



## *Chapter Six*

### TOWARDS A MUNICIPAL BOROUGH: 1800-1856

#### *A POET SELLS THE MANOR.*

**G**EORGE GORDON BYRON, sixth Baron Byron of Rochdale, was the last of his family to be Lord of the Rochdale Manor. It is well known that he spent much of his time abroad; in 1810, aged 22, he swam the Hellespont, in 1822 he attended at Rome the funeral of the drowned Shelley; it was in the same year, from Genoa, that Byron wrote to James Dearden regarding the thirty-year-old lawsuit over the Rochdale manorial rights and coal mines: "Sir, You and I have now been eighteen years at law with various success . . . . Of the original occasion of this suit I have no great knowledge, since I inherited it and was a child when it began, and for ought I know may arrive at second childhood before it terminates." He continues, "a mode might be found of combining . . . the adjustment of our lawsuit and the sale of the remainder of the manor . . .", having already mentioned his thoughts of settling permanently in Italy or elsewhere, but, in fact, he had inherited encumbered estates and his own extravagances led him into further debts. In another letter, once in the possession of Mr. A. J. Law, he wrote "If we must sell, sell Rochdale." In 1823 the Manor was sold to James Dearden, whose house "The Orchard," north of the river and almost opposite that older house "The Wood," became known as "The Manor House." It would be pleasant to think that Byron, as had been reported, actually stood at the top of the Church Steps and said "Fair breaks the morn o'er the distant hills," but it is difficult enough to establish that he ever came to Rochdale. It is probable that he visited the town while he was a Harrow schoolboy; again, in September, 1811, he wrote in a letter "My address when I leave Newstead will be Rochdale, Lancashire," and, in October, "I

have just returned from Lancashire and ascertained that my property there may be made very valuable." From his dated letters this visit would be between September 21st and October 11th.<sup>1</sup> Probably at some time pending the sale of the Manor in 1823 he stayed at Hopwood Hall, Middleton, and "made himself very acceptable to the ladies" but was reserved and silent on the last day of his visit, on which day Mr. Hopwood returned home; Lord Byron abstained from all animal food, and showed a remarkable predilection for pickles and vegetables. It is said that in the first canto of *Childe Harold* Byron was thinking of Royton Hall (sold by his family in the 17th century) when he wrote "Deserted is my own good hall, Its hearth is desolate; Wild weeds are gathering on the wall; My dog howls at the gate." Newstead itself was sold a little earlier than Rochdale, and in April, 1824, the romantic Byron, a hater of cant and a lover of liberty, died of fever at Missolonghi while fighting for the cause of Greek independence. Literary England was stunned by the news. To the fashionable world it was as if the sun or the moon was gone out of the heavens—in almost such words Jane Welsh wrote to that other but more sedate "lion," Carlyle. George, Lord Byron, was buried at Hucknall Torkard; a portrait of him now hangs in the Rochdale Art Gallery. By an odd coincidence, the present (and 11th) Lord Byron, Rupert Frederick George, lives at Dinnidup, West Australia—an Antipodean neighbour of the present Dearden Lord of the Manor, who lives in New Zealand.

The power of the 19th century Rochdale Manor Court was still more diminished by the Court of Requests set up in 1839, and almost entirely reduced by the County Court formed in 1847. Today the revenues of the Manor do not bring in much more than one labourer's yearly wages, yet that old inhabitant, Samuel Brierley was probably describing manorial officers whom he himself had seen, when he writes of their halberds and poleaxes: during the 19th century, Courts were held for the recovery of debts not exceeding 39s. 11d. "every Wednesday three weeks" at the Wellington Hotel, provided three cases be at issue. The last recorded minutes, of May 29th, 1928, presented the following Constables and Officers for the ensuing year: the several Constables of Hundersfield, Spotland and Butterworth; Moorlookers and Hedgelookers for Whitworth and Brandwood, Todmorden and Walsden, Wuerdle and Wardle, Blatchinworth and Calderbrook, Wolstenholme and Catley Lane, Chadwick and Butterworth; one Hayward; an Ale Taster for Rochdale and another for Todmorden and Walsden. Apart from the Steward himself, the only official not elected at this meeting was: the Pinner, or Pound-keeper, who was not elected annually. The duties of the Constables, Moorlookers and Hedgelookers still include the collection of rents and the inspection of boundaries, fences and sheep-pasturage. The Manor boundaries have remained unchanged through the centuries, the halberds and poleaxes, the weights and measures, remain in the vaults of the Steward's offices, but the Manorial records are not now open to public inspection.

