

# ***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

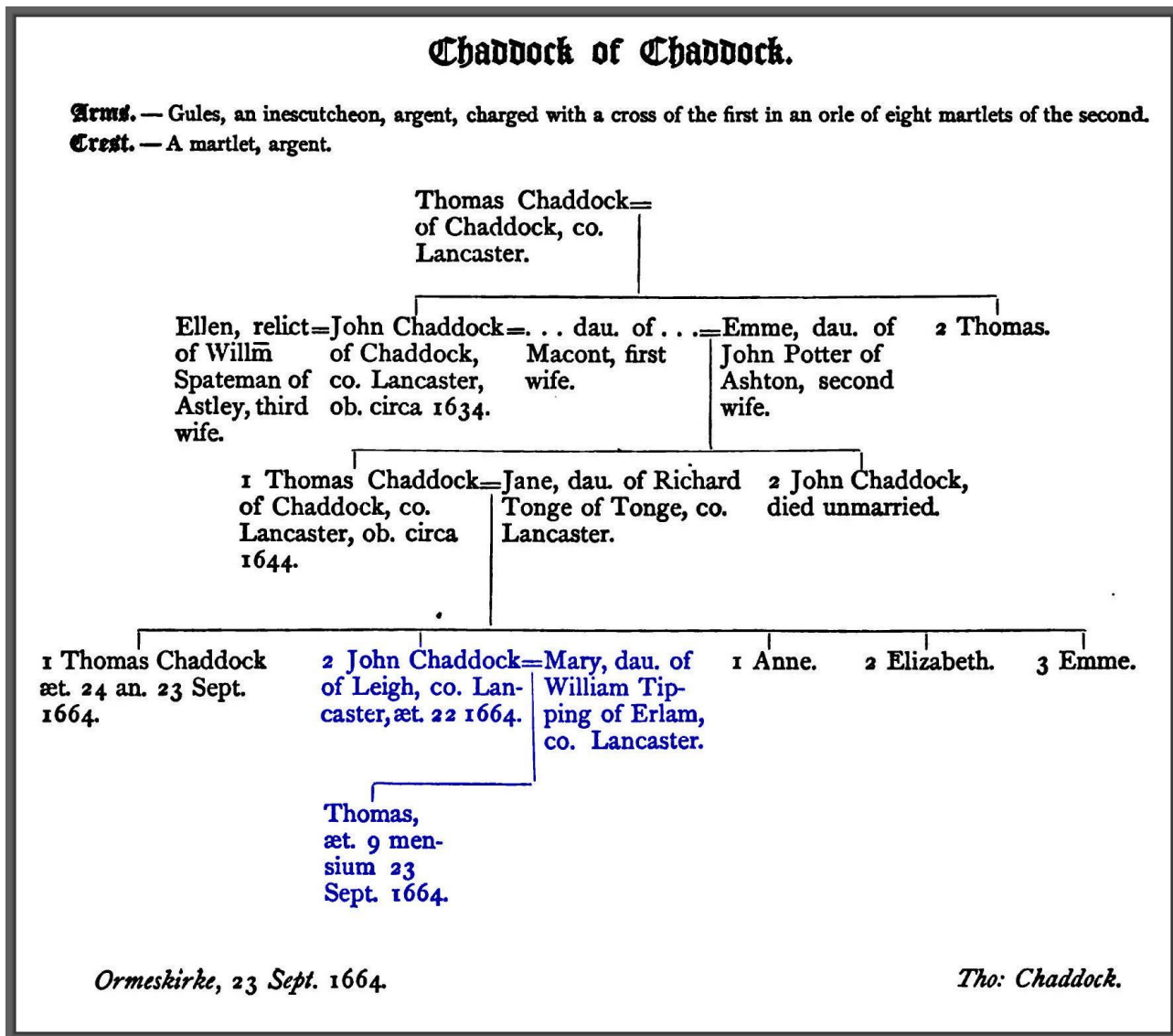
The Makerfield Rambler

**Part 2 : 1664**

*(This edition: January 2024)*

**1664**

**“He was going to be married and had stolne his love away from Mr Whiteheads”**



“[1664, February] 5.—Thursday. before day my fellow apprntice, John Chadocke cald me up with Will Parkinson John Hindley and others[. H]e was going to be married and had stolne his love away from Mr Whiteheads and my M[aste]r gave his assent I should goe with them. I gate a horse of Will Sixsmith and we went together to Billing chapell and stayd att Humphrey Cowleys till 2 came againe from fetching Mr Bispham when they brought word they must meet att Holland at one Thomas Prescottt[’s]. We took horse came thithr got the ceremonie overpast and dined. I was sent afore to Wiggan to buy 7 yards ribbon and they came to Wiggan[. W]e each of us had a yard of ribbon of 12d p[er] yard and so rid through towne. I saw them through towne and so p[ar]ted. I was all this while in a sad heart.”

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

The family of Roger Lowe's "*fellow apprntice*" was of sufficient importance that a pedigree was recorded by Norroy King of Arms Sir William Dugdale following an interview with John Chaddock's elder brother, Thomas, at Ormskirk on 23 September 1664.\* Since at least the 14th century their seat had been Chaddock Hall, Tyldesley, now largely destroyed but which formerly bore a datestone inscribed "TC 1698". The Chaddocks were evidently related to the Potters of Ashton through John's grandfather's second marriage: Lowe's future wife, Emma Potter, is said to have "gone to Chadocke Hall" on 27 December 1666.

22-year old John is shown on the Dugdale pedigree as being married to Mary, daughter of William Tipping of Irlam. It had been assumed, on the evidence of the Diary alone, that Mary was a servant of Richard Whitehead at Astley Green. However, I note from Dugdale's pedigree of the Gillibrand family at Peel Hall that Richard Whitehead's wife, Jane (née Gillibrand), had previously been married to "George Tipping of Irelam". It seems very likely that Mary was in fact related to Richard Whitehead through his marriage to Jane, and that Mary was perhaps his ward - an arrangement which would have allowed Mr Whitehead to choose who she should marry.

The couple's son, Thomas, is said to have been already 9 months old by 23 September 1664. Either the boy's uncle made a mistake in communicating this information to Sir William Dugdale or the birth had in fact occurred in the previous December as recorded by Lowe-

"[1663, December] 6.—*lord's day. I went to Leigh[.] John Chadockes wife was brought to Bed att noone...*".

In any event, neither the courtship (if it may be so called) nor the betrothal seems to have proceeded smoothly. We learn from an earlier Diary entry that John had taken ill the previous April and that, for reasons which are not explained, he had been convalescing "*at Mr Whiteheads in Astley*". The dates suggest that it was about this time that Mary had become pregnant with his child. The wedding had clearly been arranged in haste and with a degree of secrecy. Like Roger Lowe's own wedding at Warrington two years later, it was a "clandestine" ceremony: in violation of the canon law in several respects but nevertheless recognised by Church and State as "legally binding and ... carrying with it full property rights". Thomas Prescott, at whose house the ceremony eventually took place, was probably one of the Prescotts of Ayrefield House and a brother of the diarist and diocesan registrar Henry Prescott (1649–1719). The celebrant may have been Rev William Bispham MA (c.1598-1686), at various times minister of Lymm, Ecclestone and Brindle and a sub-dean of Chester Cathedral where he is buried. The tradition of "riding for the ribbon" - a race to be the first back to the bridegroom's house after the wedding ceremony - persisted for many years in Cumbria, and it may be that what Lowe describes here was a local variation on that practice. There was also a more widespread tradition of decorating the marriage bed with ribbons.\*\*

When the diarist visits John Chaddock a fortnight later both of them are in a melancholy frame of mind, and both Mary and the child are conspicuously absent-

"17.—*Tuesday. I went to Leigh very early and soe I tooke John Chadocke in bed[.] H]e opened shop door and he went to bed againe. I satt att beds feete and we talked of every thinge [including] somethinge about his marriage...*".

Whether John now regretted his actions we can only speculate. He makes several further appearances in the Diary, usually in connection with the supply of goods for Lowe's shop at Ashton, but there are no obvious references to his family.

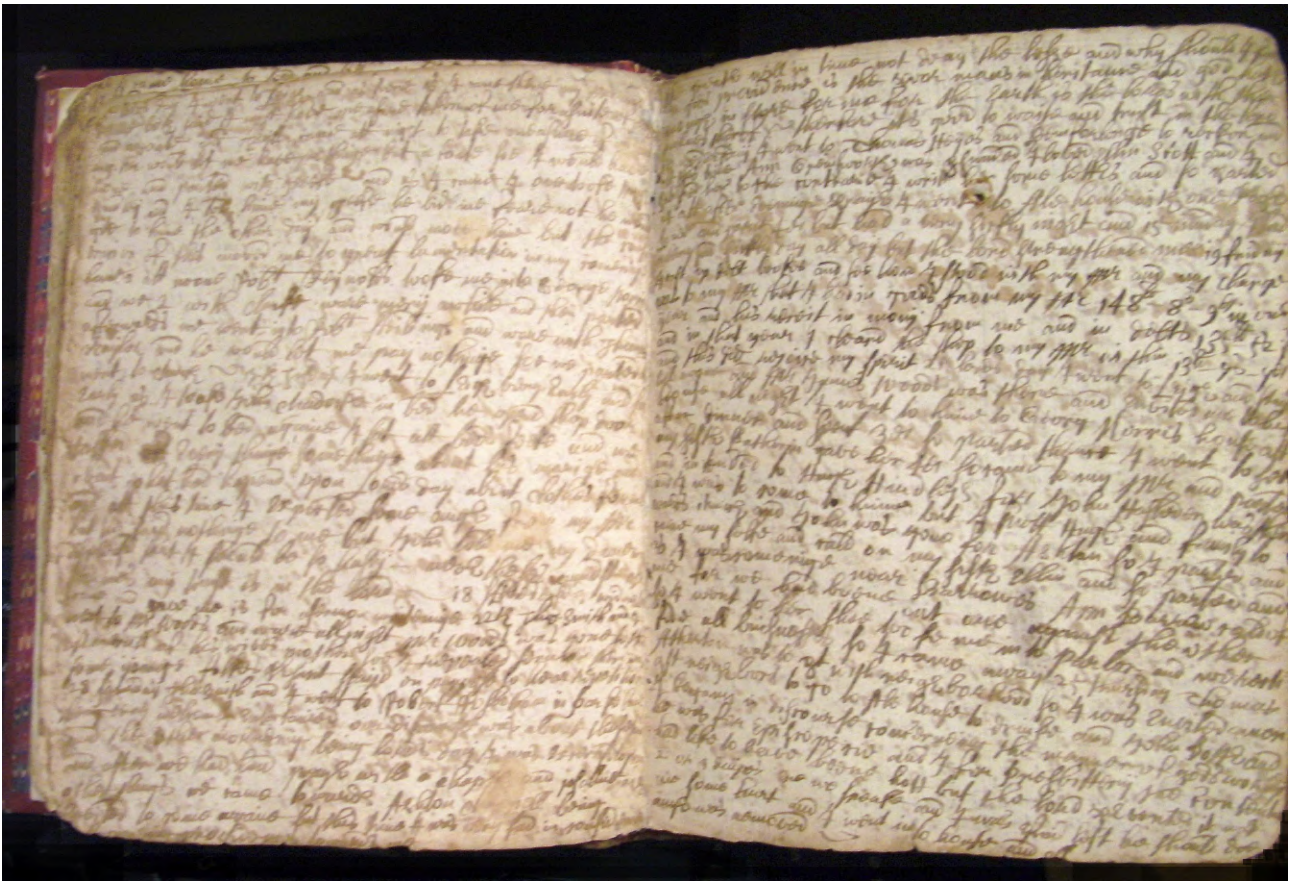
On 28 September 1698 "John Chaddock of Leigh, Grocer" occurs as bondsman in an application for a marriage licence for Peter Chaddock of Leigh and Catherine Cooke of Eccles.\*\*\*

\*"Visitation of the County Palatine of Lancaster Made in The Year 1664-5 By Sir William Dugdale, Knight, Norroy King of Arms". Image from Part I, F R Raines ed, in Chetham Soc. Vol. 84, 1872.

\*\*See, further, "Uncertain Unions: Marriage in England, 1660-1753", Lawrence Stone (Oxford UP, 1992)

\*\*\*"Marriage Licenses granted within the Archdeaconry of Chester in the Diocese of Chester: Vol 8, 1691-1700" in Rec. Soc. Lancs. & Ches. Vol. 77, 1923.

## Diary of Roger Lowe, 15 to 25 February 1664



“15.—lords day. I went to Leigh and as soon as I came there my M[aste]r and dame both said I must have measurd taken of me [for] a suite of clothes and a cote and Tay[er] 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 and as I came I overtooke Hugh Hindley and I told him my greefe. He bid me feare not he would goe to him the other day and would move him but the consideration of this moved me to greater lamentation. In my comeing home at noone Robt Reynolds tooke me into George Norris and wee 2 with Clarke were merry awhile and then parted afterward we went into Robert ffeildings and ware with Thomas Naylor and he would not let me pay nothinge soe we parted and went to church.

17.—Tusday. I went to Leigh very early and soe I took [found?] John Chaddocke in bed he opened shop door and he went to bed againe. I satt att beds feete and we talked of every thinge somethinge about his marriage and about what had happened upon Lords day about clothes for me and att this time I expected some ang[e]r from my M[aste]r but he said nothinge to me but John told me my dame was displeased that I should be so hasty nevertheless amidst all this my trust is in the Lord.

