey was delightful to one who had not for many months been absent from the town. Everything combined to enliven me - the weather, the country, the horse and trappings, the drag, and most of all my new acquaintance. On approaching his home, he directed my attention to the various mills belonging to his father. One or two of them were old-fashioned buildings, where I was informed he had begun his career; the others were modern, and some of them of imposing appearance. I was struck with the many brass bands we heard as we passed along, which he told me belonged to the various mills, each possessing its own. The music was chiefly sacred, and smartly played; the harmonies good, and time excellent.

Perhaps to make as favourable an impression as possible, I was introduced as an important customer. This recommendation was not needed by the old lady, his mother, who would welcome anyone who was a friend of her son. With his paternal, however, and brothers it might have gone for something. I was well received, as the introductions took place one by one to the brothers,

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brothers' wives, wives' sisters, and young members. They had all their separate establishments, with the exception of my friend, who was single and lived with his parents, and we made the round of all of them. As the next day was to be regarded as a holiday, I agreed to spend it and the following Sunday with him, he promising to drive me back on the Monday morning. Up to that time of my existence I had never been made the occasion of an ovation. Now I was feted. We had so many invitations - to luncheon with one, to dine with another, take tea with a third, and so on - that the only time we could call our own and be together was during



the breakfast meal, when the conversation was rapid and continuous. My friend, William Renshaw, possessed natural musical abilities, and he had a fair voice, which, with cultivation, would be an agreeable tenor. During the short time we were alone, he favoured me with a few tunes on his piano, showing a light graceful touch, and appreciation of melody.

The mills were all closed, but, as some repairs were going on, and I had a great desire to see them internally, an opportunity was afforded me of having my wish gratified. We must have tramped over many acres of flooring before the exploration was finished. I was much impressed with the weaving sheds, with their forests of looms, which I thought superb, and, I think, once or twice a feeling of envy of my friend crossed my mind. The spinning machinery had a grand effect, but now I was more devoted to that which produced cloth. On returning to the house, after a wash and a brush, I was taken to the kitchen, a

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room of great size, with an enormous fire-place in which four persons might be comfortably seated. The country which I now was in was very hilly and bleak, and I contemplated the satisfaction with which four congenial spirits might pass a winter evening in the said fire-place. The walls of the kitchen were lined with crockery and metal dish-covers so bright you could see your reflection as you passed them. At a table, not very far from the fire- place, sat the dear old lady, reading her Bible. This was the third time I had seen her so employed in the same spot. W. told me she passed nearly all her time there, and was a constant reader of the grand old Book. I was much impressed with her wonderful devotion, the like of which I think I have never seen before or since.

On visiting the various members of the family, I had to inspect their pictures, try their pianos, and give my opinions thereon; after which the stables had to be visited and crack mares and fast trotters to be seen, admired, and duly appreciated. After the final dinner party at one of the houses a decanter of wine was placed before me by the host, with the intimation that I was to appropriate the whole of it myself. Having never the capacity of absorbing two glasses of wine consecutively even to this day, I smiled, and was on the point of passing on the decanter, when, in the most commanding and serious tone, I was

informed I should have to drink it all myself. Renshaw told me afterwards, he trembled for me at that moment, as this particular relative felt insulted if his visitors did not appreciate his

#### **p.82**

hospitality by drinking the wine he placed before them, which was always of the best and oldest vintage to be obtained. Whatever had been the consequences, I should have remained resolute in declining the wine. A box of cigars, however, was placed in my hands simultaneously, and as they were small in size and looked mild in flavour, I offered to smoke if I might be relieved from taking the wine. To this he readily assented if I would smoke them all, a feat which I undertook to perform, and thus escaped an unpleasant dilemma. Mr. Thornton had taught me to smoke, and I had for some time been an appreciative blower of the weed. When eleven o'clock of that evening had arrived, the box contained sixteen cigars less than at the commencement, and I left the house with one in my mouth - I could do no more, though I would have carried off the box with me, had any encouragement to do so been given.

Most young men who have been blessed with a good home and are domesticated in their habits regard with watchful interest the lodging which they are to occupy after leaving the paternal roof, and to make it resemble as much as possible the scene of early days. In it they are to pass their solitary evenings and entertain their newly formed acquaintances. It is not surprising therefore that they should, with anxious solicitude, select not only a suitable domicile, but one the mistress of which commands confidence and respect. Hitherto I had been fortunate, for with the exception of my first six months in Lancashire, which had been passed under the same roof with the Crewes pair,

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my lodging had been my home and castle. On my arrival in Manchester, I found quarters in one of the long streets extending for a considerable distance on either side and at angles with Oxford Road. The houses were small; all of the same size, and built on the same plan. A friend described my sitting-room as one in which, when seated in the centre of it, you might, without moving from your position, stir the fire, ring the bell, close the door, and open the window. My lot was now cast with a newly-married couple whose conjugal experiences were most unhappy. I knew nothing of their antecedents, but their present life was one of continued disagreements, and unfortunately, they poured into my ear their serious objections to one another - the husband cruelly saying his wife was without mind, and the wife averring of her husband that he was without heart, and otherwise painting each other as black as they could. It was impossible for me to do more than express my regret that their lives were so unhappy, beyond making quotations and exhortations, which had no effect whatever. They seemed determined to hate each other. I could not decide which of them was the more to blame, and this inability on my part was resented somewhat by the unhappy pair. Madame, however, scored a success, when one morning, at 2a.m., she called me up, in apparent distress, to request my assistance in putting her lord, who had returned home either ill or drunk, into his bed. I found him lying helplessly in the middle of the floor, in a suit of dress clothes, and with a white kid glove on one hand. There was no mistake about his

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condition. I gave her the required assistance, and she established the fact of her husband's dissolute habits.

I was glad to get away from a probable repetition of such scenes, and took refuge in the home of a widow lady so far away as Hulme. She resided near St. George's Church, and her accommodation was good, but I did not like Hulme. Greenheys seemed to possess superior attractions for "young gentlemen requiring apartments," and before long was installed in a pleasant house in Park Street, also with another widow. In those days Park Street had quite an open space at the Moss Lane end. There was scarcely a house between it and the fields associated with *Mary Barton*, so I considered myself living almost in the country. It was here where my friend William Renshaw found me on the Good Friday, when he drove up so fresh and welcome.

My room was perfect. I had parted with my old square "Broadwood," which had done me excellent service, selling it for within a trifle of what it cost me. In its place I had a showy German instrument, which was harsh in tone and too loud in the bass. It had a handsome case, however, and aided, with other accessories, to give my room an attractive appearance, which greatly delighted my old landlady, who was a demonstrative person, and had a weakness for passing compliments. Though she attempted to practice on the vanity of her lodger she was by no means a bad landlady. After a year's residence with her, I unfortunately hinted that the street was a dull one, when she suddenly took another house, in consequence of my

**p.85**

remarks, as she informed me. I afterwards discovered she had been compelled to remove from quite a different cause; but being ignorant of this at the time, she secured my occupation of her room in the new house in a neighbouring terrace for a considerable period. The house was no improvement on the old one.

**CHAPTER VIII**

***MANCHESTER IN THE TIME OF THE CRIMEAN WAR.***

AN anxious time had now come upon Manchester. Thoughtful people saw war looming in the distance, and others a general European war. The bare prospect of war was a disquieting and injurious effect on a large trading community like Manchester. At such a time foreign politics

have so great an influence upon cotton goods that they rise and fall with the regularity of a barometer; but there is a general tendency towards the fall, more especially in the manufactured article; and when a more than usually hostile telegram is posted on the Exchange, the fall is sensible and often serious. Altogether the situation is a grave one, with the prospect of yet lower prices, the curtailment of trade, and accumulation of stocks resulting in the inevitable resort to "short time," the bane of the manufacturer.

Admiral Sir Charles Napier, K.C.B., had arrived in our city. He was accompanied by Mr. David Urquhart, and they were announced to address a public meeting at the Corn Exchange, under the auspices of Alderman Watson as chairman. I loved a public meeting, had attended a liberal quantity of them, and was present at this one. The chairman, who was a fragile-looking old gentleman, seemed to me not quite at home with the burly-looking admiral on one side of him and

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the ferocious-looking individual who accompanied him on the other. The chairman was, of course, warlike, though his feeble manner indicated the contrary. Scarcely a word he uttered could be heard at the spot where I was placed - hence the quiet way he was received by the "peace" party in the room. The Admiral was the first to speak. He delivered himself in blunt, John Bull manner; spoke contemptuously of the "peace-at-any-price" party, and was alternately cheered and hooted by the contending factions. But when he concluded his oration by emphatically declaring he was ready to go with his fleet to the Baltic and to shed the very last drop of his blood in their behalf, the applause was universal and tremendous. Sir Charles had scored a success. Not so with Mr. Urquhart, who followed him. The only thing I ever knew or can remember of Mr. Urquhart apart from this occasion is contained in a political alphabetical rhyme I once saw in a number of

*Punch*. It ran-

U is for Urquhart, the Eastern intriguer;

V is for Villiers, the veteran Leaguer.

