

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 3 : 1665

(This edition: February 2024)

1665

“I went to Leigh, and schoole M[aste]r had gotton me leave to goe with hime to Mr Woods”



“[1665, January] 1. —I went to Leigh and schoole M[aste]r had gotton me leave to goe with hime to Mr Woods to be all night but I refused to goe for this time. Att noone my sistr Ellin came to me in the church yard and we both of us went to see my fathr and mothers grave and stayd a while and both wept. Went to my sistrs Katherins and we had 2d in ale and so parted. I went into church and there was given some christenings and I went out again for my M[aste]r[’s] son was to come with me and dayes ware short so I resolved to come home.”*

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

The identity of the Leigh school-master referred to here is uncertain. After John Battersby (mentioned elsewhere in the Diary) the next school-master of whom we have a definite record is William Richardson. Mr Richardson occurs in the university admission records of ex-Leigh Grammar School pupils from 1671, and in the Parish Registers - first as “Schoolemaster of Westleigh” and then as “Schoolemaster of Pennington” - from 1667. However, a Richard Croston of Leigh, “Schoolmaster”, is said to have subscribed to the Book of Common Prayer etc on the occasion of the Archbishop of York's Visitation in 1669 (Borthwick Institute ref. V.1669-70/Exh.Bk,

and corresponding Subscription Books). As John Lunn writes, Lowe's "omission to record even a surname has withdrawn partial light from a dark and obscure page of the school's history".**

The Grammar School was re-built on its original site in 1719, the location being referenced in indentures of 26 and 27 November 1770: "the edifice and building adjoining Leigh church-yard, within Pennington, commonly called the School or School-house".

The photograph shows the 18th century building at an unknown date prior to its sudden collapse in 1919. (In the meanwhile, the School had relocated to new premises in 1889.)

*The Registers indicate two christenings in the Parish Church on this date: "William s. William Crompton of Bedford" and "Katherin d. William Spakeman of Astley" (Manchester Archives, ref. L211/1/1).

**Quoted text - and photograph - from "The History of Leigh Grammar School (Lancashire), 1592-1932", Sherrat & Hughes, Manchester, 1935.

“he died at Thomas Gerards house in Windle”



“[1665, January] 9.—Munday. I was sent to the funerall of my brothers child cald Ralph [he] dyd att Thomas Gerards house in Windle and was buryd att St Ellins this same day.”

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

The manor of Windle had passed by marriage from the de Windhull to the de Burnhull family in the 13th century* and then - with the other de Burnhull lands in and around Ashton-in-Makerfield - to the Gerards of Kingsley around 1335. An enquiry into the affairs of Sir Thomas Gerard of Kingsley and Bryn, great-grandfather of the first baronet, found that he had died in 1416 “seisitus de manerio de Windhill et illud tenuit de Johanne filio et herede Willi'mi Botiller chivaler ut de manerio de Weryngton per servitum militare et per servitum 20d per annum quod valet per annum ultra repisas 20 marc”.** The first baronet's father, also Sir Thomas, declared in 1552/3 that he was “lawfully seised in his demesne as of fee, as of his own proper inheritance, of divers messuages, lands, and tenements within Wyndell”. The “lands” included a “chapel, called Wyndell Chapel, standing within his park called Wyndell Parke, for the ease of tenants dwelling near thereabouts”.***

The Thomas Gerard of Roger Lowe's Diary was a younger brother of 3rd baronet Sir William Gerard (1612-81). The location of the 17th century residence is uncertain but it was probably on or near the site of the present Windle Hall, parts of which date from 1782. Occupied for much of the 19th and 20th centuries by the Pilkington family of glass-manufacturing fame, the property was recently offered for sale by auction with a guide price of £1.9 million.

Roger Lowe's nephew had been born the previous October, the child's funeral taking place three

months to the day after his baptism at Prescott (*"I was ingaged to be the one godfather and Raphe Ralshe near Carr Mill was the othr and my coz Ann Shey was godmothr"*). He is called "Raph" in the appended list of *"such as dyd within My Aprentiship"*. Further misfortune was to befall the diarist's brother and sister-in-law in May 1665, when

"my Brother with his wife came with his beasts removing out of Windle into Houghton to Dazy Hillock to Petr Rylands house he [tha]t was the sequestor and I brought them towards Houghton and I was exceedingly troubled in my mind for my poor Brother".

Main image: "Near Windle Hall, St Helens", from a late 19th century postcard; the colour photographs of the Hall and grounds were taken in 2017.

*Marriage of Avice, daughter and heiress of Alan de Windhull, to Peter de Burnhull; National Archives ref. KB 27/12: Coram Rege Chief Justice's roll, Michaelmas 2/3 Edw I (1274).

**W Langton (ed), "Abstracts of inquisitions post mortem made by Christopher Towneley and Roger Dodsworth", in Chetham Soc. O. S. Vol. 95, 1875.

*** From "Pleadings and Depositions in the Duchy Court of Lancaster, Part 3: Edward VI and Philip & Mary" in Rec. Soc. Lancs. and Ches. Vol. 40, H Fishwick (ed), 1899.

“Gyles Greenes house”



“[1665, January] 14th. —saturday. Thomas Smith and I went to younge Mr. Woods’ in Atherton where he lived with his wife in Gyles Greenes house. As we went we called of John Hampson in Hindley who brought us to Mr. Woods house ... and John and I stayed awhile then parted.”

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

“*Younge Mr Woods*” was James Wood, son of the ejected minister - also James – of Ashton-in-Makerfield.

According to John Lunn's “Atherton, Lancashire: A Manorial, Social and Industrial History” (Atherton UDC, 1971)-

“An early stalwart worshipper in the old Bent chapel was Giles Green, the great friend of the elder James Wood... Green lived at the Green Hall, a home of Puritan sentiment and piety where the ejected minister of the old chapel found asylum in the turbulence of the intolerant times in which he lived....”.

Giles Green was born at Atherton around 1605, he and his father - also Giles - both occurring in the Lancashire Protestation Returns for 1642.* The younger Giles married Isabel Pendlebury at Leigh on 4 June 1630. He died in 1661, and was buried at Leigh on 27 April.** A will dated 23 April 1661 refers to “my house messuage and tenement with its appurtenances situate in Atherton” comprising “the Parlor”, “the chamber over the sa[id] Parlor”, “the higher chamber” and “the buttery” etc, all of which was left to eldest son Edward.*** Atherton historian T H Hope identifies the property as the former Green Hall Farm - now the site of Marlborough Road etc on the west side of Bolton Road, facing the existing Green Hall.****

*“Lancaster C” (Salford Hundred), at Parliamentary Archives ref. HL/PO/JO/10/1/95.

**Registers of the Parish of St Mary The Virgin, Leigh, at Manchester Archives & Local Studies ref. L211/1/1.

***“Will of Giles Green yeoman of Atherton”, Lancashire Archives ref. WCW/Supra/C159A/27.

Other bequests include “my greate Byble and other booke of Mr Pickins [presumably William Perkins, 1558-1602, author of “How To Live, And That Well” etc] worke”. Whilst James Wood is nowhere mentioned in the document, provision is made for a sum of £10 to be “used & improved to the best advantage together with what other moneys either already is or hereafter may bee given to Atherton Chappell to & for the maintenance of a preaching minister att the sayd chappell for ever...”. “Mr Tildsley Monister of Gods Word att Deane Church” - Rev John Tilsley (1614-1684) - was to “setle all things & pvent all strife if any shall arise a[m]ongst any herein concerned”. The Will was proven on 23 June 1663.

****Cited in J J Wright, “The Story of Chowbent Chapel” (1921).

Images:

Left- Green Hall, Atherton, photographed on 15 September 2023.