18.—Wednesday. Widow Lowe came and gave me 1s for sermon writinge.

22.—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 foure young folkes pr[e]sant [who] stayd on purpose to hear repetition.

28.—Saturday. Tho Smith and I went to Robert Rosbotham in Parke lane being very welcomly entertained. Our discourse was about these times and the other morning being lord's day I was exercised to pray and after we had had prayer and a cha[pter] and [psalm?] with other things we came towards Ashton chappell being envited to come again but this time I was very sad in consideration [?] providence towards me [?] the greatr will in time not deny the lesse[r] and why should I fear. Gods providence is the poor mans inheritance and God hath enough in store for me for the earth is the lords with the fullness thereof therefore its good to wait and trust in the Lord.

10.—Wednesday. I went to Thomas Heyes [at] Bamferlonge to reckon and at this time Ann Greensworth was p[er]swaded I loved Ellin Scott and I satisfied her to the contrarie. I writ her some lettrs and so parted.

14.—att [after?] evening prayr I went into Alehouse with one Rogr Lowe and spent 4d but had a very sickle night and

15.—Munday. I had a very sad sickly day all day but the lord strengthened me.

19.—friday. I cast up debt booke and see how I stood with my M[aste]r and my charge was to my M[aste]r that I had in goods for my M[aste]r 148li 8s 9d in one year and his receipt in mony from me and in debts 135li 5s 1d and in that year I cleared the shop to my M[aste]r within 13li 7s 7d and this did rejoice my spirit.

21.—lords day. I went to Leigh and stayd till noone and Mr James Woods was there and envited me to his house all night. I went to hime to Georg Norris house att after dinner and spent 3d so parted thence I went to see my sister Katherin gave her 4d so came to my M[aste]r and parted and intended to Hugh Hindleys for John Hasleden was there and I was to come to him but I [met] Hugh and family towards church and John was gone for Ashton so I parted and came my selfe and cald on my sister Ellin and so parted and as I was coming near Barrowes Ann Barrow cald of me for we had been out one against the other so I went to her shee took me into the parlor and we rectified all businesses and so I came away.

25.—thursday. Thomas Atherton was to part with neighbour[hood] so I was envited amongst neighbours to go to alehouse to drinke and John Pottr and I began to discourse concerning the manner of God's worship he was for Episcopacie and I for Presbittery. The contention had like to have beene hot but the Lord prevented. It was 2 or 3 dayes ere we speake and I was afraid lest he should doe me some hurt and I went into house and all angr was removed."

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

***“walked to town heath and presented my suplication to the lord”***



*“[1664] March 6.—Lord’s day. I was very pensive and sad all day and I betooke myself to solitarines for I walked down to town heath and I presented my suplication to the lord I prayed to God and showed all my trouble and I hope the lord heard for I was abundantly comforted in my spirit.”*

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

Ashton Heath, an area of common land to the south-east of Ashton-in-Makerfield, was a place Roger Lowe frequently resorted to when the stresses of running his shop, unrequited love and/or the demands placed on him by friends and neighbours became hard to bear. Thus-

*“[1663] April 5.—Lords day. I was in a troubled condition in my mind considering my unsettlednes ande that god was highly offended with me therefor I went into Ashton Heaths and kneeled me downe in a ditch side and made my prayr to the Lord”;*

and, again-

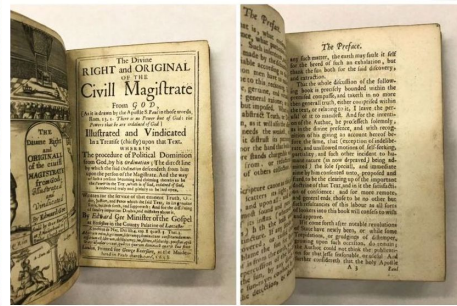


[1664] June 4.—Saturday. ... After dinner we sett towards home[. When] I came to Ashton Mary Naylor had a sweetheart come and I was somewhat greaved and went to Towne Heath and meditated upon these words its good to hope and quietly waite. Obs. [tha]t hopeing and waiting for a possible thing is a C[hris]tian duty in time of difficultie."

The foregoing Scriptural reference is to Lamentations 3:26: "It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD".

The above photograph of the Heath was taken on 20 April 2023.

**“our Herles, our Gees and our Johnsons”**



“[1664, March] 12. — Saturday... This night I promised to goe to Roberts Rosbothome’s house and did with Thomas Smith with me and was all night and they lent me Mr Gees booke concerninge prayr he was minister at eccleston[. A]nd upon the 15 day, tuesday, I was reading in his booke and in consideration of the mans person and gravitie I was posed with sadness and composed these verses:

Renowned Gee thou now enjoyst glory  
 Yet thy name shall remain earths lasting story.  
 In thought of thee ah I can sitt and weepe  
 That thou by death shouldst now be laid asleepe.  
 How lovely was thy life joyfull thy death;  
 Angels received thy soul att latest breath.  
 Ile say no more, but weepe, yet joy to see  
 Myself in happiness with blessed Gee.  
 Gee now in joy trium[p]hs, his sorrows past,  
 And he that place enjoys that aye shall last.

*Therefore, blest Gee, this once Ile bid farewell,  
Hoping ere longe to be there where thou dost dwell.*

*sic cantat Rogerus Lowe.*

*His name was Edward Gee minister of Eccleston Church[. H]e dyed about or in the year 1660 or 1659 or thereabouts but the church of God sustained great losse in his death and Mr Herles of Winwicke and Mr Johnsons of Hallsall who all flourished and dyed about this time foresaid in so much as it was the lamentation of Mr. Coleborne att Leigh exercises in his prayr that we now wanted our Herles our Gees and our Johnsons. This was upon the 25 decembr 1660. Old Mr. Woods joined with hime.”*

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

The parentage of Edward Gee (1613-27 May 1660) is disputed, but he is thought to have been the son of the John (or George) Gee who served as curate of Newton-le-Willows from c.1617. Educated at Newton and subsequently at Oxford where he graduated BA in 1630 and was awarded the degree of MA in 1636, Gee junior followed his father into the ministry. In 1646 he was elected to membership of the 6th (Preston) classis of the Lancashire presbytery and obtained the living of Eccleston, near Chorley. A “strict and unyielding Presbyterian”, Gee did not shrink from voicing his strong religious and political opinions both from the pulpit and in a series of books and pamphlets published during the Commonwealth period. Disenchanted with the republic from c.1651, he was briefly detained by the authorities on suspicion of encouraging invasion and insurrection. The book to which Lowe refers - “A Treatise of Prayer and of Divine Providence as relating to it, With an Application of the General Doctrine Thereof Unto the Present Time, and State of Things in the Land, So Far as Prayer is Concerned in Them. Written for the Instruction, Admonition, and Comfort of Those that Give Themselves Unto Prayer, and Stand in Need of it in the Said Respects. By Edward Gee, Minister of the Gospel at Eccleston in Lancashire” - first appeared in 1653.\*

Gee's contemporaries Charles Herle (c.1597-1659) and Thomas Johnson (?-1660) were, respectively, Rectors of Winwick (from 1626) and Halsall (in practice from 1645, presented formally in 1654).

Charles Herle's convictions led him to side with the Parliamentary and Presbyterian factions during the turbulent 1640s; he engaged in a public dispute with Charles I's chaplain and future Bishop of Chester Henry Ferne over the respective claims of King and Parliament and championed the Presbyterian cause as a member of the Westminster Assembly's grand committee.

Thomas Johnson was installed at Halsall following the ejection of Rector Peter Travers, the latter having been deemed “disaffected to the parliament and the proceedings thereof”. With Edward Gee, Thomas Johnson put his name to “A Solemn Exhortation made and published to the several Churches of Christ within this Province of Lancaster, for the excitation of all persons therein to the practise of their duties, requisite to the effectual carrying on of church-discipline; and in it the edification of our churches, and the reformation of religion”, issued by the Provincial Synod at Preston on 7 February 1649.\*\* Thomas Johnson's formal presentation to the Halsall rectory on 14

August 1654 was certified by, amongst others, Edward Gee and Charles Herle.

Lowe's ability to rehearse sentiments expressed at the Christmas Day service at Leigh in 1660 is perhaps an indication that he had to hand a written record, now lost, of sermons etc. heard by him before 1663.

\*A transcript is at <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A85887.0001.001>. A second edition was published posthumously in 1666.

\*\*Transcript at <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A93467.0001.001>.

Images:

Left - "The Reverend Mr Herle \ Rector of Winwick", artist unknown, photographed at St Oswald's Church, Winwick on 9 September 2023.

Right – Edward Gee's "The Divine Right and Originall of Civil Magistrates from God, Illustrated and Vindicated...", published in 1658.

***“went into towne feild and prayd to the Lord”***



*“[1664] April 11.—Munday. I was pensive and sad and went into towne feild and prayd to the Lord and I hope the lord heard...”.*

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

A map of Ashton-in-Makerfield in 1796 shows two areas labelled “Town Fields”, one adjoining the north side of Liverpool Road near its junction with Warrington Road and the other a short distance to the south in the vicinity of present-day St Oswald's Road. The latter was perhaps what Lowe refers to in 1667 as “*the further end of town field*”, his “*Dock Lane*” being that part of present-day Liverpool Road between Ashton Cross and the town centre. By the time of the Tithe Apportionment Survey, in 1838, both plots were owned by 12th baronet Sir John Gerard. The north side was leased to John Unsworth, with an adjoining plot -“Town Field Croft”- leased to William Peel. In 1879 a part of “Little Town Field” was leased to the Local Board to serve as a Recreation Ground, with reservation of “the right of laying out the ground for building purposes, if required”. Meanwhile, the south side had been given for a Catholic church and burial ground. The ancient name was revived when, on 10 September 1934, Ashton UDC's Buildings Highways and Streets Committee made an order “altering the name of the Street hitherto known as 'Naylor Street' to 'Townfields’”.\*

The Town Field has previously occurred several times in the Diary-

*“[1663] June 21.—Lord's day... I went with Mary and other wenches to a well bottome of towne field...”*

*August 20.—Thursday... I was somewhat effected and betooke myself solitarily into Townes feild and kneeld me downe on side of a came butt and prayd...*

September 6.—Lord's day... Att night I being very sad in spirit, went to Towne feild and up and down att last I get to Towne heathe and upon a ditch side I read a psalme and sunge part of another and came home being very well satisfied for the lord will be a rocke to those that trust in hime...

December 1.—Tuesday. Being Warrington faire I kept shop all day being very solemne and sad. Henry Lowe came and we discoursed togethr about all our effaires and greefes. I went with him to bottome of towne field and there parted with a joint resolution that what we said each to other should lye dead..."

and will be mentioned again in two further entries-

"[1665] June 3.—Saturday night. James Jenkins and I went all up and downe to find John Jenkins who was supposed to be drowned but att 12 clocke in night we found him fast asleep amidst town feild..."

[1667] July 18.—Thursday ...at the gate that enters into the further end of town field comeing from Dock lane I found a shoo with a silver clasp in the highway..."

Lowe's melancholy visits to Townfields and Ashton Heath tail off noticeably after 1664; a sign, perhaps, of the diarist's increasing confidence and maturity. His courting of Mary Naylor came to nothing but "upon the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March, 1667-8" he and Emma Potter "consumate[d] our grand desi[gn] of marriage att Warrington done by Mr Ward minister of Warrington att my cozen Bekinson['s] house..."\*\* Six months after the wedding Lowe ended his practice of keeping a diary apart from a brief resumption in February-March 1669 and a final entry which is dated 12 March 1674.

Other Ashton/Bryn place-names that occur in the Diary include Whitledge Green, Penny (now "Perry") Brook, Lilly Lane, Long Lane (now Bryn Road), Park Lane (that part of present-day Wigan Road adjacent to Park Lane Chapel) and Lower Lane (present-day Liverpool Road west and south of Ashton Cross).

\*Wigan Archives ref. UD Ash/A/A1/58.

\*\*The Diary evidence is slightly contradicted by the Warrington St Elphin parish register, which gives the "Rogger Lowe"/"Emme Potter" marriage date as 24 March 1668 - Cheshire Archives and Local Studies ref. P 316.

The "Townfields" street sign is seen here on 18 September 2013.

***“Mr Woods thought much I was in Ale”***



*“[1664, April] 18.—Munday. .... Lee Bowden Steward att Lodge and Rogr Naylor and I ware together [at] John Jenkins and Old Mr Woods came to shoppe and thought much I was in Ale warned me to take heed. I told him I could not trade if at some times I did not spend 2d.”*

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

As A Lynn Martin observes in “Drinking and Alehouses in The Diary of an English Mercer's Apprentice, 1663-1674”, the particular brand of Presbyterianism practised by James Wood and Roger Lowe does not seem to have required them to abstain from alcohol, even on the Sabbath: “Lowe did go to sermons on Sundays, sometimes twice, and walked to neighboring villages so that he could attend Presbyterian services. But before, between, and after he often went to alehouses”.\* On 9 August 1663 the diarist, preacher and others “ware altogether in Alehouse very merry”. Mr Wood's concern on this occasion seems to have been not with Lowe's drinking per se but with the possibility that he was indulging to excess. Lowe explains, in reply, that he cannot successfully transact business unless from time to time he accepts and returns the hospitality of his customers and suppliers. An example is given in his entry for 10 March 1664: “*This night I was envited to goe to Gaw[t]h[e]r Taylor's to drink Bragget, for [his] wife bought her comodities of me and said if I would not come then farewell so I was*

*constrained to goe but stayd but for a short time*". Gawther Taylor was an Ashton alehouse-keeper related to the Taylors of Sankey Hall near Warrington; he is listed under "non-chargeable" (having only one hearth) in the Hearth Tax assessments for 1664 at National Archives ref. E179/250/11. "Bragget" was (according to A Lynn Martin) ale fermented with honey or (per Edward Baines' "History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster", 1836) spiced ale traditionally drunk on the fourth Sunday in Lent, known in Lancashire as "Braggot or, more properly, Braget Sunday". (Baines adds that the name derives "from the British 'bragawd', the name of a kind of methgeline ... called by the Saxons 'Welsh ale'".) To "*spend 2d*" meant, simply, to have a drink, this being the price of a standard unit (ie. a quart - slightly more than a litre) of ale at that time.