*19th CENTURY CHURCHES AND VICARS.*

Three vicars were at the Parish Church during the 56 years before Rochdale became a Municipal Corporation: Thomas Drake, William Robert Hay, who succeeded Dr. Drake in 1820, and John Edward Nassau Molesworth, Vicar for nearly 40 years from 1839. In 1813 it was found necessary to open a new graveyard at Broadfield, and in 1815, the same year as the opening of the National School, to which Drake contributed an Act of Parliament was obtained to build St. James's Church. The "Old Doctor" (after whom the new Drake Street was named in about 1810) was well-beloved, in spite of preaching the same sermons over again to such an extent that one of his opening phrases "Such was the language of the Eastern magi" was long remembered by his parishioners. William Hay, on the other hand, was doomed to be loathed and insulted throughout his vicariate, and philosophically collected bundles of abusive letters and verses which were sent to him; one of them reads, referring also to his three predecessors, Wray, Hind and Drake, "We have had a full feast of fish, flesh and fowl. But alas! they have all passed away; And the Parish of Rochdale now grumble and growl, For no one can relish Old Hay." A cousin of the ninth Earl of Kinnoul, Hay was called to the Bar, became Steward of Sir Oswald Mosley's Manor Court of Manchester, and Deputy Lieutenant of the County. As Chairman of the Salford Quarter Sessions he ordered the reading of the Riot Act over the unfortunate malcontents at Peterloo, amongst whom were many Rochdale men; shortly afterwards



Rochdale Grammar School.

*Thomas Wakeman.*

he became Vicar of Rochdale and received the name of "Peterloo," after the massacre of St. Peter's Field, Manchester. Before he entered the Church he had kept an aviary of Java sparrows, Virginia nightingales and such sweet-singing native birds as larks, linnets, finches, blackbirds and thrushes: as a Rochdale Vicar he must have felt as caged as one of his own birds, but he was never intimidated. Making himself comfortable at the Vicarage, he drank liqueurs which included "Damson Ratafee," collected oak, ebony and ivory cabinets and inlaid boxes, but spent as much time at Ackworth, his other living, as he conveniently could. Weighing 18 stones, he died of diabetes, and his valuable furniture was sold by auction in Rochdale.

Small wonder that the Tory and High Church Dr. Molesworth found arrears of work to be made up in the Parish. The population of Lancashire had doubled between 1801 and 1851; the Age of Reform made serious challenges to the Church, and almost at once Dr. Molesworth found himself battling with the young Liberal and Quaker, John Bright. The most bitter controversy, coming after the centralisation of the Poor Law system, concerned the legality of the church rates, which could only be levied with the consent of the ratepayers. In April, 1840, a poll was taken and over 3,000 votes were recorded by the Church Party, with less than 1,500 votes by the Opposition. In July of the same year, crowds of voters arrived at St. Chad's, the poll being taken in the vestry. Messrs. Fielden, staunch Quakers of Todmorden, sent men in waggon-loads to vote against the rates; a wall was pushed down and many people fell with it. The result was something over 4,000 votes against a  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate and less than 4,000 for it. Later in July, at another meeting, the Vicar stood declaiming on one tombstone in the churchyard while Fielden and Bright shared another. Bright made one of the most impassioned speeches in his early career as an orator, and when the next poll was held at the National School (off Cheetham Street), red rags were shown by the Anti-Rate Party, and prominent Church Men were roughly treated, including Messrs. Pilling, Schofield, Woods and Vavasour, whereupon the magistrate Clement Royds called out soldiers with fixed bayonets, but his fellow magistrate, Mr. Chadwick, withdrew the troops. Well over 6,500 votes were for the rates and slightly under this amount were against them. Another meeting was held on the 12th August in Mr. Petrie's new foundry. In 1842 the Vicar, a great tract-writer, produced a monthly magazine, *Common Sense*, which was answered by the dissenting and satirically entitled *Vicar's Lantern*: a wordy battle between the two lasted for over a year, in which the Vicar's literary style was superior, but his opponents' jeers were the stronger. Finally, in 1843, the Vicar, who already enjoyed a large revenue, was obliged to drop the rate. In 1846 he worked towards the pulling-down of the Grammar School and the re-building of the new one at Sparrow Hill. Two years later, the presentation of the Rochdale Church passed from the Archbishop of Canterbury to the Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Lee—an irritable man whose appointment Molesworth had zealously but unnecessarily opposed after Dr. Lee had been publicly

accused of drunkenness. For some time after this, Molesworth's path was strewn with diocesan thorns, and though he endowed and promoted the building of St. Alban's and churches at Wardle, Norden and Castleton, the Bishop refused him the patronage of the last two churches, himself nominated a curate for St. Alban's Church and refused to allow Molesworth to take part in the consecration service of Wardle Church. In 1864, when Molesworth made an offer of glebe-lands, including Broadfield and Sparrow Hill, to the Town, the Bishop intervened, saying that they were worth more than the £400 per acre which Molesworth had proposed, but, after the 1866 Vicarage Act, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners did in fact sell them to the Town for little more than the first suggested price, paying a compensation of £4,000 a year to Molesworth during the remainder of his vicariate. He died peacefully, aged 87 years, having seen 15 churches built within his Parish, which, neglected by Hay, was now one of the most active in the country. Dr. Molesworth was buried, and still rests, in the graveyard of a church to which he had given much help: St. Martin's, Castleton.