Right, from top-

Leigh Parish Register extracts: “Gyles Green Izabell Pendleberie” marriage, 4 June 1630; “Giles Greene of Atherton” burial, 27 April 1661.

Detail from 1947 OS map, surveyed in 1938.

17th century tobacco pipe fragments and bottles found in the grounds of the present Chowbent Chapel.

“all afternoone we shofled att table”



“[1665, January] 15th. — We all went to Houghton Chapell and heard Mr Lever preach. Att noone John Hampson tooke me home with hime to dinner the next day we intended home but Mr Woods would not suffer us but all afternoone we shofled att table in bent there was Tho Moxon and I and Petr Twisse playd with Mr Woods and his partners we beat them....”
[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

A day earlier Roger Lowe and his friend Thomas Smith had set out from Ashton to visit “*younge Mr Woods*” at Atherton. John Hampson had joined them as they passed through Hindley. “*Mr Lever*” was possibly John Leaver, afterwards curate at Leigh and then (from 1672) vicar at Bolton-le-Moors.

The game referred to here is shuffleboard, an ancestor of the more familiar “shove ha’penny”. Joseph Strutt gives a description in his “*Sports and Pastimes of the People of England*”, first published in 1801:

“At one end of the shovel-board there is a line drawn across parallel with the edge, and about three or four inches from it; at four feet distance from this line another is made, over which it is necessary for the weight to pass when it is thrown by the player, otherwise the go is not reckoned. The players stand at the end of the table, opposite to the two marks above mentioned, each of them having four flat weights of metal, which they shove from them one at a time alternately: and the judgement of the play is, to give sufficient impetus to the weight to carry it beyond the mark nearest to the edge of the board, which requires great nicety, for if it be too strongly impelled, so as to fall from the

table, and there is nothing to prevent it, into a trough placed underneath for its reception, the throw is not counted; if it hangs over the edge, without falling, three are reckoned towards the player's game; if it lie between the line and the edge without hanging over, it tells for two; if on the line, and not up to it, but over the first line, it counts for one. The game, when two play, is generally eleven; but the number is extended when four or more are jointly concerned. I have seen a shovel-board table at a low public house in Benjamin Street, near Clerkenwell Green, which is about three feet in breadth and thirty-nine feet two inches in length, and said to be the longest at this time in London”.

The above illustration shows a game in progress with, on the left and partly out of frame, another area set aside for playing bowls. The location, date and artist are not known, but I suspect it is a fair representation of the kind of establishment frequented by Roger Lowe and his friends in and around Ashton in the 1660s. Shuffleboard's popularity at this time is also evidenced by the diary of Lowe's London contemporary, Samuel Pepys. For example, on 11 June 1664-

“thence to Hackney. There 'light, and played at shuffle-board, eat cream and good churies; and so with good refreshment home”.

Locally, the game was revived with the installation of a table at the Stubshaw Cross Labour Club in 2022-



A 23-ft long shuffleboard table - reputedly the longest surviving example - can be viewed at Astley Hall, Chorley.

It is noteworthy that, just as his father was partial to a quart of ale and a pipe of tobacco, so James Wood junior had, apparently, no qualms about spending an entire afternoon playing pub games. (15 January 1665 was a Sunday, but Lowe may be describing the following day's activities when he mentions their “*shofling att table*”.) The younger Mr Wood had been made minister at Atherton chapel in 1657, and would later be imprisoned for preaching in defiance of the Act of Uniformity.

In this entry as elsewhere in the Diary Lowe uses an abbreviated form of “Chowbent”, the old name for Atherton from about 1350. The Chowls or Cholles were a local family of tenant farmers. According to a footnote in the 1911 Victoria History of the County of Lancaster, “bent' is the grass *juncus squarrosus*, called in Lancashire 'goose corn', upon the ripe seeds of which grouse feed largely in autumn”.

“Ann Woods”



“1665, January] 15th.—... The other [next?] day we came home. Ann Woods and Mr Woods maid came with us and att Ashton we took them into Alehouse and promised them to come to them att Widow Clarkes in Windle but I could not.”

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

Anne Wood, née Townley, was born about 1645. She is possibly the “Anne Townley filia Richardi Townley de Farnworth” whose baptism on 28 September 1645 is recorded in the registers of St Mary The Virgin, Deane.* Her marriage to the son of ejected Ashton minister James Wood, also James, is said by Roger Lowe to have occurred on Thursday 18 June 1663.** She is separately mentioned by Lowe in his Diary entry for 24 April 1664: “when I came to Leigh young Mr Woods wife did very earnestly envite me home with her att noon”.

Anne died on 19 May 1724 and is buried with her daughter-in-law in the grounds of the second Chowbent Chapel, erected in 1721. So far as I can make out, the stone covering their grave is inscribed as follows:

“Memento mori ... Remember dying \ Here Resteth the Body of \ Anne the Wife of y[e] Reverend \ Mr James Wood Senior \ [who] departed this Life the 19th day \ [of] May Annoq[ue] Domini \ 1724. \ Also Hannah the Wife of the \ Reverend Mr James Wood \ [J]unior who departed this Life \ the 17th day of August 1726. \ To the memory \ of \ The Reverend Thomas Rawlins \ the Minister of Wharton who \ departed this Life 15th of January \ [1787] in the 31 Year of his Age”.**

*Now at Manchester Archives & Local Studies ref. L85/1/1/1.

**Diary entry for 21 June 1663. The marriage seems not to have been entered in any of the local

registers.

***Rev. Rawlins does not appear to have been related to the grave's female occupants. The Chowbent Chapel register at National Archives ref. RG 4/48 has “Revd Thos Rawlins of Wharton \ Was Buried Jan. 19 1787”.

Images:

Left, from top-

Chowbent Chapel interior, including the 18th century triple-decker pulpit and memorial to Anne's son, James Wood III, “whose active exertions founded this place of public worship. He died February 20th, 1759, having served this Society as a Christian Minister with affection and fidelity more than 60 years”.

Grave of Anne and Hannah Wood, and Rev. Thomas Rawlins.

Right-

The Grade II*-listed Chowbent Chapel of 1721 at Atherton, west side.

The photographs were taken on 15 September 2023.

“I went to Blacky Hurst”



“[1665, February] 9.—Thursday. I went to Blacky Hurst to the funerall of Thomas Blakeburne who was buryd at Winwicke.”

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

Blackley Hurst Hall is situated off the present-day B5207 between Billinge and Ashton-in-Makerfield. The term “Blakeleiebroc” occurs in a description of lands given by Adam de Billinge to the Canons of Cockersand Abbey in the year 1212. The “-hurst” suffix may originally have denoted a wooded hillock or copse.* There is speculation that Blackley Hurst was at one time entirely surrounded by a moat.**

The existence of a residence at the site in the 16th century is indicated by testamentary and other documents of the Winstanley and Bankes families.*** The Hearth Tax assessments for Billinge Chapel End at National Archives ref. E179/250/11 show “Mr Blackburne of Blackleyhurst” being liable for tax on 8 hearths in 1664. Further particulars of the house and lands associated with it are given in documents concerning changes of ownership and occupation in the 17th and 18th centuries.**** By 1812 “the forlorn country-seat” was said to be “tumbling down with damp and dry-rot”.***** Mine-owner Samuel Stock, who became a tenant in 1836, seems to have embarked on a series of improvements. A site visit by the county archaeologist in 1982 found the main part of the house at that time to date from about 1840. An older building adjoining to the north, of stone up to first floor level with suggestions of (at one time) a possible timber upper storey, was sandwiched between this and another 19th century addition, and may have been a remnant of that visited by Roger Lowe in 1665. The foundations of a still earlier building were found in the yard during 1980s renovation works. Some elements of the (presumed) 17th century building are retained in the present Blackley Hurst Hall.