\*In "Alcohol: A Social and Cultural History", M P Holt (ed), Berg 2006). Also noteworthy is the Puritan John Bunyan's comment in "A Vindication of Gospel Truths Opened" (1667) that Quaker teetotallers were "walking after their own lusts, and not after the spirit of God". No killjoy himself, Bunyan's pilgrims drink wines and spirits whilst at the feasts given by Emmanuel in "The Holy War" there is "brave entertainment", wines and a succession of exotic dishes.

The illustration is from John Taylor's "A Brown Dozen of Drunkards (Ali-ass Drink-hards): Whipt, and shipt to the Isle of Gulls For their abusing of Mr Malt the bearded son, and Barley-breth the brainlesse daughter, of Sir John Barley-corne...", London 1648.



## “John Hasleden and I went to see Colepits”



[1664, April] 2. —Saturday. John Hasleden and I went into his Brothers ground to see Colepits..”

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

Possibly the earliest surviving record of local coal-mining is the above deed of assignment of dower, dated 12 June 1329. Preserved among the Arley Charters (Box 4, Item No. 41) at the John Rylands Library, Manchester, the document assigns certain lands at “Burnhill [Bryn] & Ashton” including the “miniere carbonie” to Katherine, widow of Peter de Burnhull. (The bulk of the estate went to Peter's sister, Joan, who c.1335 married William Gerard of Kingsley. From this couple were descended the later Gerards of Bryn and Ince.)

Fast-forwarding into the 17<sup>th</sup> century, an investigation of the estate of first baronet Sir Thomas Gerard in 1622 found that he died “seised in fee of ... the coal-mines in Ashton in Makerfield and Windle”.\* A “survey of the estate of Sir William Garrard, of Brinn, Bart, a delinquent and recusant” dated 24 June 1652 mentions “The cole pitt banks” within his “Brin Demesne”, possibly on the site of the later Park Lane Colliery off Wigan Road. Additional “Cole mynes” were found within his “Garswood Demesne”, worth in 1652 either £20 or £200\*\*.

Owing to the limitations of tools and other equipment, poor transport links and a lack of geological and engineering expertise, the practice at this time was to move on to new sinkings as soon as the most accessible and marketable coal deposits had been extracted. In consequence mining was still, for many, a part-time or temporary occupation. From deeds preserved at Lancashire Archives, it

would seem that the principal actors in the local coal trade during the period covered by Roger Lowe's Diary were Richard Crompton, George Sorocold, William Whitfield, Raphe (or Ralph) Hasleden and, of course, Sir William Gerard. Whereas Sir William clearly had some appreciation of the value of the deposits under his land, the income he derived from coal was modest relative to that gained from farm rents and other property. On 5 December 1664 Richard Crompton had purchased from him the "right to Coals under his lands in Ashton" but a separate "Agreement" of 4 April 1665 obliged him to pay Sir William a royalty of 1d per basket on any coal sold to a third party, his compliance with this being assured by means of a £200 bond (DDGE(E) 1221 and DDGE(M) 241-3).

Raphe Hasleden - the "Brother" whose pits Lowe visited on 2 April 1664 - was mining both on his own land and on that of Sir William, probably at or near the site of the later Park (a.k.a. Stones) Colliery off present-day Liverpool Road. His grandfather - also Raphe or Ralph - had purchased the Dock Lane House estate from Sir Thomas Gerard of Bryn in 1586 (DDGE(M)87: "Sir Thomas Gerard & others to Ralph Haselden; Conveyance of lands in Ashton", 1 April 1586 (28 Eliz.)). Under an agreement of 27 March 1654 he was to pay George Sorocold and William Whitfield - as trustees for the Gerard lands - a royalty of 3d per load. For this he obtained the right to dig wherever he saw fit, to move or deposit coal, slack, rubbish, stone, timber and water across or onto the premises and to lay "the said Coales cannell or Stonnes uppon the Banke in loads pyles or other wyse uppon all or any of the said Landes which ... may be most beneficial for the uttering, ven[d]ing and selling of the coal" (DDGE(M) 93-95 and 115). However Raphe Hasleden was also a general wholesaler, supplying Thomas Hammond - and, no doubt, others - with a wide variety of goods for his shops at Ashton and Leigh. The impression given by the Diary is that mining was, for him, no more than a profitable sideline.

Roger Lowe additionally identifies two "oditors" (auditors) of coal pits and 5 "colliers", but these, too, may have been part-time or temporary occupations in some instances. As John Langton explains, "many who were so called probably spent only a part of their working life, or even of any working year, in the pits except in the most developed parts of the coalfield. This kind of situation is, of course, to be expected where collieries were short-lived or intermittent... [Moreover] men's jobs were changed as water levels rose, as unexpected faults were hit, as pits became exhausted, requiring very long draws and quick new sinkings, and as sales slackened in summer or became almost overwhelming in winter".\*\*\*

\*"Inquisition taken at Lancaster, 11 April 20 James [1622] ... after the death of Thomas Gerrard, Knt and Bart"; a translation from the original Latin is in *Rec Soc Lancs & Ches* Vol 17, 1888.

\*\* National Archives ref. SP28/211 "County Committees: Sequestration Accounts and Papers: Lancs-Lincs". Frustratingly, the part of the original manuscript where the value of the "Cole mynes" at Garswood was recorded has been damaged. Other papers in the collection record the cost of "getting Coles" on the Gerard lands during the period 1649-52. Selected transcripts are in Vol III, "The Royalist Composition Papers", J H Stanning (ed), *Rec Soc Lancs & Ches*, 1896.

\*\*\*"Geographical Change and Industrial Revolution: Coal-mining in South West Lancashire, 1590-1799" (Cambridge UP 1979).

***“She sate at chimney's end hangeing downe her head”***



*“[1664, April] 9.—East[e]r day. I went to Leigh and att noone John Chaddockes and I went to Lately Comon to a house cald Sumnors to se[e] Ann Smith who was there in Hold that had drowned her child in Hurst ground and she was very much greeved as she seemed she sate at chimneys end hangeing downe her head and I spoke to her to repent told her God was mercifull he pardoned David who was adulterer and murderer\*. I came away being full of sorrow for her came to Leigh Church and he was at his sermon. Mr Woods\*\* maid would have [had me] gone home with hime but I refused.”*

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

By the Act 21 James I c.27 (1624) “to Prevent the Destroying and Murthering of Bastard Children”, it was provided that-

*“if any Woman ... be delivered of any issue of the Body, Male or Female, which being born alive should by the Lawes of this Realm be a bastard, and ... she endeavour privatlie either by drowning or secrett burying thereof, or any other way, either by herselfe or the procuring of others, soe to conceale the Death thereof, ... the Mother soe offending shall suffer Death as in the case of Murther except such Mother can make proffe by one Witsesse at the least that the Child ... was borne dead”.*

Despite the legislation being weighted heavily against the mother, a death sentence was not inevitable. Increasingly, it seems, sympathetic juries were willing to take account of the mother's

emotional state at the time of the supposed killing or of her circumstances more generally, and for such reasons - even though they were excluded from consideration by the terms of the statute - to find that the case against her was not proven.

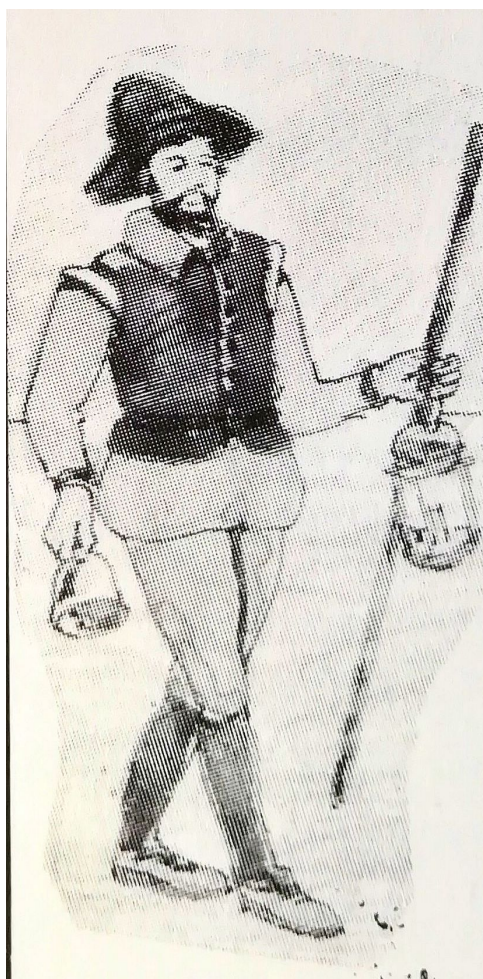
Ann Smith's fate is unclear. Lowe does not mention her again, and the Lancaster St Mary's Parish Registers record the burial of "Anne Smith ye daughter ffraye of bedford" on 5 September 1664 (Lancashire Archives ref. PR3262/1/1; there is no indication - as for example in the case of "Isabell Rigby of Hindley hang'd for witchcraft" on 10 April 1666 - that this Ann Smith had been a prisoner or was executed). On the other hand, an order for the "maintenance of bastard of Richard Hasleden of Bedford and Ann Smith" at ref. QSP/300/1 is dated 1666/7.

The woodcut is from W Burdet's "A Wonder of Wonders" (1651). Anne Green, an Oxfordshire servant, was "condemned to bee hanged for killing her owne new borne Infant, w[hi]ch [she] tooke upon her death had never life... But notw[i]thstanding all this shee was hanged neare halfe an houre beaten on the breast w[i]th many violent stroakes w[i]th the Butt end of a Musket then Cut downe and laid in a coffin". The corpse, being taken away for dissection, then "began to stir; insomuch, that Dr Petty caused a warm bed to be prepared for her, let her blood, and applyed oyls to her, so that in 14 hours she recovered, and the first words she spake were these; behold Gods providence!" According to another pamphleteer, the magistrates "readily apprehended the hand of God in her preservation, and [were] willing rather to co-operate with divine providence in saving her than to overstraine justice by condemning her to double shame & sufferings".

\*Lowe refers to the Israelite king's adultery with Bathsheba and the killing of her husband Uriah. "The thing that David had done displeased the Lord" (2 Samuel 11:27) BUT "Nathan said unto David 'The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die'" (2 Samuel 12:13).

\*\*The "Mr Wood" of this entry was, presumably, the son of the former minister at Ashton.

## ***“John Jenkins, constable”***



*“[1664, April] 20.—Wednesday. John Jenkins constable tooke John Hazelden and myselfe to every Alehouse with hime in night in answr to warrant to make pri[vate] search.”*

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

The office of constable (from the Latin 'comes stabuli', master of the stable) originated in the Norman period. By the 17<sup>th</sup> century there were two types. Operating at parish level, the duties of the petty constable were varied but included reporting suspicious (including potentially seditious) activity, and arresting and delivering up for trial any criminal offender. Petty constables were selected annually from the population of local able-bodied males aged 25-55, service being compulsory unless the appointee could pay for a substitute or belonged to an exempted occupation. The role attracted no salary, although necessary expenditure was reimbursed. The power to appoint petty constables had originally rested with the manor court but increasingly came to be exercised by the parish itself through the annual vestry meeting. Appointed by the quarter sessions and acting as the assistant to the county Lieutenant, the High Constable's jurisdiction covered the entire administrative area known as the Hundred. He received payment of £5 per quarter, and had a special responsibility for raising the muster when ordered by the Crown. The High Constable could also direct the activities of the petty constables in some instances.

Local appointments of petty constables at this period can be found among the Quarter Sessions

Petitions at Lancashire Archives – see, for example, QSP/143/34 (John Birchall elected constable for Ashton-in-Makerfield at Easter 1657); QSP/155/41 (election of John Huestr (?), William Ashton and Thomas Hill at Epiphany 1657/8) and QSP/219/45 (election of John Birchall the elder and John Fletcher at Epiphany 1661/2; the latter may be “*prateling John Fletcher de Lowr Lane*” whose death on 18 March 1677 is noted by Roger Lowe: “*he was observed to be a very proud man both in gate and apparal and one [tha]t gloried in his o[w]ne discourse*”).) Also of interest in this regard are certain of the Recognizance Rolls, for example QSB/1/170/68: Ormskirk, Midsummer 1636: “Ashton-in-Makerfield - warrant for arrest of Robert Locker, mason, Elizabeth wife of Henry Leadbeater, Isabel Mosse, widow, and William Herbie, blacksmith, for rescuing Thomas Greenhalgh from the constables”, and QSB/1/174: Wigan, Michaelmas 1636: “Ashton-in-Makerfield - John Hay, yeoman, to appear at Sessions for assaulting John Stringfellow, constable”. QSB/1/288/36a (Ormskirk, Easter 1647) includes a petition of the constables of Ashton-in-Makerfield for reimbursement of expenses. The names of constables and “leygatherers” (tax collectors) for Ashton at Michaelmas 1647 are in QSB/1/296/20.