The Parish Church of St. Chad had lapsed into a ruinous condition in 1815, and, such was the zest for new enterprises, many parishioners had wished to set up an entirely new building, but Vicar Drake and his supporters successfully opposed this. Instead, St. James's Church was eventually built in 1821 as a Chapel of Ease; while St. Chad's itself was being restored, services were, for the time, held in the old Grammar School at School Lane. This restoration was one of the many alterations in the Parish Church during the century, further changes being made in 1835 and '54-'55, respectively, when the Trinity Chapel's wall and St. Chad's north aisle were re-built; during greater alterations in 1873, the south porch and most of the south aisle were re-built, also the tower was raised, having now a belfry but no church clock. In 1885 the chancel was re-built and extended, together with the north and south aisles, the nave floor being lowered 13 inches to its original level, 10 inches being added to the nave pillars. Of the ancient church, these 13th century pillars, alternately octagonal and round, still remain, as does the lower part of the tower, with its 14th century window and (a little to the west) the mysterious sculptured face on the tower's south wall. The octagonal font now in use near the vestry was discovered buried in the Vicarage garden in 1892. Amongst St. Chad's most treasured possessions is a silver chalice which is thought to be Elizabethan, but it bears neither initials nor marks, except for an ornamental engraving below its rim. Within the vestry is the handsome marble memorial to the Holts, which is one of the few works signed by the maker, William Coleburne of London. An almost complete list of the Vicars is on a board in the porch.

All the old Chapels of Ease, at Littleborough, Milnrow, Whitworth and Todmorden, had been re-built once or twice before the 19th century. Canon Raines, of Milnrow, for 46 years worked there unceasingly, particularly towards the building of new churches and schools. He was a distinguished antiquarian, genealogist and historian; one of the founders

of the Chetham Society, he left 44 folio volumes of manuscript records, concerning Rochdale, which are carefully preserved at Chetham's Library, Manchester. His best known printed work is, perhaps, *The Vicars of Rochdale*, published by the Chetham Society in 1883. He married Honora Beswicke of Pike House and was buried at Milnrow in 1878.

The building of Dissenting chapels has already been referred to. The Friends' old George Street chapel still exists but the now Unitarian Church in Blackwater Street was re-built in 1856. In 1837 the United Free Methodist Church was built in Baillie Street. The Providence (High Street) Chapel was sold to [the Congregationalists and in 1852



Rochdale Parish Church, 1830.

*By Permission of A. T. Handley.*

the present Milton Street Chapel was founded. In 1861 St. Patrick's Chapel (Watt Street) supplemented St. John's (Ann Street)—the oldest Roman Catholic church in Rochdale. Meanwhile, within the town, there were two other notable additions, the second of which still survives: St. Stephen's Chapel was built in 1812 for supporters of Selina Hastings, the Countess of Huntingdon who, though a friend of the Wesleys, aided their rival, George Whitefield; also, in 1858, John Ashworth, son of a woollen weaver, became the minister at the Chapel for Destitute which he founded after a visit to London had impressed him with the sufferings of the poor. The author of *Strange Tales*, he travelled to the United States and to Palestine, publishing tracts which brought him a world-wide reputation and immense popularity before he died in 1875. After a removal from the Lyceum, Baillie Street, some years later the old Wardle-

worth Workhouse in Rope Street (off Whitehall Street) became "Ashworth's chapel" until the present, and adjacent, Chapel for the Destitute was built in 1902 on the site of the former Police Lock-ups.

In connection with the many Sunday schools which were the very backbone of late 18th and early 19th century education, the Rochdale Sunday School Union was formed in 1817 and has now been in existence for nearly a century and a half.

#### INVESTMENTS AND IMPROVEMENTS.

Rochdale's religious history alone, during the first and dynamic half of the 19th century, gives a strong hint of the extraordinary spirit of energy and adventure which was flooding into the town's trade, bringing a zest for "doing" and an increasing need for reform and organisation. Fortunes had already been made through the inventions of Kay, Arkwright and Crompton; before the end of the first decade, Thomas Smith of Castleton Hall left £180,000 when he died, and Joshua Fielden of Todmorden, whose nine children included John Fielden, had already built a five-storey factory: these were only typical examples of men who found boundless opportunity to employ their hard-won money and who did not lack the courage to grasp their chances.

