

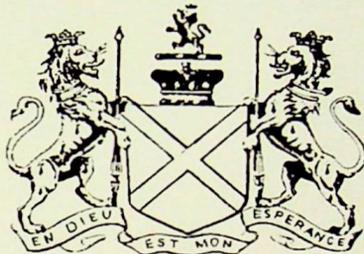
The Gerards
of
Ashton-in-Makerfield

by
Hilda Plant

Darlington.

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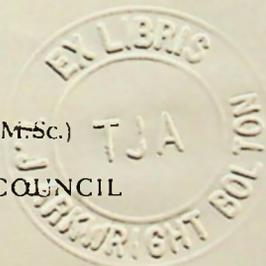
GERARD



by
Hilda Plant

DEPARTMENT OF LEISURE
(Director of Leisure G. Swift, B.A. (Econ), M.Sc.)

WIGAN METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

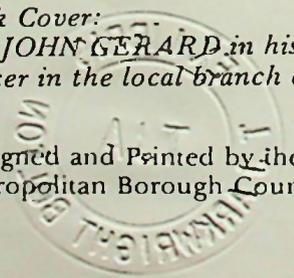


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Front Cover:
GARSWOOD HALL, 1900.

Back Cover:
Sir. JOHN GERARD in his first field dress as commanding officer in the local branch of the Lancashire Hussars. (1848).

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FOREWORD

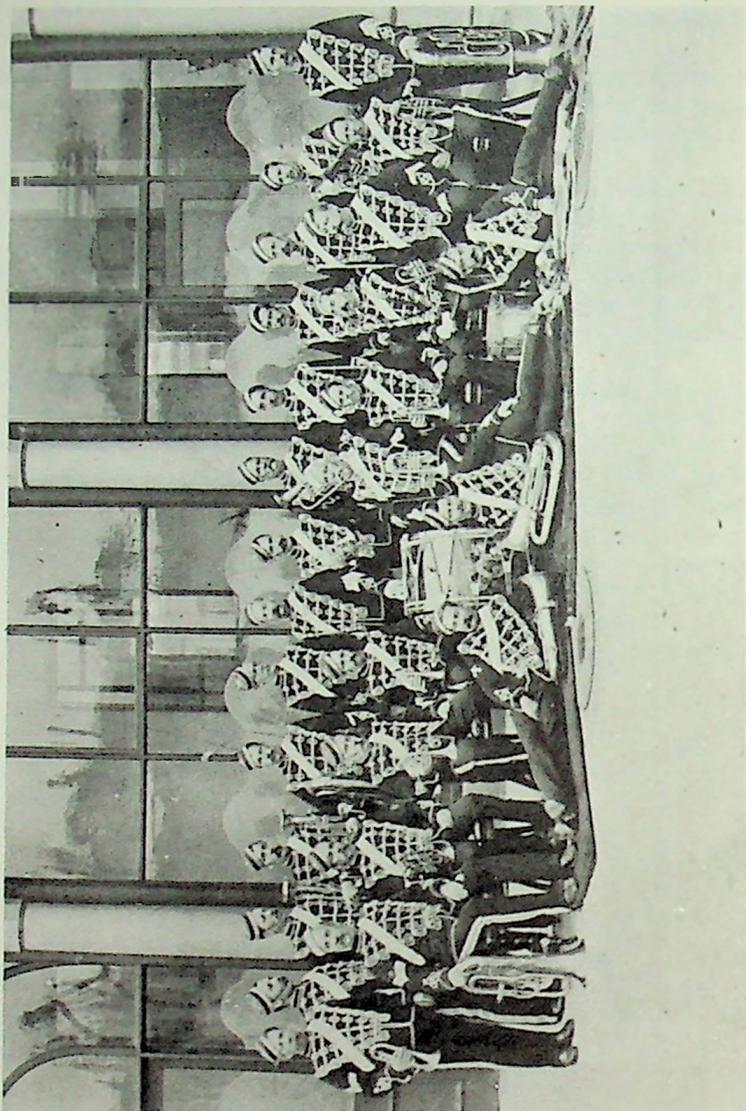
I am very pleased to write a short foreword to this publication, not least because of the strong connections between the Gerard Family and the Ashton-in-Makerfield Library building.

The Carnegie Library at Ashton-in-Makerfield was formally opened on Saturday, 17th March, 1906. The new library was (and still is) an imposing structure standing at the junction of Wigan Road and Old Road. It was built at the cost of £5,843, defrayed by Mr. Andrew Carnegie, on one of the most valuable sites in the district, generously given by Lord Gerard, who performed the opening ceremony.

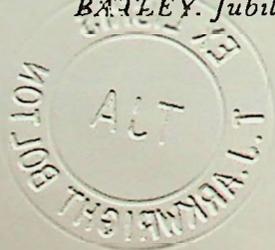
This booklet has been researched and written by a local resident, Miss H. Plant, and arose out of a lecture, which she gave to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the opening of the library. I should like to record my personal thanks for her hard work in producing a fascinating account of the Gerard Family.

F. Howard
Chief Librarian & Curator, Wigan Metropolitan Borough





Band of the Lancashire Hussars. Bandmaster Mr. THOMAS BATEY. Jubilee of the Regiment, 1898.



