

An Illustrated Companion to The Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield



**WITH SELECTIONS FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT NOW IN
PRESERVATION AT WIGAN ARCHIVES**

By

The Makerfield Rambler

Part 1 : Introduction and 1663
(This edition: December 2023)

Introduction

*“When I into your letter once did see
an[d] bee-held no remembrance of (poor me)
then to myself I said “Hodge thou’rt forgot,
for he in his lettr Lowe remembreth not..”*

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Described by some as Lancashire's answer to those other great diarists of the period, Samuel Pepys and John Evelyn, Roger Lowe was an apprentice shopkeeper in Ashton during the reign of Charles II. Unlike his London contemporaries, Lowe was far removed from the political intrigues of the time and mentions hardly any of the events that would later find their way into the history books. Nevertheless, his Diary – the record, in his own words, of one man's thoughts, feelings and experiences as he sought to transact business, to find romantic love and to make certain the salvation of his soul – gives the reader a unique insight into life in an unremarkable Lancashire town during the latter half of a remarkable period in our national story.

Inclusive of his lists of “the seaveral names and persons that are dead in Ashton and buried att Winwicke” and “such as dyd within My Aprentiship and providentiallie I was cald to the funerall”, which come at the end, the manuscript now in preservation at Wigan Archives runs to about 150 pages and covers the period from January 1663 to January 1679. Each page measures approximately 216mm x 178mm (“small quarto”). The purpose of this Companion is not to reproduce the Diary in its entirety but rather to explain and elaborate on certain passages in a way which, hopefully, will assist the reader by providing historical and geographical context and by defining certain terms that have since fallen out of use. I have also found it enjoyable to document my own experiences and discoveries as I physically retraced Lowe's steps within and around my adopted home-town.

As I will discuss in the final part, several annotated transcriptions of the Diary have been published over the years. It may be helpful if I provide here links to those that can be freely accessed online-

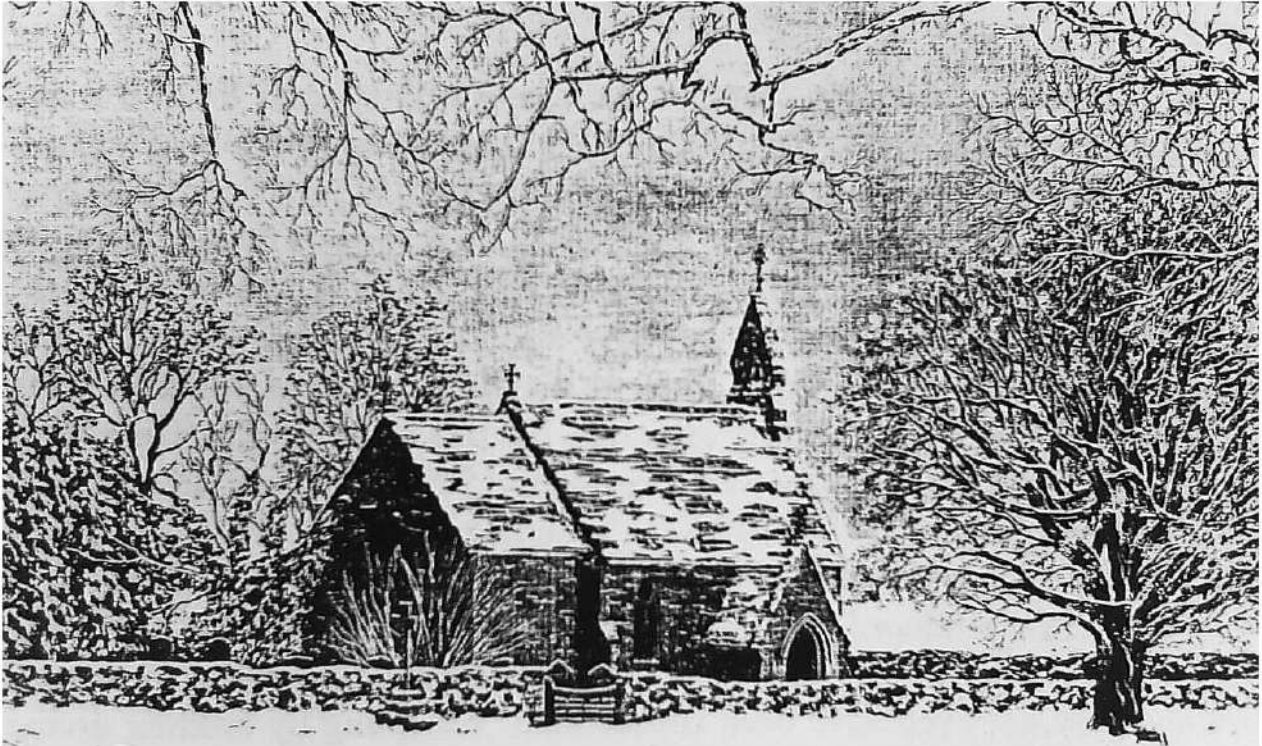
<https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000112672> (annotated edition of 1938 by William L Sachse, published by Yale University Press)

https://www.academia.edu/95149883/Roger_Lowe_diary (a “reading version” produced by independent researcher Angus Graham in 2008 which also draws on previous commentaries and reproduces the “Frontmatter” of the Sachse edition).

The Makerfield Rambler
4 December 2023

1663

“We came to chappell, Mr Madocke preached”



*“[1663, January] 3 day. Lords day. We came to chappell, Mr Madocke preached...”**

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

In Roger Lowe's time, what is now the Parish Church of St Thomas the Apostle in Ashton was still a chapel of ease to the Parish Church of St Oswald at Winwick. It probably dated from the 14th century but is first mentioned explicitly in a document of 1492.** By the end of the 17th century the chapel was “much out of reparaire and not becoming that sacred use to which it hath been so long appointed and dedicated”*** It was accordingly rebuilt in 1714, and was formally dedicated to St Thomas in 1746 (Wigan Archives ref. DP3/6/1).

Mr Maddock makes just one other appearance in the Diary. On 11 March 1664, he visited Lowe's shop in company with “old Roger Naylor” and the three of them went to the alehouse. Lowe then joined them for supper at Mr Naylor's, where Mr Maddock was to spend the night. It is largely on the strength of the references to him in the Diary that Mr Maddock's name appears after that of James Wood on the list of curates and vicars now displayed in the Church. If his identification as Mr Wood's immediate successor is correct, the following anecdote (contributed by Presbyterian minister Job Orton to the 1802 edition of Edmund Calamy's “The Nonconformist's Memorial”) must relate to him:

“On the sabbath after Bartholomew-day [1662], the new minister preached: when the people came out of the church, a good old woman remarked 'I think if Mr Woods had only gone into the pulpit and shook his grey beard over us it would have done us more good.'”

*Until 1752 the Julian calendar was still being followed in England, with new year's day celebrated on 25 March rather than 1 January. Thus, on the opening page of the Diary, Lowe gives the year as

“166 $\frac{2}{3}$ ”. For simplicity, in this and the following extracts I have replaced all “Julian” dates with their modern (Gregorian) equivalents. Except where I have used [square brackets], the quoted text is otherwise as it appears in the original. Like most of his contemporaries, Lowe was not overly concerned with spelling and rarely used punctuation. This allows something of the local accent and speech patterns to come through, but also requires certain entries to be read several times before the meaning becomes clear.

**From “Title to Moss Lands at Ince [etc]”, 6 Hen VII, in “Pleadings and Depositions in the Duchy Court of Lancaster”, Rec Soc Lancs & Ches Vol. 32, 1896: “Sir Thomas Gerard, Knight ... caused the priest who served the chapel of Assheton ... to show openly in the said chapel that he intended to make a "strythe" ditch through the said Turnyschea moss, so that he might have his "turve romes the mor drier" in those parts. And the said priest further showed to the congregation that if any of them would help to make the said ditch they would be "wellcum", whereupon about 40 or 50 or more of [Sir Thomas'] tenants, neighbours and servants, of their "gentylnes", came thither with spades and shovels and cast up a ditch, and [Sir Thomas] gave them meat and drink and thanked them "of their kynnes", whereupon they departed...”.

***“Humble request of the inhabitants of Ashton”, 17 October (1697?), at Cheshire Archives ref. P158/1/2.

The above artist's impression of the pre-1714 Ashton Chapel is from S Hibbert's “Come Let Us Worship: A History of the Church of St Thomas the Apostle, Ashton-in-Makerfield” (1993).

“John Battersbie, some time Leigh’s school-master”



“[1663, January] 14.—John Battersbie some time Leigh’s school-master came to towne and I was with him all night...”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

The origins of the Grammar School at Leigh are slightly obscure. In their report of 1828, the Charity Commissioners are only able to confirm its existence as far back as 1655. The reference to the year 1614 on the plaque that can now be seen at the end of Church Passage derives from a bequest made on 6 January 1613 by James Starkie, a Penington tailor, of “fourtie shillings for and towards a free Grammar Schole, which I pray God may be in good tyme att Leigh”. However, in his “History of Leigh Grammar School” John Lunn is prepared to infer a foundation date in 1592 or earlier from the reference in a report of that year to the schoolmaster at Leigh being “unlicensed” (Sherrat & Hughes, Manchester, 1935, citing the Bishop of Chester’s Visitation Book at Cheshire Archives ref. EDV 1/10; the original entry reads “Contra Willelmum Stirrup, ludimagistrum, non licentiatum”). A possible successor to William Stirrup -Geoffrey Flitcrofte- is also identified by Mr Lunn. “For there to have been masters”, he writes, “there must have been a school... What Starkie seems to have desired was an ENDOWED school, where promising boys could receive instruction without payment of a standard fee, although each scholar would have to contribute certain expenses”.

John Battersby’s appointment as schoolmaster in 1645/6 is implied by information about former Leigh scholars in the Cambridge University admission records at <http://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk>. Why he had vacated the position by the time of his visit to Ashton in 1663 is unknown.

The Diary contains very little information about the early life of its author, but it is apparent that Roger Lowe came originally from Leigh. His parents were buried in the grounds of the Parish

Church of St Mary the Virgin, and his sisters - Ellin and Katherin - continued to live in the town. It is tempting to think that the skills that enabled Lowe to transact business and act as de facto town clerk at Ashton were first acquired at the “free” Grammar School in Leigh. However this is nowhere stated explicitly and, as Mr Lunn points out, “free” did not necessarily mean free of charge. Even a heavily-subsidised grammar school education might well have been beyond the means of most local families. In an entry dated 13 October 1663, Lowe reminisces about the time “when I lived with Mr Livesey” in Great Budworth, Cheshire. James Livesey was an alumnus of Leigh Grammar School, having studied there under his cousin - and John Battersby's immediate predecessor - John Greenhalgh. In 1650 he became a minister at Turton and then spent five years at Chowbent (Atherton) before becoming vicar at Great Budworth in 1657. Could it have been there, at the vicarage in Great Budworth, that Roger Lowe acquired both his Presbyterian convictions and a second-hand grammar school education?

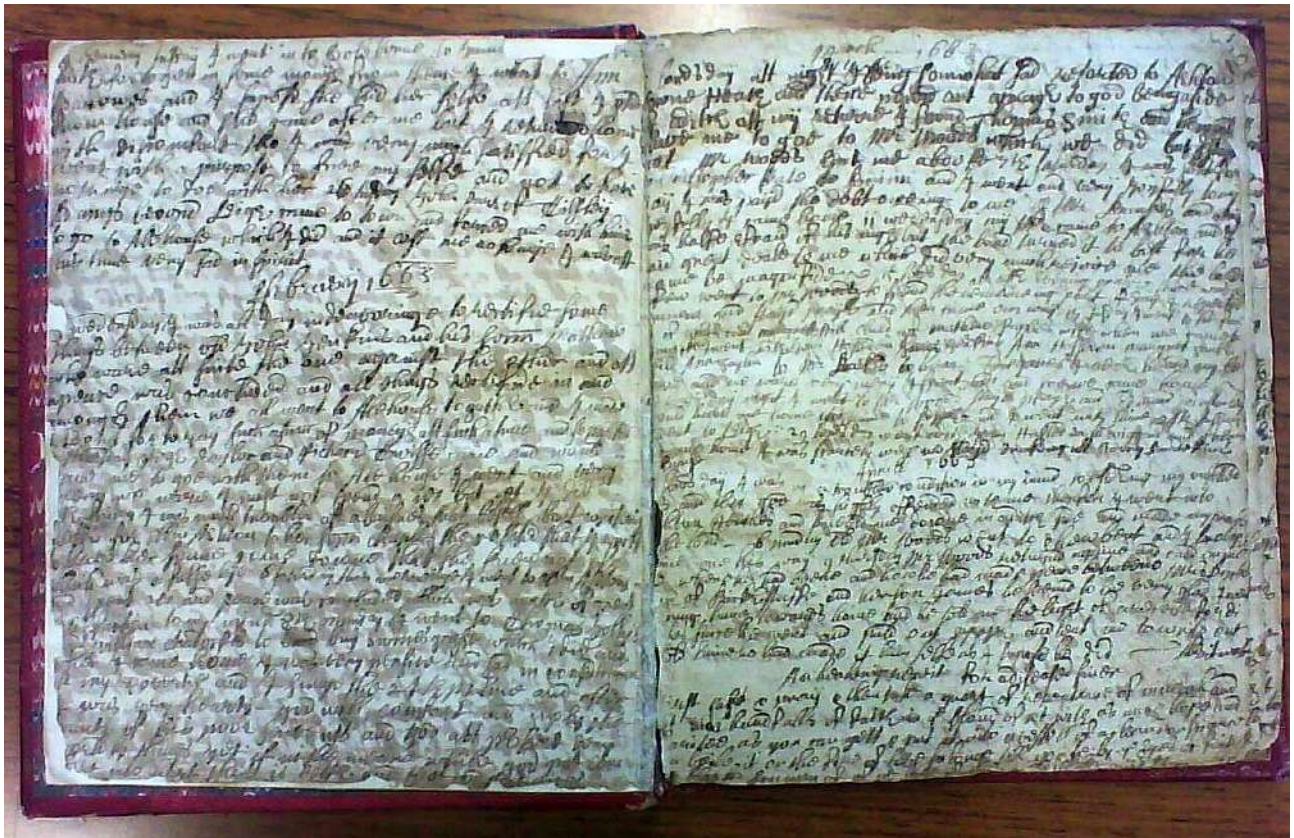
Mr Battersby occurs once more in the Diary. On 16 October 1664 Lowe happened to meet him when returning from a visit to Leigh. Evidently frustrated by the lack of intellectual stimulation offered by his apprenticeship, he asked the former schoolmaster to put in a word for him:

“I thought it sad for me to be ingaged 9 years to stay in Ashton to sell my M[aste]rs ware[s] ... and get no knowledge so he promised to speake to Hugh Hindley of it and they two would goe together to my M[aste]r and speke my greevences”.