In 1804 the long-fought-for Rochdale Canal was extended, having cost nearly £500,000, to join up with the Duke of Bridgewater's Canal, and the gentlemen, merchant and manufacturer subscribers wished to to advertise their venture by chartering the 50 ton vessel, the *Mayflower*, to sail from Hull to London and proceed by inland waterway to Rochdale in time for the opening day in December. The story of the *Mayflower* is in itself a small epic. George Tindall, the owner, was delayed by storms at sea: several ships, including one called the *Rochdale*, foundered off the east coast. Meanwhile, on a frosty 21st December the Canal was duly opened and the Committee, in two elegant yachts and preceded by ice-breakers, sailed to Piccadilly, Manchester, to the tune of a military band on the first yacht and the cheers of thousands of spectators who lined the canal banks. When Tindall arrived in Rochdale on February 10th he had been forgotten. He went quietly on to Manchester and was at first refused admittance at the docks. Not until the *Mayflower* reached Liverpool was she at last greeted by numbers of gentlemen who came to see the first vessel to arrive in their port by inland waterway from London. This great new port of Liverpool, facing across the Atlantic to the New World, in 1834 was to import twenty times as much cotton as London, and, but for the 1894 Ship Canal, Manchester itself would have faced slow strangulation. Today, by a queer turn of fate, the site of the unlucky Stanlaw Abbey (where the loyal Robert Howarth remained in the 13th century) now stands virtually on an island contained by the Goway River, the Mersey estuary and the Manchester Ship Canal: the way to Stanlaw lies by the giant silvery tanks of the Shell Chemical Plant and beneath the flaming towers which burn up the waste petroleum oil. A little further down the estuary, beyond Stanlow Point, the £5,000,000 Eastham Dock,

opened in 1954, is now the largest oil dock in Britain, and Manchester has become the second oil port in the country.

Thirtyfive years after the opening of the Rochdale Canal, a more general venture, the Manchester to Leeds two-lined railway was constructed as far as Littleborough and a plaque at the station now commemorates July 3rd, 1839, when some 500 eminent persons, including George Stephenson, made the journey of some 13 miles in about 30 minutes, travelling in two trains of eleven carriages each, one drawn by the *Stephenson* and *Kenyon* engines, and the second by the *Stanley* and the *Lancaster*. The 80 h.p. *Stephenson* engine had six wheels; the 1st Class carriages, shaped elliptically like coaches, were painted yellow and black and emblazoned with the arms of Manchester, Leeds, Liverpool and Hull; the 2nd Class carriages had three compartments, but the 3rd Class were large, square and open, without seats, but divided up by hand-rails—the 3rd Class fare was about 1d. per mile, in contrast to about 1s. per mile by the tediously slow post chaise journeys of sixty years before. Very soon a regular time-table was printed, showing that in 1839 trains left Manchester at each hour from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and then at 1, 3, 4, 6 and 7 p.m. while nine trains a day left Littleborough at ten minutes past these hours. Such was the success of this cheap and rapid transport that during the first few months there was a daily average of over 1,800 passengers, most of them travelling 3rd Class.

Men were meanwhile working on the Summit tunnel beyond Littleborough, and when it was finished, in 1840, it was then by far the longest tunnel in the world, being over one and a half miles in length. In less than five years, up to June, 1840, the Company had spent over £2,000,000; the line from Manchester to Leeds was open in 1841. Later in the century John Bright was to say that railways had rendered more service than any other institution in the country, but the feelings of at least one contemporary traveller are amusingly illustrated in Frederick Fag's *The Recess*, written in the '30's by a London doctor and author whose actual name was James Johnson: "the immersion in gloom, and the clash of reverberated sounds in confined space combine to produce a momentary shudder, or idea of destruction,—a thrill of annihilation, which is instantly dispelled on emerging into the cheerful light. The meetings or crossings of the steam-trains flying in opposite directions are scarcely less agitating to the nerves, than their transits through arches . . . . The period of suspense, however, though exquisitely painful (to those unaccustomed to the sight) is but momentary: and in a few seconds the object of terror is far out of sight behind."