Mr. Urquhart's appearance was remarkable. He was of slight build, but well made; he was also well dressed. His manner was inclined towards that of haughtiness. His hair, however, attracted the most observation from its golden hue, not red by any means, but the colour of real gold, and which had accumulated heavily at the eyebrows and moustache, with only an average quantity on the head and none whatever in the form of whisker. He had fierce-looking eyes and an oratorical promise

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about him which excited my expectations. Before he had very long begun his address I imagined him to have lived a great while in India, during which time he had accumulated caloric of a supply unlimited, which he now was unbottling with unstinted measure.

Beyond these effects and his gesticulations, however, I was doomed to disappointment, as nothing of his utterances reached the spot where I was sitting. He did, however, express some words in a rasping manner - what they were I never knew - which disturbed the gallant Admiral, who roared out to him in reply and without rising, the words, "That shows how much you know about it." Mr. Urquhart was so unprepared for this explosion that he was suddenly pitched into a hostile House of Commons attitude, and stood speechless, with his hands resting on his hips and his eyes upon the Admiral. It signified nothing that he resented this interruption by looking at his disturber with the fury of a Bengal tiger, he was met with the stern and angry look of the British lion. For a moment or two after these expressive exchanges of glances they stood declaiming at each other with furious animation.

The little old gentleman in the chair was apparently in a position of frightful danger to himself - sitting as he was between the angry disputants, he might be gobbled up at any moment to enable them the better to grapple with each other. But no! he actually arose, and in a peaceful, conciliatory tone requested the Lion and the Tiger to stop their roaring and afford him the opportunity of explaining to the meeting the

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cause of this unexpected duel; for I am certain not one in a hundred had the faintest conception of the cause of it. As well might he have presented his request to the Falls of Niagara as to expect silence there. The whole room, too, was now in commotion, and the din of noise confounding. The Admiral had said his say, but Mr. Urquhart had only partially expressed his sentiments. The meeting was something to be remembered. Almost every man on the platform essayed to speak, each doubtless thinking he had sufficient influence with his fellow citizens to obtain a hearing. The occasion must have been a trying one to the *amour propre* of many a gentleman who had to retire in disgust. The scene was like the effect which might be produced by a large orchestra, each member of which is playing a melody distinct from every other, both in time and tune - the oboes and flutes, with fiddles, cellos, and double bass, horns and trumpets, bassoons and trombones, with the occasional thump of a drum, of each man endeavouring to make his particular strain heard above the rest. The "peace" men must have experienced the most indefinable sensations, and many with the martial turn were animated with the desire to retire quietly from the scene.

How is it all to end? Nobody will listen to anybody. Had George Wilson been there, his powers would have been put to the test! Rescue from the disturbance came at last in the most unexpected manner. An insignificant-looking individual was seen hurriedly to make his way to the front part of the platform; his low stature

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and disproportionate energy bore him past every obstacle. The effect of this sudden appearance of so small a man facing the audience was comical and striking enough to gradually close the mouths and cause all eyes to be turned towards the daring individual. The noise was rapidly subsiding, but the first word that issued from his lips, which was delivered in a voice of thunder, produced on the audience the stillness of the ocean calm after a tempest. The combination of almost minimum dimensions with the maximum of lung power in this "Boanerges" was sufficient to convert one of the noisiest meetings ever assembled into one the most silent and attentive. He for a short time made capital from the familiar manner he spoke of Lord Palmerston and his "gallant friend the Admiral," but after some platitudes it soon became apparent to everybody his speech was *vox et præterea nihil*, and he had to make a speedy exit from the front, after the perpetration of a splendid, innocent hoax. I heard afterwards the little man was a baker. He thought perhaps the great man's extremity might prove the little one's opportunity. After this departure the noise recommenced, but eventually Doctor Vaughan, whose influence was always respected, rose and pacified, if he did not satisfy, the majority, by a "philosophical" explanation of matters as they stood.

Soon after this time our Government "drifted" into war with Russia, and the dreaded results in Manchester followed. Our business was one of the first to suffer, and the "survival of the fittest" theory was practically demonstrated.

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The home trade houses all over the country stopped their buying operations; and the shipping houses, not knowing how the war might extend to other nations not yet involved, also withdrew from the markets. I remember only one advantage the war brought us - the Army Commissariat Department required cloth for making tents, and we supplied them with a quantity through a London house. It was fortunate that our particular article was suitable. We had a large quantity of it, and to our great relief the whole of the stock was cleared out. There were many piles of these goods which had long remained in our cellar, occupying so much of the space as to render it not only dark but uninhabitable, by depriving it of air circulation. We heard that these goods were shipped for the Crimea in the Prince transport ship, which was lost with many valuable lives. The order was not repeated.

The Athenæum in those days, though not the flourishing institution it has since become, was in



favour with young men. It was then under the management of Dr. Hudson. Most of the young men coming to Manchester were expected to become members of the Athenæum, to which they were promptly introduced by some friend already in the enjoyment of membership. Edward Phelps, my friend with the mania for old engravings, acted as my *introduceur*. It was an attractive institution, with a president, vice-presidents, treasurer, librarian, and an enterprising committee of intelligent young men. Mr. Samuel Ogden, I believe, was the president, and, if I mistake not,

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is so now, notwithstanding the long lapse of years. Delightful concerts of classical music were given from time to time in the Library of the building. The Library itself was a poor one, the books dirty, and the missing volumes, of which there were many, seemed never to reappear. But there were other advantages, such as Dramatic and Chess Clubs, French, German, Spanish, and Italian classes - classes, indeed, for every European nationality - and an excellent Debating Society. I remember once finding myself in the miniature House of Commons of the institution. One of the members was on his legs, and my movements were accordingly hushed into instant silence. I gathered the subject of discussion was India, and the youthful orator who was speaking wore the aspect of a man upon whose head and shoulders lay the whole weight of governing the great dependency. To listen to his urgent appeals to honourable members on the opposite side of the House to be convinced and converted by his array of facts and figures, backed by eloquence and argument, formed a striking contrast with the frivolous conversation going on below in the smoke-room. I did not wait the completion of the debate on India, but I came away with the impression that I had been listening to a future statesman, which, doubtless, he might be whenever he chooses to relinquish the editorship of the best weekly paper published in Manchester.

In the chess-room I occasionally tried my strength with one of two brothers, who, like myself, were strangers in Manchester. They had

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been sent up by their papa, who was a well-to-do medical practitioner in one of the midland counties, that they might become wealthy Manchester merchants, and at that time were serving their articles of apprenticeship in two of the leading houses. They often came to my quarters when we renewed our chess proclivities, accompanied with "churchwardens," and otherwise spent the evenings in discussing the relative merits of many of the leading firms with their buyers and other employes. Quiet, gentlemanly fellows were the two brothers, Benjamin and Jack Woodley.\* I wonder how Manchester has fared with them!

Not yet being a member of the Royal Exchange my source of information from the seat of war was the telegrams posted in the reading-room, which I perused anxiously every morning and evening when going to and from the warehouse. Dr. Hudson had a plan of the seat of war conspicuously exhibited, in which the relative positions of the respective forces of English, French, Turkish, Sardinian, and Russian troops were indicated by different coloured pins. Business dragged fearfully; customers vanished. There was nothing to be done except through an occasional "forced" sale, which incurred loss, without sensibly reducing the accumulated stock. Our buying and selling business, which had begun so auspiciously and continued with such good results, was nipped in the bud; and all our efforts were directed to keeping down the ever-increasing stock. Mr. Thornton came frequently over from the mill with care on his brow and discontent in

\* Benj and John Wood

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his countenance - moreover, he made unpleasant insinuations, which were overlooked by us under the circumstances.

Communities like individuals adapt themselves to circumstances. We gradually became

familiarized with the war. Every now and then appeared for the moment a prospect of restoration to peace, with a simultaneous improvement of business, and we looked with avidity for such revivals, which frequently occurred; but at length we came to regard the hostile condition as a normal one. The war lasted over two years, and we ceased to think much about it in regard to its effects upon commerce, and jogged along as well as we could. Our expenses at the warehouse, now increased by the additional staff, were disproportionately heavy for the work done, especially as no profits were made from outside sources. I had for some time contemplated making a start for myself and thus to relieve somewhat the burden, but in what shape I should make a commencement I could not determine. I mentioned the subject to Mr. Thornton, with whom I was free and open to speak. He offered me a partnership, and indeed was willing to do anything to promote my interests, but unwilling we should be separated. He had given up his residence at Kearsley, and his family was now living in a house near Pendleton. Here I found myself, evening after evening, discussing his as well as my own probable future movements, for he too contemplated a change of some kind or other, though what he could scarcely define; but it was clear we should for some time longer be inseparable.