Assuming Mr Battersby was true to his word, no immediate improvement in Lowe's situation seems to have resulted from this intervention. He might, anyway, have been better suited to a career in law or public administration of some kind – but this was a period when natural talent alone opened few doors and, without money and a family name to call on, men like Roger Lowe could only dream of entering such professions.

The photographs were taken on 15 September 2017.

Diary of Roger Lowe, 19 January - 9 April 1663



“19. Jenuaey tuesday. I went into Goleborne to James [page torn] mith for to gett in some moneys from thence I went to Ann Barrowes and I suposd she hid her selfe att last I p[ar]ted from house and she came after me but I returned home with discomfort tho I was very much satisfied for I went with purpose to free myself and not to have nothing to doe with her.

26.—Tuesday. John Parr of Tyldesley Bangs beyond Leigh came to town and forced me with him to go to Alehouse which I did and it cost me nothinge. I was at this time very sad in spirit.

ffbruary, 1663

3.—Wednesday. I was all day indeavouringe to rectifie some things between old John Jenkins and his soun Matthew who were att suite the one against the other and a peace was concluded and all things rectifide in and amongst them. We all went to the Alehouse together and I made Bond for to pay such a sum of moneys att such a time and so parted.

Thursday. Roger Taylor and Richard Twisse [came] and would have me to go with them to Alehouse. I went and very mery we were. I must not spend a 1d, but yet I did.

5th. Friday. I was much troubled about a business that befell about writeing a letter for Ellin Ashton to her son Charles. She related that I writt to have her sonne come down that she knew not of which was a false lye.

6.—Saturday. This morninge I went to Ellin Ashtons and spent 2d and peace was concluded which was mattre of great satisfaction to my mind.

8th.—Munday. I went to Thomas Hollys and William Chaddockes to buy swines grasse, which I did, and when I came home I was very pensive and sad in consideration of my povertie, and I sunge the 24th psalme and after I was very hearty god will comfort and supply the wants of his poor servants, and god at present deny worldly things yet if in the meanwhile god put comfort into hurt this is better and that god that gives ... [bottom of page is damaged]

March, 1663

1.—Lords day. Att night I being somewhat sad, resorted to Ashton towne Heath, and there pourd out a prayr to god, b[e]ing aside of a ditch. Att my return I found Thomas Smith and he would have me goe to Mr. Woods' which we did but I stayd not. Mr. Woods lent me a booke.

7th.—Saturday. I was sent for to Christopher Bate to Brinn and I went and very Joyfully to my joy I was payed the debt oweing to me per Mr. Brunkes and very Joyfully I came home.

11.—Wednesday. My M[aste]r came to Ashton, and I was halfe afraid of his angr, but the Lord turned it to best, for the great deale to me which did very much rejoyce. The Lords name be magnifide.

15.—Lords day. Att after evening prayr there was a few went to Mr. Woods to spend the remaining part of the day. I remaind and stayed prayer, and then came our way.

17.—Tusday. I went to the funerrall of a child cald Margaret Hill, child of Mathew Raphes wife. When we came to Winwicke I went with John Hasleden James Jenkins Ann Hasleden Margaret Tankrfield Ann Taylor to Mr Barkrs to hear Organes. I never heard any before, and we ware very mery. I spent 6d, and soe we came home.

22.—Lords day night. I went to Mr. Woods stayd prayr and Edmund Winstanley wuld have me home with him to suppr and I went with him.

24th.—Tusday. I went to Leigh.

29.—Lords day. Went with John Hasleden to Wiggin and when I came home I was scarcely well. We stayed drinking at Beony Bourdekins house.

April 1663

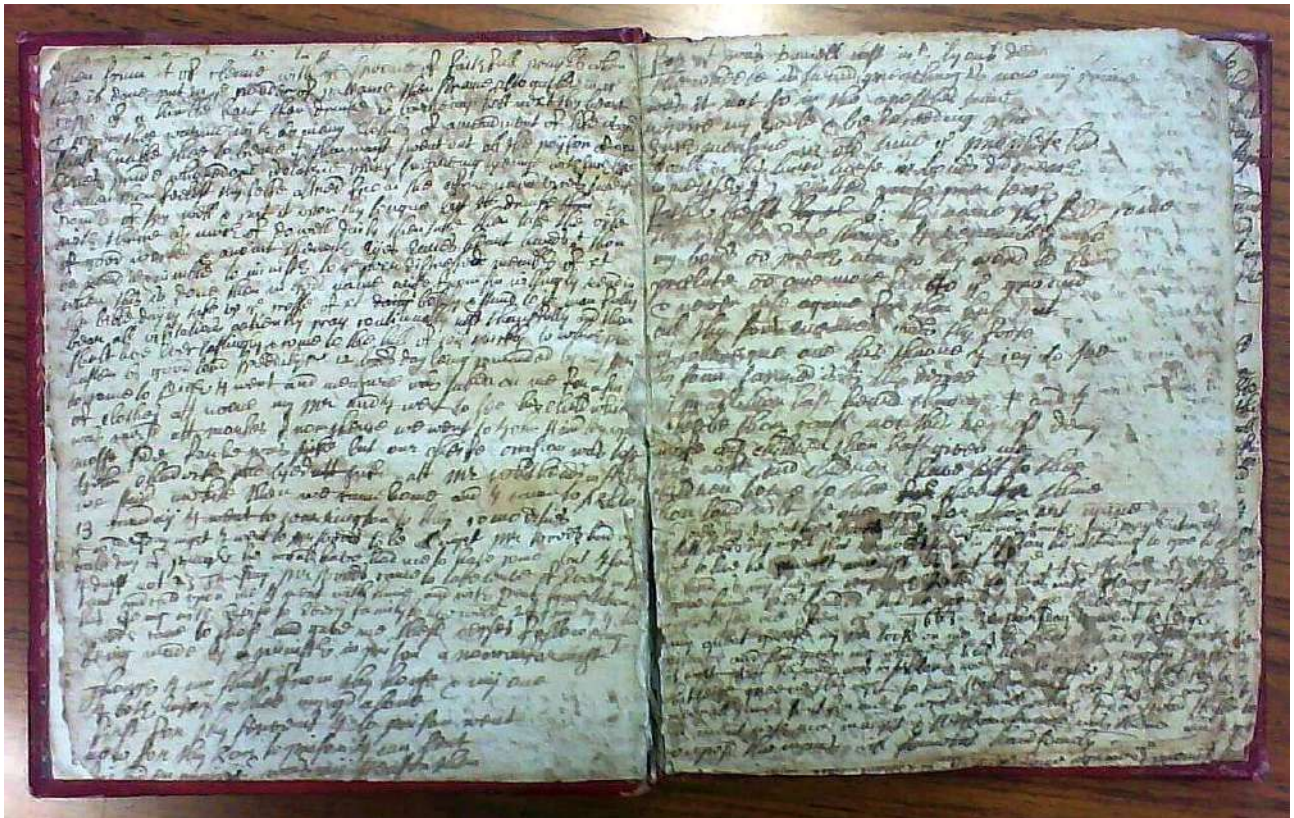
5.—Lords day. I was in a troubled condition in my mind considring my unsettledness and that god was highly offended with me therfor I went into Ashton Heathes and kneeled me downe in a ditch and made my prayr to the Lord.

6.—Munday. Old Mr. Woods went to Chewbent and I brought hime on his way.

9.—Thursday. Mr Woods returned again and cald on me and told where he had beene and how he had made peace between Mrs. Duckewilde of Bickerstaffe and her son James he seemed to be very glad. I went to bring him towards home, and he told me he light of a reci[p]e for diseases since he went, and puld out a paper and lent me to write out I told him he had made it himself, as I supose he did this it was. An healing receit for a diseased liver ffirst fast and pray, and then take a quart of repentance of Ninivah and put handfulls of faith in the blood of Christ and as much hope and charitee as you can gett and put it into a vessell of a clean conscience then boile it on the fire of love so longe till pale by the eyes of faith a blacke scum of ye love of the world ...”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Diary of Roger Lowe, 9-30 April 1663



[Continued from previous section]

“... then scum it off cleane with ye spoone of faithful prayers. When this is done put [in] the powder of patience then straine together in ye cupp of a humble heart then drinke it burnening hot next thy heart to cover thee warme with as many clothes of amendment of life as God shall enable thee to bear and that thou maist sweat out all the poyson of wantones pride whoredome idolatrie usury swearing lyeing with such like and when thou feelest thy selfe altered from the afore-named vices take ye po[w]der of say well and put it upon thy tongue but drinke it with thrice as much of do well daily then take the oyle of good workes and anoint therewith eyes, eares heart hands that thou be readie and nimble to ministr to ye poor distressed members of [Chris]t. When this is done, then in god’s name arise from sin willingly read in the bible daily take up the cross of [Chris]t boldly and stand to it manfully bear all visitations patiently pray continually, rest thankfully and thou shalt live everlastingly and come to the hill of joy quickly to which place hasten us good lord speedily.

12.—lords day. Being commanded by my M[aste]r to come to Leigh I went and measure was taken on me for a suit of clothes att noon my M[aste]r and I went to see his child which was nursed at Morles. From thence we went to John Hindley upon Mosse side [for he] was sicke but our cheife occasion was to se John Chaddocke who lyed sicke att Mr. Whiteheads in Astley. We stayed awhile then we came home and I came to Ashton.

13.—Munday. I went to Warrington to buy comodities.

15.—Wednesday night. I went to Mr Woods to be all night Mr Woods had a private day of prayr he would not have had me to have come at but I said I durst not.

23.—Thursday. Mr Woods came to take leave of every inhabitant and cald upon me I went with hime and with great lamentation at his going with advice to every family to live well.

24.—Friday. John Woods came to shop and gave me these verses followeing being made by a minister in prison a non-conformist:

Though I am shutt from thy house and my o[w]ne
I both enjoy in thee my g[o]d alone

ffirst for thy servant I to prison went
Now for thy son to prison I am sent.
For biden prairs was my reason then
For that was Daniell cast in't lions denn
The wheel is turnd preaching is now my crime.
Was it not so in th'apostles time
rejoice my soule and be exceeding glad
such measure in old time ye prophets had
Paul in his hired house in bonds did preach
in neither I p[er]mitted am [to] teach
father blest be thy name thy [kingdom] come
thy will be done though I remaine dumb
my bonds e'en preach now e'en thy word be bound
prelate e'en once more falls to ye ground
& never rise again for thou hast put
all thy Sons enemies under thy foot
my Sovereign on his throne I joy to see
The sonne sacred is by thy decree
My prayer thou hast heard through [Chris]t and I
Believe thou canst not this request deny
A wife and children thou hast given me
This wife and children I have left to thee
Children born to thee and therefor thine
Thou Lord wilt be their god for thou art mine

26.—Lords day. I went to Mr Wood's house with Thomas Smith stayed prayer it was the last lords day night that Mr Woods stayed in Ashton he intended to goe to Cheshire to live he preacht amongst us out of ye 14 psalme 5 verse the Lord is my refuge very much affected he was with parteing with Ashton. [I] gave him 12d bended but he would take no leave of me for he thought to see me often.

30.—Thursday. I went to Leigh. To my great greefe my M[aste]r took on me 3li that I had gotten with writeinge and had given me when I have lived as in Warrington, Lirple... I was sent for to Whittleige greene this night to one William Marsh who lay sicke and had seaverall times sent for me to write his will which I did. John Hasleden went with me in night and William Knowle was there and I composed the mans will somewhat handsomely."

[From "Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield", Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

“When we came to Winwicke I went to Mr Barkrs to hear Organes”



“[1663, March] 17 Tusday. I went to the funerall of a child cald Margaret Hill child of Mathew Raphes wife. When we came to Winwicke I went with John Hasleden James Jenkins Ann Hasleden Margaret Tankrfield Ann Taylor to Mr Barkrs to hear Organes. I never heard any before, and we ware very mery. I spent 6d, and soe we came home...”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Until 1845 the Parish of Winwick comprised not just Winwick-with-Hulme but also Ashton-in-Makerfield; Haydock; Golborne; Newton; Lowton; Kenyon; Houghton, Middleton and Arbury; Southworth and Croft; and Culcheth. Although a handful of baptisms, marriages and burials are recorded as having taken place at Ashton Chapel in the 17th century, most took place at the Parish Church. This necessitated frequent visits to Winwick by the people of Ashton, as evidenced by Roger Lowe's diary and his appended “account of the seaveral names and persons that are dead in Ashton and buryed att Winwicke”.

Dedicated to St Oswald, the oldest parts of the Grade I-listed Church at Winwick date from the mid-14th century although some elements - such as the carvings at the bases of the pillars in the north aisle - are suggestive of the Norman period. It occurs in the Domesday Book as “Ecclesia Sanctus Oswaldus de ipsa [i.e. Newton] villa”. The Norman building possibly replaced a still earlier structure, of which the 10th century cross-head kept in the Gerard Chapel of the present Church

may be a remnant. The name “Richard Barker”, churchwarden, is inscribed on one of the beams in the south aisle of the nave.

Taken on 17 August 2017, the photograph shows the south- and east-facing exteriors of the tower and nave. The porch was added in 1721. On the extreme right is part of the 19th century chancel, built by the then rector Rev James Hornby to a design by A W N Pugin.