The Diary provides several further examples of the parish constables' activities in Ashton during the 1660s. On 20 May 1664 Lowe assisted John Jenkins with the laying of “*night hookes*” - but, on inspection the following day, “*nothing was found*”. On 20 August 1664 “*Constables [of] Hadocke and Goleborne came to have me write their presentments for assizes, and when I had donne I writt: "Poore is provided, highwayes repaired, these querys answerd, and clarke unrewarded," att which they laughed most heartily*”. On 12 March 1666 “*I was advised to give this order I had gotten from the Justices to the Constable which I did and went with the Constable to Thomas Naylor's because he had caused me to be layd [ie. assessed, presumably for payment of a debt or taxes]*”. On 28 March 1667 “*I went with constable to Ashton to helpe to gather Pole [tax] money...*”. Finally, on 9 February 1675 Lowe records a general summons by constable John Clough to attend the funeral of an orphaned child who might otherwise have had no one to mourn him.

William Sachse suggests in his transcript of the Diary that the operation conducted by John Jenkins and others on 20 April 1664 would have been “a search for vagrants and such petty offenders, carried out by the constables upon the order of the Justices of the Peace”.

The above sketch (from “The Police! 150 Years of Policing in the Manchester Area”, Archive Publications Ltd 1989) shows a typical 17th century petty constable with the accoutrements of his position – staff, lantern and alarm bell.

## **“went to Heath a-shooting”**



*“[1664, May] 6. —Friday. John Chaddocke came from Leigh... Att after we had cast up shop we went to Heath a-shootenge[,] came to towne againe and supt att young John Jenkins and was there all night..”*

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

The earliest extant text in English dealing with the shooting of flying birds is the 1686 edition of Richard Blome's “The Gentleman's Recreation”. In a section entitled “The Compleat Art of Fowling”, which includes the illustration shown above, Blome advises his reader

“That is ever esteemed the best Fowling-piece which hath the longest Barrell, being five foot and a half or six foot long, with an indifferent bore, under Harquebuss.

Provide the best sort of Powder as near as you can, and let it not be old, for keeping weakens it much, especially if it grow damp; therefore when you have occasion to use it, dry it well in a Fire-shovel, and sift it through a fine Searcher to take away that dust which hindreth the more forcible effects, and fouleth your price.

Let your shot be well sized, and of a moderate bigness; for if it be too great, then it scatters too much: if too small, it hath not weight nor strength sufficient to do execution of a large Fowl....

In shooting observe always to shoot with the wind, if possible, and not against it; and rather side-ways, or behind the Fowl, than full in their faces.

Next, observe to chuse the most convenient shelter you can find, as either Hedge, Bank, Tree, or any thing else may abscond you from the view of the Fowl.... If you have not shelter enough, by reason of the nakedness of the Banks and want of Trees, you must creep upon your hands and knees

under the Banks, and lying even flat upon your Belly, put the nose of your Piece over the Bank, and so take your level; for a Fowl is fearful of man, that though a Hawk were soaring over her head, yet at the sight of a man she would betake her self to her wing, and run the risque of that danger...".\*

The gun used by Roger Lowe and John Charnock presumably belonged to or had been borrowed by John. The Diary contains no other mention of gun sports, though Lowe does record in his entry for 27 April 1664 going with "*Younge John Jenkinson*" to "*looke [for] Bird nests out in fields*".

Even at this period such practices were regulated by measures for the protection and conservation of certain species of wildlife. Persons convicted under the statute 11 Hen.7 c.17 for taking the egg of any hawk or swan from their nests were to be imprisoned for a year and a day and fined at the King's will. Conviction under the statute 23 Eliz. I c.10 for destroying or taking pheasants or partridges at night resulted in one month's imprisonment or a fine and binding over "with good Sureties" to refrain from repeating the offence within the following two years. An "Act for the better Execution of the Intent and Meaning of former Statutes made against shooting in Guns, and for the Preservation of the Game of Pheasants and Partridges, and against the destroying of Hares with Hare Pipes and tracing Hares in the Snow" (2 James I c.27) provided, inter alia, that "if any person shall shoot at, kill or destroy (with any Gun or Bow) any Partridge, Pheasant, or other Fowl [he] shall be committed to the common Gaol, there to remain for three months without Bail, unless the Offender shall forthwith pay 20s. for every such Fowl ... so taken and destroyed". Under the Act 7 James I c.11 "to prevent the Spoil of Corn and Grain by untimely hawking, and for the better Preservation of Pheasants and Partridges", "Hawkers at Partridge or Pheasant in July or August (upon proof of the Offence before any two Justices of Peace)" were to "be committed to the common Gaol, there to remain for one month without Bail unless the Offender shall forthwith pay 40s. for every such Hawking, and 20s. for every Pheasant or Partridge so killed or taken".\*\*

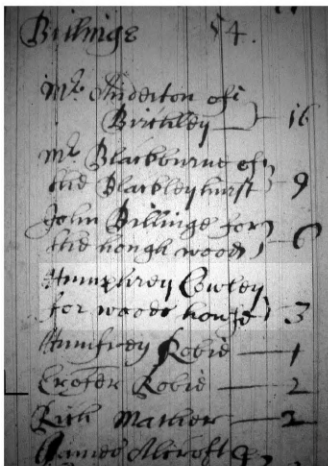
\*"The gentlemans recreation in two parts: the first being an encyclopedy of the arts and sciences ... the second part treats of horsemanship, hawking, hunting, fowling, fishing, and agriculture: with a short treatise of cock-fighting... Printed by S Roycroft for Richard Blome..., 1686";

<https://archive.org/details/gentlemansrecrea00coxn>. A full transcript can also be found at <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A28396.0001.001>.

\*\*The modern law is contained mainly in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and in the various measures governing the possession and use of firearms.



**“Humphrey Cowley's wife was angry att me in a very furious manner”**



Billinge 4.  
Mr. Houghton of  
Billinge 16  
Mr. Darbishire of  
Billinge 9  
John Billingge for  
the hangar wood 3  
Humphrey Cowley  
for wood house 3  
Humphrey Cowley 1  
Exofen Cowley 2  
John Marston 2  
James Houghton



“[1664, May] 19. —Thursday. I went to Billinge Chappell to a race and James Darbishire saw me and envited me to goe with him into Humphrey Cowleys to spend 2d, he being come from Bosson [Bolton?] so I went and in the spence of 2d, Niceolas Houghton came to as we ware in Butterie and he begun to give disdaininge words out against the art of a grocer or mercer and so pticularizd it as to me in so much as I was very angry in so much as Humphrey Cowleys wife was angry att me in a very furious manner and I was sadly troubled yet the wife went out and some compeny as she went out too commended me highly in so much as she came againe and made a recantation for what she had said and I was bettr satisfied.”

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

Like the neighbouring towns and villages 17<sup>th</sup> century Billinge was liberally endowed with drinking establishments, and it was rare for Roger Lowe to visit the chapel there without subsequently - or, indeed, beforehand - repairing to a convenient hostelry for “*the spence of 2d*”. Occasionally he drank at Henry Birchall's but, on the evidence of the Diary, Humphrey Cowley's was the more popular establishment of the two. On one occasion, in December 1666, Roger Lowe and John Potter found Cowley's “*so thronged that we could not attain a fire to sit by but we sacrificed ourselves o'er [a] twopenny flagon in a cold chamber*”. Both Birchall's and Cowley's served food as well as drink, but whereas the former was “*in the fields*” the latter seems to have been both larger and more conveniently located in the centre of the

village; possibly on the site of one of the present-day public houses such as The Eagle & Child or the Olde House at Home, a former coaching inn pictured above on 16 July 2013.\* Named “woode house” in the 1663 Hearth Tax assessments, Humphrey Cowley's premises boasted 3 hearths, ranking them the 4<sup>th</sup> largest at Billinge Chapel End behind Birchley Hall (16 hearths), Blackleyhurst (9 hearths) and Houghwood (6 hearths).\*\* An inventory of his widow's possessions in 1681 separately identifies “ye Dwelling house”, “ye kitchen”, “ye Buttery”, “ye Milkhouse”, “ye little Cham[ber]”, “Chamber at Greese head” and “ye little Chamber above”.\*\*\*

Humphrey Cowley occurs as Billinge Chapel feoffee in a deed of 1665 and as jointly liable, with John Cowley and others, for a debt owing to Robert Walthew of Walthew House, Pemberton.\*<sup>14</sup> He seems to have been twice married, first to Margaret Hasleden who died in 1643 and then to Elizabeth (?), who survived him by 10 years. A will dated 15 March 1671 names his then wife, daughter Margaret, son-in-law David Pendlebury and granddaughter Margaret. Associated with the will is an inventory of his possessions in 1671 as follows (item values are in pounds-shillings-pence):- in Cattell 37-3-4; in wheate growing on the blacke acre 7-0-0; in Wheate groweing on Windle tenement 1-10-0; in pewter 3-14-8; in brasse 5-16-08; in Ironware 2-1-2; in ready moneys 1-7-0; in silver Spoones 1-0-0; in bedstide & bedding 17-9-2; one paire of Virginalls 2-0-0; in tables formes Chists and settles 6-4-2; in Cubbords 2-1-8; in dishboards shelves & other boards 0-9-8; in Linnen 1-18-0; in oates thirty six measure 2-14-0; one breweing lead 0-12-0; in breweing vessell and treeneware 1-15-0; in beefe bacon & other dead victuall 0-6-8; in Glasses and earthen vessell 0.2.0; one kneading Turnell 0-1-6; in Chaires stooles and cushions 1-1-6; in hay & strawe 1-10-0; in carts Wheelles Cartrope sacks poakes pichforkes & other implements of husbandry 2-0-1; in fuell 0-2-0; one Buckette rope & Chaine 0-1-0; one Cisterne & Seaven Swinetroughes 1-1-4; in poultry 0-6-0; in other small implements & utensils of househould unparticularized 0-2-0; in spinning Wheelles 0-2-0; in Wood and latts 0-2-0; in slaits skeweboards & other old wood 0-2-6; one Cheesepresse 0-2-0; in apparrell 2-10-0; in debts due & owing unto 11-9-07. [Subtotal:] 116-9-7. In debts owing by 86-0-0. \*5

In accordance with his last wishes Humphrey Cowley was buried at Wigan on 17 March 1671.

\*The Olde House at Home displays a date-stone inscribed “W A E 1740” but, interestingly for present purposes, was at the time of the tithe apportionment survey (1843) owned, together with an adjoining yard, by Thomas and John Cowley.

\*\*National Archives ref. E179/250/8.

\*\*\*Lancashire Archives ref. WCW/Supra/C224B/21. “At Greese head” means “at the top of the stairs”, from the now-obsolete 'grees' meaning stairs or steps. An associated will is dated 12 January 1680.

\*4 Wigan Archives refs. DP 6/24/26; DP 6/2/1; D/DZ A13/1; D/D Ma/B/28. “Humfry” or “Humfrey” Cowley of Billinge also occurs as chapel feoffee in 1625, as Wigan churchwarden in 1641, as a beneficiary of the will of his “cosine” Richard Atherton (1638) and as appraiser of the goods of Ralph Foster (1636) and Roger Anderton (1640) – but some of these earlier references may be to an older namesake and/or near relative.

\*5 Lancashire Archives ref. WCW/Supra/C186B/28. The “Windle tenement” may have been what is now Cowley Hill, to the north of St Helens. A “turnell” was an oval bowl or tub typically used for salting meat but also, as implied here, for kneading bread. A “virginall” was an early keyboard instrument, popularised in England by Henry VIII. Paulus Paulirinus explains in his “Tractatus de Musica...” (c.1460) that the instrument was so called “because, like a virgin, it sounds with a gentle and undisturbed voice”. The double-keyboarded variety was referred to as a “pair” or “Moeder und Kind” (“Mother and Child”). Humphrey Cowley's inventory is unique among 60 examined by Roger L Hart for his 1984 Library Association Fellowship thesis “Billinge in the 17th Century: A study through probate inventories”, being the only one to mention a musical instrument of any kind.

***“They caused me to set down in sellr to take account of flagons drawen...”***



*“[1664, June] 14. —tuesday. Att night Ralph Hasleden sent for me his youngest daughter was dead it was conceived she had eaten asnicke for Sarah had laid asnike in meale and in butter and the child getting it gett that which was laid in buttr and so dyd..*

*15. —Wednesday. My dame came to the funerall and sent for me to come and bring all monys with me I had to pay for funerall expenses with when we came to Winwicke they caused me to set down in sellr to take account of flagons drawen. I rid home and att Thomas Rothwells we stayd drinkeinge but the*

*16th day thursday. I lay all day sike but was much comforted by Em Potts care of me.”*

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

*“My dame”* was the wife of Roger Lowe's master at Leigh, Thomas Hammond.

The Hasledens were business associates, possibly wholesalers, and lived on Dock Lane at Ashton – that part of the present-day A58/Liverpool Road between Ashton Cross and its junction with the A49/Warrington Road in the town centre. A Ra(1)ph Hasleden is shown as the owner of Dock Lane House in 1677, when he sold the property to John Launder of New Hall (Lancashire Archives ref. DDGE(M) 109).