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Anxiety for the future, and that of the past, brought on a severe attack of liver congestion, and on one Sunday morning, when I had intended spending a pleasant day at his house with him and his family, as had been my custom since his arrival at Pendleton, I discovered I had passed a restless night, and was troubled with pains and sickness. I would have given all I was worth to throw off these symptoms, but my efforts were hopelessly unavailing, and my landlady's doctor was sent for. The doctor was a well known practitioner living in Burlington Street,\* and her estimation of him was that he was a wonderful man. She emphatically informed me, "He had always pulled her young gentlemen through when anything ailed them." He found me very ill, and provided me with a blister, informing me that my malady was caused by anxiety. To my horror, he said I should have to leave Manchester "to take care of itself" without my aid, and go to the West of England for three months; at the expiration of which time, however, he promised I should return in the physical condition necessary for the commencement of making a fortune. I passed several delirious nights, during which I was battling continually figures which would not add up, and accounts which would not balance. Another visit followed from the doctor and the application of a more potent blister. I had a visit from W. Meadows and some other friends, who considered my condition alarming.

A good constitution, never impaired by excess, brought me through faster than the doctor had anticipated, and when he called the next time, I

\* Dr. Mellor

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had flown! Mrs. Thornton had taken me in a cab to her house to nurse me herself. The landlady afterwards told me the doctor held up his hands in mute astonishment at my unexpected departure. The same night, at eleven o'clock, my mother arrived at my lodging, from Bath, to find I had gone. My officious landlady informed her of my perilous condition, and that but for her assiduous watchfulness my mother might then be deploring the loss of her son. On the following morning, after passing a miserable, sleepless night, at the end of her long journey, the doctor called, and congratulated my mother on her son's capacity for throwing off a severe attack so speedily. In an hour afterwards I was astonished by the announcement of my maternal in my new quarters, by Mrs. Thornton, who, it appears, had written to her, the circumstances being considered sufficiently serious to warrant such a step. I had begun reading *Dombey and Son*, and at that moment was wondering how "Fanny" was to make the requested "effort," feeling very weak myself, when my mother's unexpected appearance almost caused me to faint.

I spent the allotted three months pleasantly enough in the West of England. I had no end of young relatives who had come into the world since I left that part of it, and the young uncle found himself in the thick of nephews and nieces, who formed little colonies here and there. It

took me some time to learn them off by heart - indeed some of them required considerable study. I could recognize amongst them, here and there, a rising genius, and they were all good-looking

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without an exception, especially the girls. I had also opportunities of visiting my valued friend Alfius Banham. I had not seen him since his wedding day, when of course, I was present, doing duty as one of his chief men. He was now engaged in scholastic work in Bristol. He had a sweet little cottage, in which with himself, his wife, and a little son and daughter, I lived a pleasant week, so pleasant indeed as never to be forgotten. My sister took me to a picnic - on Salisbury Plain, where I found myself singing "*Dell' aura tua profetica*" with such vigour that some of the party thought I must be taking leave of my senses. It was not so, however. The Druidical stones recalled Manchester, where I had recently heard Formes in the chief priest's part in *Norma*, and a consciousness of returning health assured me I should be there again before long. My brother-in-law had a mare who, instead of trotting, ran like a dog. I shall never forget the way he and I returned over the soft velvet-like grass plain. The effect was like travelling in a sledge.

Whilst at home I received a letter from Mrs. Thornton informing me her husband had been seriously unwell during my absence. The doctor had pronounced his malady to be one which could only be met by his being continually in the society of some congenial friend. Mrs. Thornton considered I was the only person who would take the role. She only briefly alluded to the state of her husband's business, which she thought was going from bad to worse. On my return to Manchester I went direct to his house to take up my abode

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there as arranged. I found that in my absence Mr. Brownrigg, Mr. Speakes, the assistant collector, and Edward, together with the warehouse building, had all been placed under notice. Mr. Thornton, who was fertile in ideas, had formed a scheme, and he made a proposal that I should begin business, and as a nucleus for it he would consign the whole of his cloth to me; whilst I, on the other hand, should take suitable premises, affording him the small office accommodation he might require. This proposition met my cordial approbation. It would not only relieve him of a great responsibility and be an important stroke by way of retrenchment, but it opened up a prospect also for myself. I took suitable premises, which comprised a commodious cellar, a saleroom, and an office, the whole being a portion of a large warehouse in a square of buildings in the old locality. In my ledger, which I have preserved, I find the first business entry was made on 30th July, 1855. W. Brownrigg found the employment he had coveted in the warehouse of my friend W. Renshaw, where he revelled in "quantity and quality." The old cashier, Mr. Speakes, retired on his limited income into private life, whilst the collector who assisted him found advancement in an adjoining establishment, and Edward, in his old capacity of porter, followed me and became a member of my establishment.

I engaged a lad, whom I remember was called Arthur, as clerk and office boy, and with the addition of attractive letters in gold on either side of the door, indicating to the outside world my name and occupation, I was then, as I thought,

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in a position to become an important item in the city. A good-natured uncle, who was interested in his lively young nephew's efforts, kindly placed one thousand pounds at my disposal in one of the banks.

*More in next month's newsletter.*

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Again, a continuation from previous months' newsletters, starting in October with an introduction, which is downloadable, [HERE](#)

from, '*The Book of English Trades*' published in 1827

## THE CURRIER



The business of the Currier is to prepare hides which have been under the hands of the tanner, for the use of shoe-makers, coach-makers, saddlers, book-binders, &c.

The Currier derives his name from *Coriarius*, a worker in leather; and for the antiquity of the trade, although not the modern art of currying, the reader may be referred to the seventeenth book of Homer's Iliad, line four hundred and fifty.

The use of skins is very ancient, the first garments in the world having been made of them. *Moroccos* are made of the skins of a kind of goats. Parchment is made of sheep-skins. The true chamois leather is made of the skin of an animal of the same name, though it is frequently counterfeited with common goats' and sheep's skins.

The Curriers have been an incorporated company ever since the beginning of the reign of James the First: during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, history records an account of a fierce contention between the Curriers and

Shoe-makers, respecting the dressing of leather, and the price to be paid them for their work ; and also respecting the places in which leather should be sold. At length it was stipulated, in the year 1590, among other articles, that the Curriers should have the dressing of all the leather brought into Leadenhall and Southwark markets, and within three miles of London.

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Currying is the last preparation of leather, and puts it into a condition to be made up into shoes, saddles, harness, &c.; it is performed in two ways, either upon the *flesh* or the *grain*. In dressing leather for shoes, on the *flesh*, the first operation is soaking the leather in water till it be thoroughly wet; then the flesh side is shaved on a board, called a *beam-board*; that is, a piece of *lignum-vitæ* about two feet long, two inches thick, and six inches wide, placed on a wooden block fixed on the ground, to which the Currier stands at his work, with a knife which has two edges; the blade is rectangular, about twelve inches long, and from four to six inches wide, and varying in size and weight according to the work to be performed; one end has a straight, the other a cross handle, in the plane of the knife. It is brought to a wire edge by rubbing on a stone of a coarse grit, which is afterwards taken off, and a finer edge produced by a finer and softer stone. The cross handle of the knife is then firmly fixed between the workman's knees, and while in a kneeling posture, he turns the edges to an angle with their former position, by means of a polished steel, similar in shape to a butcher's steel. They are kept in order chiefly by a smaller steel, which the man holds constantly between his fingers, and passes along the knives, the point within, and the side without the groove, formed by the turned edge, as occasion requires; and as often as the edges are worn they are renewed in the same way.

*Beam-boards* are imported sawed into the size and shape in which the Curriers use them. The name of Cox of Gloucester, is known throughout Europe as the principal maker of Curriers' knives. Lane of Cirencester, is also an approved maker; a patent has lately been obtained by Mr. Bingley, of Birmingham, for an improvement in the manufacture of their knives; but they have not been sufficiently

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tried to enable us to decide on the merits of the improvement: from what we have seen, they are, however, certainly well worth the master's attention.



Having thus prepared the knife, the wet skin is thrown over the beam with the flesh side outwards, and the man keeps it in its position, by the pressure of his knees as he leans over the beam. The knife is then applied horizontally to the leather, and by repeated strokes downwards it is reduced to the substance required.

After the leather is properly shaved, it is thrown into water again, and scoured upon a board or stone appropriated to the use. Scouring is performed by rubbing the grain or hair side with a piece of pumice-stone, or some other stone of a good grit, by which means a white sort of substance is forced out of the leather, called the bloom, produced in the operation of tanning. The hide is then conveyed to the shade, or drying-place, when the oily substances are applied, which are put on both sides of the leather, but in a greater and thicker quantity on the flesh than on the hair side. Thus far is the process of currying in its wet state, and thus far it is called *getting out*.