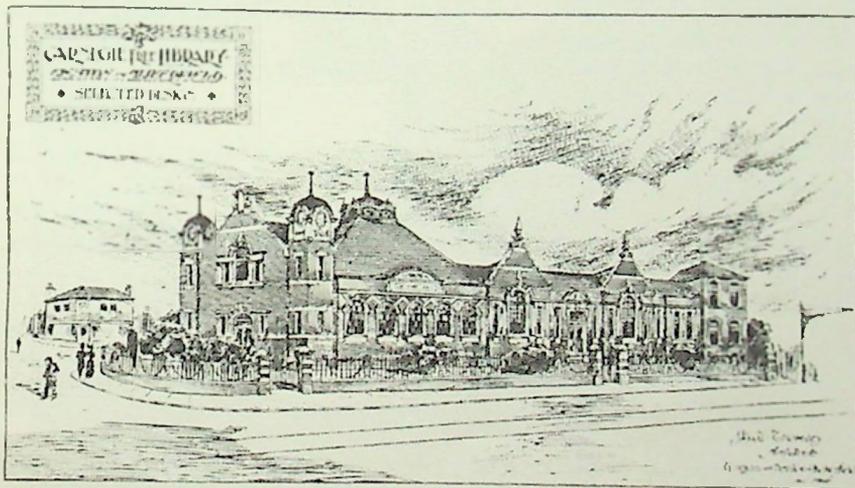
The Gerards of Ashton-in-Makerfield

An old history of Wigan says that no family in this neighbourhood and very few in England can trace their pedigrees as far back as the Gerards of Bryn. They originate from Otho, a rich and powerful lord in the reign of Alfred the Great. He was descended from the Dukes of Tuscany and was a baron of England around 1042. His son was Walter Fitz Otho, who became Castellan of Windsor and warden of the Forest of Berkshire. He married Gladys, daughter of a prince of North Wales.

Their son Gerald or Gerard had a grant made to him of land in Berkshire. He was constable of Pembroke Castle which he fortified and defended against the Welsh, fighting with great courage. He slew Owen, son of Cadugan, chief lord of Cardiganshire and was made President of the Country of Pembroke. He had married Nesta, a Princess of South Wales and the family later acquired an estate at Kingslea (Kingsley) near Frodsham.

The eldest son of Gerard and Nesta was Maurice who crossed to Ireland with Richard Strongbow, Earl of Pembroke 1170 and became a distinguished soldier and founder of many great families. From their other son, William, sprang many important families in England.

Like many other families the Gerards improved their position by fortunate marriages. In 1212 Thomas de Burnhull (Brindle) owned Ashton (called Eston, later Ayston, then Assheton and finally Ashton). His



CARNEGIE LIBRARY, Ashton-in-Makerfield.

grandson Peter had two daughters, Joan and Agnes. Joan married William Gerard, descendant of William the son of Gerard and Nesta. He was Lord of the Manors of Kingsley and Catenhall and was born about 1322. The two manors were thus united but Joan and William came to live in Ashton.

The Gerards have an unbroken line from Walter Fitzgerald to the present day. They have occupied four homes in the district.

Their first home is supposed to have been built near to where Landgate farm is now. It was built on a mound, surrounded by a moat and protected by a drawbridge. It was surrounded by swampy ground which made it difficult to approach. A farmer ploughing near there of recent years saw evidence of the mound though it is probably obliterated by now. It was built in a quadrangular form, with a spacious courtyard reached by a narrow bridge over the moat. The gatehouse had massive doors studded with iron. There was a curiously carved porch which led into the great hall where, in the chimney-piece, were displayed the Arms of England. There was a railed gallery, supported by double pillars forming archways and showing rich carvings.

This home was abandoned about six centuries ago and the family moved to New Bryn Hall (The Brynne) which was rebuilt in the reign of King Edward VI about 1550. In 1601 a funeral certificate says that the family arms were "quartered in the glasse window in his Chapel at the Bryne which were boarne by his ancestor in 1518". This chapel was built only a few yards away from New Bryn Hall and dedicated to St. Oswald, the patron saint of the Gerard family. On the site of that chapel now stands a stone cross (on the lawn of Bryn Hall) under which it is said may be the remains of Saint Edmund Arrowsmith. It is also said that under the hall was a tunnel leading to Bamfurlong Hall whereby recusant priests might make their escape.

In 1651 Charles II (then Prince Charles) stayed there on his way to the Battle of Worcester and it is referred to as "a red-brick manor house". By 1750 it was in ruins and though it is now rebuilt and forms a pleasant residence there is nothing to interest the historian except the cross on the lawn and some rather impressive gates.

The family then moved to Garswood and lived there during the eighteenth century at a place which is now a farm-house. When they moved away the house was taken down and there are few signs of those early times except some foundations in the outer buildings.

Their next move was to New Hall in Garswood Park. This was built by the Launder family in 1692 and bought from them by the Gerards towards the end of the eighteenth century. Improvements were made by

Sir John Gerard in the 1800's. It was a huge, stately building — more like a palace than a manor house — employed a staff of sixty servants and was the scene of many lavish functions attended by noblemen and women from surrounding areas.



MARY, LADY GERARD, Garswood House Garden, April 1917.

It had its own ballroom, measuring 53 feet long, a chapel, a library and amongst other bedrooms one referred to as the "Emperors" bedroom because Napoleon II stayed there before his recall to France.

At the back of the Hall was a large ornamental lake and nearby a sizeable fruit garden. The Gardens of New Hall cost £30,000. Later, Lord Gerard said that they were damaged by chemicals and won a legal battle against Crosfields. The Park now makes an impressive golf course for Ashton Golf Club.

The family crest has a background ARGENT (silver often shown white). On it is a SALTIRE GULES (red diagonal cross); a LION RAMPANT (upright) ERMINE CROWNED OR (a gold crown with ermine fur).

There are SUPPORTERS on either side each being a LION ERMINE DUCALLY CROWNED OR GORGED WITH A COLLAR GEMMEL GU and SUPPORTING A TILTING SPEAR.

The motto is EN DIEU EST MON ESPERANCE (my hope is in God).

The old arms shown in the glass window at the Chapel at the Brynne contained three stags' heads; three owlets; three bezants and other heraldic designs.