Thomas Blackburne (c.1622-65) completed his education at Oxford, matriculating in 1639 and becoming a Bachelor of Divinity in 1662. He was ordained in 1645 and served first at Rivington and then at Newton-le-Willows, being described by the Church Survey of 1650 as a “godly

preaching minister [who] did come into the said place by ye consent of the whole chapelrie, and supplieth the cure diligently upon the Lords Dayes” (National Archives ref. C94/4). Roger Lowe heard him preach at Newton on 14 August 1664. The Winwick Registers at Cheshire Archives ref. P 158/1/2 confirm his burial on 9 February 1665 as stated by Lowe. An inventory of the goods of “Thos. Blackburn of Blackleyhurst, clerke”, some of which were said to be “at Crowlane House in Newton”, is dated 20 April 1665 but for some reason was not filed until 1669 (Lancashire Archives ref. WCW/Supra/C177A/38 ; Crow-lane House was afterwards sold by Thomas' son, William Blackburne, to John Stirrup of Newton).

*British Library (Manuscript Collections) ref. Add MS 37769, fol 96b: “SCIANT, [etc.], quod ego Adam, etc., dedi, [etc.], unam porcionem terrae meae in Bulling, scilicet, medietatem de Crochurste, et tocius terrae tarn boscum quam planum infra has diuisas, a Swineputtecloch usque ad Bircheleiebroc, et ita sequendo easdem diuisas usque in Blakeleiebroc, et iterum ab eodem Swineputtecloch in transuersum per terram Galfridi Turnemerley, usque in cloch qui descendit in Bircheleibroc, Cum communione et eisiamentis feodi mei praedictae uillae pertinentibus; in puram et perpetuam, etc., quietam ab omni seculari seruicio, et liberam tarn in glandibus quam in pascuis, tarn in viridi quam in sicco, ad sustentacionem illorum qui eandem elemosinam de praedictis fratribus tenuerint; pro salute animae meae, [etc.] Hiis testibus”. See also Eilert Eckhart's “The Place Names of Lancashire” (Manchester UP 1922): “The place is situated at a hill”.

**“The Medieval Earthworks of the Hundred of West Derby: Tenurial Evidence and Physical Structure”, Jennifer Lewis, BAR British Series 310 (2000). William Yates depicts an enclosure of some sort on his map of 1786/7. The pond adjacent to the existing Blackley Hurst Hall and a smaller body of water to the west, both included on Richard Thornton's Tithe Map of Billinge Chapel End in 1842, may be surviving elements of a water-filled moat.

***The 12 March 1555 will of James Winstanley, now at Lancashire Archives ref. WCW/Supra/C1/61, indicates that a house existed at “bracklihurst” at that time. “The tenants of Blackleyhurst” are mentioned in a letter of 2 August 1597 (transcribed in “James Bankes and the Manor of Winstanley, 1595-1607”, Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches. Vol. 94/1942). A later “ James Winstanley of Blakle horst” agreed the sale of 5 tenements to James Bankes of Winstanley on 14 June 1611 (“Early Records of the Bankes Family at Winstanley”, Chetham Soc. 1973), having on 6 February that year been cited for fraud in a complaint by his father-in-law Roger Rigby (Kenyon MS, at Lancashire Archives DDKE/1/8).

**** A series of documents included with the Gerard Estate Papers at Lancashire Archives, starting at ref. DDGE(M) 426, gives the history of the “Capital Messuage or Manor House called Blackleyhurst” from 1617 when it passed from James Winstanley to the Blackburne family. Commencing at ref. DDGE(M) 439, which is dated 1764, are details of mortgages raised on the property by Jane Crichton (née Blackburne) and her children. DDGE(M) 457 records that, on 14 March 1798, the Blackley Hurst Estate was conveyed by Messrs Geldart, The Hon Richard Jones his wife, their trustees and creditors to Sir William Gerard, Baronet. Bundled with the conveyance are lists of the Gerards' tenants and particulars of further mortgages raised on the estate up to the end of 1801.

*****From “Henry Fothergill Chorley: Autobiography, Memoir, and Letters, compiled by H G Hewlett”, Vol 1 published by Richard Bentley & Son 1873. Chorley was born at Blackley Hurst in 1808; he recalled his birthplace as “a dilapidated country-seat, near Billinge, in Lancashire, one of those which belonged to the Catholic family of the Gerards, and which was let to my father at a reduced rent....”.

Images:

Left, from top: Extract from William Yates' map of 1786/7; extract from a plan included at Lancashire Archives ref. DDGE(E) 914 with a lease to Samuel Stock of “Coal Mines in Billinge” dated 30 March 1836; tracing of a part of R Thornton's 1842 Tithe Map of Billinge Chapel End at Lancashire Archives ref. DRL 1/8; 2004 site plan; modern birds-eye view looking across the site

from east to west.

Main picture: Mid-1970s view of Blackley Hurst Hall from the north-east. Samuel Stock's neoclassical addition of c.1840, since demolished, is furthest from the camera position. My thanks to Ian Bonnell for allowing publication of the photograph taken by his father, W E Bonnell.

“Mr Crompton preached and I was glad of it”



“[1665, March] 26.—lords day. I went to Leigh and John Chadocke and I walked after Broakeside in Slatefields at noone discousing about my effairs and my M[aste]r att our returne into Towne I went into George Norris house to old Mr Woods who was there and stayd awhile then went into church and Mr Crompton preached and I was glad of it.”

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

Thomas Crompton, son of William Crompton of The Grange, Bedford, completed his education at Exeter College, Oxford, in 1630. Appointed minister of the chapel - now St Stephen's Church - at Astley, he was ejected for nonconformity in 1662. “Yet 7 or 8 years after”, writes Edmund Calamy, “he preached again in this chapel, reading some few prayers, without subscribing. He died Feb 2, 1691, about 82 years of age. He was a great scholar, well acquainted with the fathers, particularly Austin, of most of whose works he could give a very exact account. He left a considerable library, and a good name. He was a man of universal charity, a true catholic Christian, of an exact inoffensive conduct, and a rare example of self-denial and mortification, with respect to wordly pleasures, profits or honours”.* How he was able to get away with preaching at Leigh in 1665, presumably without a licence, is not entirely clear.

“Old Mr Woods” was James Wood, the ejected former minister of Ashton-in-Makerfield.

The present Church of St Mary The Virgin at Leigh dates mainly from a rebuilding by the Lancaster architects Paley and Austin in 1871-3. My photograph of the nave, taken on 23 August 2023, looks towards the tower screen (1894) by Messrs Hatch of Lancaster at the west end of the nave. The oak roof of the old church - a piece of which, preserved separately in a cabinet at the back of the church, is inscribed "1616" - now covers only the north aisle. The clergy and choir stalls in the foreground, also by Messrs Hatch, are carved with verses from the "Te Deum".

*Edmund Calamy, "The Nonconformist's Memorial...", 2nd ed (1878) Vol 2.

“and so went to one Mr Lawrence Hallewells”



“[1665, April] 2. —lords day. John Hasleden and I went to the Lees beyond Holland to heare Mr Baldwin preach and att Hugh Worthington[’s] in Holland we ware to meet Thomas Tickle and other Reinford men which we did and stayd drinkinge of 8d and so went to one Mr Lawrence Hallewell[’s] where Mr Baldwin was and preacht in the forenoon but we ware prevented with some women that came into house and some of them ware papists so we ware forced to come home before laetr sermon was preached and att Holland we stayd drinkeinge of 12d and then parted home but Thomas Tickle paid it.”