“went to see his child which was nursed at Morleys”



Morley's Hall, Astley, 15 September 2023.

“[1663, April] 12. —lords day. Being commanded by my M[aste]r to come to Leigh I went and measure was taken on me for a suit of clothes att noone my M[aste]r and I went to see his child which was nursed at Morle[y]’s. From thence we went to John Hindley upon Mosse side [for he] was sicke but our chiefe occasion was to see John Chaddocke who lyde sicke att Mr Whiteheads in Astley. We stayed awhile then we came home and I came to Ashton.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Roger Lowe was still at this period apprenticed to Thomas Hammond of Leigh (his “Master”). The latter evidently had a tradition of treating his apprentices to a new suit and/or coat from time to time. The suit for which Lowe was measured on 12 April 1663 was presented to him on 12 May. On 15 February 1664 “my M[aste]r and dame both said I must have measure taken for me a suite of clothes and a cote and Tay[l]or came att night to take measure of me but my M[aste]r would let me have nothinge but a cote soe I would have none and parted with greefe...”. Their differences settled, Lowe received another suit AND a coat on 3 July.

Employment of a “wet nurse” - i.e. a woman other than the child's mother- to breastfeed one's child was common before the introduction of the feeding bottle and infant formula. The practice was

resorted to in particular by aristocratic women and by the wives of professional men such as doctors, lawyers and merchants who wished to be free to attend social functions and/or to assist in the running of the household or business.* The Diary gives no clue as to the identity of the wet nurse in this instance. The child was presumably Thomas Hammond's infant son, Richard, whose baptism on 10 November 1661 is recorded in the Leigh registers at Manchester Archives & Local Studies ref. L211/1/1. (The baptism of Richard's younger brother Edward on 26 July 1663 is mentioned by Lowe in his entry for the preceding day.)

The Morleys estate, to the south of Tyldesley and east of Leigh, occurs first in the late 12th/early 13th century when Hugh de Tyldesley donated “terrae infra diuisam de Aste-leghe, scilicet Dicfurlong et Mor-leghe” to Cockersand Abbey. The abbot seems to have granted it to a local family who took the name “Morley”. By the late 14th century the property had passed to the Leyland family. In 1540 the house of Sir William Leyland was described thus:

“Morle (in Darbyshire) Mr. Lelandes Place is buildid saving the Fundation of Stone squarid that risith within a great Moote a vi. Foote above the Water, al of Tymbre after the commune sorte of building of Houlls of the Gentilmen for most of Lancastreshire. Ther is as much Pleasur of Orchardes of great Varite of Frute and fair made Walkes and Gardines as ther is in any Place of Lancastreshire. He brennith al Turfes and Petes for the Commodite of Mosses and Mores at hand. For Chateley Mosse that with breking up of Abundance of Water yn hit did much hurt to Landes thereabout, and Rivers with wandering Mosse and corrupte Water is within lesse than a Mile of Morle. And yet by Morle as in Hegge Rowes and Grovettes is meately good Plenti of Wood, but good Husbandes keepe hit for a Jewell... Morle stondith in Leghe Paroche a Mile and more from the Chirch”.

Thomas Leyland's probate inventory of 1562 mentions “My Chamber neare unto my chapel”, a “dayehouse”, a “bakehowse”, a larder, a brewhowse and a kiln. On his death the property reverted to the Tyldesleys via the marriage of Thomas' daughter, Anne. It is marked “+ Tilesley de morleyes” on the map commissioned by Elizabeth I's Lord High Treasurer, Lord Burghley, c.1590. In 1641 “a Romish priest was apprehended on Easter-day last past at the Hall of Morley's in the County of Lancaster”. All of the Tyldesley properties including “the capital messuage or Manor House of Morleys” were sequestered in 1643 and declared forfeit in 1651 on account of Sir Thomas Tyldesley's having taken up arms against the Parliament. Discharge of the sequestration had been ordered by March 1652 but by then, Sir Thomas having been killed at the Battle of Wigan Lane, title had passed to his son Edward. The Hearth Tax assessments show “Mr E Tyldesley” in possession at “Morleys” in 1663-4. By the end of the 1660s the Tyldesleys were living elsewhere but continued to derive an income “ffrom Morleys” until it was sold by James Tyldesley of Holcroft in 1755.**

The present Morley Hall, which is Grade II*-listed, dates for the most part from the 19th century but it incorporates elements such as timber-framing which are survivals from earlier construction on the site. The moat is a scheduled monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 as amended.

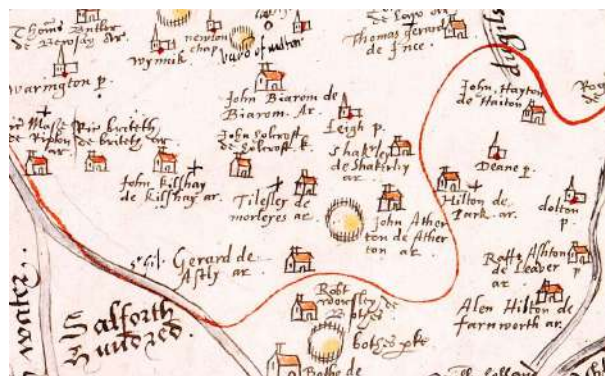
John Chaddock was, as Lowe calls him in the Diary entry for 5 February 1664, his “fellow appr[e]ntice” - i.e. both worked for Leigh merchant Thomas Hammond. 21-year-old John would the following year elope with Mary Tipping, a servant or possibly step-daughter of Richard Whitehead of Astley Green. The dates suggest that it was about the time of John's “lying sick” at the Whitehead residence that Mary became pregnant with his child. John Hindley -who occurs twice more in the Diary- may have been yet another employee or business associate of Mr Hammond.

*See, further, Valerie Fildes' “The English Wet-Nurse and Her Role in Infant Care, 1538-1800” in

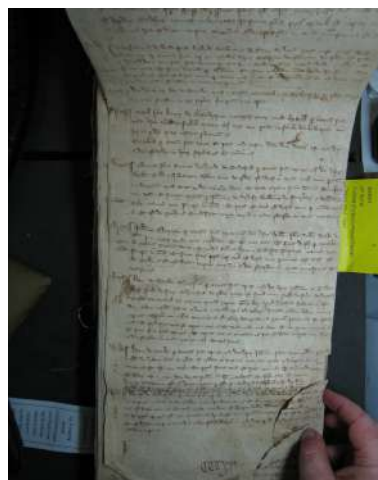
“Medical History” 32 (1988), pp. 142-173. As to weaning at this period, John Pechey's “General Treatise of the Diseases of Infants and Children...” (London: R. Wellington, 1697) recommended “that the Child suck a year and an half, or two years; and it is proper to diet them with milk a little longer; for the parts being strengthened by this agreeable aliment partake of the benefit of it for the whole life. But at what time soever the Child is weaned, unusual meats are not suddenly to be offered to it; it ought therefore to be accustomed to them by degrees while it does Suck; for all sudden changes are dangerous... Flesh, first chew'd by the Nurse, may be sometimes given...”.

**Chartulary of Cockersand Abbey at British Library ref. Add MS 37769, fol 108; Common Plea Rolls at National Archives ref. CP 40/121 m. 321 and -/148 m. 112d; Lancashire Inquisition abstracts in Chetham Society Vol 99 (1876) p. 33; John Leland's Itinerary Book 5 fol 83 in the collection at Bodleian Library ref. MSS. Top. gen. c. 1-4, e. 8-15; will etc of “Thomas Leylande esquire” at Lancashire Archives ref. WCW/Supra/C1/38 (the probate papers of his successor Edward Tildesley at ref. WCW/Supra/C28/43 mention only the “capital house and demesne of Morlies”, items within the house, lime, “breeke” - among the earliest recorded evidence for brick in South Lancashire - and salt fish); House of Lords Journal, 20 May 1641 (the captured priest was -as the Journal entry confirms- Ambrose Barlow, subsequently executed for his faith at Lancaster); orders of the Committee for Compounding with Delinquents in National Archives ref. SP 23; Commonwealth statutes 1651/Cap. 10; Hearth Tax assessments at National Archives refs. E179/250/8 (1663) and E179/250/11 (1664); items dated 8 August 1666 in the Letter Book of Sir Roger Bradshaigh at Manchester Archives & Local Studies ref. L1/48/6/1; entry for 30 March 1712 in the privately-owned “Tyldesley Diary”; Lancashire Archives refs. DDGE(E) 72, RCHY 2/2/52, DDX/17/2 and DDX 553/1. For the later history of the property, see the Victoria County History (Vol 3, 1907: Astley).

Additional images-



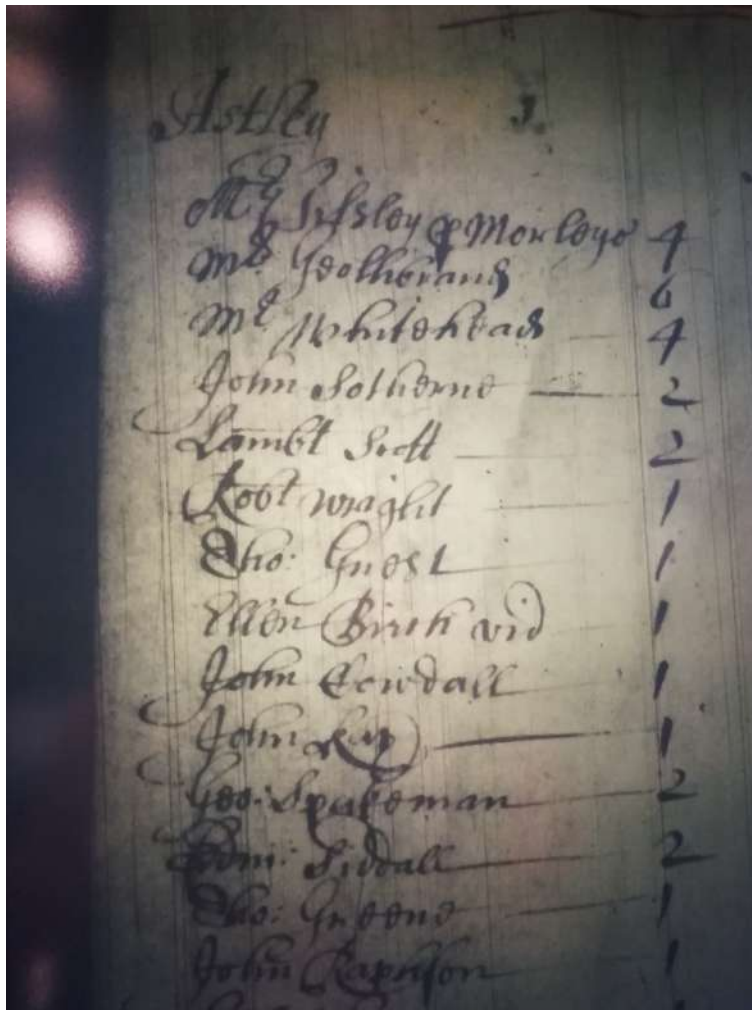
Burghley Map (extract)



Common Plea (“De Banco”) roll CP 40/21 m. 321 (extract)



Tyldesley memorial plaque at St Mary's Church, Leigh (“At the east end of the north aisle, formerly the Tyldesley chantry of St. Nicholas, within this ancient parish church, rested the body of Sir Thomas Tyldesley, of Tyldesley, Morleys, and Myerscough, in this county, knight, a major-general in his Majesty's army, and governor of Lichfield, who was slain fighting gallantly for his royal master under James, seventh Earl of Derby, in the battle of Wigan-lane near this place, on the twenty-fifth day of August, 1651.”), photographed on 15 September 2017.



Astley Hearth Tax assessments, 1664 (extract)



“Mosleyes (sic) Hall, Lancashire, sketched by N G Phillips” (from “Views in Lancashire & Cheshire Of Old Halls and Castles”, self-published 1893).

the Lancashire clergy's response to the Agreement of the People in 1649. Roger Lowe's diary hints at his involvement in "wars and troubles", but gives no detail.