The Canal and Railway were the two greatest enterprises in which Rochdale subscribers speculated their money, and these, like each other new development, met with opposition from schemes already launched: the land owners had fought against the turnpike roads which, in their turn, suffered a reduction in tolls after the introduction of the Canal, and this, again, together with the turnpike roads, was adversely affected by competition from the Railway. Other more localised undertakings were



the provision of a water supply to supplement that at Leyland's Brow, below the churchyard, also such springs and pumps as those which were at Wet Rake, at Lower Gates near Amen Corner, and the "spout" east of Blackwater, near Barrack Yard. In 1809 the Water Works Company obtained an Act of Parliament to pipe water from the Noon Sun Well on Cronkeyshaw. By other Acts of '16, '39 and '47, the reservoirs of Jephys, Buckley, Hamer and Brown House Wham were all enlarged or constructed. These were very necessary for health reasons, apart from merely saving the Rochdale townfolk from carrying their water supplies in buckets on their heads, for the only form of sanitary work was performed by the brooms of the scavengers and the shovels and carts of farmers who bought and removed the midden-heaps. In 1824 a Market Hall was opened, abutting on Yorkshire Street and on Blackwater Street (which still extended along what is now Lord Street), the old market stalls having been pulled down and replaced by a new Market Place. In the same year the newly formed Rochdale Gas Light and Coke Company built their gas works at the very foot of the ancient castle, at a cost of about £11,000. The promoters did not take the occasion sadly. The opening day was celebrated with a grand balloon ascent by the well-known aeronaut, Mr. Sadler, and the Chairman of the Company, who was none other than the Rochdale author and banker, John Roby. In a Lewis Carroll fashion, the Chairman and the Aeronaut sailed through the air, over the moors, and came down near Bacup, while the rest of the town stayed at home and enjoyed a public holiday.

These were adventurous days, but the energetic Rochdaliens had little reverence for the past. The future was all that mattered—in 1815 they had nearly torn down the old church of St. Chad; now they built their gas works at the foot of the castle; one hopeful gentleman, in particular, Mr. Lodge of Oakenrod, even tried to carry coals, from his mine, by tramway across the Vicar's neat gravel walks at Broadfield, and to the canal basin. Mr. Lodge probably considered Vicar Hay to be unsporting when permission was refused.

The ambition of these early 19th century Rochdaliens was prodigious, and they lived, according to Leigh's 1818 Lancashire General Directory, in an opulent town which was mostly modern, also: "it is in general well built, and has a handsome appearance. . . . The town is situated under a range of hills . . . which for the greatest part of the year are covered with snow" says Leigh, giving borrowed and not too accurate information, in this case, but he continues: "These mountains, however, produce coal, slate, and free-stone in abundance; and likewise inclose several beautiful valleys . . . possessing fine streams of water, so essential for the . . . machinery of the various manufactories. . . . The staple manufacture of this place is a branch of the woollen trade: . . . baizes, flannels, kerseys, coatings, and cloths, which are generally sent abroad to Holland, Portugal, Spain, Italy, Russia, and Germany . . . . The cotton manufacture has extended much into this parish, and there is also a considerable hat manufactory. The bread, in common use at Rochdale, is oatcake."

*STEAM-POWER AND FOUNDRIES.*

Steam-power was, in fact, being applied to the new cotton mills which were now springing up, and with this power-driven machinery came a need for an extension of a centuries old industry in Rochdale—iron-smelting. In 1792 the Lowland Scot, Alexander Petrie, had set up as an iron-moulder and millwright in Bury, but one of his sons, John Petrie, in 1814 built a foundry in Rochdale at the corner of High Street and Mill Street, behind Cheetham Street, whereupon the family left Bury and founded the firm of Alexander Petrie and Co., Ironfounders and Engineers; in 1816 removing to Whitehall Street, they anticipated many famous Manchester firms at their Phoenix factory by making steam engines; the first of these was of 8 h.p. (nominal) made in 1819 at a cost of £300 for James King of Leavengreave, Facit, and another of 20 h.p. was made in 1820 for John Whitworth of Facit. By 1845 their then superintendent, William McNaught, had designed a magnificent pair of beam engines, of 120 combined nominal horse-power, for the Brights' New Mill—these, actually, developed over 700 "indicated" h.p., according to the modern system of compounding horse-power ratings, which itself was first patented by a cousin of McNaught.<sup>7</sup>

Until 1816 there had been some seven steam engines in the district, two of which, at Hanging Road and at Greenbank, had been made by the Birmingham firm of Boulton and Watt; before this there had been a pumping engine at Smallbridge Colliery, and in about 1802 a comparatively large beam-engined pump raised water from the artificial Hollingworth Lake (beneath whose surface lies the Round House, which once belonged to the Schofields of Schofield Hall). This supplied water for the Rochdale Canal, at Summit level.