Like many families they have family names. In the early days there were WILLIAM, JOHN, THOMAS and PETER but later on ROBERT and FREDERICK became often used.

They are in general not a particularly long-lived family but have some strong characteristics. They are devoted to the Roman Catholic faith. For this they have suffered imprisonment, and loss of wealth and lands. Their sons have become priests and their daughters nuns throughout many generations even until today. In 1822 Sir William Gerard built the Roman Catholic Church in Ashton dedicated to St. Oswald and they helped and encouraged this church and its schools.

They have a very strong military tradition. The Fitz Gerald's fought in the Crusades. There were eight Gerards in the army at the time of the Great Rebellion.

1385 during the reign of Richard II Peter Gerard de Bryn of Kingsley, Bryn and Windle was knighted in the Scottish War (also served in Parliament for Lanchashire)

1415 Henry V defeated French at Agincourt and expressed high regard for Sir Thomas Gerard, son of Peter.

Sir Thomas built WINDLE ABBEY on his return (helped by admiring tenants) "to pray for the souls of his antecessors".

1443 Sir Thomas Gerard was praised by the King of France at the siege of Montereau "The English garrison behaved with great valour having at their head an English Knight, Sir Thomas Gerard.

1523 Sir Thomas Gerard was killed at Flodden. The victory was largely due to the skill of the Lancashire archers (longbow men).

Gerards fought in the Civil war. They formed "defencibles" against Napoleon 1804. Sir John Gerard began the Lancashire Hussars 1850, Lord Gerard and his men took part in the Boer War 1899-1900. The local regiment also played a brave part in the 1914-18 war during which period the Dowager Lady Gerard ran a V.A.D. Hospital for them at Garswood Hall.

At one time the Gerards owned a considerable amount of land in various parts of England and their estate spread further in this district than it does today. There is a Gerards Bridge on the way to St. Helens. There was a Gerard Hall in St. Helens, there is a Gerard Street in Ashton and at one time the Gerard Arms.

The family settled down during the Middle Ages and towards the end of that time we have Sir Thomas Gerard born 1488 who succeeded his grandfather at the age of 6. He was a "turbulent and lawless man" who enjoyed watching cock fighting at Winwick and was notable for carrying off cattle that did not belong to him. In 1515 he had a quarrel with the priest of Ashton "Chapel" over a straight ditch he intended to build through Turnlea Moss. All the same he was a very brave fighter who was killed at the Battle of Flodden.

He was followed by his son Sir Thomas Gerard who died in 1560 and was buried at Winwick. He knew nothing of letters but spent his time in gallantry, hunting, drinking and carousing. Yet he was loyal and faithful to his creed and the positions of M.P. for Lancashire 1566-7 and High Sheriff of Lancashire 1558. His relations with his wife were not very happy and he is reported to have had several natural children. In 1543 he was ordered by some special commissioners to return to his wife Jayne and to go to Windleshaw and make merry there with her brother and his wife. He was told to put away his concubine and not take a new one. All the same he divorced his wife in 1550.

His son Sir Thomas Gerard died in 1601. He was a strong catholic who resisted the religious laws of Elizabeth I. He was sent to the Tower in 1571 for sympathy with Mary Queen of Scots. He was only released after

surrendering his land at Gerard's Bromley to his cousin Gilbert Gerard, the Attorney General. He sold land in Lancashire, Leicester, Derby and Chester for money to help the R.C. cause.



WILLIAM CANSFIELD (LORD GERARD), SECOND BARON GERARD Colonel of the Lancashire Hussars, Yeoman Cavalry. 1851-1902

In 1586-89 Sir Thomas was implicated in the Babington Plot and released by giving evidence against the Earl of Arundel. Later he began to seek favour with Elizabeth I and sold very cheaply a piece of land 44 yds by 30 yds at Seneley Green for the new Grammar School. He urged his family to go to church to satisfy the Conformity Laws and had his brother Nicholas (grandfather of St. Edmund Arrowsmith) carried to church and set up near the pulpit. Unfortunately, Nicholas, a sufferer from gout created such an uproar that he was taken outside and allowed to limp his way back to Haydock. This Sir Thomas also bought the remaining third of the district from John Atherton and sold the Kingsley estate to pay for it.

In 1588 along with other landowners he paid £25 towards expenses connected with local defence against Armada.

At the beginning of the Seventeenth Century James I, urged on by his adviser Salisbury, sold baronetcies. One of the first to produce the £1,000 for his baronetcy was Sir Thomas Gerard. He was given this but his £1,000 was restored to him for the services of his family to Mary, Queen of Scots. 1605 his brother John Gerard, a Jesuit priest (see his book - Diary of an Elizabethan) a man of charm and daring with the veneer of a man of the world was accused of taking part in the Gunpowder Plot. He was probably innocent but fled and set up the R.C. College at Liege.

The grandson of the first baronet, Sir William Gerard, was also considered to be a subtle Jesuit and Papist. He had £10,000 from an estate at Etwall in Derbyshire which came to him from one of his ancestors. He intended to buy the estate at Newton but instead gave the money to Charles I then involved in the Civil War. He became Governor of Denbigh Castle and was one of the last to hold out for the King so his estate was sequestered. His brother Richard, a pioneer who helped to found Maryland, returned to fight for Charles I. He was wounded at Burton-on-Trent and became cup-bearer to Henrietta Maria for life. He bought the manor of Ince and died there in 1686.