Following restoration of the monarchy in the person of Charles II, the Presbyterians suffered a reversal of fortune and the bishops and Book of Common Prayer were restored. By the Act of Uniformity (14 Car II c.4) every minister was required before St. Bartholomew's Day, 24 August 1662, "openly and publicly before the congregation assembled for religious worship [to] declare his unfeigned assent and consent to all and everything contained in, and prescribed by, the book entitled the Book of Common Prayer, and administration of the Sacraments, and other rites and ceremonies according to the use of the Church of England"; that "it was not lawful on any pretext whatever to take up arms against the king"; that "there is no obligation upon any person from the oath commonly called the Solemn League and Covenant" and that "the same is itself an unlawful oath". It was further enacted that "no person should be capable of any benefice, or presume to consecrate or administer the Holy Sacrament, before he be ordained a priest by episcopal ordination". Failure to comply would result in automatic dismissal, and preaching in defiance of the Act in heavy fines and imprisonment. In the event, about 1,200 resigned their positions rather than do what their consciences could not allow. John Locke wrote afterwards that:

"Bartholomew day was fatal to our Church and Religion in throwing out a very great number of worthy, learned, pious, and orthodox Divines, who could not come up to this and other things in that Act".*

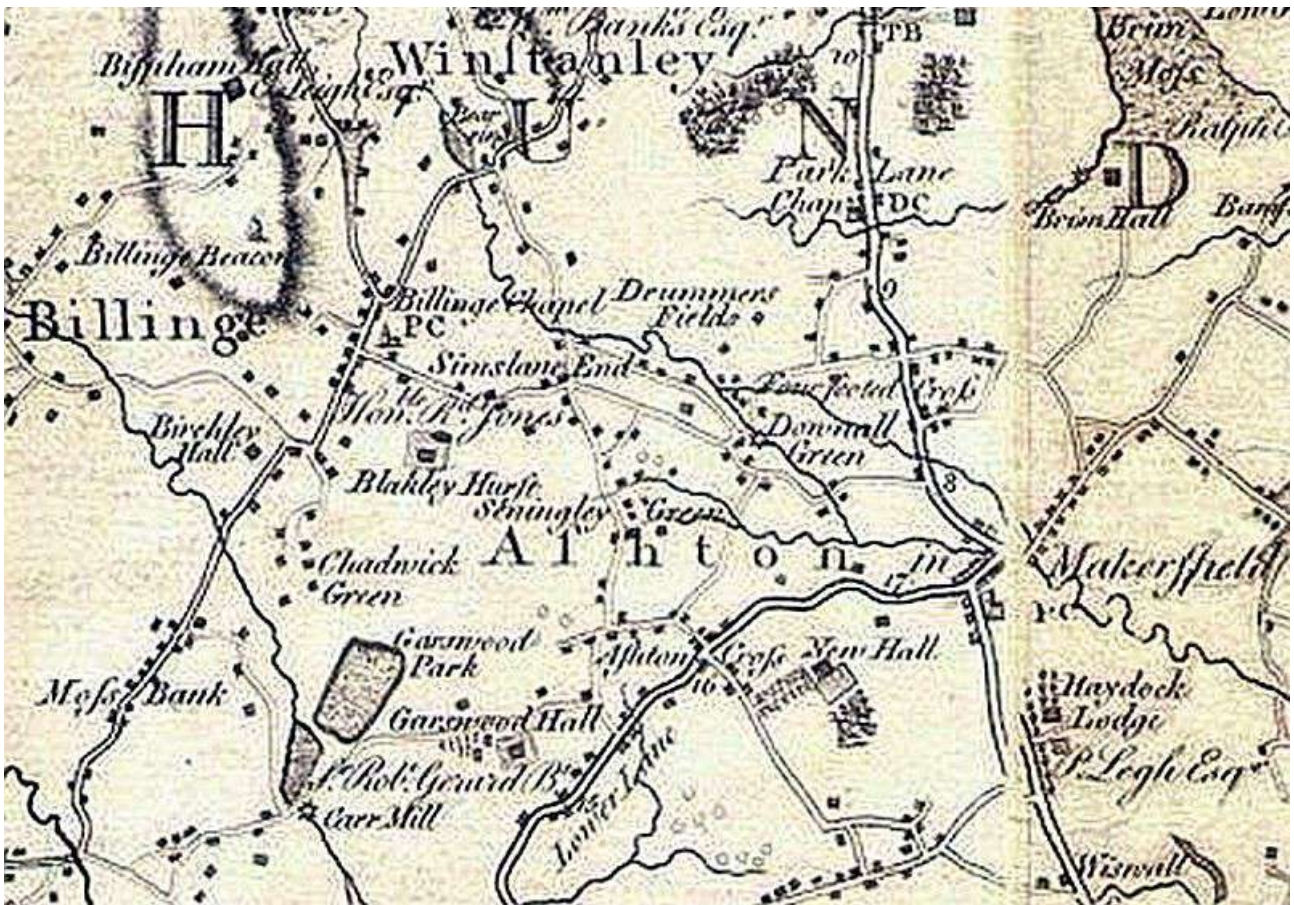
Some have questioned whether James Wood was among those forced from office in 1662. No contemporary document to that effect has survived, and use of the title "minister" in relation to him in the Grappenhall burial register seems to be behind a suggestion that he subsequently conformed and was re-engaged by the Anglican Church at Thelwall. This, however, would have been out of character and contrary to family tradition. The "letter-book" of Sir Roger Bradshaigh** indicates that Mr Wood was in fact seen at this time as a possible agitator and subversive. The weight of the evidence is that his life after 1662 was that of the typical nonconformist preacher, relying on the charity of his former congregation and meeting with them for prayer and worship whenever circumstances allowed. His expectation that he should continue to see them "often" notwithstanding the legal restrictions echoes sentiments expressed by other excluded ministers in the several printed collections of "Farewell Sermons" that began to circulate after August 1662.***

*"A Letter from a Person of Quality to his Friend in the Country", November 1675, British Library at (1) Egerton MS 3383, fols 59-68; (2) Add MS 74,273.

**Manchester Archives & Local Studies ref. L1/48/6/1.

***As, for example, by Daniel Bull to his congregation at Newington Green: "It will be some alleviation of sorrow, though I must leave you and dye to you as to my publick Ministry, that I hope I may a while go up and down and converse with you, to be among you... And though I take this solemn leave of you, as to this publick Exercise, yet if the Lord shall open the door, and take off[f] those bands of Death that the Law hath laid upon my Ministry in regard of Conscience, who cannot Conform (for which our publick Ministry is suspended) I shall chearfully and willingly return to you in this place". A detailed study of the "Bartholomean" books and pamphlets -of which pages from two examples are shown above- is presented by David Appleby in "Black Bartholomew's Day: Preaching, Polemic and Restoration Nonconformity" (Manchester UP 2007).

“I was invited to Mr Leandrs house”



“[1663, June] 3.—Wednesday. I was invited to Mr Leandrs house and I went att my coming home I mett with Mr Leandrs and he have me to Alehouse.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

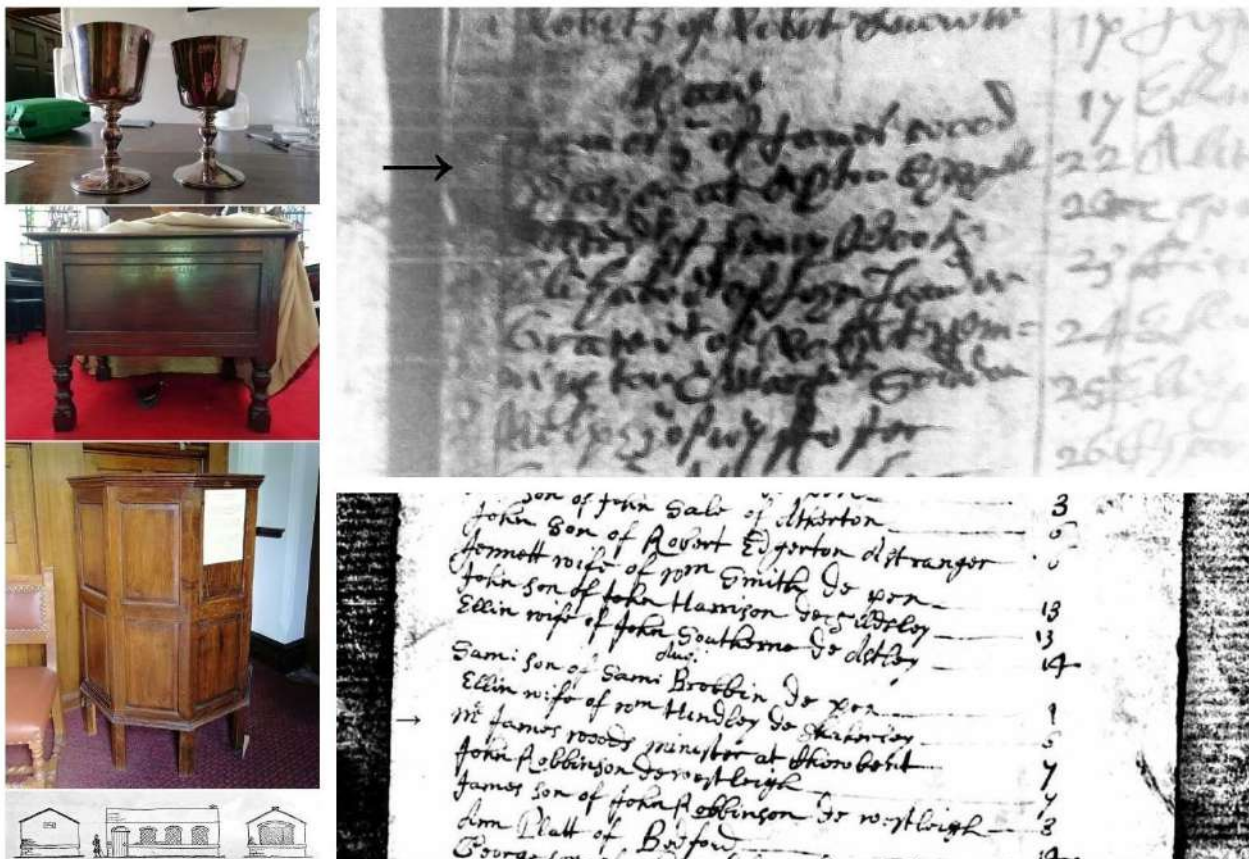
“Mr Leand[e]r” was John Launder (or Lander), 1631-92, of New Hall, Ashton in Makerfield. His father, also named John, had purchased the Hall from the Gerard family in 1634 (Lancashire Archives ref. DDGE(M) 149). An order of December 1662 in the “Letter Book” of Sir Roger Bradshaigh, now preserved at Manchester Central Library ref. L1/48/6/1, required “John Landers and his son” to contribute £150 “towards fynding of horse” for the local militia. Lowe mentions on several occasions going with the younger John Launders to play bowls at Golborne Copp. The death of “old Mr John Launders” at “half an hower past 12 att noone” on 14 December 1673 is also recorded by the diarist.

William Yates' Map of Lancashire in 1786, of which an extract is shown here, was the first to give a detailed representation of the town of Ashton. Although drawn more than a century after Roger Lowe's death it shows several locations mentioned in the Diary including New Hall, the Gerards' first “Garswood Hall” near Carr Mill, their former home at Bryn, and Haydock Lodge.

New Hall dated from the late 15th or early 16th century, and was probably given by Sir Thomas Gerard of Bryn (1512-c.1558) to his brother William around 1540. Comparison of the Hearth Tax assessments for the years 1664 and 1673 indicates significant new building at the Hall in this period. In 1716 New Hall passed by marriage to the Master family and, following several further

changes of ownership in the late 18th century, returned to the Gerards in the person of Sir Robert Cansfield Gerard (c.1725-1784). Re-named Garswood Hall, the property was further enlarged and remodelled in the style of the architect John Nash. It was demolished in 1921 following the Gerards' decision to move to their estate at Blakesware, Hertfordshire. Ashton in Makerfield Golf Club now occupies the site.

“Mr James Woods was lately married”



“[1663, June] 21.—lords day. I went to Leigh and there Mr James Woods came into church was lately married Thursday before and his wife was now with hime...”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

According to the Winwick parish register the son of Ashton minister James Wood, also called James, was baptised on 1 May 1639. He followed his elder brother Samuel first to Winwick Grammar School (where he studied under Ralph Gorse, master at Winwick 1644-1667, and may have been a classmate there of Cromwell's chaplain John Howe) and then to Christ's College, Cambridge (where he was admitted “sizar” -i.e. an undergraduate who had to perform menial tasks in exchange for his tuition and sustenance- on 22 June 1653). Immediately upon graduating BA in 1656/7 he was appointed minister at Chowbent (Atherton) Chapel in succession to James Livesey.*

The younger James Wood's marriage in 1663 to Ann(e) Townley would produce at least 6 children, although only two -yet another James (born 1672) and Samuel- are known to have survived into adulthood. The Diary provides evidence for the date of the marriage, this detail being absent from the surviving parish registers.**

Like his father at Ashton, James Wood II was “silenced” in 1662 but nevertheless continued preaching in the locality, notably at the former Wharton Hall near Walkden. He occurs again in the Diary on 30 August 1664 (“Young Mr Woods came with his servant to go to Georg Markland and I gat a horse and went with hime...”), on 14-15 January 1665 (“Thomas Smith and I went to younge Mr Woods’ in Atherton...”) and on 20-21 August 1665 (“I was with young Mr Woods att old John Robinsons and ... Mr Woods preached...”). Joseph Hunter places him at Halshaw Moor in 1668. In

1670 “Mr James Wood, of Chow-bent, was caught and sent to prison”. He was again at Atherton by 1 May 1672, and seems to have recovered the use of the Chapel there by 1676.***

In 1689 “James Wood, minister” at Atherton, was among “our conformable clergy who have taken the oaths...”. He died in 1694.****

*<https://venn.lib.cam.ac.uk/>; “The Story of Chowbent Chapel”, J J Wright, 1921. Venn has him aged 16 on admission to Christ's College; assuming the baptismal record to be correct and that convention was followed in regard to the timing of the baptism he would in fact have turned 14 in 1653.

**Registers of St Mary The Virgin, Leigh, at Manchester Archives & Local Studies ref. L211/1/1. The burials of 4 children “of Mr James Wood, Minister of Atherton” are recorded: an unnamed/ungendered child on 16 November 1665, an unnamed daughter on 19 February 1671, a son – Sylvanus - on 16 July 1675, a daughter – Anne - on 19 January 1681.

***“Biography of Nonconformists”, British Library ref. Add MS 24485.111; “The Life of Adam Martindale Written By Himself” (R Parkinson ed), Chetham Soc 1845; “Calamy Revised...”, A G Matthews (Clarendon Press, 1934). J J Wright cites a deed of 1676 which described Wood as “of Atherton, clerke”. In the same year he performed a baptism at Atherton, that of John Withington, on 29 October.

****Kenyon MS at Lancashire Archives ref. DDKE/acc. 7840 HMC/712. The Bishop's Transcripts of the Leigh registers give a burial date of 7 August 1694; the grave location remains uncertain – see “The Story of Chowbent Chapel” as above. A will dated 11 May 1691, on which probate was granted on 1 June 1695, is at Lancashire Archives ref. WCW/Supra/C268A/61.

Images:

Left, from top-

Two cups in silver of (left) 1653/4 and (right) 1652/3, gifted to the Atherton congregation by Robert Mort of Wharton Hall. “Both cups, you will see, are marked with the initials R. M. The donor ... was the warm personal friend and benefactor of James Wood, the Chowbent minister, silenced in 1662, and who is mentioned by Adam Martindale” (letter of 14 November 1891 from Thomas H Hope of Atherton to George Eyre Evans, as quoted in the latter's “Vestiges of Protestant Dissent...” (Liverpool: F & E Gibbons 1897)).