“Thome Rothwell de Newton, gent” had been a member of a commission assembled at Wigan in 1650 to report on the local church estate. In 1673 a “Tho Rothwell” of Newton was found liable to pay tax on 8 hearths (National Archives ref. E179/132/355). Presumably one or other of these was the innkeeper at Newton whose premises were visited by Roger Lowe in the period 1664-5.

The author of the introduction to the 1994 re-print of John Leyland's transcript of the Diary explains that, in Lowe's day,

“A deceased native was mourned respectfully enough, but the preparations for the funeral took place amidst a buzz that betrayed the eagerness of the young men and women to have a day free from shopkeeping or brewing, from planting or cleaning pans. Messages flew back and forth while the expectant mourners made plans for the horses for each maid, it would seem, must have a man, preferably a young man, to ride before her. The mourners crowded the house and overflowed into the yard and the chambers overhead, so that no one noticed particularly if the young people were tying up the loose ends of their courtships while waiting for the procession to start... Weddings were not hampered by the proprieties, but Roger seldom described them with the gusto he bestowed upon funerals...”.

To his annoyance, at the Hasleden funeral Lowe found himself despatched to the cellar by Mrs Hammond to keep an eye on how much ale was being consumed by the mourners – but seems to have more than made up for it by spending the rest of the night drinking at Rothwell's alehouse in Newton and then, somewhat worse for wear, submitting himself to the tender care of Emma Potter, his future wife. Doubtless he would have subscribed to Nicholas Breton's characterisation of “Death” in “Characters Upon Essays, Moral and Divine...” (London, 1615):

“he is a terror but to the wicked, and a scarecrow but to the foolish; but to the wise a way of comfort, and to the godly the gate to life: he is the ease of pain, and the end of sorrow; the liberty of the imprisoned, and the joy of the faithful: it is both the wound of sin, and the wages of sin; the sinner's fear, and the sinner's doom. He is the sexton's agent, and the hangman's revenue; the rich man's dirge, and the mourner's merry day”.

In his list of “*the names of such as dyd within My Aprentiship...*”, Lowe gives the following additional information about the circumstances of the girl's death: “*a daught'r of Raph Hasleden very young of the Docke Lane was a suddenly dead her mothr had laid rotten meat for mice & the Girle had received it through her mothrs carlessness in laying it*”. There is no corresponding entry in the Winwick burial register; the reason for this discrepancy is not known.

The above depiction of St Oswald's Church, Winwick, by Thomas Allom is based on an original sketch by J Harwood c.1830. It was first published as an engraving by J Sands in Volume 3 of Edward Baines' “History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster” (Fisher, Son & Co, 1836) and, as such, also adorns the cover of the 1994 edition of the Diary of Roger Lowe.

***“a pair of breeches dublett and cote”***



*“[1664, June] 23. —Wednesday. I went to Leigh and gave my dame 9li in monys. She would have the Taylor take measure on me for a pair of breeches dublett and cote and she and I went into shop to look out cloth and she made me take my choice soe we tooke two remnants into house and she kept them in her custordie[. T]his newes sent me joyfullie towards Ashton. It was the Lord that moved her - nay she was so forward as she wuld have had the tailor left others worke for to have done my clothes against Sabbath day.”*

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

Breeches ending at or near the knee, a doublet (a type of jacket or waistcoat) and an over-coat were standard attire for English men from the late 16<sup>th</sup> until well into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Underneath would be a pair of stockings and a shirt, possibly two shirts in cold weather. The cut and degree of embellishment of the outer garments varied according to the fashions of the day. Thus Lowe's contemporary, Samuel Pepys, recounts in his own diary how an acquaintance mistakenly put both legs through one of the knee-holes in his voluminous 'petticoat-breeches' “and went so all day”. Two years after this, Pepys was admiring himself in “my *close-kneed* coloured suit, which, with new stockings of the colour, with belt, and new gilt-handled sword, is very handsome”.

Shown above are items from the Victoria & Albert Museum's Textiles And Fashion Collection. The more workaday coat (worsted, c.1680), doublet and breeches (wool twill, 1625-35) on the left perhaps more closely resemble what Roger Lowe would have worn as he transacted business in and

around Ashton in the 1660s. Towards the end of the Diary, on 27 March 1669, he mentions going to Leigh to buy “9 yard and a ½ of *Cersie* for a suite of clothes for myselfe”, kersey being a type of coarse woollen cloth. The flamboyant doublet-and-breeches ensemble (quilted satin, 1635-40) on the right was probably made for a wedding (although the direction of some of the seams betrays the fact that the fabric had been repurposed, having originally been perhaps a bedspread or drapes). Over-coats were sometimes accessorized by the addition of a collar or “band” of lace as shown left, below: Lowe has previously mentioned receiving from his “dame” on 7 April 1664 “4 new bands which pleased me very well”.

“*My dame*” was Ann(?) Hammond, the wife of Leigh mercer Thomas Hammond to whom Roger Lowe was apprenticed at this time.

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***“And this is the conclusion of the story...”***



*“[1664, July] 10.—lords day. I was envited by Widow Taylor to ride before her daughter to the funeral of Thomas Taylor of Sankey Hall and I assented. Ralph Hasleden and his wife and Elizabeth Taylor rid altogather. This Evening I was all night at Sankey Hall there was att Hall a young man a papist named Robert Kenyon he and I conversed longe togeather about papistrie and after our discourse he was very loveinge.*

*11.—Munday. Early I got up and went to Warrington and in Mr Pickerings shop I found paraton dicke Tilsley and Ale he would give me so I went with him and stayd awhile and so parted. Came to Mr Worrells and paid 3s 6d and so went to Hall there was wine and bisketts to be had. So about 11 clocke he was fatched out and led on a coach to Winwicke and this is the conclusion of this story by which we may se how that one day friends and world and all here below we must part with the grave is the parting place. Friends that did much honor this funerall came to attend it to the grave and there parted. Now the lord grant us such grace as tho we may pt with friends and world yet we may never part with Christ and that will be our comfort.”*

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

The Taylors were a prominent family of Great Sankey township, resident by this period at Sankey Hall in succession to its original owners. Their Ashton relatives were important customers of Roger Lowe's shop, and he did not dare decline their several invitations "*for fear of displeasure*". The source of their wealth, he says, was unknown.

Lowe's paraphrasing of 1 Thessalonians 4:17-18 ("... and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words") suggests that this text was the subject of the sermon preached at Thomas Taylor's funeral. The diarist also describes a tradition, now lapsed, whereby an unmarried female mourner would have a male companion ride ahead of her to the burial place. Another death in the family - that of Thomas Taylor's widow, Lucy - just one month later saw Lowe called upon to provide his services again:

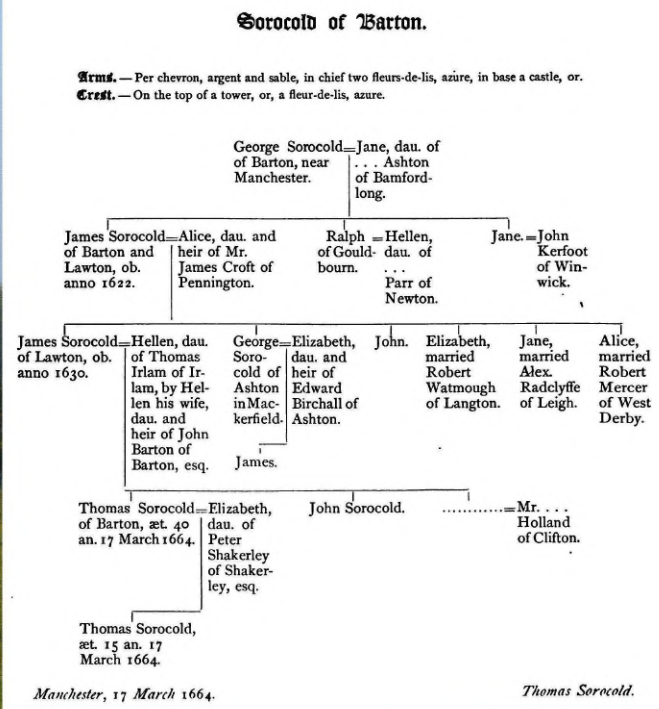
*"Went to Sankey Hall came againe with bringinge [the corpse] to Winwicke and whiles drinkinge ... I get Emm into a place above where we talked about some things and in this while Eles Taylor like an unworthy woman went and took another to ride before her so that when I came to take horse there was none for me I was hughly prplexed yet bore it very patiently".*

The main photograph above shows the nave at St Oswald's Church, Winwick, looking towards the stained glass window in the west wall of the tower. Roger Lowe would not recognise the chancel (shown left, above), as it was entirely rebuilt in 1847-9. The nave, on the other hand, contains elements such as the carved bishops' faces at the bases of the pillars in the north aisle (left, below) which may date back to the Norman period. Both aisles were rebuilt in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the south aisle further restored in 1836. The panelled ceiling, which dates from 1701, has recently undergone a 7-year restoration.

The photographs were taken on (left) 9 September 2023 and (right) 17 August 2017.



**“Anon Mr James Sorrowcold came into house...”**



“[1664, July] 3.—lords day... I came to Ashton [from Leigh] and went to John Jenkins and anon Mr James Sorrowcold came into house and he spent 6d on me. I brought hime home for he tooke me along with hime and I was all night and I lay in his c[h]amb[e]r.”

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

George Sorocold - father of the James Sorocold of the Diary - seems to have set up home in the vicinity of Aye Bridge, on the Ashton-in-Makerfield/Abram border, about the year 1620. In 1628 Thomas Knowles of Ashton and Roger Spencer of Newton were contracted by George Sorocold, gent., of Asthon and Thomas Corless of “Abraham” (i.e. Abram) “to build a bridge at a place called Eye Bridge ... at a cost of £4-15-0 to replace an old decayed bridge”.\* Various land deeds to which George Sorocold was a party in the 1640s and 1650s evidence his interests in local coal mining and the manufacture of pewter goods.

The Winwick Registers confirm the burial of “Mr Gorgue Sorocold of the Eae bridge” on 30 November 1655 (Cheshire Archives ref. P158/1/2).

George, his wife Elizabeth ( née Birchall) and son James appear on a pedigree of the Sorocolds of Barton given by George's nephew at Manchester in 1664 (shown above, right). James had at least three siblings who are not mentioned on the pedigree. The register of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, shows that he and a younger brother, George, were admitted there as students on 9 May 1645. Then aged 18 and 17 respectively, the brothers had previously studied for “about 6 years” under James Pickering, master of Winwick Grammar School from c.1628 until 1638. In 1654 their

sister, Alice, was married at Leigh to John Launder of New Hall (the “*Mr L(e)anders*” of the Diary) but died in childbirth a year later. The death of another brother, John, is reported in a letter of 22 June 1661 “ffor Mr James Sorocold att his howse att the Eye bridge in Ashton neere Wigan”; a transcript of the letter and enclosures is in Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, Vol. 4 (1851-2). “Mr Sorrocould of the Eay-bridge” also features in the Letter Book of Sir Roger Bradshaigh (Manchester Central Library ref. L1/48/6/1), being ordered in December 1662 to contribute £100 “towards fynding of horse” for the local militia.

On 4 September 1664 (“*lords day*”) Lowe “*was with Mr. Sorowcolds servants in Ale house and was merry*”.

In 1666 James Sorocold married Elizabeth, daughter of Hugh Barrow of Wigan. By his will of 10 September 1666, now preserved at Lancashire Archives ref. DDWH 3/34, he bequeathed to her a life interest in his lands at Ashton and Leigh with the remainder to their children “if any”. By a deed of sale executed on 1 November 1673, he and Jonathan Blackburne of Orford purchased from Henry Gerard all of the latter's goods and chattels at Bamfurlong together with a lease of 21 years on Bamfurlong Hall (DDTA 235). That same year James Sorocold was held liable to pay tax on 5 hearths (Hearth Tax assessments at National Archives ref. E179/132/355; this may be compared with the 14 hearths of his brother-in-law, John Launder, at New Hall, and Sir William Gerard's 22 hearths at (Old) Garswood Hall).

None of the buildings at Aye Bridge Farm is listed. However, a partially defaced or decayed inscription on a beam in one of the barns reads “JS: GS: 1673”.

\*Lancashire Archives refs. DDGE(M) 863-865. For some reason the bridge works were not carried out until 1651. The present bridge, constructed in 1920, carries the A573 over Hey Brook which at this point forms the boundary between Abram to the north and Ashton-in-Makerfield to the south.

The photographs were taken in September 2017.

## **“... St. Ellin Chappell ...”**



*“[1664 July] 17. —lords day. I went with Thomas Smith to St. Ellin Chappell and we cald on my brother and refreshed ourselves with victuals and so went to Chappell. It was a very rainy day. Mr Ambrose preached. We came home at noone and Mr Asmull preached in Ashton.”*

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

Standing on or very close to the site of W D Caröe's Grade II-listed parish church of 1916-26, a chapel is first recorded at St Helens in 1552.\* Construction of the building with which Roger Lowe and his contemporaries were familiar had been initiated by its patroness Katherine Downbell (otherwise “Downall”, “Domville”, “Doumville” etc), whose deed of gift of “all that messuage chapel and building in Hardshaighe within Windle called the 'Chapel of St Ellen's'...” on 23 January 1613/4 had directed that “the same now being in great decay might be repaired for the ease of our loving neighbours”. The Chapel was found on the occasion of a formal visit by the Archdeacon of Warrington in 1622 to be “newly-built and not yet consecrated”.\*\*

Several commentators have noted that, from the evidence of the Diary and other sources, those officiating at St Helens Chapel in this period seem to have remained at liberty to preach according to their Presbyterian convictions. This state of affairs would come increasingly under challenge towards the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and with the death of the incumbent minister James Naylor in 1710 the nonconformists were finally compelled to withdraw and build their own place of worship.\*\*\*

\* "... one belle belongyng to seynt Elyn chapell is Imbecellid Lately as the said wardens do saie and also one chalice at the same chapell was sold by the late comiss[ion] for conceyled goods unto Ric[hard] parre of Caghil..." - National Archives ref. E 117/3/49/17: "Exchequer Records: Church Goods Inventories: Lancashire: Prescott church with Farneworth church and St Elyn chapel, 1547 Jan 28-1558 Nov 17"; a transcript is in Chetham Soc. Old Series Vol 113 (1888).