Sir William Gerard, the fourth baronet, was also loyal to the Stuarts and involved in the Lancashire Plot 1694. James II was in exile in France. Certain Lancashire gentlemen wrote to James offering to help to restore him, James accepted and commissioned them as officers. They began to collect arms and ammunition at Standish Hall. The plan was exposed by John Lunt and others, and the matter tried at Manchester 1694. The accused included Sir William Gerard but the case against them was destroyed by the poor character of the witness, John Lunt, and the inability to produce real evidence against them. The gentlemen were declared innocent and set free but in 1757, a bundle of papers was found when taking down the old cop wall at Standish. It included letters from

James II and a list of commissions. There was also a declaration of loyalty from the gentlemen involved dated the 18th November, 1693.



*ASHTON, St. OSWALD'S PARISH PRIEST, Fr. J. McLOUGHLIN,
With the Holy Hand of St. Edmund Arrowsmith.*

There was also an enquiry at this time as to whether Garswood Hall was being used for superstitious practices which I understand means the practice of Roman Catholicism. A brother of the fourth baronet John married Ann the heiress of Gerard of Ince.

The fifth baronet Sir William Gerard had to register his estates as Lancashire papists in 1717 because of the Jacobite rebellion of 1715. He married Mary, the heiress of John Cansfield of Cansfield and Birchley. Cansfield became a family name of the Gerards later and led to Cansfield Grove in Ashton and Cansfield Street, St. Helens.

Mary Cansfield Gerard left an interesting clause in her will "My body is to lye in the bed wherein I dye for the space of twenty-four hours after I shall expire before it be removed or anything taken from about it or the pillows removed from under my head, afterwards to be put in a leaden coffin for eight days and kept open as long as it maybe without offence". She obviously did not wish to be buried alive.

The fifth baronet was very friendly with Nicholas Blundell of Crosby who kept a very interesting "DIURNALL" between 1702-1727. He seems to have visited Lord Gerard — at that time living at Garswood — and have been visited by him quite often. It is amazing how, without modern facilities of transport, they managed to socialise as much as they did.

The following few extracts, chosen from many referring to the Gerards show the different ways in which they spent their leisure and that the Gerards were men of action rather than intellectuals.

"We hunted and killed a very fat white buck in my Lord Gerard's Park. After dinner we went to Bartington Bowling Green".

"I went to a race on Crosby Marsh between a black mare of John Gerard's and a bay mare of Liverpool".

"My Lady Gerard took my wife and me in her coach to the Out-side where we dined at Mr. Billingtons".

"My Lady Gerard and my wife went to Rock Savage to wate of my Lady E. Savage".

"I played at tables with my Lord Gerard".

"I bowled with Lord Gerard".

September 20th 1711. "I went to Garswood and dined there with Mrs. Walmesley, Mr. Scarisbrick, Mr. John Gelibrond etc. I discoursed (with) Cozen John Gelibrond etc, about the Debt owing by Mrs. Blackbourne to Mrs. Margery Nicholson. Sir William Gerard took phisick. Monsuer la Abbe taught Mrs. Walmesley etc. to dance at Garswood, I saw them dance, I brought Sir William Gerard a present of a Miss - Clenly !

Nicholas Blundell also records 1) the marriage of Lord Gerard's butler. 2) the funeral of Lord Gerard, the fifth baronet, May 1721. 3) the birth of a son to Lord Gerard, the sixth baronet, September 1721.

From the time of the eighth baronet Sir Thomas Gerard, we have a record of a Toll-gate arrangement between Sir Thomas Gerard, Legh Masters Esquire and John Leech of Dock Lane (now Liverpool Road) a whitesmith. Leech had to pay £20 a year rent for five years from the 1st May, 1754 in trust for himself, Sir Thomas Gerard and Legh Masters.

It was agreed that their several families, horses, cattle and carriages should pass gratis. All carts with one or more horses going for or with coal to and from Sir Thomas Gerard's pit in Ashton had only to pay a penny a day - a wagon had to pay twopence.

In 1760 there was a lease of Burchenheads by Sir Thomas Gerard to John Jameson. This was probably at the junction of Low Bank Road and Spindle Hillock.

Sadly in 1767 a letter patent was obtained granting custody of the possessions and management of the estates of Sir Thomas Gerard, lunatic, to Dame Elizabeth Gerard, Dame Mary Clare Gerard, Thomas Clifton and John Standley Massey.

Sir Thomas was succeeded by his brother Sir Robert who in 1769 had obtained a licence to assume the name and title of Cansfield. He was succeeded by his son Robert who died while still a minor and was followed by his brother William the eleventh baronet who died without family.

A person of some note is Sir John Gerard, the twelfth baronet. He was a son of John Gerard of Windle Hall who died in 1822 before Sir William, the eleventh baronet who was his elder brother.

The twelfth baronet was a man of powerful personality. He made magnificent additions to the Hall from designs of Foster of Liverpool and it became rather Grecian in style. His initials J.G. can be seen on the part which later became the estate offices. He followed on the strong military tradition of the Gerards being Colonel of the Third Regiment of Royal Lancashire Militia and began a group of the Lancashire Hussars in Ashton.

In 1849 there was a meeting to form this. The Hall, however grand, was not large enough so they used the old Town Hall and Market Place for the occasion. One hundred and eighty five gas lights as well as candles lit up the scene. In 1847 he entertained at the Hall the man who in 1848 became Napoleon III of France and his wife (later Empress Eugenie). Later the Empress bedroom was said to be haunted and only the night nurses would stay there.



This part of the Hall, with the initials "J.G.", was later used as the estate offices, and is now a private bungalow.

There are some interesting leases in his time including one of the Windle Hall Estate to Richard and William Pilkington. There are records of bonds, also the use of silverplate and effects as collateral security, between a younger brother Charles Aloysius Gerard and himself evidence of the fact that he was spending lavishly. During this time about 1828 Gamble and Muspratt built a chemical works near Gerards Bridge and as it was affecting the countryside the Gerards asked Lord Derby to complain in Parliament.