Chowbent Chapel communion table of c. 1650. This, too, may have been the gift of Robert Mort. “The Wharton Pulpit” - “The Mort family, contrary to law, made a room available at Wharton Hall for dissenting worship and here James Wood led worship. At least once he was imprisoned for this activity. A pulpit was built for the preaching of the Word and continued in use by Wharton Presbyterians when freedom was secured... [In 1996] the pulpit was brought from Chorlton Road URC in Manchester and, with the kind co-operation of Wharton URC, given a home at Chowbent Chapel...” (information leaflet seen at the Chapel).

Sketch of the first Chowbent Chapel of c.1645 based on a description “by one who worshipped in it before it was taken down in 1810” as cited in J J Wright's “The Story of Chowbent Chapel”.

Right, from top-

Extract from “Winwick Parish Registers: Early Register (1563-1642)” at Cheshire Archives & Local Studies ref. P 158/1/1. The “Bishop's Transcript” of the Winwick registers -on microfilm at Lancashire Archives ref. DRL 2/529-547- gives the child's name as “Jonas”, but I suspect this was a transcription error.

Extract from the Bishop's Transcripts of the Leigh registers at Lancashire Archives ref. DRM 2/111-119. The Transcripts bridge a gap in the original register covering the period September 1692 – April 1696.

Photographs taken on 15 September 2023 by kind permission of Chowbent Chapel archivist John Readett.

“After meny envitacions to goe with Ellin Scott to Holland this day I answered her envitacion and went”



“[1663, July] 5.—lords day. After meny envitacions to goe with Ellin Scott to Holland this day I answered her envitacion and went to Banfor longe where she lived and get her readie. so we went to Holland togethr and when we came there it was befor service time[. W]e went to Hugh Worthington[’s] and spent 2d so went into church...”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

The Chapel of St Thomas the Martyr -precursor of the present Grade I-listed Parish Church at Upholland- was founded by Sir Robert de Holland 1307. In 1310 he founded a College of Canons at the site. The College was re-founded by Bishop Walter de Langton as a priory of 12 Benedictine monks in 1318-19.* The Priory is thought to have attained its greatest physical extent around 1450. It would have comprised several buildings, providing both domestic accommodation and space for religious worship and contemplation. A model made by Harry Glover and Leonard Fowler to mark the 650th anniversary of the foundation in 1957 can be seen inside the present Church, the nave of which was originally the chancel of the priory church. Aside from the Church itself, the only visible remains (situated immediately to the south of the Church, behind the former rectory) are of part of the monks' dormitory. The site is, collectively, a scheduled monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.

On its dissolution by Henry VIII in 1536 the priory's lands were sold and the church became a chapel of ease to the parish church of All Saints at Wigan. In 1643, “for the providing of fit maintenance for a preaching minister at the said church or chapel of Holland, and for the ease of the Inhabitants of the said chapelry”, Upholland was made a separate parish. The statute was declared null and void following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, and St Thomas' continued as a chapelry until 30 November 1882 when, by Order in Council, it was once again made a distinct parish.**

Hugh Worthington evidently kept an alehouse at Upholland. His daughter, Ann, had been baptised on 4 January 1663; sadly, she died not long after her 3rd birthday. Hugh died on 4 December 1675.***

*Transcripts of the foundation and other documents associated with the Priory are included in Part IV of George T O Bridgeman's “History of the Church and Manor of Wigan” (Chetham Soc New Series Vol. 18, 1890). The registers of John Catterick, Bishop of Coventry & Lichfield 1415-1419, now preserved at Lichfield Joint Record Office ref. B/A/1/8, include several references to the ordination of monks at Upholland, including Brothers Laurence Perepoynt, Nicholas Burscough, and Ralph Pepepoynt and secular priests Robert Bowland, Henry Coke, Thomas Raynforth (or Raynford), Thomas Dichefeld, James and Robert Fisser (or Fyssher), and Gilbert (de) Hesketh.
**Transcripts of the 1643 Act and the Order in Council of 1882 are in, respectively, the Journal of the House of Lords, 19 Car., pp. 233-4, and the 8 December 1882 edition of The London Gazette.
***Lancashire Archives ref. PR 2907/1/1: Upholland Parish: Register of baptisms, marriages and burials, 1600-1735.

The photograph was taken on 20 September 2019.

“A young lad preached”



South Aisle, Church of St Thomas The Martyr, Upholland, 20 September 2019

“[1663, July] 5.—lords day... a young lad preachd.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

The identity of the young preacher at Upholland on 5 July 1663 has not been established. Samuel Baldwin (otherwise “Boden(e)”, “Bauden” or “Baldene”), styled “Rector of Holland” in the parish registers from the date of his son's baptism there on 28 May 1654, had died on 19 April 1661. His next identifiable successor, Gerard Brown(e), described as “Curat” in the episcopal transcripts of the registers for 1674 and 1675, first occurs in an official capacity in February 1665.*

Nonconformist minister Adam Martindale complains in his autobiography about the “clutter” made in the pulpits during these unsettled times

“by raw youths that had never studied the controversies concerning Calvinisme and Arminianisme..., and what advantage the subtler sort of Papists would make of them”.**

*The original Upholland registers for the period are at Lancashire Archives ref. PR 2907/1/1. Near-contemporary transcripts made for the Bishop of Chester, which include some particulars missing from the originals, are at Cheshire Archives & Local Studies ref. EDB.

**“The Life of Adam Martindale written by himself...”, in Chetham Soc Vol. 4 (1845). His sister, Margaret, lived at Ashton in Makerfield. Martindale himself makes an appearance in Roger Lowe's diary around the time of her death there in 1665.

“the pleasantest place that e'er I saw; a most gallant prospect”



“[1663, July] 5. — lords day.... Att noone [Ellin Scott and I] went to her mothers in Dalton stayd dinner[. T]hen Elizabeth Scott livd att Ashurst Hall and she took us downe thithr[. A]s we were going we looked up and downe stood upon a hill and saw the land round about[. I]ts the pleasent[est] place that Ere I saw a most gallant prospect..”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

The Grade II-listed Ashurst's Beacon, constructed in 1798 supposedly to serve as a watchtower in case of French invasion, stands at 173 metres above sea level. A nearby direction-finder commemorates the centenary of Dalton Parish Council in 1994. From this point the land falls away steeply on all sides, but the prospect is perhaps no longer quite so “gallant” as it appeared to Roger Lowe and his companions on that summer's day in 1663. Ordnance survey mapping reveals a dramatic increase in tree cover on the slopes of the hill since the middle of the 19th century, possibly due to reduced footfall over that period. The site was presented to Wigan Corporation in 1962 by Mrs S Florence Meadows in memory of her husband, Thomas.

Lydia and Joseph Scott, who hailed “out of Dalton beyond Holland”, also occur in the Diary and may have been relatives of Ellen and her mother. A yeoman family of this name occur at Belle Vue Farm -a.k.a. Scott's Fold- in Dalton, taxed on a single hearth there in 1666 (National Archives ref. E179/250/9). Elizabeth, however, was evidently a live-in servant at Ashurst Hall.

The author of the preface to the 1994 Picks edition of the Diary comments, in regard to this entry- “Seldom before the eighteenth century did people stop to admire the view... His curiosity was indicative; there was a breadth about it; he was a peasant but a good deal more”.

The photographs were taken on 17 October 2019.

“Came to Ashurst Hall...”



“[1663, July] 5.—lords day.... Came to Ashurst Hall and Elizabeth tooke us into the chambrs up and down – a most pleasant place...”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

The Ashurst family were landowners in Dalton and Orrell at the time of Henry III, and had acquired the entire manor of Dalton by the end of the 16th century. The present Ashurst's Hall, though Grade II-listed, is an early 19th century replacement for the house that Roger Lowe would have seen in 1663. The separately-listed gatehouse of 1649 implies the existence of a substantial property at that time, consistent with the hall, two parlours and five upper chambers mentioned in an inventory of the possessions of William Ashurst in 1618 (Lancashire Archives ref. WCW/Supra/C69A/9). His son, Thomas, was assessed on 10 hearths in 1664 (National Archives ref. E179/250/11).

The photographs were taken on 17 October 2019.

“gallant walks”



“[1663, July] 5. —lords day.... and gallant walks[. W]e envited Elizabeth [and her] fellow servant to goe take part of ½ a dozen which was done[. W]e went together to one Ashcroft and as we went we gat Winberry[. F]rom thence we parted and came home.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Another survivor from the time of Roger Lowe's visit to Ashurst Hall, Dalton, is the 17th century sandstone columarium or dovecote, situated about 40 metres south of the Hall and seen here on 17 October 2019. Also Grade II-listed, it was restored by the North West Buildings Preservation Trust in 1985.

The w(h)inberry plant, an ericaceous species usually found growing on hillsides and mountain slopes in acidic, peaty moorland soil, bears mauve/violet-coloured berries which are ready for harvest from July into September. At this period the fruit was a popular accompaniment for game dishes – rabbit, grouse, pigeon etc- but it can be enjoyed straight from the plant or used in a pie. It was/is also believed to have some medicinal properties.

The diarist's courting of Elizabeth Scott's daughter, Ellen, took place at a time when his love life was “complicated”. How serious he was about her is open to conjecture. On 27 March 1664 Ann Greensworth, already suspicious that he “loved *Ellin Scott*”, confronted him with “*a love lettr writt in Roman hand with R L in the conclusion and this was found before goes att Bamfor longe directed to Ellin Scott*”. Lowe admits to being “*displeased*” at the discovery, but dismisses it as “*a matter of small value*”. Ellen makes several further appearances in the Diary, but by April 1664 she is being courted by Roger Naylor and we do not hear of her again after a “*wessell*”^{*} on 3 November. The implication

seems to be that Ellen was then leaving the district.

*i.e. wassail: originally a pagan fertility ritual, typically performed in winter, from the Saxon “wæs þu hæl” meaning "be healthy".

“she sen[t] for us to Stirrops”



“[1663, July] 16.—Thursday. Att night James Naylor came and asyed me to goe with him to Neawton which I did. He woo[e]d Ann Barrow and she sen[t] for us to Stirrops where we came and get into chambr where she was and after a while parted.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Pictured above is “Dean School House”, situated to the west of Newton Lane and south of the A580 East Lancs Rd in an area known as Golborne Hollows. According to the “Notitia Cestriensis” (compiled by Francis Gastrell, Bishop of Chester 1714-25; now at Cheshire Archives ref. EDA 3/4702):

“An[no] 1646 John Stirrup built a School here upon a small parcell of Barren Land, and soon after dying, left ye Int[erest] of £50 to a Master, in ye hands of Mr Legh of Lime. Nothing else belongs to it. The Town choose ye Master”.

Whether this was the venue for the meeting described by Roger Lowe is speculation on my part. The information in Notitia Cestriensis seems to be contradicted, first, by inscriptions at the property which read-

(above the original entrance) “John Stirrup Built This Scoole-House Upon Hos Own Cost And Charges And Gave The Use Of Fifty Pound For Ever. June The 6 1677”; and

(on the south-facing gable) “Behold that which I have seen: it is good & comely for one to Eat & to drink, & to Enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all ye dayes of his life which god Giveth him for it is his portion. J S 1677”

and, second, by indentures of lease and release dated 20 and 21 November 1699 under which John Stirrup conveyed to Peter Legh of Lyme and others “a messuage called Dean School, and a close of

ground thereto belonging, in Newton". On the other hand, the location does seem to fit with Lowe's description of where he and James Naylor met Ann Barrow in 1663. No other member of the Stirrup family is mentioned in the Diary apart from Lowe's godfather, Raph (or Ralph) Stirrup, a Leigh mercer.

The later history of the School can be ascertained from the Charity Commissioners' reports. John Stirrup had also conveyed to Peter Legh another property -Crow Lane House, at Newton. This was subject to an annual charge of £3 for the support of the master of Dean School. By an indenture of 17 February 1752, Peter Legh's son (also Peter), placed this and certain other properties in trust for the benefit of the master in order that he "should yearly teach and instruct in English any number of poor necessitous children of the said township, not exceeding ten. And it was agreed that the said Peter Legh, his heirs and assigns, should have the sole right of nomination of such schoolmaster, with power of displacing and removing at his and their will and pleasure any master who should not be studious and diligent in his place, or who should obtain for himself or servants a settlement in Newton, or obtain a license for the said school, or do any thing displeasing to the said Peter Legh and his heirs" (Further Report of the Commissioners..." House of Commons, 1826).

By 1826 -but no doubt long before this*- the original school house had been adapted for residential use. The rental income from this and the other trust properties was used for the keeping of a school in the court-house at Newton, "which has been used for this purpose for upwards of 50 years, and ... has from 70 to 100 children [who] are taught reading, writing and accounts, without any charge". In 1879 a new scheme changed the focus of the charity to the award of scholarships through an annual competition or "exhibition". The assets were later absorbed by the Winwick Education Foundation (registered charity no. 526499), which still exists to support and promote education in the area. In the meanwhile, and despite its Grade II-listing, the original school house had been allowed to fall into disrepair. Lacking basic utilities, the property was threatened with demolition.** Eventually a buyer was found, and extensive repairs and alterations were undertaken c.1973.

The black-and-white photographs above were taken in May 1968. The colour photographs were taken in 2017.

* J H Lane says in Volume II of his "Newton-in-Makerfield: Its history, with some account of its people" (1916): "How long the building was used as a school we have not been able to ascertain. Possibly, when the free school near the church was founded by Peter Legh in 1699, the Dean scholars would be transferred to it. This arrangement would continue down to the demolition of the old school about 1840 ... when the old Cockpit School was taken for these and other scholars".