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

The Grade II*-listed former yeoman's house of 1671 at Halliwell Farm is situated on the north side of Lees Lane, Upholland. Associated with it is a Grade II-listed barn and adjoining cowshed, dated (on the west side) “1663”.

The Halliwells of Upholland were probably related to the family of that name at South Tunley Hall, Wrightington. Both families had a tradition of naming the first-born son, in alternate generations, either Lawrence or Robert. A settlement of 1683* between (a) “Lawrence Hallywell of Upholland, gent, and Robert, his son and heir”, (b) Alexander Mawdesley esq and (c) “Robert Hallywall of Tunley in Wrightinton, gent” and others, in contemplation of Robert's marriage to Dorothy, daughter of Alexander Mawdesley, rehearses that a freehold estate in the Lees area of Upholland had been acquired by Lawrence Halliwell from Ralph Brownlow in 1653. The house was substantially altered by the Halliwells, works which saw the number of hearths reduce from 6 to 5** and which are now commemorated by the “H L A 1671” date-stone on the porch. Further

structural changes were made during the 18th century. A date-stone inscribed “RB 1649” was found in a nearby field in the early 1980s, and is now displayed above the fireplace in the parlour.

The Halliwells may have had a longer association with the Parish Church of St Thomas The Martyr, Upholland, as the initials “LH” and the date “1635” are inscribed at the end of one of the pews in the south aisle.***

The Lawrence Halliwell of the Diary was clearly an important and wealthy man, though the source of his wealth remains obscure. The burial of “Thomas Bradgshewe serivant to Mr Lorance Halliwal” is recorded on 17 May 1661. Halliwell was a churchwarden in 1663-4, became a High Constable for West Derby in 1677 and was chosen to be an assessor for the Manor Court in 1678. He also occurs as a donor to and trustee of the grammar school at Upholland. A visit to his grandson (another Lawrence) by the diarist and diocesan registrar Henry Prescott on 27 May 1717 prompted the recollection of an earlier visit:

“About 4, in a soft rain, set out thro Holland to the Leese to see Mr Halliwell and his wife. They receive mee civilly & with good Ale, in the silver Cup which I gave his Grandfather in 1678.”*⁴

Identifying the “*Mr Baldwin*” of the Diary is made more difficult by the fact that, on each of the three occasions when he occurs, Lowe fails to supply a first name for him. Suggestions that he was Richard Baldwin or his successor as minister of Upholland (and a possible relative) Samuel Baldwin - otherwise Boden, Bowden etc - can probably be dismissed on the basis that the latter, at least, was dead by 1665. This leaves as the more likely candidate Roger Baldwin, “a Judicious Divine ... of good Parts and an agreeable Temper”, who had been ejected from the ministry at Rainford in 1662 and was by 1665 residing at Chisnall Hall, Coppull. Another diarist, Henry Newcombe, confirms that this Mr Baldwin continued preaching clandestinely after 1662-

“ffriday, Mar 27, 1663: ... At 7 Mr B. preached on Rev. xiii. Here is ye faith and patience of ye S[ain]ts. A very seasonable & profitable descourse”

- and on 17 August 1665 he again occurs in the Letter Book of Sir Roger Bradshaigh as a suspected insurrectionist.*⁵

It is interesting to note that proceedings at the Halliwell residence on 2 April 1665 were brought to a premature close by the arrival of some Catholic women. Whilst the Recusant Roll of 1641 names only 7 Upholland Catholics, the martyr John Thewlis is said to have been born there c.1568 and the patronising of his lodgings at Upholland by “many papists” was one of several “inconveniences” that, in 1642, had prompted Adam Martindale to quit his teaching position there. A footnote in the Victoria County History states that the Halliwells of Wrightington “adhered to the Roman Catholic religion”.*⁶

*Lancashire Archives ref. DDAL 117. Associated with the settlement are: a deed of surrender (DDAL 100), whereby Lawrence and Alice Halliwell surrendered the properties named in the settlement to the use of Thomas Mort and another, on trust for Robert and Dorothy and subject to an annuity of £20; and a deed of assignment (DDAL 102), stating that Lawrence and Alice were to continue to occupy part of what is now Halliwell Farm, including the “old parlour” and the chamber above it. A statement of no lawful impediment in respect of the Robert Halliwell/Dorothy Mawdesley marriage is in “Marriage Bonds & Allegations” at Cheshire Archives ref. EDC8. The marriage, on 22 December 1683, is in the register of St Michael & All Angels, Croston, at Lancashire Archives ref. PR3128: “Robert Halliwell of Upholland and Dorathy Maudsley of Maudsley, married at Croston with Licence”. Robert was buried at Upholland on 23.5.1715.

**Hearth Tax assessments at National Archives refs. E179/250/8 (1663), E179/250/11 (1664) and E179/132/355 (1673).

***This would seem to be “the seat to LH” referred to in a conveyance of 1726, Lancashire Archives ref. DDAL 105, whereby a later Lawrence Halliwell purchased from Thomas Bispham, for 3 guineas, an adjacent seat in the south aisle “together with 7 ancient burial places under the same”. Associated with the conveyance is DDAL 107, “Confirmation to Lawrence Halliwell of the Lees in Upholland, gent., to make his 2 seats in Upholland Chapel into one”, sealed on 17.1.1728.

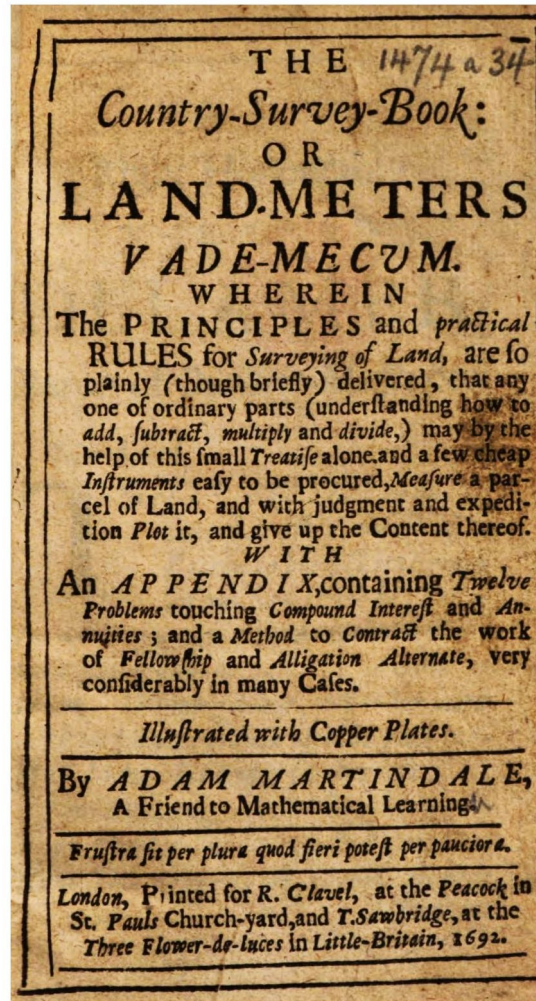
*⁴ Henry Prescott's diary is at Cheshire Archives ref. D5409. In an earlier entry, dated 14.9.1689, he describes an encounter with Robert Halliwell and his wife Dorothy, née Mawdesley: “We greet Mrs Halliwell and her husband, a woman made by nature for dissimulation and pretence, extolling some people deceitfully, secretly injuring most, busying herself in others' affairs, of doubtful character, very sharp – prolix, forward and petulant in politics. She receives us in her style, he in his.”