His relations with his wife were unfortunately not happy. Apart from being unfaithful to her he is reputed to have shot before her eyes four white or cream ponies of which she was very fond. These used to draw her carriage. In an old painting in the ballroom there was a picture of Sir John and Lady Gerard with these four animals in front of the hall with Billinge Hill in the background.

He was followed by his brother who during one of Disraeli's periods in power was created the first Baron Gerard. In his letter Disraeli said, "I should be glad to see Her Majesty mark her respect for your ancient creed and blood and also be pleased if it be in my power to gratify the honourable aspiration of a very old friend". The first Baron Gerard was a Colonel of Lancashire Hussars Yeoman Cavalry and an aide-de-campe to Queen Victoria. There were some interesting leases during his time. These include:—

1874 Land in Eddleston Lane to Rector Melville for St. Peter's School. Rent £3-15-0.

1875 Land to the Aldermen of St. Helens for a plot of land in College Street for Firemens' Dwellings. Rent £31-11-6.

1875 Lease to Ashton-in-Makerfield Local Board for twenty-one years of two farms at Edge Green and four fields for sewage purposes.

The Second Baron Gerard played an important part in the life of the district. During his comparatively short life (fifty-one years) he carried on the military tradition of his family. He was an officer in the Second Life Guards and Colonel of the Lancashire Hussars, one of the finest yeomanry corps in the North — mostly drawn from the Gerard estate. He served in South Africa in 1899-1900 as Aide-de-Campe to Sir Redvers Buller who when he visited Ashton in addressing a large meeting near Garswood Hall praised the fighting qualities of Lancashire men and putting his hand on Lord Gerard's shoulder said "This is a rare old fighting dog".

Lord Gerard was awarded the D.S.O. in 1900.

He endowed the Garswood Bed in the Imperial Yeomanry Hospital and was the Premier Roman Catholic Baronet. He was very well known in St. Helens where he was President of the Managing Committee of Providence Hospital, and Vice-President of the St. Helens' Conservative Committee. He was also Chairman of Newton Conservative Party. Lord



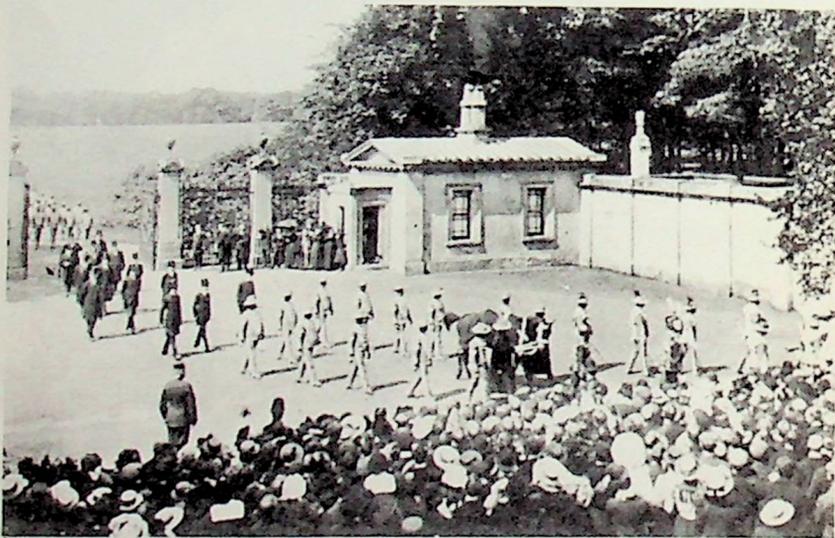
LADY GERARDS DRAWING ROOM.

Gerard was very interested in agriculture and often presided at the dinner of the Makerfield Ploughing Society. He shared a love of hunting with his brother Robert who lived for a while at Blackleyhurst Hall, Billinge and then inherited Wrightington from his relative DICCONSON and so became Robert Gerard Dicconson. He was known locally as Bobbie Gerard. When the boys at the Grammar School in Garswood heard the hounds they used to fasten their teacher up in school and run off to follow the hounds. Because of his interest in racing Lord Gerard was elected member of the Jockey Club 1876. His most famous horses were Sweetbread and Elzevir and his colours were pink with white stripes.

Because of the Queen's Jubilee 1887 and 1897 he gave land in Wigan Road for the formation of the Jubilee Parks. Some rich and famous people visited Garswood Hall including Lady Randolph Churchill (Sir Winston's mother) and the Prince of Wales later Edward VII.

Some of the wealth of the Gerards came from the coal dug up on their land and they had been helped by the building of the Sankey Brook Canal in the 18th century. In 1779 Coal had been taken by horse railroad from Garswood to wharf at Blackbrook and there put on the canal. (Coal was 6 shillings 6 pence a ton at that time). Later, when Stones' Colliery was built Lord Gerard made them agree to keep the chimneys low enough not to be seen from the Hall windows. When the new railways became a quicker means of transport Lord Gerard indulged in legal wrangles with the North West Railway lasting nine years. Although he claimed £360,000 he was awarded only £6,245 and had paid £10,000 in fees.

Although he was getting £70,000 - 80,000 a year he had a very expensive taste in homes, buying Eastwell Park in Kent for £198,000 and furnishing it with the help of Waring and Gillow who presented their account in book form on vellum, illuminated and bound in morocco.



FUNERAL OF LORD GERARD, 1902. The cortege is leaving the park gates.