Apart from the firm of Alexander Petrie, one must not ignore a possibility that John Cockerill, who established a great Belgian foundry in a converted palace at Seraing, in 1817, may have learnt the rudiments of his trade at a smithy in Birches, Healey. His father was William Cockerill of Haslingden, who had two younger brothers, Mark and James. Mark, a cabinet-maker of Haslingden, married Betty Coupe of Bacup, and one of their daughters married a Rochdale solicitor, Henry Whitehead, while another daughter married James' son, Mark Squire Cockerill. According to the Rochdale Parish Church registers, a James Cockerill married Ann Coupe in 1798, and both were of Healey. It would seem probable that this James was the brother of William and Mark, and if this should be so, then it would certainly be quite likely that the older brother William, who spent much of his time abroad, should send his son John to be apprenticed at James Cockerill's smithy at Birches, Healey. This child, John, left England in 1802, aged 12, but, in those days, ironfounders employed children of 7 years old. The Rochdale historian, William Robertson, born in the 30's, would know men who could remember the existence of the Cockerill smithy, and in 1889 Robertson stated that the King of the Belgians "kindly verified the facts as to the native of Rochdale's first appearance in his kingdom." In 1835 the Seraing factory produced the

first locomotive, also railway lines, to be made in Europe. In 1842 (two years after John Cockerill's death) the concern was made into a limited company; in 1863 this company was the first in Europe to produce steel made by Bessemer converters, and today (in 1954) the Société Anonyme John Cockerill employs about 30,000 workpeople, operating 10 blast furnaces, 2 Basic Bessemer steelworks, 2 open hearth steelworks and 1 electrical steelworks, together with workshops, a shipyard near Antwerp and various coal and ore mines.<sup>3</sup>

### *COTTON CONQUERS WOOL.*

During the first half of the 19th century, and for the first time in Rochdale's history, wool was about to take second place in the trade of the town. Already, in 1818, the Lancashire General Directory gives some 30 Rochdale cotton spinners and/or manufacturers: in 1802 John and William Holme came to Rochdale from New Mills, and, together with the Rochdale Quakers, James Butterworth, William Midgeley and John Taylor, developed what was to be one of the biggest cotton factories in the town, at Hanging Road (the premises now belong to Messrs. Ormerod's, Printers). Jacob Bright, a former apprentice of the Holmes, was their book-keeper and in 1804 married their sister, Sophia, who died in 1806. The Greenbank mill at Cronkeyshaw was built in 1803 and in 1809 was taken over by Jacob Bright. Reports by the Inspectors of Factories show that in 1835, 7,500 people were employed at cotton factories in Rochdale, compared with a total of over 122,000 in the whole of Lancashire; slightly over 2,000 Rochdale woollen workers formed nearly half of the factory hands in Lancashire woollen mills, though it must not be forgotten that the Lancashire hand-loom weavers eked out some sort of a desperate existence until the '80's. By 1856 there were in Rochdale about 138 cotton spinners and/or manufacturers compared with 108 mill-owners concerned with woollen goods. The latter had been dwindling rapidly since the '20's and in the 20th century only a score or so were left, one of which, in the wild and isolated Naden valley, was the Greenbooth flannel mill, which once possessed its own gasometer and village school. Its useless gate-posts now stand at the head of a street which it created and which is now half derelict.

Thomas Smith, of Castleton Hall, was, during the first decade of the 19th century, one of the largest woollen manufacturers of the town, with mills and water-power machinery at Castleton, and a carding and scribbling mill at Lumb, in Rossendale.<sup>4</sup>

George Ashworth of Sunny Bank (Holland Street) is said to have been the first woollen manufacturer to introduce the power-loom to Rochdale, in 1825, three years before the woollen firm of Messrs. Kelsall and Bartlemore was established. Henry Kelsall, J.P., of the Butts, Rochdale, a member of a Mottram-in-Longendale family, had married his cousin, Lydia Ainsworth of Wicken Hall, Ogden, in 1819. Lydia's sister, Sarah, married William Bartlemore, one of the 19th century occupiers of Castleton Hall, and he, dying in 1885, was buried at Ogden. Henry and Lydia

Kelsall's daughter, Emily, married George Tawke Kemp, of Beechwood, Rochdale, and through these family connections was formed the present-day firm of Messrs. Kelsall and Kemp. Colonel George Kemp, M.P., of Beechwood, who married Beatrice, daughter of the Earl and Countess of Ellesmere, was knighted in 1909 and was created a baron, Lord Rochdale, in 1913.

Steam-power was only gradually adapted to woollen manufacture—in 1833 most woollen mills in the district employed steam-power for carding alone; nevertheless the two great changes, from wool to cotton, and in particular, from water-power to steam-power, had come fast. Men were drunk with the possibilities of the future, and, like the sorcerer's apprentice in Dukas' musical fantasy, they found that a little learning is a dangerous thing—once the wheels of machinery had been started, the tempo increased too quickly for its masters to control it comfortably: there were many bankruptcies, and not even the banking firms of the day were safe.