*⁵ “The Diary of the Rev Henry Newcome...”, in Chetham Soc. Vol. 18 (1849); Letter Book of Sir Roger Bradshaigh, Manchester Archives & Local Studies ref. L1/48/6/1. Roger Baldwin was baptised at Wigan on 28.11.1624, the 4th of 6 children of William Baldwin, pewterer, of Standishgate. Lowe heard him preach again on 9.7.1667 at James Lowe's house, Newton Common, and on 7.3.1669 at the home of his cousin, Robert Rosbotham (“*heard Mr. Baldwin preach out of 8 Romans, 25, 26 verses*”). Despite being on the wrong side of the law after 1662, the authorities seem to have been fairly lenient with him. In 1671 prosecutor Nicholas Mosley accepted payment by others on his behalf of a £20 fine on account of his “being a very poore man and in noe wise able to pay the same” (Manchester Sessions MS, Manchester Central Library). Signing himself “your loveing freind”, Sir Roger Bradshaigh wrote to him on 24.4.1674: “Since Mr Deane of Salisbury hath taken notice of your Unlawfull meeting and Preaching at Copull Chapell I must look upon it as an Informacion, & Consequently proceede against [you]; wich I shall bee unwilling to doe if I may be encouraged to beleve that you will desist...”. He lived out his final years at Eccles (where he had begin his ministry, in 1646), and was buried at Manchester on 8 June 1695. An inventory of his possessions in 1695 is at Lancashire Archives ref. WCW/Supra/C267/7.

*⁶ “A Rowle of Callender of the Names of all the Convicted Recusants [etc]”, in Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches. Vol. 50 (1898); “The Life of Adam Martindale written by himself...”, in Chetham Soc. Vol. 4 (1845); 'Townships: Wrightington', in A History of the County of Lancaster: Vol. 6, ed. William Farrer and J Brownbill (London, 1911). John Thewlis (otherwise Thules, Thulis etc) was hung, drawn at quartered at Lancaster in 1617 for refusing to swear an oath that he considered at variance with his Catholic faith. See Bishop Richard Challoner's “Memoirs of missionary priests [etc]”, J H Pollen (ed), (1924). He was afterwards venerated (10.11.1986) and beatified (22.11.1987) by Pope John Paul II.

The photographs were taken on 19 October and (left, below) 20 September 2019.

“There was Mr Martindale”



“[1665, May] 15.—Munday night. I went [to] be all night att John Robinson’s[. T]here was old Mr Woods and Mr Martindale.”

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

Adam Martindale was born at Prescott on or about 15 September 1623. Like Roger Lowe he kept a diary, described by its editor for the Chetham Society as containing “the most intimate thoughts, feelings and actions of one who was formed by, and the very creature of, the times, nursed from his cradle in the atmosphere of that great revolution [i.e. the English Civil War] and mixing from his childhood in the military and religious turmoils which then agitated every portion of society...”.*

Martindale's plans to proceed to Oxford following his education at St Helens and Rainford were frustrated by the outbreak of war, leading him instead to take a succession of teaching posts. In 1644 he was approved to preach at Gorton and was formally ordained on 25 July 1649, by which date he had accepted an invitation to become minister to the church at Rostherne, Chester. During the Civil War he threw in his lot with the Parliamentarians** but by 1659 had come round to the view “that a king and a free parliament [was] the only government for the regular making and execution of lawes under which I could comfortably act and suffer”. At the Restoration in 1660, “no man did more truly rejoice than I”. Nevertheless, in 1661, he was indicted first for failure to read out an order against unlawful assemblies and later for refusing to use the Book of Common Prayer. Like others of his persuasion, he was formally deprived of his position in the Church of England by the Act of Uniformity.*** Thereafter Martindale embarked on the life of a

nonconformist minister, sustaining himself and his family through private tutoring and later enjoying the protection and patronage of George Booth (1622-84), Baron Delamer, to whom he became resident chaplain.

Aside from his autobiography, a number of books on both religious and non-religious subjects were written by Martindale and several of them were published during his lifetime. Among these, completed in October 1681, was "The country-survey-book: or Land-meters vade-mecum; Wherein the principles and practical rules for surveying of land, are so plainly (though briefly) delivered, that any one of ordinary parts (understanding how to add, subtract, multiply and divide) may by the help of this small treatise alone and a few cheap instruments easy to be procured, measure a parcel of land, and with judgment and expedition plot it, and give up the content thereof...". Signing himself "A Friend to Mathematical Learning" and a "humble and faithful (though unworthy) Servant to all Your Lordship's Noble Family", Martindale dedicated the work to his employer, George Booth.

This first appearance of Adam Martindale in Roger Lowe's diary is possibly explained by the fact that Martindale's sister, Margaret, had recently died at Ashton-in-Makerfield "and was there buried".*⁴

Adam Martindale himself died in 1686 at Leigh and was buried at Rostherne.

Throughout the period covered by the Diary, John Robinson's house at Rainford was frequently the setting for nonconformist preaching and prayer meetings. On 18 October 1673 Lowe records that "*this night about 12 o'clocke dyed old John Robinson [and] was buryd at Chappell*".

*Preface to "The Life of Adam Martindale written by himself...", in Chetham Soc. Vol. 4 (1845). Martindale's original manuscript is at British Library ref. BL Add MS 4239.

**"though mine office was all along to employ my penne, not my sword, and to spend inke, not spill blood".

***"such things were required as I could not satisfie myselfe to comply with".

*⁴ "She was", Martindale says, "the last of all my father's children save myselfe". Margaret may have been the sister who, in 1641, had married "a noted royalist". He also refers to "my brother-in-law Wm Hey" and "my brother and sister Hill". Other than these there are no clues to what Margaret's surname was at the time of her death, and no obvious reference to her burial in the (Winwick) parish register.

“to Pemberton to see the burneing well”



“[1665, June] 1. —Thursday. I went with Sarah Jenkinsons brotherley [brother-in-law] and brother to Henry ffrances in Pemberton to see the burneing well and we had 2 eggs which was so done by no materiall fire...”

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

The first published description of the “burning well” or “ditch” on the Hawkley estate at Pemberton is contained in a letter of 25 August 1663 from Roger Bradshaigh of Haigh to Richard Gerrard Esq. The letter, preserved in the Royal Society archives, identifies the location as “an old grown-up ditch in Mr Molyneux of Hawkley's ground near Wiggan in Lancashire” and records how Mrs Molyneux invited their guests “to the eating of a Hen and Bacon boiled by that fire”.

The next account, written by Thomas Shirley in 1667, appeared as “Description of a Well and Earth in Lancashire taking Fire by a Candle approached to it” in the Royal Society's journal, “Philosophical Transactions”. Shirley deduced that it was not the water in the ditch that was burning but, rather, “bituminous or sulphurous fumes” finding their way up through the water from subterranean coal deposits.

Some years later, probably in 1683, a visit was made by the Rev John Clayton DD. Procuring a sample of coal from a nearby pit, he placed the sample in a retort over an open fire and eventually succeeded in distilling from it first a liquid, then a black oil and then “a Spirit ... which I could in

noways condense”. Rev Clayton found that he was able to collect and store the “Spirit” in bladders, subjecting it to controlled burning as required by allowing a quantity to escape through a pin hole. He communicated his discovery by letter to the acclaimed natural philosopher, chemist, physicist and inventor, Robert Boyle. It appears that Rev Clayton was then distracted by other interests and by the demands of his career and family. Boyle seems, uncharacteristically, not to have appreciated the significance of the discovery. At any rate, it was only when a copy of the letter was found by Rev Clayton's eldest son several decades later that his experiments were brought to the attention of a wider audience. The distillation, storage and transmission processes were in due course perfected by James Murdock, an engineer with the firm Boulton & Watt, who in 1792 installed a system of gas-lighting at his own home and, later, at his employer's factory in Smethwick, Birmingham.