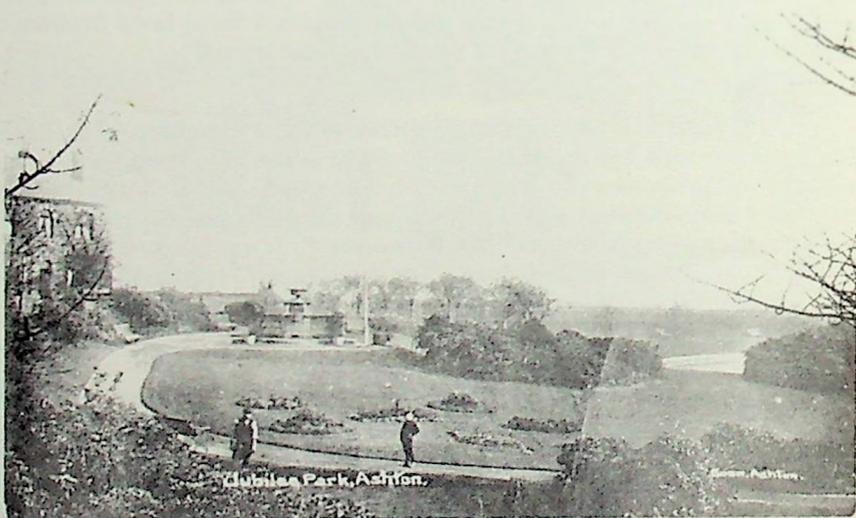
Lord Gerard found Eastwell Park (there is an Eastwell Road in Ashton) very expensive to maintain and tried to sell it. While staying there in 1902 he had a paralytic stroke dying quietly a month later on a Wednesday. The next Saturday his remains were brought from Ashford to Ashton-in-Makerfield Station. They were laid in a special room in the Hall surrounded by lighted candles until Monday. There was a very solemn and impressive funeral. The body was placed on a gun-carriage of the Royal Horse Artillery which was attached to a Khaki gun, drawn by four horses of the Artillery Regiment followed by his own charger in trappings of mourning led by Corporal Moulding who had been with his lordship in S. African War. The coffin was covered with the Union Jack and Lord Gerard's sword, busby and medal were laid on the coffin lid along with a wreath from King Edward VII. It was followed by the main company of the Lancashire Hussars with reversed arms and marching in slow, funeral style. Colonel Hopwood was in command accompanied by Lords Lathom and Selton. The Band of the Regiment under Bandmaster Batley played the Dead March from Saul followed by Chopin's Marche Funebre. A service including some very beautiful music was taken by Dr. Whiteside, Roman Catholic Bishop of Liverpool. The coffin was then placed in the vault which was lined with purple and three volleys were fired by the yeomanry. Many important people were present including officials from Wigan and St. Helens. There were many wreaths including ones from Lord Derby and Lord Lonsdale but only three wreaths were placed on the coffin in the vault; one from Lady Gerard, one from King Edward VII which was magnificent and had a card saying "In kind remembrance and as a token of regard with deepest respect" and one from Lord Brabazon saying "In memory of a very old and very dear friend".

Two years after his death his eldest child a daughter, Miss Ethel Gerard was married to the Baron de Forest who although from Lichenstein was allowed by Queen Victoria to use his title in England. A part of the Hall separated from the Estate Offices by a large gate and gateway was used by her and always referred to as "The Baronesses". It was allowed to fall into disrepair and is now pulled down. The Baron later returned to Bendorf and became Councillor of State for the Principality of Lichenstein. They had two sons ALARIC and JOHN.

The new Lord Gerard had a very memorable Coming of Age in 1904. All the family were present at a lunch given for three hundred cottagers and tenant holders. Toasts were proposed and the men of the Lancashire Hussars presented him with a beautiful smoking cabinet. This was followed in the evening by a pyrotechnic display by Messieurs Pain and Souss.

In the meantime his mother Mary, Lady Gerard had established herself as a personality in her own right. She was the daughter of Henry Milner and granddaughter of the Bishop of Armagh. As she was a Protestant they were married at St. George's Chapel, Windsor and honeymooned on board her father's yacht. She was christened Mary Emmeline Laura one of her names being that of the yacht. She was fond of entertaining and was a daring rider on horseback, jumping the local hedges sitting side-saddle. She devoted herself to good works visiting the local schools St. Andrew's and St. Thomas and St. Luke's at Christmas taking presents for the children. The girls were given cloaks of red or hunting-green lined with red. Great was the excitement of the children on the day when she came to give them their presents from the Christmas tree. On the first occasion when she went to Garswood it snowed and she was taken by sledge along Tithebarn Road to the School. The children danced round the tree singing joyfully "Merrily! merrily round go we, Brightly shines our Christmas tree". The girls were given dolls beautifully dressed carrying little "Dorothy" bags and the boys some fine toy.

In 1906 Lord Gerard married his cousin May Gosselin. It was one of the most important weddings of the year. The event took place at Brompton Oratory. A troop (officers and men) of the Royal Horse Guards lined the aisle making a brilliant spectacle in blue and scarlet with silver breast-plates and helmets with flowing cockades of crimson.



JUBILEE PARK.

The sunlight coming through the high window lit up banks of white hydrangeas, great bowls of white Madonna lilies, chrysanthemums and fern as well as the beautiful bride and her attendants. Miss Gosselin wore a dress of ivory satin trimmed with silk and lace. The bridesmaids wore Empire dresses of white silk, lavishly embroidered with gold as well as wreaths of golden leaves and sashes of mauve and gold. The presents were very elaborate; many of silver ornamented by precious stones and the donors included people such as the Duchess of Norfolk and Lionel de Rothschild.

Mary, Lady Gerard became even more active in her social work, she supported the Primrose League — Newton Division and also worked for Lord Wolmer, Conservative Candidate for Newton. She was a Patron and zealous worker for Providence Hospital, St. Helens helping to organize a Grand Bazaar in the Town Hall. This made £1,300 and put the hospital back on its feet. She also helped at a further bazaar 1909 (celebrating twenty-fifth anniversary of hospital). She was largely responsible for installation of X-ray equipment and used to visit the patients on Christmas Day with presents and cheerful talk.