**"Vandalism' to destroy school", The Guardian, 5 June 1968.

“We ware all afrnoone in ale house, the lord forgive us”



“[1663, August] 9. —lords day. Matthew Lythgo Edward Bradshaw Robert Reynolds came from Leigh sent for me to Tankerfields and had wenches that mett them. we ware all afrnoone in ale house the lord forgive us.”
[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

What the Diary reveals about 17th century attitudes and practices in regard to alcohol consumption is the subject of an essay -“Drinking and Alehouses in The Diary of an English Mercer's Apprentice, 1663-1674”- in “Alcohol: A Social and Cultural History” (M P Holt (ed), Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006). The author, A Lynn Martin, notes that 47 separate drinking establishments are mentioned by Lowe, 25 of which were in Ashton itself and 6 of which were run by women. There is, I think, a distinction to be drawn between recognisably commercial ventures such as Tankerfield's in Ashton and Widow Raniker's at Leigh, and other venues like Robert Rosbotham's in Park Lane where something more akin to an occasional “open house” for friends and neighbours seems to have been on offer. It nevertheless remains true -and the Diary provides ample evidence- that ale was a staple of most people's diets at a time when few had access to a safe supply of drinking water, and coffee- and tea-drinking had yet to catch on outside London and the main university towns. It is also clear that the stereotypes of the teetotal nonconformist and the alehouse as the exclusive domain of working-class men belong to later centuries.

The alehouse-keeper with whom Roger Lowe had most dealings on a professional basis was Ann Greinsworth at Bamfurlong. Frequently in 1663-5 he was summoned to write letters for her or to “make streight” her accounts, usually in anticipation of a visit from her brother “then in London”. This may indicate that she was in partnership with him or was transacting business on his behalf. The Diary coincides with a period when beer was beginning to replace ale as the beverage of choice, the complexities of the brewing process leading to the development of large commercial

breweries which, as A Lynn Martin observes, “had no place for the traditional alewife”. Lowe's diary entry on 19 October 1663 - “*Ann Greinsworth came to towne to goe brew att [Haydock?] lodge*”- is of interest in that context. On 27 February 1665-

“Mr Robt Greinsworth came from London and cald on me and forced me to go with him to Bein forlonge so I gat him to gat John Jenkins to come with me because it was night and I would come so John and I went and stayd till 12 o'clock in night drinking and afterwards we came home, and

28.—tusday. I was sick all day but ere night the lord restored me”.

The incidence of tobacco-smoking in 17th century Ashton is difficult to judge from the evidence of the Diary alone. Tobacco seems to have been among the commodities available from Roger Lowe's shop but only once, on 1 November 1663, does he mention taking “*a pipe of tob*” to James Wood. On 9 May 1664 he delivered “*a quarter*” (of a pound?) of tobacco to the workers at Nicholas Burscough's marl pit in Haydock, and Thomas Whittle at Edge Green received “*a pipe of Tob*” from him on 16 February 1669*. His supplier was possibly Mr Swift, the trader in “*Bristoll goods*” with whom Lowe struck a deal over “*a pottle** of butt end ale*” at Swift's lodgings in Liverpool on 27 March 1666. There is no suggestion that Lowe or any of his close friends were smokers. Tobacco-smoking had become popular in England in the previous century; it would of course be several more centuries before the danger to health was fully understood.

This woodcut of an alehouse interior is from a pamphlet of c.1628.

*In this period tobacco was often sold in pre-filled, single-use clay pipes.

**A “pottle” was a half-gallon jug.

“there was a race to be run from Goleborne Stockes to Ashton towne”



“[1663, August] 24. Robert [Rowbotham] gat us plumes we hastened away [for] there was a race to be run from Goleborne Stockes to Ashton towne. I gat a horse and Ran with them.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Lowe's reference to “*Goleborne Stockes*” has prompted speculation that there were stocks located in the vicinity of Stack House Farm, seen here on 23 June 2014. In his “*Gleanings of Golborne History*” (1955), James Bridge writes:

“The most likely place would have been Golborne Smithies, for there several roads converged. In the absence of definite information, we may surmise that the farmstead known as Stack House which adjoined these roads was the most likely place, and that Stack has been substituted for Stock.”

Mr Bridge may have been right about this, for the Farm is referred to as “Stock House” in the 1901 census returns and in some 19th century burial records.

“I went round about church to looke at graves of such as I knew”



“[1663, September] 13. —lords day. I went to Leigh and att noone John Bradshaw and I went into Vicars field and talked of formr things. I was at this time very sad in spirit by reason of my selfe and seeing my fathers and mothers grave and pondering of other deaths for I went round about church to looke at graves of such as I knew.”

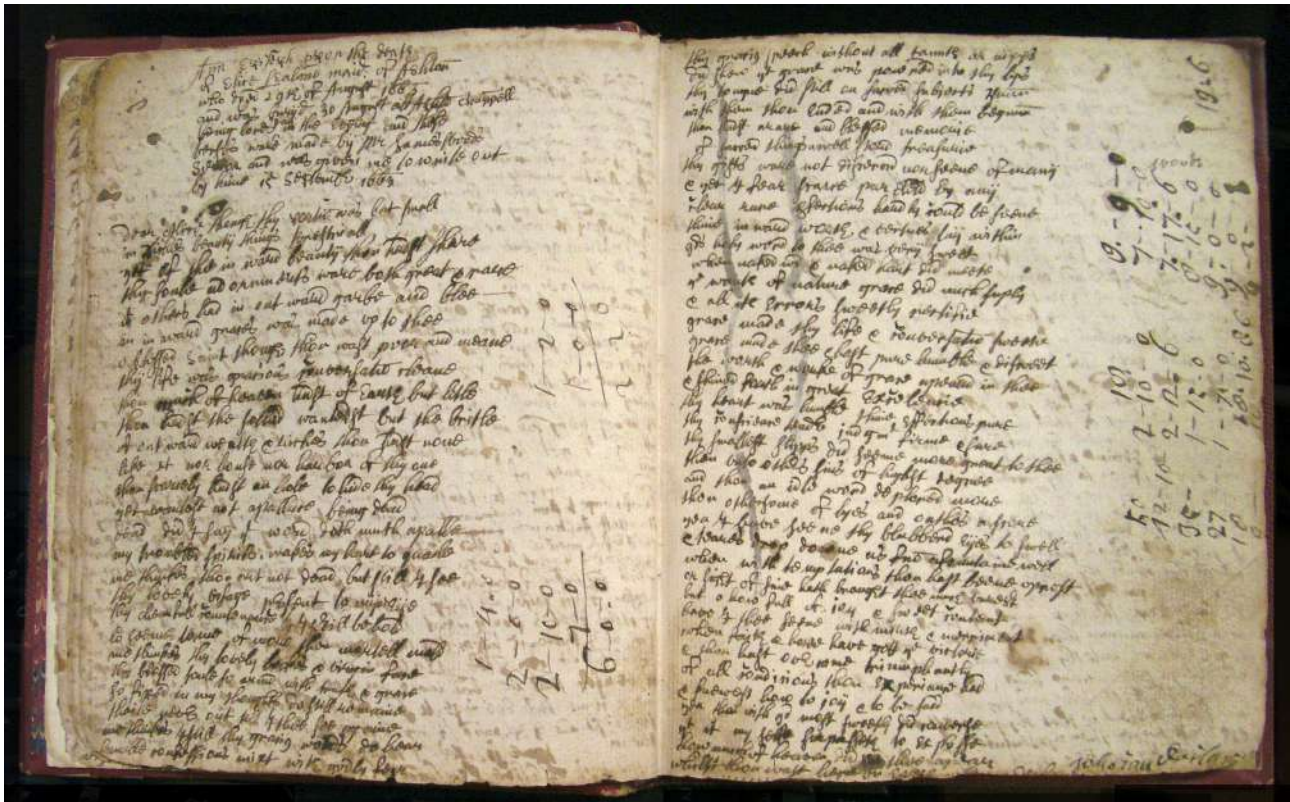
[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

The present vicarage at Leigh was built in 1959. It replaced a building of 1771/2, but the vicarage has been in more or less the same location since the 15th century, giving its name to Vicarage Square and the former Vicar's Fields or “glebe” lands immediately to the north.

A dozen or so 17th century stones are incorporated in the pathway that runs through a Garden of Remembrance on the south side of the Parish Church of St Mary The Virgin. The Church itself stands in the footprint of its medieval predecessor but dates mainly from a re-building in 1873.

The photographs were taken on 15 September 2017.

Diary of Roger Lowe, 15 September 1663 (part)



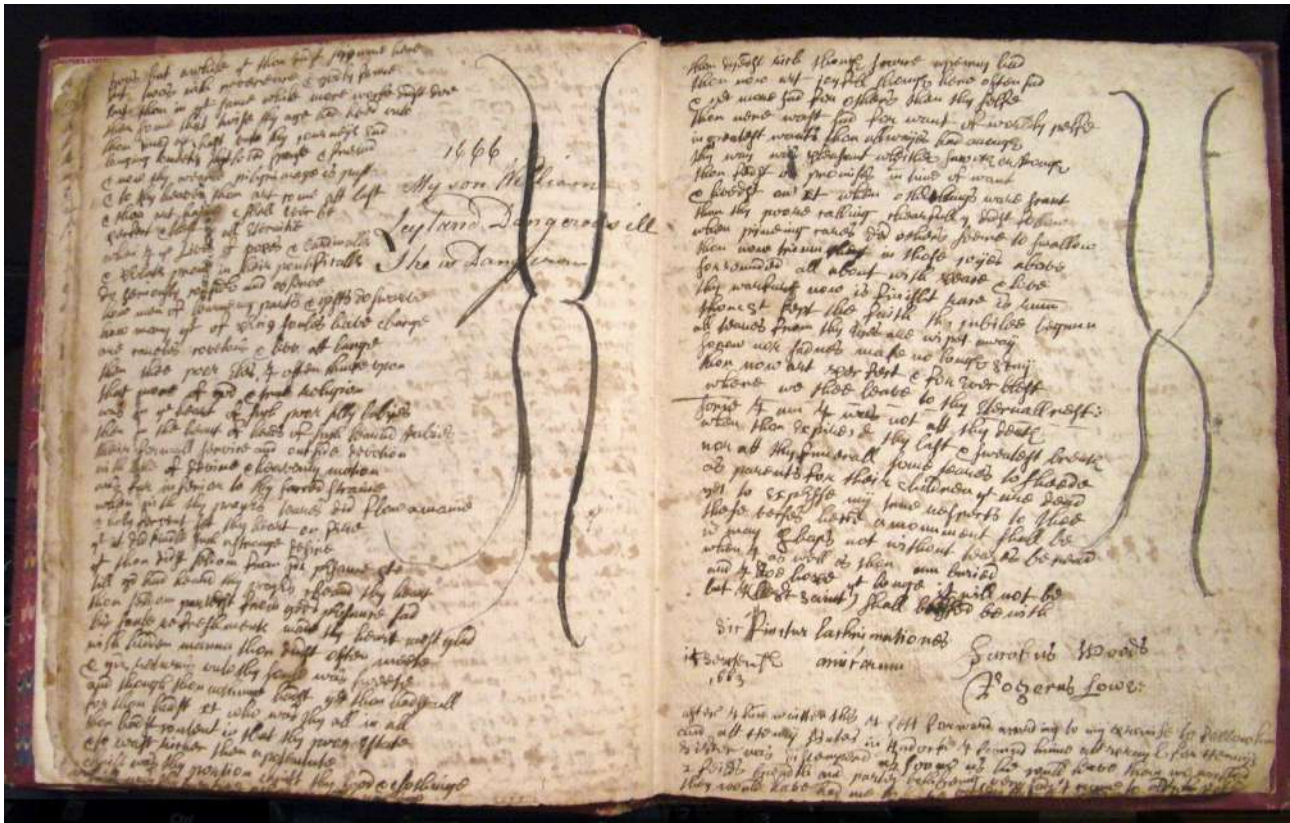
“Ann Epitaph upon the death
of Elice Lealand maid of Ashton
who dyed 29th of August 1663.
and was buryd 30 August att Ashton chappell
being lords day in the Evening and these
verses ware made by Mr. James Woods
Senior and was given me to write out
by hime 15 September 1663

Dear Alice though thy portion was but small
in Riches beauty things terrestriall
yet of the in ward beauty thou hadst share
thy soule adornments ware both great & rare
w[ha]t others had in out ward garbe and blee
in inward graces was made up to thee
o blessed Saint though though wast poor and meane
thy life was gracious conversation cleane
thou much of heaven hadst of Earth but little
thou hadst the sollid wantedst but the brittle
of outward wealth & titles though hadst none
like [Chri]st nor house nor harbor of thy own
thou scarcely hadst an hole to hide thy head
yet wantest not a pallace being dead
dead did I say [tha]t word doth much appalle
my troubled spirits makes my heart to quaile
me thinkes thou art not dead, but still I see
thy lovely visage present to mine e[y]e

thy cheerful countenance I still behold
it seemes to me of more than mortell mold
me thinkes thy lovely lockes & virgin face
thy blessed soul so armed with truth & grace
So fixed in my thoughts do still remaine
thaile never out till I thee see againe
me thinkes I still thy gracious words do heare
humble confessions mixt with godly fear
thy gracious speech without all taunts or nipps
did shew [tha]t grace was powered into thy lips.
thy tongue did still on sacred subjects runn
with them thou Ended and with them begunn
thou hadst a rare and blessed memorie
of sacred things a well stored treasurie
thy gifts ware not discerned nor seene of many
& yet I fear scarce paraleld by any
clear rare perfections hardly could be seene
thine inward worth & virtues lay within
gods holy word to thee was very sweet
when naked w[or]ld & naked heart did meete
The wants of nature grace did much supply
& all its Errors sweetly rectifie
grace made thy life & conversation sweete
grace made thee chast[e] pure humble & discreet
the worth & worke of grace appeared in thee
& shined forth in great Excellencie
thy heart was humble thine Effections pure
thy conscience tender judgem[en]t firme & sure
thy smallest slipps did seeme more great to thee
than unto others sins of highest degree
and thou an idle word deplored more
than others some of lyes and oathes a score
yea I have seen thy blubbered Eyes to swell
& teares drop downe as from a fountaine well
when with temptations thou hast beene opprest
Or sight of sine hath brought thee much unrest
but o how full of joy & sweet content
have I thee seene with mirthe & merriment
when faith & hope have gott the victorie
& thou hast overcome triumphantly.
of all conditions thou experience had
& knewest how to joy & to be sadd
yea thou with g[o]d most sweetly did converse
[tha]t it my selfe surpasseth to Expresse
how much of heaven did in thee appeare
whilst thou wast here on Earthe who will declare...”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Diary of Roger Lowe, 15 September 1663 (part)