As Alan Davies has pointed out in “The Burning Wells of Wigan” (Past Forward Issue 37, July-November 2004), the occurrence of flammable gases in the natural environment had been known in Ancient Greece. At about the same time natural gas was also being burned by the Chinese in a process to obtain salt from sea water. Nevertheless, Pemberton residents can perhaps claim that their community was the first to make regular use of gas as a cooking fuel. The Burning Well of Hawkley was a must-see attraction for travellers in the 17th and 18th centuries, recommended by such publications as Emanuel Bowen's “A Complete System of Geography” (1747) and William Bancks' “England Described: Or, The Traveller's Companion, Containing Whatever is Curious in the Several Counties, Cities, Boroughs, Market Towns and Villages of Note in the Kingdom” (1788). Doubtless many of these visitors were prevailed upon by enterprising locals to try ham and/or eggs cooked over the mysterious fire.

By the end of the 18th century, according to William Bancks, “this burning well, as it was called, [was] lost, supposed to be owing to the coal works about the Hawkley demesne, near where it was”. Of course the topography of the area has been much altered since then, and it may be that the location in my photograph – taken near present-day Killington Close at grid ref SD578029 on 9 July 2015 - is not the place visited by Roger Lowe and others. But, if not the exact spot, it cannot have been too far away.

“went to the Alley and played att bowles”



“[1665, June] 5.—Munday. Daniell Chadocke was come to towne to meete Mr Taylor who was come over and gone to his unkle Stirrope we went Daniell Chadocke John Jenkinson and I to Goleborne Copp and sent to Mr Taylor to have hime come thithr and when he came we went to the Alley and played att bowles and annon Mr Pottr came and Mr Widdowes John Jenkins and I beat Mr Pottr Mr Taylor and Mr Chaddocke in each of them 4d in ale.”

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

Bowling greens began to appear at the homes of the gentry in the 14th century but the sport was almost immediately banned for members of the lower classes for fear that it would keep them from their archery practice; at that time a legal obligation considered vital for defence purposes. By a statute of 1541 artificers, labourers, apprentices, servants and the like were forbidden to play bowls at any time except Christmas, and then only in their master's house and presence. Formally such restrictions remained in place until 1845, but as time went by objections to the game came to be based more on morality than on national security. Thus Stephen Gosson wrote in “School of Abuse” (1579) that “common bowling allyes are privy moths, that eate uppe the credite of many idle citizens”. Despite these moral objections and legal constraints, bowling - both what we would

now recognise as lawn bowling and pin-bowling or skittles - was widely enjoyed in England by the 17th century, and Charles II is credited with having “settled ... rules for the Game of Bowls” in 1670.

James Bridge speculates that Golborne Copp - situated immediately north of the present Park Road, once known as Copp Lane - may have been an ancient burial mound or “barrow”, used in later centuries for archery practice-

“Nearby was the local bowling alley and possibly a green... Bowling in the alley was distinguished from bowling on the green. In the alley the bowls were circular discs... The bowling resort and the bowl house were immediately behind the residence known as Brook Villa and the house referred to as Copp House. The short road leading off Park Road by the side of Brook Villa still retains the name Bow Alley. A little distance away there used to be shallow pits known as the bow pits. The term bow is a shortened version of bowl suggested by the bowling alley...”.*

The photograph shows Bow Alley from Park Road on 29 April 2014. (Visible to the left of the Alley is “The Whitehouse” at 43a Park Rd; “Brook Villa” - 43 Park Road - is further left, and so out of frame.)

“The Copp House” is referenced by Roger Lowe in an entry dated 3 February 1666:

“Emm and I ware exceedingly falne out which greeved me sore and shee was gone with Ann Taylor towards Goleborne Coppe and I got Mathew Turton to go with me and we went and took them in Copp house I sat down with them but shee would not be moved I spent 12d and was more greeved than before”.

Lowe additionally mentions bowling at Whitledge Green and at Dentons Green, St Helens.

*From “Gleanings of Golborne History”, 1975; the work was republished as “A History of Golborne” by P & D Riley in 1997.

“waters of consolation”



“[1665, June] 11. —lords day. In the afternoone I went to Neawton to hear Mr Tayler preach I was very pensive and sad att this time in consideration of my condition in this world but God is the rocke to which I hold and the wa[t]e[r]s of consolation is still distilled from hime amidst the greatest discouragements.”

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

Taken on 17 January 2024, the above photograph looks along the nave towards the east window of the present St Peter's Church at Newton. J H Lane records that, on 10 July 1891,

“a building committee was empowered to carry out a long-contemplated extension of the church eastward of the present nave. In accordance with their instructions, the architects* prepared drawings, in the perpendicular style of architecture, which showed that a sufficiently handsome and commodious new church could be erected on the present convenient and commanding site whenever the nave should become no longer serviceable and must be rebuilt. Meanwhile, all that was intended was to erect a new chancel, organ chamber, vestry, and south choir aisle... The following year the old chancel was taken down ... and the ground was cleared for building...

The alterations took about eighteen months to complete, at a cost of £3,600... On September 29th, 1893, the chancel was consecrated by the Right Rev Dr Roston, Assistant Bishop of Liverpool...

On the 16th of July, 1895, George McCorquodale, DL, died, and shortly afterwards it was

announced that his children had decided to rebuild the nave of the church to the glory of God and in loving memory of their father. The demolition of the old nave was begun in January, 1897, and the building of the new was completed in April, 1898...".**

Lowe had also heard "*Mr Tayler*" preach at Ashton. He is distinguished from the other Taylors in the Diary only by the designation "Mr". In consequence it has not been possible to trace the preacher in other records.

*James Demaine and Walter Henry Brierley. Drawings and plans by the architects are included at Wigan Archives ref. DP 35/6/2 and in the Incorporated Church Building Society records at Lambeth Palace Library ref. ICBS 09906.

**From Volume 1 of Lane's "Newton in Makerfield: Its history, with some account of its people" (self-published, 1914).

“Mr Martindale had and could provide a good wife for me”



“[1665, June 27] tusday... I went to John Robinsons for his daughter widow Jaxon had envited me upon a privat account ... and the matter she had to equaint me was that if I ware lief[?] Mr Martindale had and could provide a good wife for me a woman in Chestr his one sisterly Major Jollyes fil [who] hath £120 to her portion...”

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

The “Mr Martindale” referred to here is the nonconformist preacher encountered by Lowe on a visit to John Robinson's house earlier in 1665. In his own diary Adam Martindale describes how, on returning to Prescott for Christmas in 1641, he

*“abhorred to live idly and burden my father, and besides I could noe more be safe there then my brother Henry, for being above eighteen yeares old (whereas sixteen would have brought me in) I was as liable to the danger of dancing attendance at the Generall Musters, and thence to Bolton, as he. To avoid both these inconveniences if possible, (though I was still rather too young), I enquired after a schoole. St Hellens was then newly disposed of, but Holland and Rainforth were both vacant. I tooke Holland, for the liker place, there being a prettie church-towne, and a great number of free-holders and considerable yeomen in the neighbourhood. But I was there subject to so many great inconveniences: I. By the discouragements that many lay under to send their children in those dayes of constant alarmes : II. By the uncomtbrtable[ness] of my habitation in a publick house, to which many papists and drunkards did frequently resort : III. By the disturbance given us by the soldiers often quartering among us, to the depriving us of our beds and chambers : IV, By the suspicion I lay under of being a round-head, (that is, one for the Parliament,) because my brother was gone to Bolton, and my father plundered upon it, and I could not cleare myselfe from it by swearing and debaucherie but would have beene quiet and meddled on no side; (for these reasons I say) I left the place when I had beene there not much above a quarter of a yeare”.**