When the skin is quite dry, it undergoes other operations for the purpose of softening the leather. Whitening or paring succeeds, which is performed with a fine edge on the knife already described. It is then *boarded up*, or grained again, by applying the graining board first to the grain, and then to the flesh side.

It is now fit for waxing, which is performed by rubbing it with a brush dipped in a composition of oil and lamp-black, on the flesh side, till it be thoroughly black, it is then shed, called black-sizing, with a brush or sponge, dried and tallowed. After undergoing some other operations, this sort of leather, called waxed leather, is curried.

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For leather curried on the hair side, termed black on the *grain*, the first operation is the same as that already described, till it is scoured. Then the black, which is a solution of copperas in bark liquor, is applied to it while wet: this is first put upon the grain, after it has been rubbed over with a brush dipped in urine; and when it is dry, it is *seasoned*, that is, rubbed over with, a brush dipped in copperas water on the grain, till it be perfectly black: after this the grain is raised with a fine graining-board, and the leather is oiled with a mixture of oil and tallow, when it is finished, and fit for the shoe-maker.

Hides are sometimes *curried* for the use of saddlers and collar-makers, but the principal operations are much the same as those which have been already described. Hides for the roofs of coaches are shaved nearly as thin as those for shoes, and blacked on the grain. A fact worthy of remark is, that oil is imbibed more uniformly and effectually by wet than by dry leather, and this most probably arises from the gradual evaporation of the water, which gives place to the introduction of the oil, by capillary attraction; whereas the air, if interspersed in the pores, would resist it.

In the plate we see the Currier engaged in his business: on his right hand and on his left are hides which have undergone part of the operation; and behind him, pinned to the wall, are two skins, finished except the drying.

In many places the business of a Currier connects with it that of the leather-dresser and leather-cutter, who supplies the shoe-makers and others with all their leather, black, red, blue, green, &c.

Leadenhall-Market, in London, is one of the principal marts for leather: and shoe-makers and leather-cutters in the country, who command the capital, buy the greater part of their goods, particularly their sole or butt leather, there.

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The Indian women, in Carolina and Virginia, dress buck and doe-skin with a considerable degree of skill; and so quick, that a single woman will completely dress eight or ten skins a day. Curriers exercise their trade under a license from the Board of Excise, which they take out annually, and they are obliged to specify in the entry every room in which leather is deposited, as well as the vats and tubs in which it is soaked. Their premises are of course subject to the inspection of Excise-Officers, and any hide not having the tanners' duty-mark is liable to seizure.

No Currier can use the trade of a butcher, tanner, &c. nor shall he curry skins insufficiently tanned, nor gash hides or leather on pain of forfeiting for every hide or skin 6s. 8d. Curriers not currying the leather sufficiently shall forfeit the ware or the value, &c. 1 Jac. c. 22. If Curriers do not curry leather sent to them within sixteen days, between michaelmas and lady-day, and in eight days at other times, they are liable to a forfeiture of 5l. 12 Geo. II. c. 25.

### THE WOOL-COMBER.



The Wool-Comber cleanses and prepares wool in a proper state to be spun into worsted, yarn, &c. for weaving and other purposes.

This is a very ancient trade in this country, wool having been long reckoned one of its staple commodities. The raw material, as is well known, is the hair or covering of the sheep, which when washed, combed, spun, and woven, makes worsted, many kinds of stuff, and other articles, adapted to the use, comfort, and even the luxuries, of life.

The invention of wool-combing is ascribed to Bishop Blaize, the patron saint of the trade, and also of the clothiers, in honour of whom a splendid festival is annually kept by the whole body of woolcombers in this kingdom, on the third of February. But, we think, there is more of fable than reality in this honour to the bishop.

While the wool remains in the state in which it is shorn from the sheep's back, it is called a fleece. Each fleece consists of wool of different qualities and degrees of fineness, which the wool-stapler, or the wholesale

dealer in wool, sorts, and sells in packs, at different rates, to the wool-comber. The wool which is obtained from the skins of sheep which are killed, and not shorn, is of a different quality, in regard to length, from the shorn wool, and is used by the wool-combers principally for making stockings, for which, from being longer,

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it is much better calculated; and hence one reason why knit-stockings are stronger than wove ones.

The attitude of the Wool-comber, in the plate, exhibits him in only one part of his business, the drawing out of the slivers. The wool intended for the manufacture of stuffs is brought into a state adapted for the making of worsted by the Woolcomber. He first washes the wool in a trough, and, when very clean, puts one end on a fixed hook and the other on a moveable hook, which he turns round with a handle, till all the moisture is drained completely out. It is then thrown lightly out into a basket, such as is seen in the plate. The Woolcomber next throws it out very lightly into thin layers, on each of which he scatters a few drops of oil; it is then put together closely into a bin, which is placed under the bench on which he sits: at the back of the wool-bin is another and larger one, for what is called the noyles, that is, the part of the wool that is left on the comb after the sliver is drawn out. The shape of the comb is seen in the plate: there are in each comb three rows of teeth, parallel to one another. The best combs are manufactured at Halifax, in Yorkshire; the teeth are made of highly tempered steel, and fixed into a very smooth stock, in which is inserted a handle, in nearly a perpendicular position. Each workman has two of these combs: these he makes pretty hot, by putting them into a jar, made of clay, (see the plate) called a comb-pot, in which there is a fire, made of the best burnt charcoal.

When the combs are hot, he puts on each a certain quantity of wool, having first disentangled it from all knots and other obstacles that might impede the operation. He then combs the wool

from off one comb on to the other, alternately, till it is exceedingly smooth; when, having again heated the combs, he fixes each on an iron spike, placed in the

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wall for the purpose, as it is represented in the plate, and draws out the wool into a fine sliver, oftentimes five or six feet in length; what is left on the comb is called a noyle, and is fit only for the manufacture of blankets and coarse cloth.

The business of the Wool-comber varies in different counties: some, as the Wool-combers in Hertfordshire, prepare it only for worsted yarn, &c.; others, as those in and near Norwich, prepare it for weaving into camblets and other light stuffs.

Sometimes the worsted is required to be very white: in that case, before it is dry, after washings it is hung up in a close room, in which a charcoal fire is burning; on the fire some finely-powdered roll-brimstone is thrown, and the room made airtight, so as neither to admit the external air, nor suffer the vapour from the sulphur to escape.

In general, four Wool-combers work at the same pot, which is made large enough to admit of eight combs. There are, of course, four distinct benches and bins, of both kinds, in each shop. In almost every work-shop is an hour-glass, by which they measure the time; the care of this falls to the lot of a particular person. The small bottle underneath the comb is filled with oil, which is occasionally used. On the side of the wall are placed two ballads, of which, in general, there are several in the Woolcomber's shop.

The journeymen work by the piece, and will earn from sixteen to twenty shillings per week. Like people in many other trades, they often make holidays in the early part of the week. They come on a Monday morning, and having lighted the fire in the comb-pot, will frequently go away, and, perhaps return no more till Wednesday, or even Thursday. The men in this trade have a curious custom, the same with the hatters when out of work: they set out in search of a master, with a sort of certificate from their last place; this they call going on the

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*tramp*; and at every shop where they call, and can get no employment, they receive one penny, which is given from a common stock, raised by the men of that shop. A spare bench is always provided in the shop, upon which people on the tramp may rest themselves.

Wool-combing is preparatory to the manufacture of worsted yarn, and is the first process towards the making of flannel, serges, stuffs, baize, kerseys, &c.

A pack of wool, which weighs two hundred and forty pounds, being made into stuffs, serges, &c. will employ two hundred persons. And when made into stockings, it will afford work for a week to one hundred and eighty-four persons, viz. ten combers, one hundred and two spinners, winders, &c. and sixty stocking-weavers, besides doublers, throwersj, and a dyer.

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**From the e-Postbag**

This email came in from my friend Glyn Collin, who has done extensive research on his extended family ancestors and shares the most interesting finds with me! The newspaper clipping below was his more recent find. Many thanks for sending it.