When the 1914-18 war came she began a V.A.D. Hospital at Garswood Hall using her own private means, and started a branch of Red Cross in Ashton-in-Makerfield. Nothing was too good or too much trouble. She was apparently in good health but heard that a relative had been killed at the Battle of Cambrai and suffered a collapse followed by



GARSWOOD HALL, JULY 1918. Some of the voluntary nurses, including Miss M. Ashton who has provided many of the photographs.

		Prices Realised
219	A pair of Japanese jars, decorated iris and wisteria, and brass lamp fittings	2½ gns.
220	Three porcelain lamps with brass fittings, and a bronzed candelabrum	4 gns.
221	A Copeland flower and gilt writing set of inkstand pen tray and sponge cup, a pair of candlesticks, 2 white and gilt extinguishers and stand, a small basket, and a pair of fern pots	2 gns.
222	A pair of Delft horses and riders, coloured decoration, 10 in.	5 gns.
223	Three ditto, without riders, 9½ in.	7 gns.
224	A Stafford zebra, a parian horse, and a carved wood figure of a Dutchman	1 gn.
225	A clock in apple-green and gilt Paris china case, painted landscape and Watteau figure, and raised flowers, 13½ in.	2 gns.
226	A Paris china figure of a Sultan, a Pomeranian dog, a sundial, and 3 Worcester ornaments	3 gns.
227	A STOKES MINTON TABLE SERVICE, of white china, with turquoise and gilt bands and cameo portraits, comprising a centrepiece, with 3 parian draped female figures supporting a circular pierced bowl, a smaller ditto, with 3 boy figures, a pair of 6-light candelabra, with female caryatids and scallop shell bases, a pair of assiettes montées, with infantile figures, and 2 circular plateaux	15 gns.
228	An early Minton part service, in the Sèvres taste, apple-green ribbon, flowers and gilt: 3 compotiers, a ditto (without foot), 2 wine coolers and 1 cover, and 4 tureens and covers	4 gns.
229	A COPELAND CHINA BREAKFAST SERVICE, painted shamrock border: 24 cups and saucers, 114 plates, in sizes, 6 muffin dishes and covers, 3 jugs and 2 basins	16 gns.
230	Four Worcester white and gilt sea-weed pattern cake plates, 2 ditto cups and 5 saucers, 2 cake plates, painted in roses and gilt leaves, 6 ditto cups and 2 saucers	4½ gns.
231	Seven Coalport cups, blue band, gilt, 26 saucers and a basin, 2 gilt and flowered cups and saucers, and 7 odd saucers and 1 cup	3 gns.

*Excerpt from catalogue for auction of Garswood Hall contents,
Monday 7th March 1921.*



*VISIT OF THE PRINCE OF WALES TO GARSWOOD HALL c. 1898.
Lord Gerard is fourth from the left, back row, Lady Gerard and
Lady Randolph Churchill' are sitting on either side of KING
EDWARD VII.*

death. She was given a military style funeral including horses with black plumes. Lady Gerard did much good in the district and is still spoken of with affection and respect by those who are old enough to remember her, and refer to her as Mary, Lady Gerard. There is a monument to her in St. Thomas' Church erected by her son and daughter.

When the war ended the Gerards had now acquired a new estate. Alwyn Gosselin, the brother of Lady Gerard had died in the war and she inherited his estate at Blakesware in Hertfordshire. The Gerards decided to let Garswood Hall go and so it was sold fireplaces, doors, staircases and all in 1921.

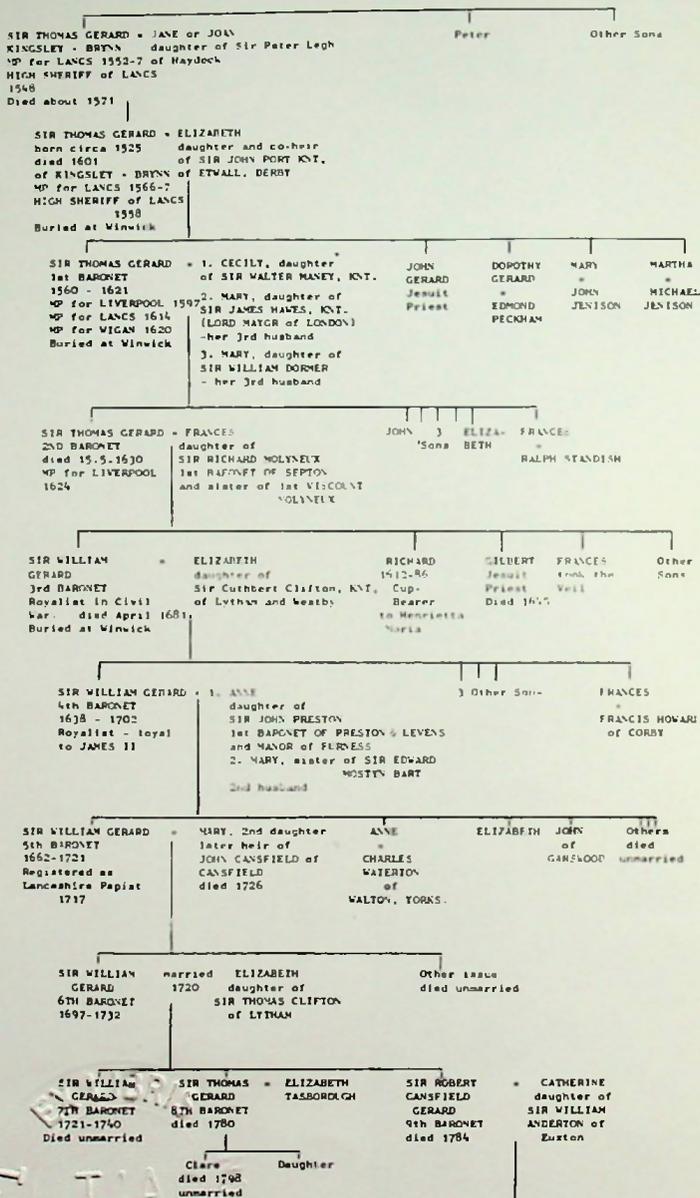
Unfortunately, after a few years in Hertfordshire there was a fire and many family portraits were burned destroying links with Ashton-in-Makerfield. The eldest daughter of Lord and Lady Gerard, co-organiser of W.V.S. in Hertfordshire was awarded the M.B.E. in 1954. The two middle sisters became nuns and one of these, Mother Clare, has died recently. The youngest daughter Mary, born after the Gerards left Ashton, was in the Armed Forces and married Major E.G. Davies. They have one son Mark. The present Lord Gerard is unmarried so on his death the title will go to a descendant of Robert Gerard Dicconson (Bobbie Gerard).