"... twas but awhile that thou didst sojourne here
 but twas with reverence & godly feare
 but thou in [tha]t same while more worke didst doe
 than some that twice thy age had lived unto
 thou madest haste unto thy journeyes End
 longing to meete that loved spouse & friend
 & now thy wearie pilgrimage is past
 & to thy heaven thou art come att last
 & thou art hapie & shall ever be
 perfect & blest to all Eternitie
 when I the Lives of popes & cardinalls
 & prelates proud in their pontificalls
 do seriously consider and observe
 how men of learning parts & gifts do swerve
 how many [tha]t of [precious?] soules have charge
 are careles covetous & live att large
 then thee poor Elies, I often thinke upon
 that more of god & true religion
 was in ye heart of such poor silly babies
 than in the heart of heads of such learned rab[b]ies
 their formall service and outside devotion
 with little of devine & heavenly motion
 was far inferior to thy sacred straine
 when with thy prayrs teares did flow amaine
 & holy fervent set thy heart on fire
 [Tha]t it did kindle such a stronge desire

[Tha]t thou didst seldom from gods presence p[ar]te
 till g[o]d had hearde thy prayrs cheered thy heart
 thou seldom partedst from gods presence sad
 his soule refreshments made thy heart most glad
 with hidden manna thou didst often meete
 & gods returnes unto thy soule was sweete
 and though thou nothing hadst yet thou hadst all
 for thou hadst [Chris]t who was thy all in all
 thou hadst content in that thy poor Estate
 & so wast richer than a potentate
 christ was thy portion christ thy food & clothinge
 Christ was thy treasure [page torn] nothinge
 thou dyedst rich though scarce a penny had
 thou nowe art joyfull though here often sad
 & yet more sad for others than thy selfe
 thou nere wast sad for want of worldly we[a]lthe
 in greatest wants thou allwayes had enough
 thy way was pleasant whether smooth or rough
 Thou fedst on promises in time of want
 & livedst in [Chris]t when other things ware scant
 thou thy poore calling cheerfully didst follow
 when pineing cares did others seeme to swallow
 thou now triumphant in those joyes above
 surrounded all about with peace & love
 thy warfare now is finished race is runn
 thou [ha]st kept the faith thy jubilee begunn
 all teares from thy eyes are wipet away
 sorrow nor sadness make no longer stay
 thou now art perfect & forever blest
 where we thee leave to thy Eternal rest
 sorie I am I was not att thy death
 when thou Expired thy last & sweetest breath
 nor att thy funerall some teares to sheede
 as parents for their children [tha]t are dead.
 yet to Expresse my true respects to thee
 these verses here a monument shall be
 w[hich] may p[er]haps not without tears be read
 when I as well as thou am buried
 and I doe hope [tha]t long it will not be
 but I (blest saint) shall blessed be with [thee.]

Sic finitur lacrimationes amicorum

Jacobus Woods

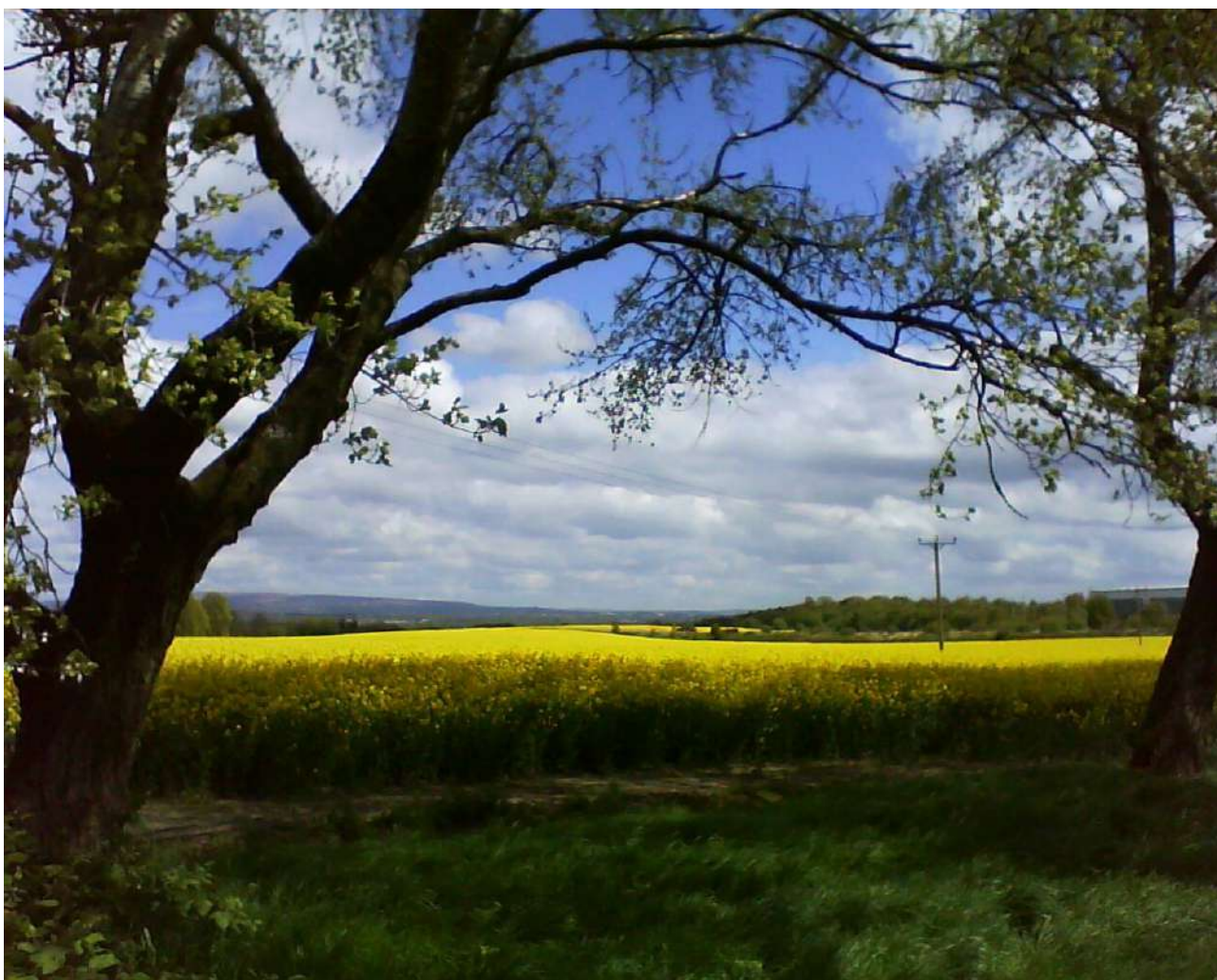
Rogerus Lowe

15 September 1663”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

(The Latin phrase at the end of the epitaph means “this concludes the tears of friends”. To this, Lowe adds the following in his list of “such as dyd within My Aprentiship and providentiallie I was cald to the funerall”: “29 August 1663. dyed Eles Leyland Jauvis sister a good woman”.)

“went to Brinne to see a race”



“[1663, September] 21. —Munday. John Bradshaw came from Leigh to see me and we went to Gawthers and drunke and then afterwards went to Brinne to see a race but it was run before we came so we came to shop againe.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

The photograph shows the view north from Bryn Recreation Ground on 26 April 2017. Also known as Whithill Street Playing Field, Ashton Town AFC played their home games on “Bryn Rec” in the interval between quitting their original Windsor Road ground in 1962 and establishment of their present base at Edge Green Street in 1964. St Peter's Church Hall and, later, the Bath Springs Pub provided makeshift changing facilities.

The land has since been earmarked by the local authority for mixed -i.e. housing and commercial-development.

Whether this was the actual location of the race that Roger Lowe and John Bradshaw had hoped to see in 1663 is speculation on my part – no further clues are given in the Diary. “Gawther” was Gawther Taylor, an Ashton alehouse-keeper related to the Taylors of Sankey Hall near Warrington.

“old nicke”



“[1663, October] 13. —tuesday. I sat in shop all day. Onely I went up greene to old parson Lees and John Hasleden and Thomas Rosbotham and we all went to gether jesting... I made them to laugh in telling them how once I was harried with a tupp on a Rope[. When] coming towards Leigh with Tupp in fields the tupp sett upon poor Hodge and so geper knowd [?] me that in the conclusion I cryd out but none heard me and I being unecquented how to act with tuppe on Rope let hime have the length of Rope and tupp ran all wayes backwards and fell on me so that I was put in a terrible fright what to doe to save my shinnes. I was almost in a bewailed condition. I layd me down with my head upon my leggs thinking to save me leggs and he gave me such a patt on the head [as] made me turn up white eyes. I thought and was halfe afraid lest I had gotten old nicke on the Rope. I prayed to god to delivr me from the tupp and Rope but in the conclusion my bones ware sore brains sicke and heart dead with feare what to do with tupp. I looked at tupp with an

angry countenance but could not tell how to be revenged. Kill him I durst not then I should have the labour to have carryd himme which I could not. Faire words would not pacifie him nor angry countenances effright him but att last I resolved upon a manly resolution thus- "What Hodge? A]rt [thou] in a strait[e]? W]hats the reason of this feare and greefe[? A] tupp[? A] tupp does that daunt thee[? S]tand upon thy legs and fight manfully in answer thereunto[!]" I did, and get a kibbow out of hedge and tupp and I fell to it but the tup o'ercame me. I could doe no good but downe on my knees againe. I get hold of tupp's horns and one of his feet and cast him. "So now tupp I intend to be revenged on thee" - and smote him on the head... With great difficultie I get him to Leigh but I ne'er was in such a puckle in all my life as I was with that tupp..."
[From "Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield", Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

A footnote to the 1877 edition of the Diary suggests that "*old parson Lee*" was William Leigh, Rector of Newchurch, Culcheth and thereafter of Gorton Chapel from where he was ejected in 1662.

The origin of "Old Nick" as a pseudonym for the devil, or Satan, is somewhat obscure. It may have derived from "Old Iniquity", an appellation used in medieval plays, or from the Scandinavian term "knickar", the destroying principle. Alternatively, Francis Grosse points in his "Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue" (1785) to a tradition that Satan had a hand in the design of the female anatomy: "he maliciously gave them monstrous gashes, or nicks, whence he was called old scratch, and old nick". In any event, the name was in common usage by the time of Roger Lowe, as evidenced for example by Edmund Gayton's "Pleasant Notes on Don Quixote" (1654)-

"... for this trick, I'll warrant him a Passe-port to old Nick..."

- and in a satirical Restoration poem about Oliver Cromwell's supporters-

"... for Round-heads, Old Nick stand up now..."

According to Egerton Leigh's "A Glossary of Words used in the Dialect of Cheshire" (1877), a "kibbow" was a feat or proof of great strength. Roger Lowe uses it twice in his entry for 13 October 1663 to mean, rather, a stick or cudgel.

The tale of "*poor Hodge*" and the "*angry tup*" was evidently Lowe's party-piece, repeated when he was feeling especially merry for the entertainment and amusement of his friends. Though no doubt founded in fact, it gives the impression of being a well-rehearsed account, with lines such as "*Stand upon thy legs and fight manfully in answer thereunto!*" calculated to draw the biggest laughs. He pairs it in the Diary with another humorous account of finding himself at table with the servants of a Mr Henry Lee, ravenously hungry but with no spoon with which to consume the "*whole sea of pottage*" set before him:

"*I att last rise from table with a hungry belly but a lamenting heart and e'er since I have been cautious how to suppp pottage and likewise wary.*

Nothing worser to a man then over hastiness especially in hott concernments: hott women, hott pottage and angry tupps be ware of and pray to be delivered from”.

The photograph was taken near Staveley, Cumbria, on 3 January 2020.

“ ... a communion at James Lowes Neawton Common”



“[1663] November 1.—lords day. Mr Woods came to towne he was att William Hasleden att dinner. I went to bring himme a pipe of tob but could not stay for I was ingaged into Compenie. Ann Barrow and James Naylor and we ware all togeather at noone in Gawthrs. Mr Woods left word with Izabell that he would go to Robt Rosbotham to be all night and would hve me to come to hime so att night. Thomas Smith and I went thithr but we went away by Petr Lealands. Thomas sent me into house and stayd for me. When I came to door they were singing psalmes. I went in and Petr would have me pray but I was unfitt at that time and so desidrd excuse. Wenches and [Thomas and I] went altogather to Robt Rosbotham. Thos Smith and I ware altogather and he spoke low and told us to be intended a communion thursday night next at James Lowes Neawton Comin...

November 5.—Thursday. att night I went to James Lowes of Neawton Comin there Mr Woods was and a company of Christians where we received communion and Mr Woods preachd out of 7 Ecclesiastes 14 verse. Mr Gregg was at prayr when I came in it was a joyfull night and a sad night.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

The removal of non-conforming ministers from their benefices by the Act of Uniformity was followed by measures to restrict their activities and influence outside the Church of England. Under the 1664 “Act to prevent and suppress seditious conventicles” (16 Car 2 c.4)-

“if any person of the age of Sixteene yeares or upwards being a Subject of this Realme at any time after the first day of July which shall be in the yeare of our Lord One thousand six hundred sixty and fower shall be present at any Assembly Conventicle or Meeting under colour or pretence of any Exercise of Religion in other manner then is allowed by the Liturgy or practise of the Church of England..., at which Conventicle Meeting or Assembly there shall be five persons or more assembled together over and above those of the same Household, then it shall and may be lawfull to and for any two Justices of the Peace ... [to] committ every such Offender ... to the Gaole or House of Correction, there to remaine without Baile or Maineprize for any time not exceeding the space of three Monethes unlesse such offender shall pay downe to the said Justices or Cheife Magistrate such Summe of Money not exceeding Five pounds..., which Money shall be paid to the Church Wardens for the releife of the Poore of the Parish where such offender did last inhabite”.