***FATAL BOILER EXPLOSION AT OLDHAM***

*The Manchester Guardian* Feb 25th, 1852

About five years since, two working men, named Robert Nuttall and Daniel Clough, erected a two-storey building, about twenty yards long and seven or eight yards wide, at Westhill, Oldham, calling it 'The *Diamond Mill*'. For nearly two years, we believe, these men used their building principally for bobbin-turning; but in March, 1849, Nuttall suddenly went to America, leaving Clough in possession of the mill, and in somewhat embarrassed circumstances. Since then, different portions of the mill have been let , in small tenancies, Clough supplying the

power for driving the different machinery. Up to May last, the boiler used was within the building, at the west end, the engine being in an adjoining room; but at that time a larger boiler was purchased, second hand, from Messrs. Fearnought and Sons of Dukinfield, and fitted up in a small shed on the north side of the mill - the previous boiler house being turned into a saw-pit. the *Diamond Mill* has recently been occupied by seven persons or firms - three of them being in the one room on the upper floor; and four occupying a small room each on the ground floor. The westerly end of the upper room was occupied by Messrs, Coop and Mellor, who had in it three or four lathes, and who worked as iron turners and repairers of engine rollers; a part of the same floor was occupied by Clough, as a bobbin-turning shop; and the rest of the building was occupied by willowers\* and waste dealers, there being seven willows in all. Opposite the westerly end of the mill and boiler house, and about five or six yards distant, stood a row of five cottages; at the back of these (and fronting Whitehead Lane) being another row called Westhill. The five cottages first mentioned were respectively occupied by Clough, James Heap, Thomas Newton, Robert Wright, and James Ashton. For some time it appears that the engine and boiler were 'tented' by a brother of Clough's; a fortnight since Clough undertook the management himself, and on Monday morning a man named James Howard, or Howarth, said to have been for some time a labourer at Messrs. Hibbert, Platt and Son's works, entered upon the management.

Nothing is yet known of what passed after the steam was got up on Monday morning, until twenty minutes after eleven; but at that time when all the machinery in the place was in full work the boiler burst, with a very loud report. The boiler itself flew in one direction, and the back end of it in another; a considerable portion of the end of the mill was blown down, and the boiler house chimney, (17 yards high) was flung against the cottages occupied by Newton and Wright, which are now almost cut through and completely shattered; the other three houses being more or less injured, and much damage done to the furniture. A crowd of persons was soon collected on the spot and they commenced to remove therubbish; first aiming to get out anyone who might be among the ruins of the cottages. Newton's wife was first got out alive, but with her head and breast bleeding and burned; she was able with the assistance of two men, to walk a short distance to a friend's house, where she died within an hour and a half. This poor creature was busily engaged preparing dinner, at the time of the explosion. Newton (who is by trade a hatter, but has long been unemployed) kept a small greengrocery shop, as a means of helping towards the maintenance of his family of eight children; and Mrs. Wright, who had entered the shop to make a small purchase, was instantly buried among the bricks. When she was got out, she was found to be very much cut upon the forehead and arms; but, on Monday night it was thought that she had not sustained any fatal injury. Thomas Newton, a boy 11 years old, was standing outside his father's cottage with his sister, Sarah Ann, 15 months old, in his arms; the infant was so severely struck and burned, that it died within ten minutes, and the lad very seriously, although it is thought not fatally injured. No other person in the five cottages was injured; indeed, most of the children were at school. When the bricks and rubbish at the corner of the mill had been somewhat cleared away, the engine-tenter (Howard or Howarth) was found in the fire-hole; he was very much burned and bruised, and is scarcely expected to recover but the wonder is that he was not instantaneously killed, as the boiler must, apparently, have passed over him. John Gartside (generally known in the neighbourhood as 'Dusty'), a man employed by Henry Tetlow, who has a willow on the ground floor, was found under the willow nearly buried with bricks, which are supposed to have been driven through a window close to the end of the boiler shed; he was removed to a house near and was found to be so severely injured, that on Monday night his death was hourly expected. Eight members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers had a very narrow escape. They had been inspecting the premises on Monday morning, with a view, it is said, of renting them for a machine shop; and when the boiler burst, they were at the westerly end of the upper floor, examining the working of Coop and Mellor's lathes. When the corner of the building fell, they rushed to the opposite side of the floor, and escaped, although they hardly know how. Thomas Collin was struck in the



forehead by a brick and stunned a little, and Benjamin Brierley was slightly injured, from his foot being caught by some of the ruins; but the rest were only scratched or bruised during their escape. The names of these men, we are told, are Matthew Brierley, Thomas Wolstenholme, James Sykes, George Burgess, William Lees, and another. It will thus be seen that a woman and child were killed; two men, a woman, and a boy, were seriously if not fatally injured; and three or four others have suffered in a less degree. No part of the machinery in the building was damaged with the exception of Messrs. Coop and Mellor's lathes, some of which are destroyed; and except at the north-westerly corner, where the boiler stood, the mill itself has not been much injured, beyond the smashing of the windows and frames. Clough was in the saw-pit at the time of the explosion; he escaped with a severe cut at the back of his head.

There are some very singular effects, in connection with the accident. The boiler was a high-pressure cylindrical one, with flat ends, 17feet long and 6 feet in diameter; it stood lengthwise beside the mill, with its back end towards Jackson's Buildings. We could not learn at what pressure it was usually worked, but as it is said to have been of the power of twenty-one horses, and to drive an engine of only eight horses' power, it certainly need never have been at all strained. Fears seem to have been entertained as to the boiler bursting, from the absence of skilled or competent management; and the result has shown that there must have been a most fearful pressure of steam when the accident happened. The first rent seems to have taken place close to the rivets at the back end, and it was probably somewhere near the lower edge; for after the end had been completely blown out, it flew over Jackson's Buildings, the houses fronting Whitehead Lane, the road itself, and fell two or three yards inside the hedge on the opposite side, destroying a pig-cote there, the distance it thus travelled being from 60 to 100 yards. The boiler took the opposite direction; after passing six or eight yards of the length of the mill, it struck the ground, which there rises slightly, and cut a trench five or six yards long, and nearly a yard deep at the further end. Several persons say that they saw the boiler 20 or 30 feet high in the air; and if this be so, it must, when able to overcome the resistance of the ground, from the depth of the trench it had cut, have turned a double somersault. It now lies between 30 and 40 yards from its original bed, and nearly half that distance from the end of the trench; its turning in the air is rendered probable from the fact that it is now two or three yards to the north of the line of the trench; and if it turned at all it must have done so twice, as it is now in the same relative position as before the explosion. It lies close to a slope down to an occupation road; and but for striking the ground would probably have crossed the road and fallen in a field on the other side.

A quantity of cotton waste and hemp must have been stored in or near the boiler shed; for the ground near the boiler is much scorched and there is a large quantity of burned cotton scattered about; while the field on the opposite side of the road is strewn with bricks and cotton waste (some in bags) for a distance of at least 100 yards. Two trees which stand in the field in a line with the flight of the boiler, have their bark cut and torn off by bricks as though cannon loaded with grape-shot had been discharged at them within point blank range. Following the direction taken by the end of the boiler, an iron rod may be seen stuck through the brickwork of the chimney of one of the houses fronting Whitehead Lane, and bricks are scattered for 50 or 60 yards up the field on the other side of the road. At a rough guess, the two parts of the boiler cannot be less than 100 or 120 yards apart, and bricks and cotton waste are lying at points which must be fully double that distance from each other. Two or three bricks fell through the roofs of the houses in Westhill; but we could not learn that any one in the houses or the road was injured. The boiler appears to have been well stayed. There was a strong longitudinal stay, and two others fixed angularly from the sides to each of the ends; and the cotters and other fastenings which remain seem to be more than usually strong. The interior of the boiler is somewhat foul; and judging from the marks, the water appears to have been for some time kept lower than was consistent with safety. The angle iron is unbroken, except for about six or eight rivets on the upperside; but throughout the whole circumference the breakage of the end plates has been so cleanly effected that the inner side of almost every rivet is left bare. The

firing-up end of the boiler (which remains) has been smashed in, nearly up to the centre, evidently by the resistance of the ground in cutting the trench or furrow beside the mill, and there is a large quantity of earth inside; a hole has been knocked through one of the side plates, a few feet from this end; and at the other end, one of the plates has been deeply grazed, as though with some very powerful tool. The valve (a common lever, apparently), remains upon the boiler, but it is much bent; the cover of the man-hole also remains, but the other fittings are destroyed. From a slight inspection of the inner surface of the end which has been blown out (the underside as it lies in the field), it appears that the cotters of all the stays were in their place at the time of the explosion. The fastening of the longitudinal stay is torn through, without injury to the plate, those of one of the smaller stays are torn off, and a hole made in the plate; while those of the other are merely bent outwards. Altogether, it may be considered very fortunate that so little destruction of life and property has been caused by this explosion; for had the end of the boiler gone through, instead of over the cottages, many lives must have been lost, and had a greater portion of the mill itself fallen, some ten or twelve persons would probably have been killed or seriously injured there. No mills or other large works were fortunately so situated as to be in danger.

The inquest on the bodies of the sufferers will be commenced by Mr. T.F. Dearden of Rochdale, this (Wednesday) morning at the *Spread Eagle*, Oldham. It will of course be a question for the jury, whether some competent engineer shall be called in to report as to the probable cause of the accident, and if this be done the inquiry will have to be adjourned; but we must express a fear, from all we have been able to learn, that the result of the inquiry will be to show that this boiler has been worked at high pressure, almost close to rows of cottages without any person at all qualified for the work being engaged to superintend it.