#### BANKING AND TRADE.

Following the 18th century experiment of Messrs. Taylor, Heape and Co., in about 1812 Messrs. Rhodes, Garlick and Co., of Halifax opened an early bank in Rochdale, at a time when directories listed only half-a-dozen towns in Lancashire as containing such establishments: a preference for gold and bills existed in Lancashire long after most other counties. However, in a few years Messrs. Rhodes' Bank was obliged to stop payment. After being taken over by Messrs. Rawson of Halifax, it was successively transferred to Messrs. Clement Royds and Co., then amalgamated with the Manchester and Salford Bank, now Williams Deacon's Bank, Ltd., whose present premises stand next door to the old 1819 bank at the Butts.<sup>5</sup> In 1818, a meeting of magistrates at the Swan Inn (then at the bottom of Yorkshire Street) resolved that the Rochdale Savings Bank be opened: deposits were to be "not less than one Shilling and not more than One hundred pounds in the first year,"<sup>6</sup> but this failed in 1849, having a nett deficit of about £38,000.

The versatile John Roby, who could cast up lines of three figures at once, was one of the partners of Messrs. J. and J. Fenton's Bank, established in 1819. In 1878 the failure of this bank, with some 12,000 depositors, and liabilities exceeding assets by over £200,000, was to shake the town, though Messrs. Clement Royds' Bank successfully rode the storm.

By 1850 the trade of the town had become increasingly general and varied; to keep pace with requirements there was extensive coal mining and stone quarrying: in fact, by 1867 there were over 50 collieries in the district, but this temporary "boom" subsided in the '80's. One considerable innovation was the 1840 introduction of carpet weaving at Messrs. John Bright's mill at Fieldhouse. Whellan's classified Manchester and Salford Directory for 1852 gives lists of Accountants, Agents, Attorneys, Auctioneers, in plenty, with several Architects. Tradesmen quoted include makers of Baskets, Brushes, Cabinets, Clogs, with Gas Fitters as

well as Plumbers and Glaziers. The flourishing hat trade provided not only silk hats, but even a "patent silk plush hat." Thomas Robinson and Co., of Water Street, were now planing wood by machinery. There were now both Musical Instrument Makers and Organ Builders. News Agents kept Rochdale abreast of world affairs, and,—a sign of the times,—there were several Pawn Brokers and Rag and Bone Merchants. One of the most striking features, however, is the number of Taverns and Beer Houses. Of the former, 180 are listed, two of them being "The Amen Corner" and "The Clegg Hall," whose glories, like many of the old halls, were on the wane. One tavern with a most intriguing title was "The Stump and Pie Lad," which was then near Milnrow Bridge; Edwin Waugh tells how it was named after a famous Milnrow runner. Amongst upwards of 240 proprietors of Beer Houses, the good old Rochdale name of Butterworth outnumbered any other, and, glancing through this 1852 list, one is impressed, as by the Manor Court rolls of six hundred years ago, with the number of Rochdale native names, such as Chadwick, Clegg, Garside (or Gartside), Healey, Holt, Schofield and Turner.

#### *MACHINES VERSUS FLESH AND BLOOD.*

With the new factories and new owners of the early 19th century, there came a change in the old intimate relationship between master and men. The yeomen weavers were accustomed to freedom. With their own smallholdings and the moors at their doors they could follow at will their delight of chasing hares "at the season of the year" and enjoy the song of the larks, or layrocks, which still sing by the dozen near such deserted pack-horse tracks as dip down past Rooley Moor, Shore and Ogden. Long hours and barrack-like buildings made the new factories seem like prisons. Nevertheless, the new owners had sprung from the yeomen weavers themselves, and the fight had been to the fittest. The Smiths, Fieldens, Royds and Walmsleys have already been mentioned as working themselves up from small beginnings. A. P. Wadsworth has given instances of other early manufacturers: a farmer's son, Jacob Tweedale, started his career with one handloom in his bedroom before, in 1813, he and Robert Leach built their mill at Healey Hall Bottoms. Henry Kelsall originally had a few handlooms and jennies in a Packer Street house; one of the largest Rochdale woollen mills in 1833 had been built up by John Chadwick, once a Packer Street innkeeper.<sup>7</sup>

For those less fortunate, the early 19th century was little less than a nightmare of hardship. Rochdale, indeed, still the stronghold of wool in Lancashire, suffered less than many other neighbouring towns which had whole-heartedly adopted cotton and steam-power machinery. The general picture is well-known: when the adult male weavers shunned the factories, manufacturers soon found that it was easy and cheap to employ women, also children and adolescents who could be bound and disciplined as apprentices. In 1796, and even earlier, responsible Manchester men had found that overcrowding in factories led to unhealthy conditions and to fevers; Sir Robert Peel's Factory Act of 1802 contained clauses which were

designed to improve working and living conditions for parish apprentices. This Act, "For the Preservation of the Health and Morals of Apprentices and Others, employed in Cotton and other Mills . . ." provided that girls and boys must have separate dormitories and that not more than two children should share a bed. Hours worked were not to exceed more than 12 per day, exclusive of meals. Inspectors were to be annually appointed within Counties, with the right to enter any factory at any time; but the Act was not strongly enforced; no printed copy of it was displayed in factories and it had little effect.