\*\*As recorded in various documents at St Helens Local History & Archives Library ref. CSHA/1: "General history and management of Saint Helens Parish Church". On 8 September 1691 commissioners assembled at Wigan "to redress the misemployment of lands, goods and stocks of moneys given to charitable uses" heard that "there then was, and for time immemorial there had been, a consecrated chapel in Hardshey-cum-Windle, in the parish of Prescot, called St Ellen's Chapel; and that the said chapel, about 70 years before, being old and decayed, and too little for the 'auditors', was taken down, and a larger chapel was built in the same chapel yard..." (Kenyon MSS, Lancashire Archives ref. DDKE/acc. 7840 No. 783). For particulars of the 1622 visitation, see Cheshire Archives ref. EDV 1.

\*\*\*"The list of ministers/school masters employed from 1613 to and including 1688 is a roll call of men with impeccable non-conformist credentials" - Brief History of the Ormskirk Street URC at <https://ormskirkstreeturc.org.uk/brief-history-of-the-church/>. See also the Kenyon MSS at Lancashire Archives as above, Nos. 712, 744, 783 and 799, and the letter at ref. DDKE/9/77/15. Concerning the Rev. Isaac Ambrose (1604-64), see my note on the Diary entry for 28 May 1666.

Shown above is an "imaginative impression" of the 16th century St Helen's Chapel painted by local artist John Clitheroe c.1950.

**“I went to Neawton and heard Mr Blakeburn...”**



“[1664, August] 14. — lords day. I went to Neawton and heard Mr Blakeburn and he enjoyned old William Hasleden and I [to] come to Rothwells which we did and had 2 pints of wine which he would have paid for but I would not suffer it..”

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

As Lynton J Smith explains in his “Historical Summary” (available from St Peter's or, in an abbreviated form, at <http://www.lan-opc.org.uk/Newton-le-Willows/stpeter/index.html>):

“The church today is the third building to stand at the eastern end of Newton's Anglo-Saxon High Street, erected to the glory of God and for the spiritual benefit of the people of the parish”.

Roger Lowe would have been familiar with the first of these three, identified by Francis Raines and others as-

“the Chapel of Newton, anciently called Rokeden, ... founded by Sir Robert Banastre, Lord of the fee of Makerfield, who, in February 1284, obtained a license from Richard de Wavertree Prior of St Oswald of Nostell, in consequence of his distance from the Mother Church, to have a Chantry here...”.\*

The privileges granted in 1284 were renewed in 1405, but in 1553 the lesser monasteries and chantries were suppressed. Almost a century later, in 1650, commissioners reported that there existed-

“an Ancient Chappell called Newton Chappell, distant from the p[ar]ish Church of Winwicke two Statute Myles or thereabouts, and distant two Statute myles and upwards from the Chappell of

Ashton, And that there is not any other Church or Chappell nere unto the same; And in regard of the distance of the said Chappell from any other Church or Chappell, wee p[re]sent that Newton Chappell is fitt to bee made a parish Church...;

And wee p[re]sent that there doth belong to the said Church of Newton Three pounds one shilling seaven pence p ann out of the Dutchy of Lancaster, and that there is a Donatiue of Twenty poundes p ann given by Richard Blackborne, late of Newton, for the mainteynance of a preaching Minister att Newton...;

And wee present that Mr Thomas Blackborne is the present Incumbent there, And hath for his Salary the sume of Twenty poundes p ann, formly given unto the said Chappell of Newton by Mr Blackborne aforesaid, and that hee is a godly preaching Minister and supplyeth the Cure diligently upon the Lords daies, but Thursday, the Thirteenth day of this instant June, appoynted a day of Humiliacon by Acte of Parliamt, hee did not observe, And did come unto the said place by the gen'all consent of the whole Chappellrie".\*\*

Awarded the degree of Bachelor of Arts at Oxford University (Brasenose College) on 7 February 1643, Thomas Blackburne was made a deacon on 22 December 1644 and a priest on 21 September 1645. The Subscription Book for 1629-46 at Oxfordshire History Centre ref. MS Oxf. Dioc. Papers e.13 records that the latter ordination was performed by Robert Skinner, Bishop of Oxford, in the chapel at Trinity College. It was probably soon after this that "Mr Thomas Blackburne was approved of by the Committy of Ministers att Manchester to preach at Rivington for six months upon triall". However in May 1647, noting that "the time aforesaid is already expired, and also [that] the well-affected of the congregation have desired us to forbare any further approbation of the said Mr. Blackburne", the members of the Bury Presbyterian Classis "resolved noe further to approve of the said Mr. Blackburn to be Minister at Rivington".\*\*\*

Thomas Blackburne's appointment to the cure of Newton-le-Willows probably came about through family connections, the "Blackburne of Hale" pedigree in Joseph Foster's "Pedigrees of the County Families of England" (Vol 1: "Lancashire", 1873) indicating that he was a great-nephew of the chapel's erstwhile benefactor and local landowner Richard Blackburne.

Whether Mr Blackburne spent the rest of his days at Newton is unclear. A tablet at Rivington Church suggests that he may eventually have been restored to his former position there ("Blackburne ord[ained] 1644; ejec[ted] March, 1647; rest[ored] 1662").

Newton Chapel was rebuilt by Richard Legh Esq around 1682 (per Lynton J Smith and others; Bishops Gastrell's "Notitia Cestriensis", Cheshire Archives ref. EDA 3/4702, says the rebuilding was in 1684 and that "the old Chap[el] joined to ye Court-house, and had a door open[ing] into it"). Several enlargements and improvements during the 19<sup>th</sup> century were followed by a complete rebuilding and the addition of a tower in three phases over the period 1892-1901. In the meanwhile the recommendation of 1650 in favour of a distinct parish centred on Newton was finally acted upon in 1845.

A list of "vicars" together with a short history of the town and parish of Newton-le-Willows can be seen at the western end of the south aisle of the present Church.

The photographs were taken on 17 and (top right) 15 January 2024.

\*From "A History of the Chantries Within the County Palatine of Lancaster" in Chetham Soc. Vol. 59, 1862, citing Dodsworth's MSS at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, and F R Raines' own "Lancashire MSS" at Chetham's Library, Manchester.

\*\*“Chancery: Surveys of Church Livings, 1650-8: Lancs” in National Archives ref. C94/4.

\*\*\*Chetham Soc. N. S. Vol. 36, 1896. It seems that Mr Blackburne was never informed of the allegations made against him by “the well-affected of the congregation” at Rivington, and thus had no opportunity to respond. There were 10 charges in all, amounting to what Stephen Bull describes in “A General Plague of Madness: The Civil Wars in Lancashire” (Carnegie, 2009) as “a minor litany of crimes”: “(a) He doth not attend his charge, but is many days absent, and sleights his congregation without publicke notice or private either in due time, and so itt cometh to passe ye people loose their labour to church and are disappointed of the means, and some take occasion to drinke and prophane ye Lord's day; (b) He neglects ordinarily the observation of the publicke fast; (c) He useth to kneele downe at his first comeing both into ye deske and pulpitt; (d) We conceive he is not ordained minister in any lawfull manner; (e) Nevertheless, he ordinarily taketh upon him to baptize att Rivington; (f) He hath baptized a child, born of popish parence, in the hundred of Lealand, and the father was absent; (g) Wee conceive he hath not taken ye Nationale Covenant; (h) He useth to preach without prayinge before; (i) He useth to associate himselfe with profane company; (j) He hath testified his unwillingness to come to private dayes and conference, being several times desired”.

***“at Neawton we stayd, and ware very merry”***



*“[1664, August] 22. —Monday... John Moody and I came home together and as we were coming John Potter and Emm behind him overtook us and he asked me what I would give him at Neawton. I promised him a qt of Ale and at Neawton he light and we stayd and ware very merry. Anon dicke Naylor comes and falls a-quarelling with [me] in so much as we fell to it but John Potter vindicated my cause nobly and poor Emm stickd close to me so they gat dicke away with [a] deal of shame to his part...”*  
[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Ashton mourners frequently repaired to one or other of the alehouses at Newton-le-Willows following a burial at Winwick. Roger Lowe usually drank at Widow Heapie's but reference is also made in the Diary to “Mr Colliers” and to “Rothwells” at Newton, as well as to “Spoilers”-

*“[1663, July] 22. —Wednesday... At night James Naylor asked me to goe with him to Neawton as formrly so I went and we ware sent for to goe to Mr Colli[e]rs so we went and stayed awhile. Anon Mr Colli[e]r comes in drunke and falls in discourse with James, and James being not able to defend himselfe I tooke hold and answered to the well likeing of James...”*



[1663, September] 17. —Thursday... *this evening I went with James Naylor to Neawton a-wooing Ann Barrow... I went to Mr Colli[e]rs to fetch her to us into widow Heapys for there we resided....*

[1664, August] 14. —*lord's day. I went to Neawton and heard Mr Blakeburn and he enjoined old William Hasleden and I [to] come to Rothwells which we did and had 2 pints of wine which he would have paid for but I would not suffer it...*

[1665, January] 2. —Monday. *I went to the funerall of Jane Pott[e]r ... at Winwicke and att o[u]r comeing home I was with John Pott[e]r of Ashton and James Low and some others and we went together into a house cald Spoilers in Newton. Spent 4d and so went home...*

[1665, August] 23 day. —*I went to Warrington and John Pott[e]r too... He let me ride behind him home[. We ware both exceedingly hungry and cold in Heapy's in Neawton and whiles we ware eating and drinkinge we had almost fallen out about presbittery and Episcopecie".*

“Mr Collier” occurs in the Hearth Tax assessments for 1664, being liable to pay tax on 3 hearths – equivalent to the tax liability for “Hall Newton” but less than the 8 hearths for which Thomas Rothwell was taxable in 1664 and 1673.\* I have been unable to identify Widow Heapie or “*Spoiler*” from the Hearth Tax records. Any of these establishments could well have been on or close to the site of the present Pied Bull Hotel at 54 High Street, built c.1930 in the style of a 17<sup>th</sup> century hostelry.\*\*

“*Dicke Naylor*” is presumably the same “*Richard Naylor*” with whom Lowe had been drinking before his visit to Newton on 22 July 1663. On 18 August 1663 this Richard Naylor “*came ovr out of Yorkshire and Henry Lowe and I were with him very mery and ware adopted brethren*”. Several Diary entries indicate that Naylor had been making romantic overtures towards Ann Barrow of Golborne.\*\*\* Ann was of course an old flame of the diarist, and this may explain why tempers became heated “*so much as we fell to it*” - i.e. came to blows. We read nothing more about Richard Naylor after this date.

The episode related above followed Lowe's attendance at the funeral of Lucy Taylor at Winwick (listed as occurring on this date in the Winwick burial register). Whilst still at Winwick the diarist had been so preoccupied with Emm Potter - “*drinkeinge ... in a place above where we talked about some things*” - that he had forgotten his undertaking to ride home with Eles Taylor. Arriving at last in Ashton after the falling out with Richard Naylor at Newton, he and John Potter went to yet another alehouse where a further three quarts of ale were drunk. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, there are no entries in the Diary for the next three days.

\*National Archives refs. E179/250/11 and E179/132/355.

\*\*The site appears vacant on the Legh estate plan of 1745 at St Helens Local History & Archives Library ref. LEG/1. An estate plan of the mid-1830s shows a row of buildings there, depicted in more detail on the 1839 Tithe map and the 1st edition 6" OS map of 1849. The 1893 OS map shows a wedge-shaped building - now identified as the Pied Bull Hotel - with a covered passage through the western end. There is also a large wing extending northward from the eastern end of the row. This building makes a final appearance on OS mapping in 1928; a photograph of it by the late Arthur Frost is in "Photographs of Newton-le-Willows from 1900-1920" (Eileen M Gaskell, 1981). My photograph was taken on 17 January 2024.

\*\*\*On 25 October 1663 "*Ann Barrow came to Ashton and gave me a letttr to answer for her into Yorkeshire to Richard Naylor.*" On 11 March 1664 "*Ann Barrow came to towne and moved me to write a letttr for her in answr to a love letttr from Richard Naylor*". The following day "*James Astley a Wiggan man came into house and gave me a letter with a lemmon which was a token sent from Richard Naylor from Wakefield in Yorkeshire*".