Since the above was written, we have learned that John Gartside died during Monday night.

\* 'Willow' ... a textile machine consisting of a spiked drum revolving inside a chamber fitted internally with spikes, used to open and clean unprocessed cotton or wool.

*The inquest transcript in next month's newsletter.*

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An email was sent to me, at Oldham HRG, with regard to the Group's December meeting in which we would remember and share our Christmas memories. It was about the tune written by an Oldham composer and performed in 2011. According to Wikipedia, "Robert Jackson, parish organist at All Saints' Church, Oldham, Lancashire, wrote a tune to "*While shepherds watched their flocks by night*" in 1903 for the Westwood Moravian Church there. It was called "*Jackson's Tune*."

It can be heard on Youtube, [HERE](#) ... the image below is a screen grab.



Many thanks to Jeremy Sutcliffe for sending this.

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This was part of a real 'nostalgia fest' and got me thinking back to my own childhood years. In the years after WWII, money was always a bit tight but Christmas followed a certain pattern; there would be a couple of sprigs of holly around the mirror hanging over the mantelpiece and a small artificial decorated tree sitting on a small table. Mum drew the line at paper chains! Christmas Eve saw my grandmother and 2 unmarried uncles (from round the corner) sit down for the evening meal with us. On the table was always roast chicken (never seen at any other time of the year!). Early evening saw me packed off to bed with my empty pillow case ready for what Santa would leave for me! Once I'd gone to bed, the adults played the card game Newmarket, for pennies ... afterwards all the pennies were then piled into a little brass bucket (sent by my grandfather from the front, in WW1, before he was killed at the Battle of Cambrai in 1917). Christmas Day morning also followed its own pattern ... the long white tablecloth from the previous evening was still on the table, with the little bucket of pennies waiting for me.



In the meantime, in the excitement, I'd up-ended my pillowcase of presents. Each year there would be one main present ... either a doll, a doll's pram, a scooter, a tiny tricycle, a doll's cot, or something similar. One year a pogo stick ... remember those? There were always the Annuals ... Dandy, Beano, Rupert Bear and, later, School Friend and Girl's Crystal; and, in the years right after the war, a tangerine and a handful of nuts in shells.

At breakfast, dad and I would both read the Dandy and Beano, swopping over as we each finished one. Happy Days!

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## 1921 ... a Census Centenary

MLFHS, **1921 Centenary Project** ... follow the links to the short introductory video [HERE](#) , other short videos and the many blog articles (20 and counting!) [HERE](#) which are full of unexpected information, making fascinating reading (they're on the public access pages). A dedicated 1921 page, bringing it all together, is [HERE](#). and a 1921 World Timeline is [HERE](#). A great deal of hard work has gone into this project, including bringing us some talks, on zoom, with a 1921 connection ... follow the links and enjoy just what the team have found for us. The final Journal (*Manchester Genealogist*) of the year, was the special **1921 Centenary** edition.

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

since the last newsletter :

\* Christmas Tree Folktales and Legends

[HERE](#)

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\* Did Oliver Cromwell Really Ban Christmas?

[HERE](#)

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\* Have you found your ancestor's baptism record? We take a closer look at these historic English and Welsh documents, which go back as far as 1538

[HERE](#)

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\* Where I Call Home: Boomerang Manc.  
Perhaps you will recognise him one of our helpdesk volunteers