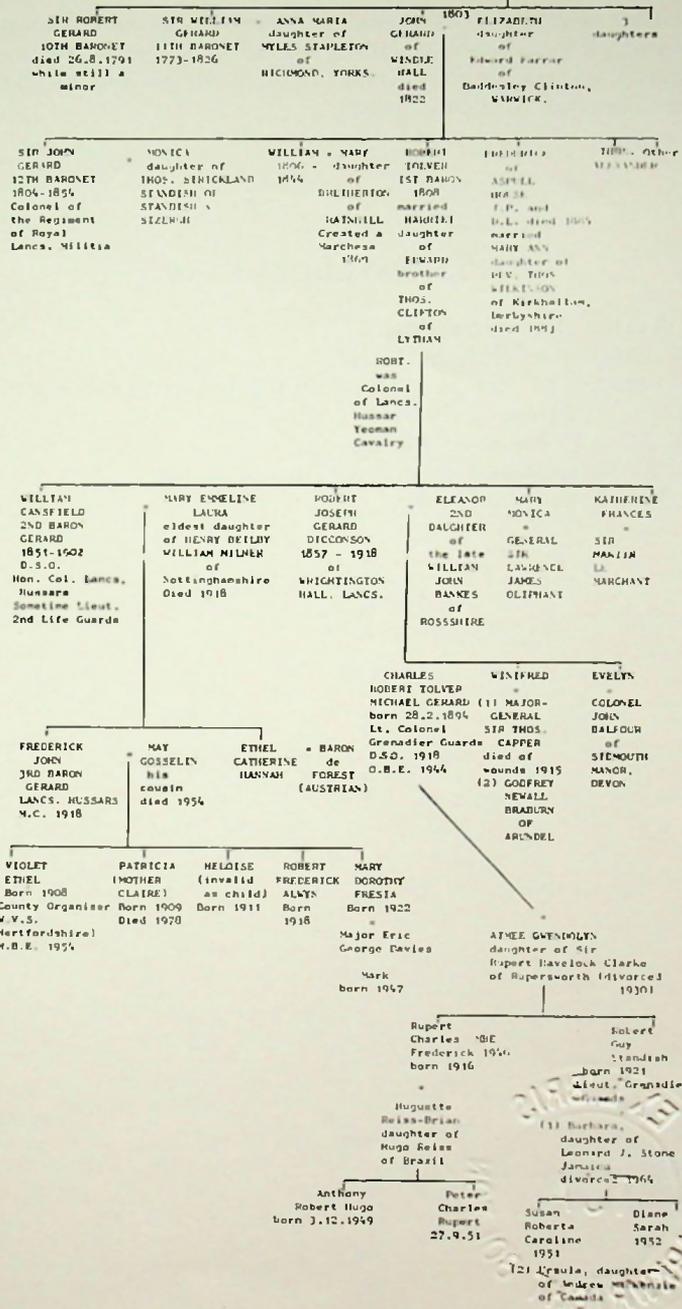
It would not be right to conclude without mentioning the close association of the Gerards with St. Oswald's Church which was founded by them in the 1820's from money left by Sir William Gerard, eleventh baronet and where they prayed and were buried in the 19 century and 20 century. Some of the early Gerards were buried at Winwick and in Winwick church there is a brass memorial to Piers Gerard, the father of Sir Thomas who was killed at Flodden. His memorial says "Here lyeth Peers Gerard, Esquyer, son and heire of Thomas Gerard, Knighte, of the Brynne, which married the daughter to William Stanley of Hoton, Knyghte and one of the heires of John Bromley, Knighte, which died the 19th of June in the yere of our Lord 1492 on whose soule God have mercy. Amen".

St. Oswald's Church contains the hand of St. Edmund Arrowsmith, whose mother was a Gerard. He was the grandson of Nicholas Gerard who stood firm for his faith in Elizabethan times. Edmund Arrowsmith christened Bryan Arrowsmith was betrayed, condemned and executed in 1628. His hand was brought to Ashton and after being kept by the Gerards was put in a special silver casket in the new church of St. Oswald 1930. In St. Thomas' Church there is a memorial to Mary, Lady Gerard from her son and the Baroness de Forest, her daughter.

It is sad to think that a family of such vitality should no longer reside in this district but as we look around they have certainly left their mark in passing.

THE GERARDS OF ASHTON IN WAKENFIELD
 SIR THOMAS GERARD
 1488 - 1523 Succeeded to estate at age of 6
 Fought in Scottish Wars





WIGAN LIBRARIES

The libraries would be delighted to receive any old documents or photographs of local interest, either for safe-keeping in Wigan Record Office strong rooms, or for a copy to be made to add to the Office's extensive collection of local records.

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Mrs. G. Turton and the Guides

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