***“We went to top of steeple and discoursed of formr dayes and passages past and gone”***



*“[1664, August] 28.—lords day. I went to Leigh my M[aste]r was gone to Assizes at noone I was very disconsulate but I went to John Chaddockes house and mett with John Hindley we went hee and I to top of steeple and discoursed of formr dayes and passages past and gone. There was buryd one Sande Sixes who had his necke broken in rideinge between dean church\* and bent\*\*. When we ware come from top of steeple John Chaddock was seekinge us so we went altogether to ale house and spent each of us 1d so parted. Att night I came home to Ashton and went to see Raphe Hasleden and parted and came to bed.”*

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

Taken on 15 September 2017, the photograph shows the Church of St Mary The Virgin from the south-east. The Diary entry suggests that the tower, which dates from about 1500, may in Lowe's day have supported a steeple.

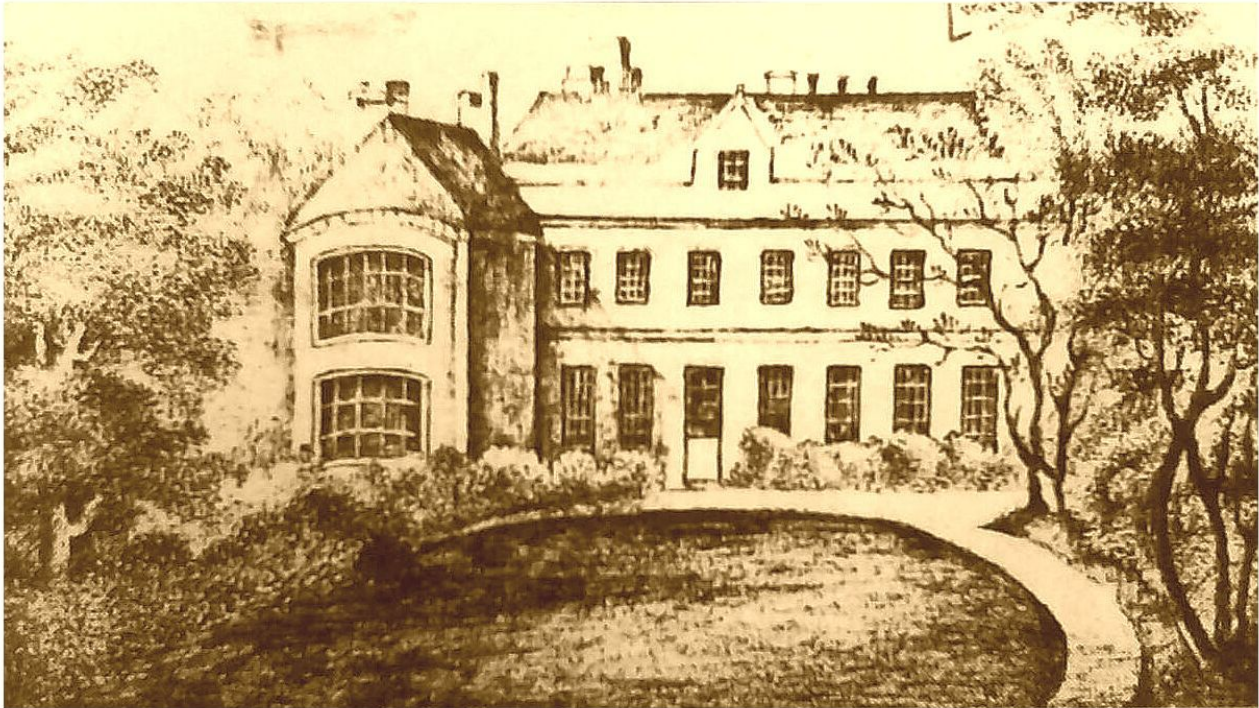
The Leigh Parish Registers at Manchester Archives, ref. L211/1/1, confirm the burial on this date of Alixander Hatton of Atherton – evidently the “Sande Sixes” of the Diary.

\*“dean church” is St Mary's at Deane, near Bolton, referred to in a document of 1128 as “St

Mariden Dene”.

\*\*“bent”: Lowe uses an abbreviated form of “Chowbent”, from c.1350 the old name for Atherton.

## ***“to Hall Winwicke”***



*“[1664, October] 2. — lord’s day. I went to the funerall of old John Jenkins to Winwicke and att after drinkinge I went with John Potttr and Ralph Low church-warden to Hall Winwicke and went to see chapell and went to top of house and up and downe and then we parted and I came home...”*  
[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

At the outbreak of the English Civil War Winwick Hall had been fortified by its then owner, the Royalist and Catholic Sir John Fortescue, but was nevertheless taken by Parliamentary forces in 1643 and afterwards sequestered. Stephen Bull refers to evidence that the Hall was used as a dressing station during the Third Civil War, 1649-51 (“A General Plague of Madness: The Civil Wars in Lancashire”, Carnegie 2009). From 1662 until his death in 1689 it was home to Dr Richard Sherlock, Rector of Winwick. The Diary entry suggests that Dr Sherlock maintained a private chapel there.

A second Winwick Hall, built in 1734 after the original had been destroyed by fire, was adapted in 1897 to serve as a home for “idiot boys”, the entire estate of 207 acres having been purchased from the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for the construction of an asylum – later, Winwick Hospital.

Image: Sepia print of a sketch of the original Winwick Hall, artist unknown.

***“... so I was ingaged to go with him to Prescott”***



*“[1664, October] 5.—Wednesday. I went to my Brothers was all night his wife was brought to bed so I was ingaged to go with him to Prescott upon Lords day after...”*

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

This entry records the birth at Windle of a son to the diarist's brother, William, and his unnamed wife.

In an age when around 12% of babies died before their first birthday it was considered prudent to keep the interval between childbirth and baptism or “christening” to a minimum. The Lowes would doubtless have inclined toward the view expressed by the Puritan writer William Gouge (1578-1653) “that it is not meet for Christians to defer the baptizing of their children beyond eight dayes”-

“The most seasonable time I take to be the day whereon Gods people use in the place where the childe is borne, publikely to assemble together to worship God next after the birth of the child, if at least it fall not out within two or three dayes after, which is somewhat with the soonest both for mother and childe.

Whether we respect the honour of God (the riches of whose mercy is lively set forth in the sacrament of baptism) or the good of our childe (which in that sacrament receiveth a pledge and seale of that rich mercy of God) Baptisme is of great consequence: and therefore the first season of

performing it to be taken. For parents by their diligence and due speed therein, give evidence both of their zeale to Gods glory, and also of their earnest desire of the childs spirituall good”.\*

Windle is now within the Church of England parish of St Andrew, part of St Helens Deanery, but in 1664 it was at the north-eastern extremity of what was then the much larger parish of Prescott. Dedicated to St Mary The Virgin, the Grade I-listed parish church at Prescott dates mainly from a rebuilding in 1610. The vestry adjoining the north-side of the chancel (believed to have been, originally, a chantry chapel) is 14<sup>th</sup> century whilst the present tower and aisles are, respectively, 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century in origin. My photograph shows the church from the south-east on 15 September 2021.

\*From “Of Domesticall Duties” (1622); full text at <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A68107.0001.001>. Gouge takes as his starting point the direction as to male circumcision in Leviticus 12:3.

***“I was the one godfather and Raph Falster was the othr and my coz Ann Shey was godmothr”***



*“[1664, October] 9.—lords day. This morneing I went to my Brothers into Windle he had a child to be christened att Prescott so I was ingaged to be the one godfather and Raph Falster near Carr Mill was the othr and my coz Ann Shey was godmothr we went to Prescott and drunk at Edward Derbyshire[’s] clarke of church and Raph Falster and I went to top of steeple in church. There was sexstones making grave for one Jacke or George Massy a Runnr who was buryd this day att after eveninge prayr. We went to Darbishire[’s] house again and stayd and drunk it cost Raph Falster and me either [each?] of us 15d - 2s 6d in all and we payd it joyntly. I had intended to come home but the lateness of night prevented me so came to my brothrs and stayd all night.”*

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

Shown here on 11 September 2021, the oldest of two baptismal fonts currently in the Church of St Mary The Virgin at Prescot has an interesting history. Either Anglo-Saxon (Historic England\*) or Norman (Pevsner, Ellis\*\*) in origin, it seems to have been removed from the church during the Interregnum. That it was returned and refurbished immediately following the proclamation of Charles II as king in May 1660 is apparent from entries in the churchwardens' accounts for the



period:

“Paid for hanginge upp the kinges armes and settinge upp the font stone 0-5-0”;

“Paid to John Poughtin for a legg for the font stone 0-0-4”;

“Paid to Thomas Langshaw for makinge a lead for the font stone... 0-19-11”;

“Paid for fyre for soderinge the lead about the font stone 0-0-2”;

“Paid to Thomas Gerard for a cover for the font and for the frame of the stoole to kneele on... 0-6-8”.\*\*\*

In either 1755 (Pevsner) or 1850 (Ellis etc) the font was given to St Bartholomew's at Roby, where it remained until Canon Harry Mitchell chanced upon it and began negotiations for its return to Prescott. The Preston Chronicle informed its readers on 25 July 1891 that-

“The Vicar of Prescott has just unearthed the ancient font which was used Parish Church for a thousand years. He discovered it in Roby Churchyard, and the vicar of that parish having renounced any claim it, it has been restored to the Prescott Church. It is simply a block of sandstone, roughly shaped and hollowed out, but is far the oldest relic now existing of the first church built on the 'Preoste-cote hill”.

Whilst much of the fabric of the present church dates from a rebuilding in 1610, the steeple was not immediately replaced and was found to be “in ruins” when, in 1619, John Wright of Cronton came before the Consistory Court “for not paying his proportion to the repair of the church” (Cheshire Archives ref EDC 5/1619/10). Expenditure on repairs to the steeple features regularly in the churchwardens' accounts of the period, culminating in a complete rebuilding in 1685-7.

Prescot yeoman, innkeeper and holder of various civic and ecclesiastical offices during his lifetime (1633-1669), Edward Darbyshire was admitted to the position of parish clerk by diocesan chancellor John Wainwright on 13 August 1662 (Borthwick Institute ref. V.1662-3/Exh.Bk, fol 35v). A detailed account of his appointment as sexton on 20 April 1647 is at Lancashire Archives ref. PR 3404/4/1, fol 170; the Diary entry seems to indicate that some other person or persons was/were discharging this function by 1664. The same series records Darbyshire's appointment as surveyor in 1659 and documents payments to him for the supply of communion bread and, in one instance, “for washinge and makinge cleane the surplises and makinge cleane the communion table cloath and for washinge the church flagon and bowle”. The “*house*” where Roger Lowe and party “*stayd and drunk*” in 1664 may have been the former Legs of Man Hotel on Church Street, various deeds in the Prescott Manor Court Rolls at Lancashire Archives ref. DDKC PC/4 linking Edward Darbyshire with a property at that location which had previously been in the possession of his predecessor as parish clerk, Edward Stockley. For Edward Darbyshire's will and an inventory of his goods in 1669, see Lancashire Archives (Archdeaconry of Chester Probate Records) ref. WCW/Supra/C177B/42.

Contemporary transcripts of the original Prescott registers for 1664, now preserved at Cheshire Archives ref. EDB, confirm both the baptism of “Raphe sonne of Willm Lowe” and the burial of “George Massie” on this date. Lowe's description of the latter as a “*runner*” may indicate involvement with coal-mining, the occurrence of which at Prescott is documented from 1552.

Raph Falster and Ann Hey do not otherwise occur in the Diary.

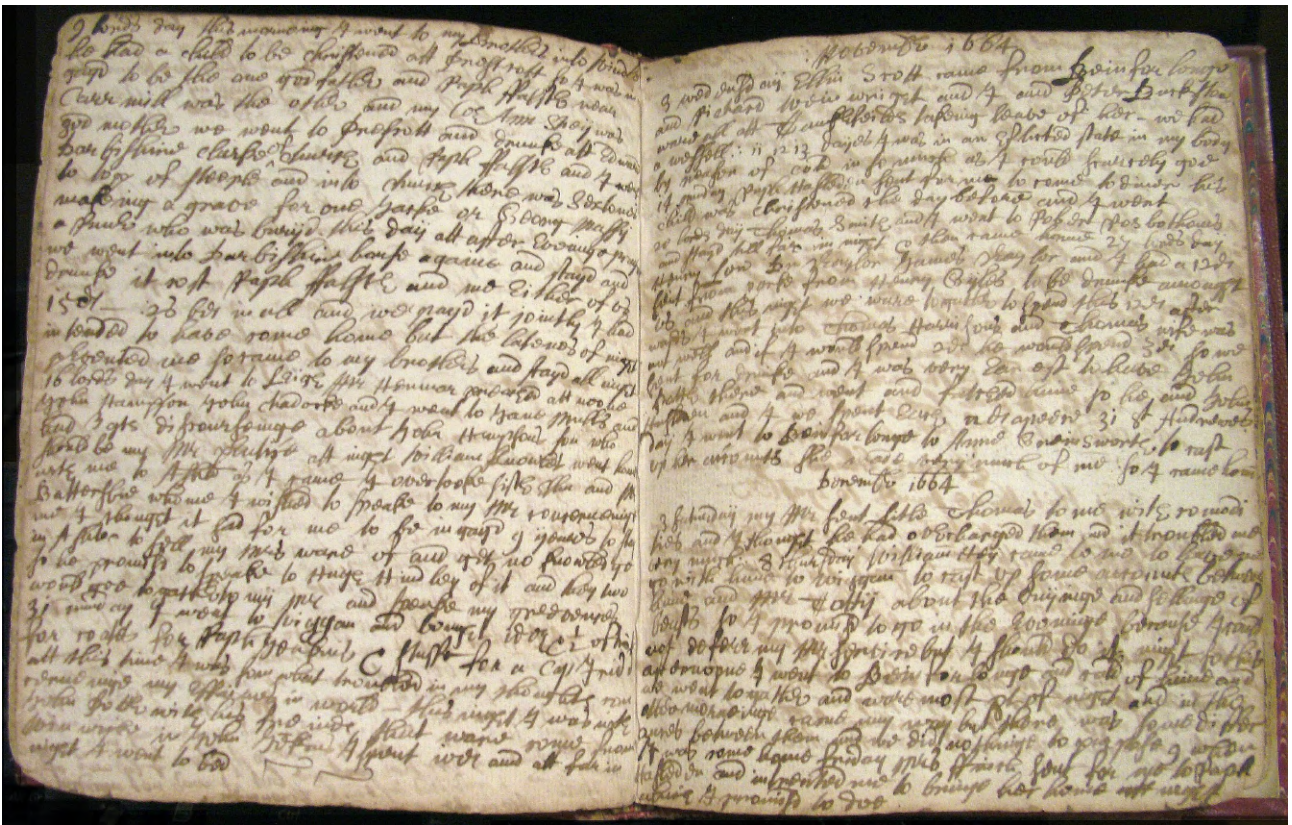
\* <https://historicingland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1199139>

\*\* “Lancashire: Liverpool & The South-West”, Richard Pollard & Nikolaus Pevsner (Yale UP, 2006); “The medieval fonts of the hundreds of West Derby and Wirral”, J W Ellis (Trans Hist Soc

Lancs & Ches Vol 53/1901).