[HERE](#)

~~~~~  
\* All Things Georgian

[HERE](#)

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\* What is a workhouse infirmary?

[HERE](#)

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\* The British Newspaper Archive  
The Top Ten Christmas Presents to Give in the 1920s

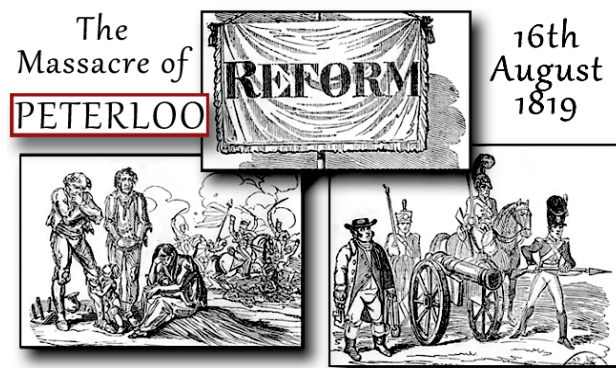
[HERE](#)

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\* Fads Popular With Ancestors Of Mid-To-Late 1800s

[HERE](#)

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\* For much 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!

### Coronavirus Pandemic Oldham Local Studies and Archives is open again

#### **Coronavirus Update and Statement July 2021 :**

Oldham Local Studies and Archives is pleased to announce that it is now fully open to the public.

#### **Our opening hours are as follows:**

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

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

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

Although it is no longer mandatory, we are encouraging visitors to continue using masks where possible and to respect 2m social distancing with regard to staff and other users.

Hand sanitisers will also continue to be available.

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

**In normal times** there are regular Family History Advice Sessions every Monday and Wednesday afternoons from 2-4pm.

There's no need to book. Just turn up with all the information you have and the resident family history experts will be on hand to help.

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

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

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

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

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

[Oldham Council Heritage Collections](#)

There are regularly changing displays in the Local Studies Library.

[Opening hours](#) and contact details.

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## Website Links

### Other Society Websites

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

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

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

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

Lancashire Local History Federation – [www.lancashirehistory.org](http://www.lancashirehistory.org)

Liverpool and South West Lancashire FHS – [www.lswlfhs.org.uk](http://www.lswlfhs.org.uk)

Manchester Region Industrial Archaeology Society – [www.mrias.co.uk](http://www.mrias.co.uk)

Oldham Historical Research Group – [www.pixnet.co.uk/Oldham-hrg](http://www.pixnet.co.uk/Oldham-hrg)

Peterloo - [Peterloo-Manchester](#)

Ranulf Higden Society (Latin transcription) - [Ranulf Higden Soc.](#)

Royton Local History Society – [www.rlhs.co.uk](http://www.rlhs.co.uk)

Saddleworth Historical Society – [www.saddleworth-historical-society.org.uk](http://www.saddleworth-historical-society.org.uk)

Tameside Local History Forum - [www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk](http://www.tamesidehistoryforum.org.uk)

Tameside Local & Family History - <http://tamesidefamilyhistory.co.uk/contents.htm>

The Victorian Society - [Manchester Regional Website](#)

### 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](#)

### Some Local Archives

Barnsley Museum & Discovery Centre – [www.experience-barnsley.com](http://www.experience-barnsley.com)

Birkenhead – [Local & Family History](#)

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

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

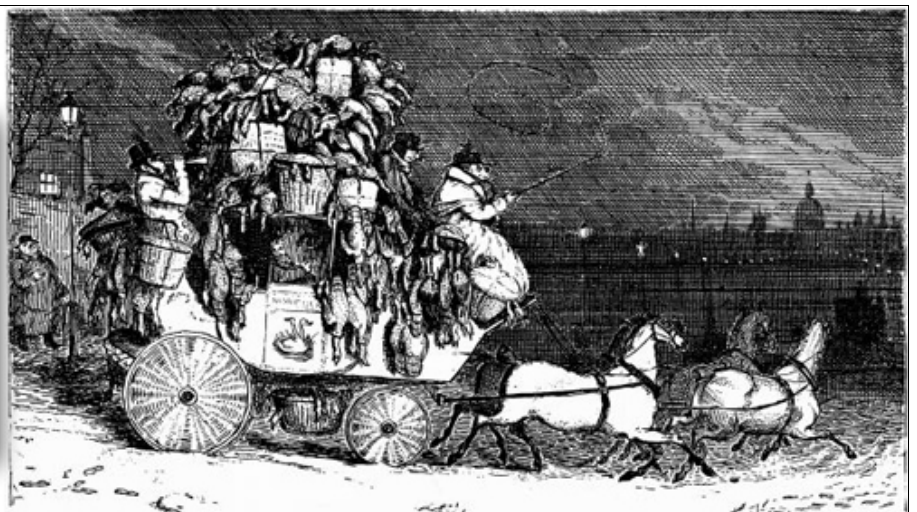
Tameside Local Studies and Archives - <https://www.tameside.gov.uk/archives>

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



### For the Gallery

The images that follow are from '*The Christmas Book*', pub. 1887  
with short extracts from the accompanying text.



**The Norfolk Coach Delivering Turkeys for Market**

" There is little exaggeration in the accompanying picture of a Lynn or Bury coach on its townward journey with its freight of turkeys at the Christmas season. Nay, as regards the freightage

itself, the artist has kept himself within bounds. Many a time have we seen a Norfolk coach with its hampers piled on the roof and swung from beneath the body, and its birds depending, by every possible contrivance, from every part from which a bird could be made to hang. Nay, we believe it is not unusual with the proprietors, at this season, to refuse inside passengers of the human species, in favor of these Oriental gentry, who "pay better;" and on such occasions of course they set at defiance the restriction which limits them to carrying "four insides." Within and without, the coaches are crammed with the bird of Turkey; and a gentleman town-ward bound, who presented himself at a Norwich coach-office at such a time, to inquire the "fare to London," was pertly answered by the bookkeeper, "Turkeys." Our readers will acquit us of exaggeration when we tell them that Mr. Hone, in his "Every-Day Book," quotes from an historical account of Norwich an authentic statement of the amount of turkeys which were transmitted from that city to London between a Saturday morning and the night of Sunday, in the December of 1793, which statement gives the number as one thousand seven hundred, the weight as nine tons, two hundredweight, and two pounds, and the value as £680. It is added that in the two following days these were followed by half as many more. We are unable to furnish the present statistics of the matter; but in forty years which have elapsed since that time the demand, and of course the supply, must have greatly increased; and it is probable that the coach-proprietors find it convenient to put extra carriages on the road for these occasions. Norfolk must be a noisy county. There must be a "pretty considerable deal" of gabble towards the month of November in that English Turkistan. But what a silence must have fallen upon its farmyards since Christmas has come round! Turkeys are indisputably born to be killed. That is an axiom. It is the end of their training, as it ought to be (and, in one sense, certainly *is*) of their desires. And such being the destiny of this bird, it may probably be an object of ambition with a respectable turkey to fulfil its fate at the period of this high festival. Certain it is that at no other time can it attain to such dignities as belong to the turkey who smokes on the well-stored table of a Christmas dinner,—the most honored dish of all the feast. Something like an anxiety for this promotion[172] is to be inferred from the breathless haste of the turkey of which our artist has here given us a sketch, in its pursuit of the coach which has started for London without it. The picture is evidently a portrait. There is an air of verisimilitude in the eager features, and about the action altogether, of the bird, which stamps it genuine. In its anxiety it has come off without even waiting to be killed; and at the rate after which it appears to be travelling, is, we think, likely enough to come up with a heavily laden coach. We hope, however, that it is not in pursuit of the particular coach which we have seen on its way to the "Swan with two Necks," because we verily believe there is no room on *that* conveyance for a single additional turkey, even if it should succeed in overtaking it."

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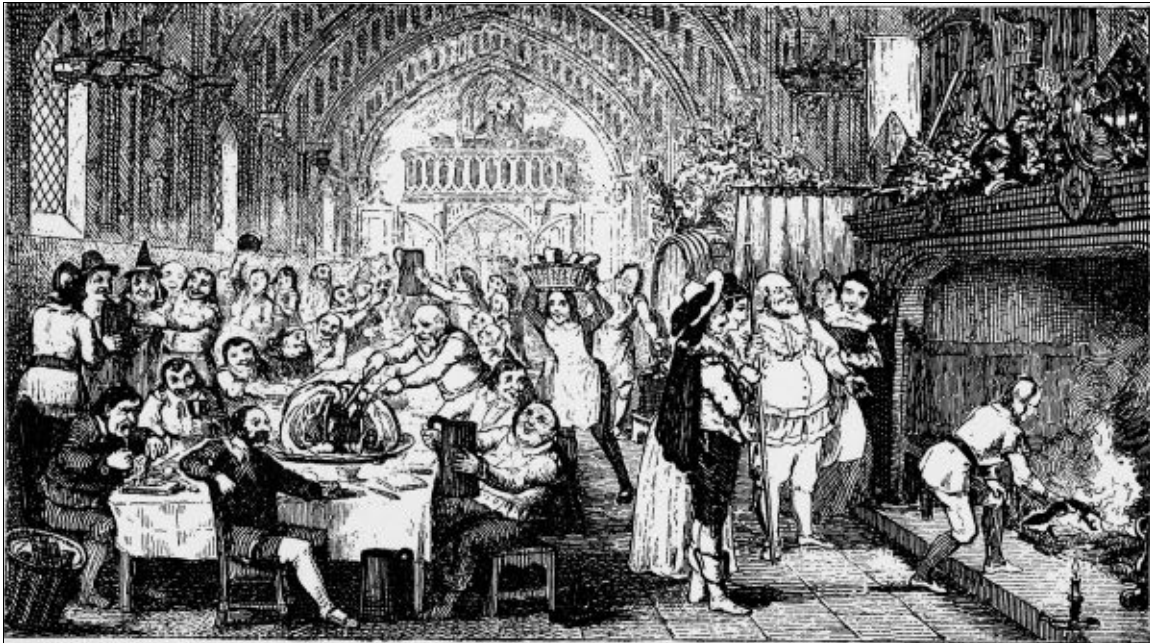




## Last Minute Christmas Eve Shopping

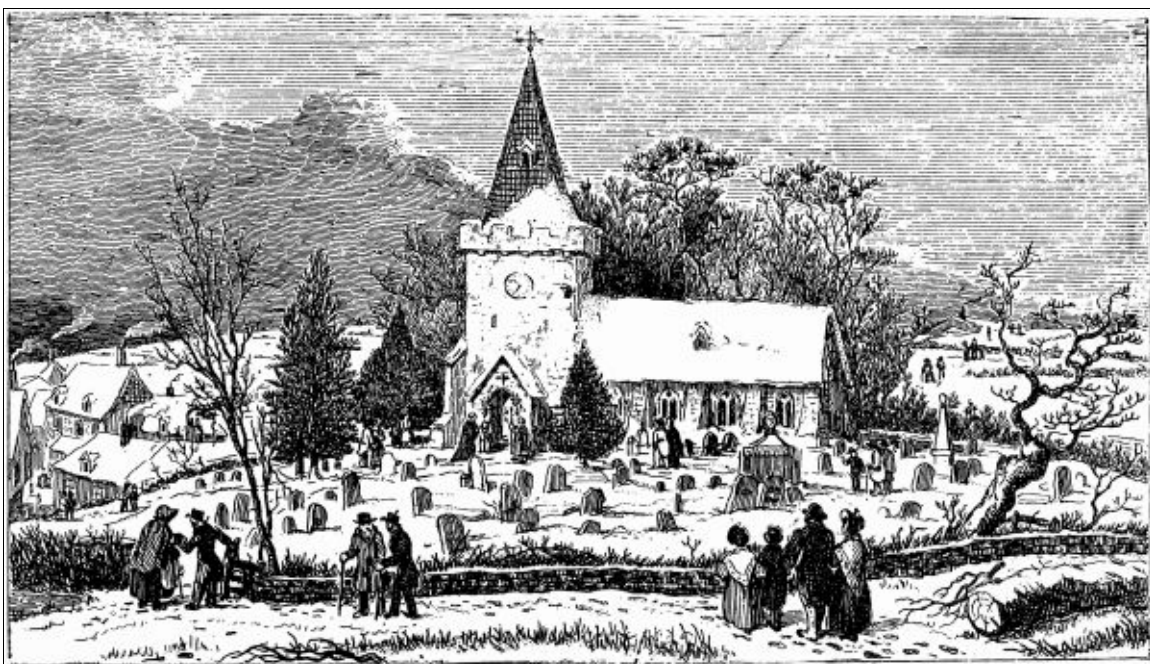
Everywhere throughout the British isles Christmas Eve is marked by an increased activity about the good things of this life. "Now," says Stevenson, an old writer whom we have already quoted for the customs of Charles the Second's time, "capons and hens, besides turkeys, geese, ducks, with beef and mutton, must all die; for in twelve days a multitude of people will not be fed with a little;" and the preparations in this respect of this present period of grace, are made much after the ancient prescription of Stevenson. The abundant displays of every kind of edible in the London markets on Christmas Eve, with a view to the twelve days' festival of which it is the overture, the blaze of lights amid which they are exhibited and the evergreen decorations by which they are embowered, together with the crowds of idlers or of purchasers that wander through these well-stored magazines, present a picture of abundance and a congress of faces well worthy of a single visit from the stranger, to whom a London market on the eve of Christmas is as yet a novelty.

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The Feast in the Baronial Hall

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Church Service on Christmas Morning

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**Spooky Story Telling for the Children!**