The grammar school at Upholland seems to have been discontinued soon after Adam Martindale's

departure but was revived in the late 1650s under the patronage of the Legh family, with construction of the building that still stands to the north of School Lane - now Grade II* listed - being completed in 1661. Internal examination suggests that this was a remodelling of an earlier building, probably timber-framed and dating from the late 16th or early 17th centuries.**

On 31 December 1646 Mr Martindale had married Elizabeth, the second daughter of John Hall of Droylsden. His “Divinity Knots” (1649) - “a treatise intended specially for the instruction of young Christians in Rothstorne parish in Cheshire: but published for a further extent of the benefit thereof”- begins with a dedication to Elizabeth's step-father, James Jollie (c.1600-1666), to whom her widowed mother had been married in 1626. Originally from Wigan, Jollie was by this time living in Chester. During the Civil War he had served in the Parliamentarian army, acting as Quarter Master General under Sir Thomas Fairfax and eventually attaining the rank of major. The marriage produced several children including a daughter, Mary, who, having “£120 to her portion”, is now suggested as a possible wife for Roger Lowe. Whether the diarist ever proposed marriage to or even met Mary Jollie is doubtful: despite borrowing a horse from the Robinsons on at least two subsequent occasions to enable him to visit Chester, Lowe does not mention her again. We know from her brother's notebook that Mary eventually married a Mr (Samuel?) Dean of Manchester. Widowed by 1686, her final illness and death are described by Thomas Jollie as follows-

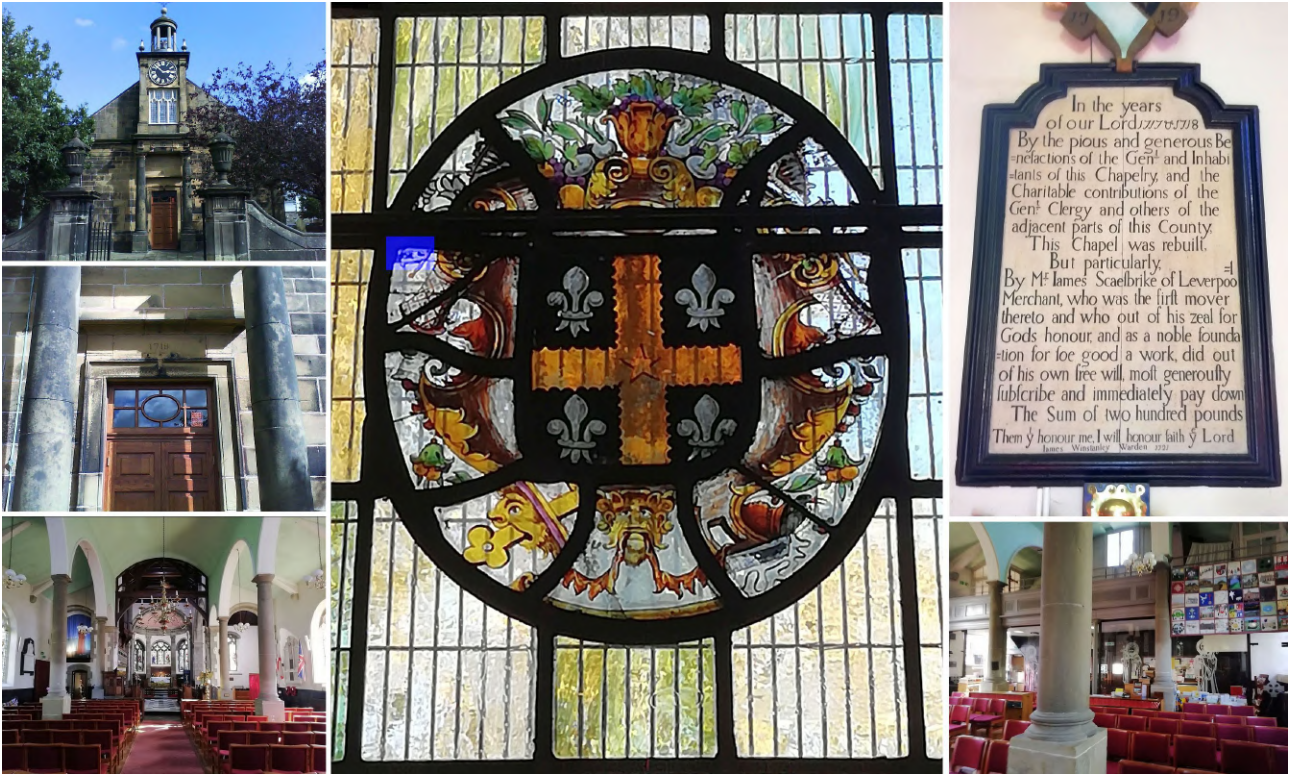
“My sister's sickness called me to Manchester, on whose behalf the lord heard prayers as to sparing her a while to put her secular concerns into some better readiness. [But] upon the 25th of 3rd m[onth], 1691, it pleased god to return upon my sayd dear sister Dean with another distemp and to call her away by it, soe that I was called back to Manchester upon the occasion of her funerall, god had wrought his good work upon her, whilst shee was my hous-keep had it been to doe in her sickness, it had been ill to doe; shee did work for god under her great bodily infirmityes, but in her last sickness shee was not in a capacity to doe much for him”.***

*From “The Life of Adam Martindale written by himself...”, in Chetham Soc. Vol. 4 (1845).

**A bundle of 17th and 18th century documents relating to the School is preserved with the Bootle-Wilbraham of Lathom papers at Lancashire Archives ref. DDLM 2/162. See, also, J J Bagley's “The Foundation and Financing of Upholland Grammar School” in Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches. Vol. 101 (1949). Taken in 2018, the photographs show (left, from top:) interior survival of possible 16th century timber frame; evidence of former window in porch; west-end first floor window; general view of first floor from east to west; (right, from top:) triangular-headed fireplace at east end of ground floor; first floor west-end fireplace, including lintel and brick insert for hob grate; possible Tudor fireplace at east end of first floor; (main image:) exterior view from the south-east. The double-height wooden doors in the east elevation and the adjoining structure visible on the far left of the picture are 19th century innovations, reflecting a change of use from school to workshops.

*** “The note book of the Rev. Thomas Jolly, AD 1671-1693; Extracts from the church book of Altham and Wymondhouses, 1649-1725; And an account of the Jolly family of Standish, Gorton, and Altham”, in Chetham Soc. N. S. Vol. 33 (1894).

“Billinge Chappell”



“[1665. September] 3. lords day. I went to Billinge Chappell in the afternoone with John Potter and others and we went and called on Henry Birchall in the fields and spent each 2d and so went to chappell. When eveninge service was done Mr Blackburne envited me into house but I could not goe but desired excuse. We came back againe to Henry Birchall and stayd awhile and so came for home.”