\*\*\* Lancashire Archives ref. PR 3404/4/1, fols 324, 325, 329. Rev Thomas Steel (Vicar, 1991-2003) suggests in “Prescot Churchwardens' Accounts 1635-1663” (Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches., Vol. 137/2002) that “this may have been a new one” – but the first mention in the accounts refers specifically to the “setting up” of the font rather than to its manufacture or purchase. Moreover, if these are *not* references to the Anglo-Saxon/Norman font one would have to ask what has become of its supposed Restoration replacement. The other font currently in the church dates from 1755.

## Diary of Roger Lowe, 9 October to 9 December 1664



“9.—lords day. This morning I went to my Brothers into Windle he had a child to be christened att Prescott so I was engaged to be the one godfather and Raph Falster [?] near Carr Mill was the othr and my coz Ann Shey was godmothr we went to Prescott and drunk at Edward Derbyshire[’s] clarke of church and Raph Falster and I went to top of steeple in church. There was sexstones making grave for one Jacke or George Massy a Runr who was buryd this day att after eveninge prayr. We went to Darbeshire[’s] house again and stayd and drunk it cost Raph Falster and me either [each?] of us 15d - 2s 6d in all and we paid it joyntly. I had intended to come home but the lateness of night prevented me so came to my brothrs and stayd all night.

16.—lords day. I went to Leigh Mr Hamner preached at noone. John Hampson John Chaddocke and I went to Jane Mulls and had 3 quarts discoursing about John Hampsons son who should be my M[aste]r[’s] prentice. Att night William Knowles went home with me to Ashton as I came I over tooke sister Ellin and Mr Battersbie whome I wished to speake to my M[aste]r concerninge me I thought it sad for me to be engaged 9 years to stay in Ashton to sell my M[aste]rs ware of 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.

31.—Munday. I went to Wiggan and bought 1 doz & half of twist for coates for Raphe Jenkins & stuff for a cap I ridd att this time I was somewhat troubled in my thoughts concerninge my eaffaires in the world. This night I was with John Pottr with his friends that ware come from Winwicke in John Jenkins I spent 10d and att far in night I went to bed.

November, 1664

3.—Wednesday. Ellin Scott came from Beinfer longe and Richard Weinwright and I and Peter Buckstone ware all at Tankerfields takeing leave of her and we had a wessell.

11, 12, 13 dayes.—I was in an efflicted state my body by reason of cold in so much as I could scarcely goe.

14.—Munday. Ralph Hasleden sent for me to come to come to diner his child was christened the day before I went.

20.—lords day. Thomas Smith and I went to Robert Rosbothams and stayd till far in the night & then came home.

27.—lords day. Henry Low Dr Naylor James Naylor and I had a 12d sent from Yorke from Henry Gyles to be drunke amongst us and this night we were together to spend the 12d. Afterwards I went into Thomas Harrisons and Thomas wife was not well and if I would spend 2d he would spend 3d so we sent for drinke and I was very earnest to have John Pottr there and went and fetched hime so he and John Hasleden and I we spent each 2d apiece.

31.—St. Andrews day. I went to Bein forlonge to Ann Greinsworth to cast up her accounts she made much of me and I came home.

December, 1664

3.—Saturday. My M[aste]r sent little Thomas to me with commodities and I thought he had overcharged them and it trouble[d] me very much.

8.—thursday. William Hey came to me to have me go with him to Wiggan to cast up some accounts between him and Mr Totty about the buying and selling of beasts [so] I promised to go in the evening because I could not deferr my M[aste]r[’s] service but I should do it at night so this afternoone I went to Bein forlonge and cald of hime and we went togathr and ware most part of night and in the othr morninge came away but there was some differences between them and we did nothinge to purpose.

9.—When I came home friday Mrs ffinch sent for me to Raph Hasleden and intreated me to bringe her home att night which I promised to doe.”

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

**“the Harthman that came to view Harthes in Ashton”**

Ashton in Makerfeld	Ashton in Makerfeld
Sir Willm Gorrard 2/	Tho Birchall — 1
Richard Birchall — 3	Robt Lythgoe — 1
Tho Gorrard of mat 3	Edmund Birchall — 1
W <sup>m</sup> Edw Ounswords 2	W <sup>m</sup> Roy Droop — 1
Bryan Louod — 2	Tho Cingo — 1
John Alston — 2	W <sup>m</sup> Aspinall — 1
W <sup>m</sup> John Rosbatham 1	
Tho. Hoolton — 4	
Richard Lorton — 3	
Humphrey Johnson — 4	
Simon Marshall — 2	
W <sup>m</sup> Crumpton — 1	
W <sup>m</sup> Gullon — 2	
Jo Wharford — 1	
Tho Robinson — 3	

“[1664, December] 21. — Wednesday. I was with John Pottr and Tho Harrison at Tankerfelds with the Harthman that came to view Harthes in Ashton and spent 4d.”

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

By the Act 14 Car. II (1662) c.10 “for establishing an additional revenue upon his Majesty, his heirs and successors, for the better support of his and their crown and dignity”, it was provided that-

“from and after March 25, 1662, every dwelling and other house within England, Wales and Berwick on Tweed shall be chargeable with the annual payment of 2 shillings for every fire hearth and stove within such house, to be paid yearly by even portions at the feast of St. Michael and the feast of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, the first payment to be paid at Michaelmas, 1662”.

The owner or occupier of each house was to give “a just account in writing of all the hearths and stoves within the house”. Exemptions were provided for any person “who by reason of his poverty and smallness of estate is exempted from the usual taxes towards the Church and Poor” and in respect of “any Blowing house and Stamp Furnace or Kiln, ... any private oven, [and] any hearth or stove within any hospital or alms-house whose endowment doth not exceed £100 by the year”.

Changes in the way liability was assessed and the tax collected were made by 15 Car. II (1663) c.13

and 16 Car. II (1664) c.3. The 1664 Act ended self-reporting, and gave the task of determining liability to professional assessors who were authorised to enter houses etc. The assessments are preserved with other records relating to lay and clerical taxation at National Archives ref. E179. As stated by W F Irvine in his article "Lancashire Hearth Taxes" for Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire N. S. Vol. 16, 1900:

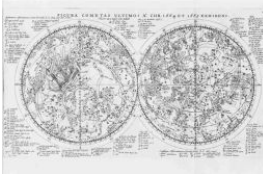
"this tax practically touched everyone who possessed a house, and so we get a complete return of the inhabited houses and the names of their occupants. Some light is also thrown on the social condition of the people by the number of chimneys returned for each district, and the whole may be taken as constituting the earliest known Directory in existence".

The return for 1664 identifies 183 separate households at Ashton-in-Makerfield. (The Hearth Tax returns for later years distinguish between Ashton, Garswood and Bryn; it appears that the "Ashton in Makerfield" of the 1664 return had the same extent as the later Ashton-in-Makerfield Urban District.) Heading the list is Sir William Gerard, the 3<sup>rd</sup> baronet. The figure of 21 hearths relates to the first Garswood Hall, near the site of present-day Old Garswood Hall Farm at Pewfall. This had become the Gerards' principal home around 1650. Their former home, Bryn Hall, was still a substantial property of 26 hearths. Comparison of the returns from different years reveals which individuals were prospering economically. A small increase in the number of hearths - as, for example, from 4 to 5 at James Sorocold's Aye Bridge Farm - can probably be attributed to changes in the way the law was administered, but the increase at John Launder's New Hall - from 6 in 1664 to 14 in 1673 - is clear evidence of new construction in this period. Very occasionally the householder's occupation or profession is given. "Thomas Potter, Clerk" may be the "Mr Potter" of the Diary; but whether he and Thomas Potter, curate of Winwick, were one and the same is unclear. "Tho. Nayler, Glazier" was perhaps the father of J Nayler, "a Herald Painter, and an excellent stainer of glass for pictures of Coats of Arms", whose premises to the north of Whitledge Green were noted by Dr Richard Kuerden in his description of the Post Road from Warrington to Wigan c.1695 (Chetham's Library, ref. Mun. C.6.1-3).

Acknowledged by the repealing Act (1 Wm. & Mary c.10) to be "not onely a great oppression to the poorer sort but a badge of slavery upon the whole people, exposing every man's house to be entered into and searched at pleasure by persons unbeknown to him", the Hearth Tax was finally abolished in 1689.

Image from from National Archives ref. E179/250/11.

***“I saw a comett in the aire; a starr with a traine along with it”***



*“[1664, December] 24.—I was this night with Matthew Raphes and John Hasleden in Joshua Naylors on purpose to take house for Joshua and we did take a house of Mathew Raphes. On this night I saw a comett in the aire a starr with a traine along with it.”*

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

Designated C/1664 W1 under the International Astronomical Union's Cometary Classification System\*, the comet observed by Lowe in December 1664 is thought to have come closest to the Earth - and thus to have been at its brightest and most distinct - on 19 December. Subject to local conditions it remained visible across much of the northern hemisphere for a period of 75 days from 17 November. Consequently there survives a good number of contemporary eye-witness accounts and illustrations, among the most remarkable of which are those of 12-year-old Katsurai Soan in Japan. On 16 December he watched from a neighbour's backyard as the comet, which had at first been “faintly visible from the ESE to the NW”, became “brighter and brighter”-

“I woke grandma and Choutarou and Mr. Kakubee and showed the comet to them. Everybody was so surprised. I was too scared to watch it by myself. This is what I saw... [see his drawing above, top left].

The star's width is about 5 sun [approximately 16cm]. The comet is not as bright as other stars. Other stars' lights are much brighter. This [line pointing to the tale] is white, [line pointing to the nucleus] bright like a star, and the point is white and faint. The length is about 2 to 2 1/2 ken [4 – 4.5 metres].

I could see many stars around the comet. By the way, the dots around the star are fixed stars.

Governor Tadayoshi's castle is to the north of the star as you can see in my drawing.

It curved to the South and moved to the top of the heavens and then went West. The comet disappeared around 6 o'clock. The tail got a bit shorter, though the light was strong. If we light fires to see stars, then we just can't see them. If we extinguish fires, the comet gets longer and longer and brighter and brighter.”\*\*

It is worthy of note that Roger Lowe similarly identified the phenomenon as “*a comett*” and, contrary to what we might have expected given his strong religious convictions, did not ascribe any supernatural cause or symbolism to it. By contrast, the Puritan minister Samuel Darnforth could not resist appending “a Brief Theological Application” to his “Astronomical Description of the Late Comet or Blazing Star; As it appeared in New-England in the 9th, 10th, 11th, and in the beginning of the 12th Moneth, 1664”-

“This Blazing Star being in conjunction with diverse other awful Providences and Tokens of Wrath, calls upon us to awake out of security, and to bring forth fruits meet for Repentance”.

Even John Evelyn, a founding Fellow of the Royal Society, reflected in 1680 that

“We had had several comets of late which, though I believe appear from natural causes and of themselves operate not, yet I cannot despise [i.e. disregard] them. They may be warnings from God, as they commonly are forerunners of his animadversions”.

Others whose accounts and drawings of C/1664 W1 have survived include Adam Martindale, Samuel Pepys, Isaac Newton, and (elsewhere in Europe) Giovanni Domenico Cassini, Giovanni Alfonso Borelli, Johannes Hevelius and Stanislaus Lubinetski. Illustrations by Hevelius and Lubinetski are shown above left, respectively 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> from top (2<sup>nd</sup> from the top is an anonymous drawing from a German news digest of 1665). The main image is a sketch by an unknown artist of the comet's appearance over Amsterdam.

\*<https://www.iau.org/public/themes/naming/#comets>. The “C” prefix indicates a non-periodic comet. Subsequent characters identify the timing of its appearance by date and in relation to that of any other observed comet during the same half-month period.

\*\*“Matasaburou”, as he was then known, continued to document the comet's appearance over his hometown of Tosa (now Kochi, on the south coast of Shikoku Island) through December and January and into February 1665. A full translation of his account, with commentary, begins at <http://www.renshaworks.com/jastro/matasab.htm>.)