"It is apparently by a group of the latter kind that this branch of the Christmas amusements is illustrated in the plate. The youthful members of a family are listening, in all probability, to some tale of their sires, related by the withered crone, who, grown old in that service, links those young beings with a generation gone by, and stands, as it were, prophesying "betwixt the living and the dead." If we may judge from the aspect of the aged sybil herself, and the pale and earnest faces that surround her, the narrative which she is imparting is one of the fearful class, and not to be listened to beyond the cheering inspirations of that bright fire; although the moving shadows which it flings upon the old walls are amongst the terrors which are born of her story. For the scene of these emotions, the artist has chosen, as artists still love to do, the chamber of an ancient mansion, with its huge chimney and oriel-window. And it may be that for picturesque effects which are to address themselves to the eye, artists are right in so doing. No doubt, the high chronicles of chivalry, and the mysterious traditions of the past, comport well with the gloom of the gothic gallery;—and, certainly, the long rambling passages of an old house afford at once room for the wandering of ghosts, and that dim, shadowy light by which imagination sees them best. But the true poetry of life is not confined to ancient dwellings; and every house, in every crowded thoroughfare of every city, has its own tales to tell around the Christmas fire."



**Sitting down to Christmas Dinner**



"The Christmas dinner of modern days is, as most of our readers know, a gathering together of generations, an assembling of Israel by its tribes. In the one before us, the artist has given a pretty extensive muster. We have them of the seven ages and the several professions.

Contrast with this modern Christmas dinner, as well as with the high festival of yore, the dreary picture of a Christmas Day and dinner, under the stern prescription of the Puritans, as given in his Diary, by Pepys, the chatty secretary to the Admiralty. "1668, Christmas-day. To dinner," thus he writes, "alone with my wife; who, poor wretch! sat undressed all day till ten at night, altering and lacing of a noble petticoat; while I, by her, making the boy read to me the life of Julius Cæsar and Des Cartes' book of Music."

To the heads of the very respectable family before us, we have already been introduced, in an earlier part of this volume, and are glad to meet with them again, under circumstances so auspicious, and supported by their junior branches. In a family so flourishing, we might have expected to escape the exhibition of antiquated celibacy. But, no! that is clearly an old maid, who is hobnobbing with the gentleman in the foreground, and, we must say, there is something about him which carries a strong suspicion of old-bachelorship. We suppose the one and the other are to be found in most families. However, they are not the parties who least enjoy this sort of reunions. We fancy, it is known to most people that meetings of this description are very happy ones amongst the members of a family, and remarkably uninteresting to third parties. We should certainly prefer reading Des Cartes, with Pepys and his wife, to finding ourselves a "foreigner" in such a group as the present.

But the best of the day is yet to come! and we should have no objection to join the younger members of that group in the merry sports that await the evening. We need not give the programme. It is like that of all the other Christmas nights. The blazing fire, the song, the dance, the riddle, the jest, and many another merry sport, are of its spirits. Mischief will be committed under the mistletoe-bough, and all the good wishes of the season sent round under the sanction of the wassail-bowl."



**Boxing Day**

Boxing-day, however, is still a great day in London. Upon this anniversary, every street resounds with the clang of hall-door knockers. Rap follows rap, in *rapid* succession, the harsh and discordant tones of iron mingling with those of rich and sonorous brass, and giving a degenerate imitation of the brazen clangor of the trumpet, which formed the summons to the gate in days of old, and which, together with the martial music of the drum, appears to have been adopted, at a later period, by the Christmas-boxers, on St. Stephen's Day. Pepys, in his Diary (1668), records his having been "called up by drums and trumpets; these things and boxes," he adds, "have cost me much money this Christmas, and will do more." Which passage

seems to have been in the memory of our facetious publisher, when he made the following entry in his journal of last year, from whence we have taken the liberty of transcribing it. "Called out," says Spooner (1834), "by the parish beadle, dustmen, and charity-boys. The postman, street-sweepers, chimney-sweepers, lamp-lighters, and waits will all be sure to wait upon me. These fellows have cost me much money this Christmas, and will do more, the next."



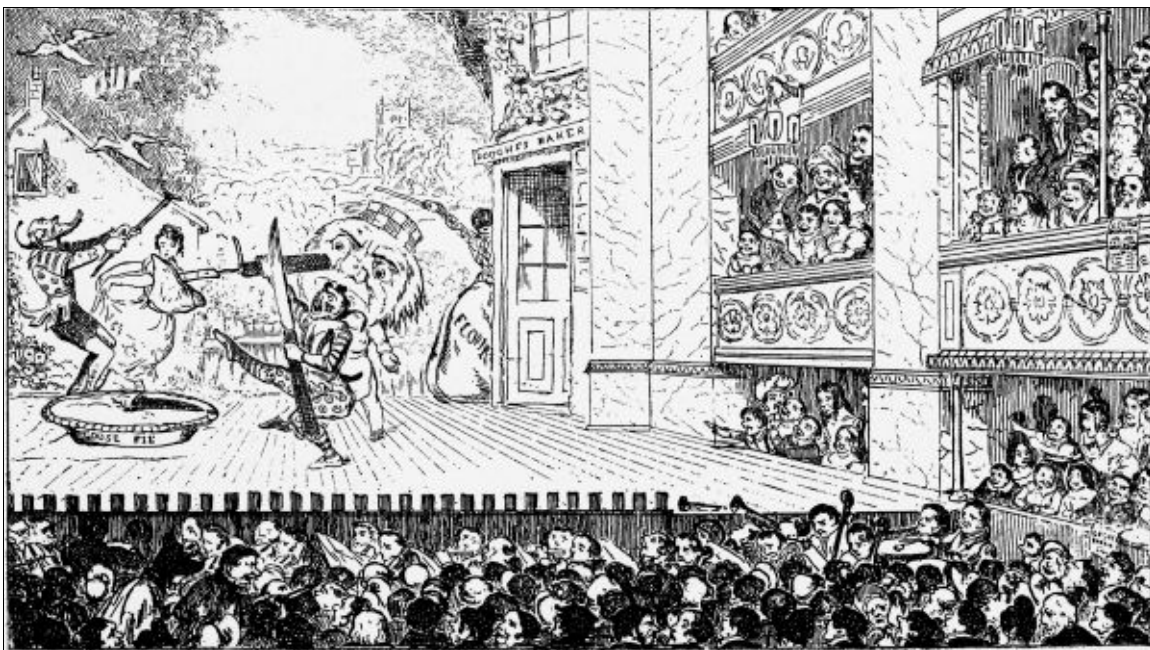
**The Mummings Entertain**

"The masques of the court and of the nobles were imitated in the mummings of the people,—of which we give a representation here, and which we shall have occasion particularly to describe hereafter,—they having survived the costly pageants of which they were the humble representatives. The festival was thus rendered a universal one, and its amusements brought within the reach of the indigent and the remote. The peasant, and even the pauper, were made, as it were, once a year sharers in the mirth of their immediate lord, and even of the monarch himself. The laboring classes had enlarged privileges during this season, not only by custom, but by positive enactment; and restrictive acts of Parliament, by which they were prohibited from certain games at other periods, contained exceptions in favor of the Christmas-tide. Nay, folly was, as it were, crowned, and disorder had a license! Sandys quotes from Leland the form of a proclamation given in his "Itinerary" as having been made by the sheriff of York, wherein it is declared that all "thieves, dice-players, carders" (with some other characters by name that are usually repudiated by the guardians of order) "*and all other unthrifty folke*, be welcome to the towne, whether they come late or early, att the reverence of the high feast of Youle, till the twelve dayes be passed." The terms of this proclamation were, no doubt, not intended to be construed in a grave and literal sense, but were probably meant to convey something like a satire upon the unbounded license of the season which they thus announce. "

### **Pantomime**

At this holiday period of the year the boxes of our theatres are filled with the happy faces, and their walls ring with the sweet laughter of children. All things are matters of amazement and subjects of exclamation. But in London above all things,—far, far beyond all other things (though it does not begin for some days later than this) is the pantomime with its gorgeous scenery and incomprehensible transformations and ineffable fun. "Ready to leap out of the box," says Leigh Hunt, "they joy in the mischief of the clown, laugh at the thwacks he gets for his meddling, and feel no small portion of contempt for his ignorance in not knowing that hot water will scald, and gunpowder explode; while with head aside to give fresh energy to the strokes, they ring their little palms against each other in testimony of exuberant delight."





The winter pantomimes are introduced on the evening next after Christmas night; and some account of this entertainment seems, as a feature of the season, due to our Christmas readers.

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### New Year's Eve



Considerable importance was formerly, and probably is still, attached to this custom. The welfare of a family, particularly of the fairer portion of its members, was supposed to depend much on the character of the person who might first cross the threshold, after the mid-hour of this night had sounded. Great care was therefore taken to exclude all improper persons; and when the privilege of the season is taken into consideration (that viz., of the hearty kiss above mentioned), it is probable that the maidens themselves might consider it desirable to interfere after their own fashion in the previous arrangements which were to secure the priority of admission to an unobjectionable guest.

It is almost impossible for man on this day to be insensible to the "still small voices" that call upon him for a gathering up of his thoughts. In the very midst of the house of mirth, a shadow passes through the heart and summons it to a solemn conference. The skeleton who sits at all feasts, though overlooked at most from long habit, gets power on this day to wave his hand, and points emphatically, with his "slow-moving finger," to the long record whose burthen is "passing away!"