The £5 fine or 3-month prison sentence was for a first offence; the penalties were doubled in the case of a second offence. Third-time offenders faced a fine of £100 fine or banishment to the American plantations, “death without benefit of clergy” being the punishment awaiting any that should escape. A married woman was to be imprisoned for a year unless her husband paid 40s for her release. A later Act (22 Car 2 c.5) subjected to a fine of £20 any person who presided over or allowed such a gathering in his house, and empowered justices etc to break down doors and take offenders into custody. Meanwhile the 1665 “Act for restraining non-conformists” (17 Car 2 c.2, otherwise known as the Five Mile or Oxford Act) had prohibited an excluded minister from residing within five miles of his former church or chapel, or of any corporate town, unless he had first pledged allegiance to the Crown.

The effect of the measures was that, as Robert Halley explains in “Lancashire: Its Puritanism and Nonconformity” (Tubbs & Brook, 1872), “Nonconformists were compelled to maintain secrecy respecting their religious services, to meet in unknown and obscure places..., to keep watch against the approach of informers, or soldiers, or magistrates, and to confine the notice of their meetings to trusty friends who would take every precaution against dangerous publicity...”. In spite of all the dangers, “domestic exercises grew into public services, social meetings into large gatherings, 'sweet repetitions' into long sermons, and the principles of an organised nonconformity were gradually developed...”. David Underdown refers in “Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660” (Clarendon Press, 1985) to “a new kind of community, united by belief and mission, sometimes formally by covenant, in a 'gathered church' as a substitute for the territorial parish church community that was now disintegrating”.

Roger Lowe's diary provides much evidence of nonconformist activity in and around Ashton in Makerfield at this time. On 15 April 1663 “Mr Woods had a private day of prayr. He would ... have had me ... come but I said I durst not”. On 3 May 1663 “Thomas Smith and severall young women was assembled together in fields and I repeated sermon...”. On 22 February 1664 “Thos Smith and I went to Mr Woods and ware all night. Mr woods was gone to the funerall of his wives mother soe I repeated sermon. There was four young folkes prsant [who] stayd on purpose to hear repetition”. On 17 April 1664 “I began to write sermon the morneinge. John Pottr and his wife and John

Haseleden invented to effright me in telling me I was cited to Bishops court for nonconformitie to Comon Prayr, ... att the hearing of which I eate no more but went to Town Heath and prayd to God to deliver me and consulted with myself how to doe but att noone it was found out, and I was glad'. On 8 January 1665 "*Thomas Smith and I went to gather to John Taylors in Goleborne and heard Mr Woods preach and we had sacrement*". On 30 December 1665 "*Robt Rosbotham sent for me. Mr Woods was come to his house and I went and Mr Woods preachd*". On several occasions in 1665 and again in 1666 a certain John Robinson hosted a "*private day*" at which Mr Wood preached and the diarist "*received the sacrement*". On 9 July 1667 Roger Lowe was again at "*James Lowes in Neawton Comon*" to hear a sermon by the excluded Rainford minister Roger Baldwin.

Taken on 30 June 2014, the main photograph above shows Newton Common from Swan Road. The road borders the Common on its north side; this view is looking south-east, with the red-brick tower of St Patrick's RC Church visible on the horizon. The location of James Lowe's house is uncertain, the first detailed map of the area being that drawn by Benjamin Yoxall for the Legh family in 1743 (Greater Manchester County Record Office ref. E17/210/159; tracing and extract included above, left). Hall House Farm, a substantial property at the southern end of what is now Swan Road, is indicated on the Yoxall map by the letter "S" and was occupied at that time by James Kenyon. Matthew Lowe held the property marked "W" - "Bibby's Tenement". My photographs of Hall House, situated west of the road, were taken on 20 June 2017.

The burial at Winwick of the wife of "*James Lowe de Newton Comin*" on 13 March 1648 is recorded in "*Early Register*", 1563-1642, at Cheshire Archives ref. P 158/1/1.

“it was a very rainy day and Mr Blakeburne came not to Chappell”



“[1663, November] 15.—lords day. it was a very rainy day and Mr Blakeburne came not to Chappell but sent Mr Barker to read...”
[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

“*Mr Blakeburne*” may have been either Thomas Blackburne (c.1622-65) or his younger brother, John (c.1622-66). Both completed their education at Oxford, matriculating respectively in 1639 and 1640 and becoming Bachelors of Divinity in 1661 and 1662*. Thomas was ordained in 1645 and served first at Rivington and then at Newton-le-Willows, being described by the Church Survey of 1650 as a “godly preaching minister [who] did come into the said place by ye consent of the whole chapelrie, and supplieth the cure diligently upon the Lords Dayes” (National Archives ref. C94/4). John is largely absent from the historical record following his graduation, but the evidence of the Diary is that he preached mainly at Billinge Chapel, close to the family home at Blackley Hurst. The diarist was present at both their funerals, Thomas being buried at Winwick on 9 February 1665 and John at the same location on 15 December 1666.

The name “Richard Barker”, churchwarden, is inscribed on one of the beams in the south aisle of the nave of the Parish Church of St Oswald, Winwick.

Ashton Chapel was rebuilt in 1714 and again -as the Parish Church of St Thomas the Apostle- in 1892-3. Datestones from both re-buildings are set into east wall of the present Church, shown

above on 1 September 2022.

*Vol 1 – Early Series - of Joseph Foster's "Alumni Oxonienses" (Oxford: Parker & Co, 1891), from which these particulars are taken, differentiates the father of Thomas - "William, of Blackley Hurst"- from that of John - "William of Billing". However, the contention that they were brothers is probably correct; both are described in the Diary and in the Winwick burial register as being "of Blackley Hurst".

“the casting of Leigh[’s] great Bell and third bell”



“[1663, November] 22 ... I went to Leigh and att noone John and I went to Twisse barne to see all those preparations in readines to the casting of Leigh[’s] great Bell and third bell both which bells lay in steeple...”

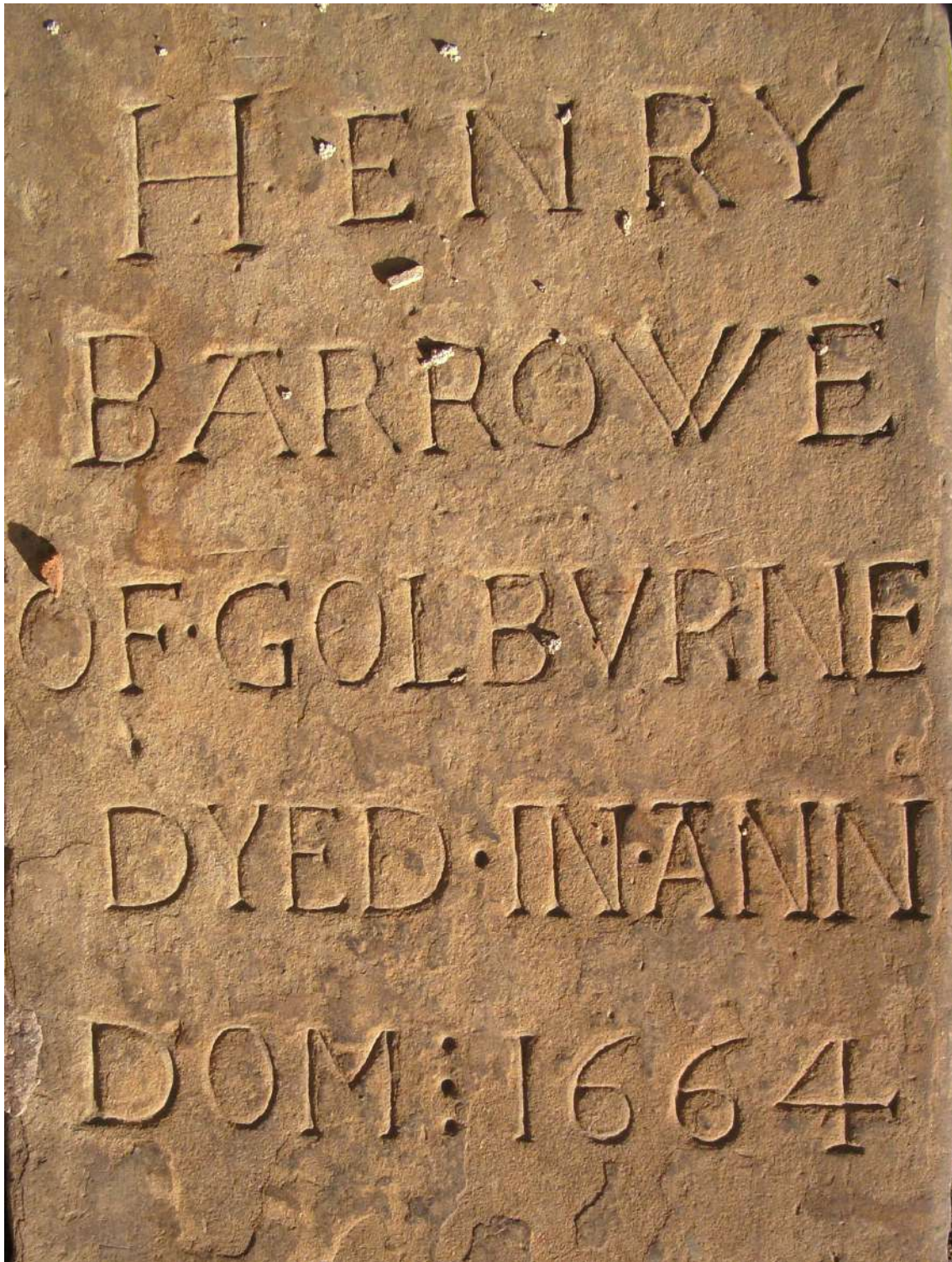
[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

The present Grade II*-listed Parish Church of St Mary the Virgin at Leigh is mainly the result of a re-building by the Lancaster architects E G Paley and Hubert Austin in 1871-3. The earliest documentary evidence of a church on the site is from the 12th and 13th centuries, with the building that was familiar to Roger Lowe being constructed around 1400. Some of the oldest surviving fabric, dating from 1516, can be seen in the tower interior. Evidence of the original roof-line and the springing point of the south arcade of the old nave is also visible immediately left of the tower arch. To the right of the arch is the “Priest’s Bell”, cast by Luke Ashton of Wigan in 1705, which was used to summon the vicar. Externally the tower was re-faced in 1910, but it still retains its 16th century studded oak door (pictured left, below).

The bells seen by Roger Lowe in 1663 were from a peal of four, said to have been given to the Church by Elizabeth I. The present peal of 8 bells was cast by Rudhall’s Foundry, Gloucester, in the 18th century. A major overhaul and refurbishment of the ancillary mechanism was completed by Nicholson Engineering Ltd, Bridport, in 2010.

The photographs were taken on (left) 15 September 2017 and (right) 23 August 2023.

“I cald att Henry Barrows in Goleborne...”



The Diary opens with the line *“Ann Barrow sent for me this morneinge”*. Lowe's relationship with Ann had always been a difficult one, not helped by her father Henry's disapproval of the diarist. A little over a fortnight later, on 19 January 1663, Lowe returned to Golborne *“with purpose to free myself and not have nothing to doe with her”*. He began a courtship with Mary, the sister of his friend James Naylor. Ann, however, was an itch that he could not help but scratch. When, that summer, James enlisted his help with his own courtship of Ann, Lowe found his old passion for her rekindled. On 21 October, *“Ann Barrow sent for*

me to John Naylor. I went and we conferred together of time and place when and where James and I must meete her. But in this discourse I intreated for my selfe to be the next in succession if in the case they two should breake of to which she did not say no neither yea...".

By November it had finally dawned on James Naylor that Lowe's actions on his behalf had not been entirely selfless. Then, as they say, "it all kicked off"-

"22.—Lord's day. I went to Leigh and cald of Ann Barrow and shee tooke me into the parlor and gave me spiced beere and we conferred awhile. I spoke much for my selfe by way of motive that she would except of me and after awhile pted being enjoined by her to come at noone backe again.... I cald on Ann Barrowe according to promise but she was sent for to go and into Pemberton but she left word I must stay till she came but I would not but Elizabeth Hart told me that shee said that if she thought her father would dye soone he would waite for me bec' I had presented me effections to her and this she said upon bettr motive to her for me - but yet the greefe of all was behind for Bett told me how pfidiously and knavish James Naylor had dealt with me for he wooing Ann would allwayes have me with hime and I had some effections to his sister and had spent her severall little notes which shee put in her box and this one eveninge the 9th of this prsant Novembr and he called for a band and Mary bid hime go take one out of her box so he rifled her box up and tooke all my lettrs which I had sent her at seaverall occasions and tooke them in his pockett and when we came into Goleborne to Barrowes I went into parlour to John Hart and he followed Ann into anothr chamber and let her see my sacrets to Mary and I had witt in one that I wished Mary would be as faithful to me as Ann was to him and this this stinkinge Rascall betrayed his own sister and me who I allwayes with and spent monys for his sake and advised hime the best I could nay and above all he backebit me and said it would doe well if I could get monys against my comeing out and said I durst never come in his fathers sight which was lye he said as soone as his sistr angred hime he would tell his father of all and this the actinge of a seeminge prtende friend to me as can be when in truth is no better than a deivelish malacious dissembling knavish rascall but Ann was displeased att me att first tho caryd nobly and loveingly to my face but bett Hart told me this might know my friends know my foes and now its best to gett and feare god for a friend for wee see man will faile us and world will fail us but god

will not faile those that trust in hime but this was matter of much greife to me and I was very sad upon it...".

Henry Barrow died just over a year later. His gravestone can still be seen, close up against the exterior south wall of St Oswald's Church at Winwick. By 6 July 1665, according to the Diary, Ann was living with her sister Margaret at Edge Green. She and James were married on either 10 May or 20 June 1666 (it is not clear which of two possible entries in the Winwick register at Cheshire Archives ref. P158/1/2 relates to the couple: "James Neylor" and "Ann Barrow" were married on 10 May, "James Naylor" and "Anne Barrow" on 20 June).

The photograph was taken on 17 August 2017.