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

A pleading of 1539 against churchwarden James Roby and others rehearses that, “for a virtuous and godly entent, and for the ease of the people near there adjoining” and to enable them “to hear there divine service according to their bounden duty”, there had recently been “erected and made ... within the said township of Byllynge [a] convenient chapel...”.*

The only “convenience” that the royal commissioners found worthy of record when they visited in 1559 was “1 littil belle”** but this was presumably a consequence of the actions of a certain James Winstanley who, in or about 1553,

“did ryotouslye assemble unto hym at Byllynge aforesaid dyverse ryotouse and evell dysposed p’sons to the number of [20] p’sons ... & then and there so being assembled wth force & armes in very ryotouse manr dyd entre into the said chappelle. And one bell price 3 pounds one chalyce wt a patentt price 3 pounds 10 s[hillings] 2 vestymetts 2 surpleses a crosse & a cruett & also 2 chysts or coffers of the goods & catalls ... then & there found & being for the admynstrac’on of godds srvice wt all & syngler o[the]r ornaments belongynge to the same dyd nott only then & there ryotouslye wrongfully unjustlye & w[ith]out conscyence take carye & conveye awaye & the same hathe converted to hys owne use butt also not beinge therew[i]t[h] contented but myndynge uttrlye to destroye the said chappell for evr of verye malice & hate [tha]t he had & beare towards the service

of god which he p'ceaved the quenes majesty was mynded to advance & sett forwards dyd lykewyse pullynge downe the glasse whiche dyd stand in the wyndoywes of the said chapell & casting out the formes cheyres & other thyngs ... & convertynge the same to hys owne use stoppe up the said wyndowes & walles of the said chapell wth bowes & bromes & hathe thereof made a barne wherein he hathe sett hys corne & heye & hathe ever synce wth lyke force & armes & ryotouse manr so kept the said chapell. So [tha]t there co[u]ld nott be any devyne sryyce said or sunge or any sacraments mynstred wthin the same...”***

The chapel must have been restored to some extent by the end of the 16th century, and seems to have been enlarged in the early part of the 17th .*4

The present Grade II*- listed church, which is dedicated to St Aidan, is mostly the result of a complete re-building of the chapel on its original site in 1717-18. Of the chapel with which Roger Lowe was familiar the only surviving element is a painted glass panel of 1637, now inserted into the Sawyer memorial window at the western end of the north wall.*5

*William Billing v James Roby & others re. Interruption of Divine Service at Wigan Church and Billinge Chapel. The (badly damaged) original is in “Duchy of Lancaster: Court of Duchy Chamber: Pleadings” at National Archives ref. DL 1. There is a partial transcript in “Pleadings & Depositions in the Duchy Court of Lancaster Time of Henry VIII”, Rec. Soc. Lancs. & Ches. Vol. 35 (1897). It is surmised that construction of the chapel must have occurred at some point between Henry VIII's “Valor Ecclesiasticus” of 1535 and the commencement of these proceedings. **National Archives ref E117; “Church Goods [etc]”, Chetham Soc. O. S. Vol. 113 (1888). ***Undated, at National Archives ref. DL 1. There is a full transcript of this document in “Pleadings and depositions...”, Rec. Soc. Lancs. & Ches. Vol. 40 (1899). The addressee, Sir Robert Rochester, served as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster during the reign of Queen Mary – indicating, perhaps, that the actions of James Winstanley & co were a reaction to the attempted restoration of Catholicism. An alternative hypothesis is that the chapel had temporarily fallen out of use as a centre for religious worship and had in fact been acquired by Winstanley for storing grain etc. His will, preserved at Lancashire Archives ref. WCW/Supra/C1/61, expresses a desire to be buried “within the holy sepulchre in the parish church of Wigan”.

*4 See, more generally, Wigan Archives refs. D/P 6/24/26 (copy of Rev W A Wickham's “Some Notes on Billinge” (1909) with additional notes by Rev D W Harris, 1968); D/P 6/2/1 (“Billinge, St Aidan: Briefs etc re dispute over the patronage”, 1768) and D/DZ A13/1 (“Ledger” of John Bridgeman, Wigan Rector and Bishop of Chester, 1615-1642).

*5 The figures “1 6 3 7” can just be made out on the left-hand side, immediately below the horizontal bar and highlighted in blue on my photograph. Howard Sainsbury suggests in “An Informal History of St Aidan's, Billinge” (self-published, 2006) that the date of the glass may correspond with the first centenary of the original chapel. Whilst the arms incorporated in the design are generally assumed to be those of the Bankes family of Winstanley Hall, Rev Wickham (op. cit.) points out that, in certain respects, they bear a closer resemblance to those of the Ashursts of Ashurst. Rev Wickham also mentions the discovery of oak timbers marked “1687” in the course of renovations undertaken during 1907-8.

The photographs were taken on 8 September 2016 (exteriors) and 21 September 2019 (interiors).

“Anon the quiristrs came, and I was exceedinglie taken with the mellodie”



“[1665, December] 26. —tuesday. I went with John Pott and Thomas Harison to Manchester. We ware up very early and gat to Boothstowne by day came Earldomes and spent each 2d apiece for I begun to be very feeble. And then we came to Manchester and in the first place we went to church and I lookd about us and at anon the quiristrs came and we stayd morninge prayer I was exceedinglie taken with the mellodie. Then we three haveing each seaverall busines done first I showd Thomas Harrison Mr Sandiforths where he was to doe his business and he had and I went and enquired of hime as soone as he see me very kindlie tooke me in and would not let passe till I had dined with hime and so did Thomas too but this while we had lost John Pott and made much labour to find hime and whiles we ware finding him I gat business pfected with Mr Howham but when we found John Pott he was very angry att us then we went altogether to a house John Jenkins brought us to where we ware troubled with fowle sheets all night but all this day we could not perfect nothing of John Potts business which was to be done with one Robert Johnson a draper who was out of town but in far of night we went to his house when we heard of his comeinge home by John Hopwood to whom we ware ingaged much to gat his business done.”

27.—We set out of Manchester and John Pottr was not well and besides he over went Thomas and me to Earloms and never gave us word all which troubled me exceedingly in my mind but we came to Earloms and there we ware merry and thence we came to Leigh and at widow Ranikers we stayd and spent each of us 2d apiece from thence we came home but by the way had a little unhappy discourages with religion as too oft we have been overtaken with too much passion for each of us ware of different judgements and each would vindicate his own way and many times fall into exceedinglye passion tho it never occasioned us to love the less which I often marked as a providence of god for I received so many singular favours from them as caused me to love them entirely...”
[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Whilst there are dangers in generalisation - some 17th century protestant dissenters did object to the inclusion of certain types of music in church services - the notion that all were opposed to music has been debunked by Percy Scholes in his book “The Puritans and Music in England and New England: A Contribution to the Cultural History of Two Nations” (Oxford UP 1934; Clarendon 1969). Indeed, as Scholes points out, hymns (as distinct from metrical psalms) actually came to be associated with the more radical sects, particularly the Baptists. John Bunyan in his later writings - notably, Part II of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and his later additions to Part I - continually insists on the acceptability of music, singing and dancing. Roger Lowe, it will be remembered, had gone to Winwick on 17 March 1663 specifically “*to hear Organes*”.

The “*church*” visited by Lowe and his friends on 26 December 1665 was the Collegiate Church of Saints Mary, Denys and George. It had been founded in 1421 by the Baron and Rector of the Parish, Thomas de la Warre, although some of the fabric of the tower pre-dates the recorded foundation and may be c.800 years old. The building became Manchester Cathedral in 1847.

The main photograph shows the rich carvings of the 16th century “*Quire*”. Several of these represent the Derby family, depicting their eagle-and-child crest and Lathom House near Ormskirk which had been besieged and all but destroyed by Parliamentary forces during the Civil War, possibly within the memories of Roger Lowe and his companions. On the left, below, is a view of the medieval screen from the Nave with, above, a closer view of the recently-installed Stoller Organ pipes.

An organ was presumably in place at the time of Lowe's visit, as a list of wardens of the Collegiate Church compiled about 1690 includes the information that-

“Mr Richd. Heyrick MA was presented Warden of Manchester colledge by K. Charles ye 1st 1634, and he founded ye College anew and dedicated it to our Saviour for a Warden, 4 fellows 2 parish Curates 4 deacons 2 parish Clarks Organist 4 Choristers”.*

The photographs were taken on 17 September 2017.

*As published in “Local Gleanings”, Manchester Courier, 29 November 1878.