Apart from the low wages paid to women and children, the honest adult male worker faced competition provided by his own Parish: since 1796, parishes throughout the country were allowed to give out-door relief to the able-bodied unemployed. Such of the poor who were not able-bodied were taken into workhouses which were maintained by the Poor Rates.

In Rochdale, it is interesting to summarize an account published in 1831 by the Overseers of one, at least, of the four Townships: the Overseers of Spotland paid over £72,000 in relief to paupers during the years 1800-1827, or, roughly, over £2,500 a year. This included casual assistance "to keep the poor in their situations where they have work, and prevent them from tossing up and down the country at the town's expence"; doctor's bills; clothing and "clogs"; casual assistance in sick clubs; coffins and church dues for those who could not bury their dead; blind and lunatic asylums: "the lunatic has been a great expence"; bastardy, and "All the maintenance of the house of Plenty, commonly called the Poorhouse." During 1800, 1801; 1812, 1813; 1817, 1819; 1826 and 1827, the monies spent were over £3,000 annually. From 1828-9, the sum spent on foodstuffs for the 42 (or over) inhabitants of this "house of Plenty" was £233, which included some shambles meat and churn milk, over £8 being spent on sugar and treacle, and over £3 on coffee and tea. The maintenance for one inhabitant was estimated at 2s. 1½d. per week. Next year, 1829-30, the number in the house was 52, and the weekly maintenance was 2s. exclusive of between £4 and £5 a year spent on snuff for the aged. In 1831 the Overseer of Wardleworth was found guilty of manslaughter after allowing one Richard Pilling, an epileptic, to starve to death. Ten years later a boy who had been apprenticed to a Rooley Moor coal miner, by the Overseers of Castleton, was found to have been habitually beaten by a piece of wood pierced with a projecting nail. This collier was fined £5 and costs.

Much of the misery throughout the country, which included heavy taxation and a scarcity of wheat, was caused by the 22 years of war with France, ended by the battle of Waterloo in 1815, but in this same year, Parliament laid a grievous burden on industrial areas by a Corn Law forbidding the importation of wheat unless the price rose to 80s. a quarter at home, and this coincided with a period of bad harvests, particularly in 1816. Later, in 1825, £500 was sent by Parliament to Rochdale, so that the poor might buy bread.

No wonder that there were riots: in 1808, Rochdale "shuttle-gatherers" had burnt down the New Bailey in Rope Street, where many manufacturers had deposited their shuttles for safety. In 1817 came the unsuccessful attempt of Manchester factory hands who, carrying blankets in which to sleep, set out to advertise their grievances in London, but were prevented from reaching there. In 1819 some 50,000 unemployed workmen, including over 1,000 from Rochdale, met at Manchester, in St. Peter's Field (where the Free Trade Hall now stands) to petition for reform, but, after the Riot Act had been read by order of the magistrate and later Rochdale Vicar, Hay, several of the crowd were crushed to death and hundreds were injured during charges made by soldiers and cavalry armed with bayonets and sabres. The Rochdale men at Peterloo were led by the inspired Radical, Samuel Bamford, weaver and poet of Middleton, whose verse was quoted by Mrs. Gaskell in her 1848 novel "Mary Barton," written after she had visited Rochdale and other towns near Manchester.

Little was done to better the conditions for factory hands until in 1824 came three Labour Acts, one of which repealed the law by which J.P.'s were allowed to fix workmen's wages; another gave freedom for the unemployed to move about the country in search of work and a third at last allowed "Combinations," both for masters and men.

The Rochdale journeymen woollen weavers and man spinners had formed an association as early as January 27th, 1824. In November they held a general meeting at the still existing "Sign of the Woodman" Inn, High Street (it is now a clinic for the protection of animals). The appeal at the head of their printed "Rules and Regulations," dated 15th November, 1824, is to their suffering fellow labourers, and exhorts "... In order that you may become men and consider your own importance in the trade, the government in its wisdom has repealed the combination and conspiracy laws; you cannot be prosecuted by statute or common law for combining to SUPPORT OR EVEN TO RAISE YOUR WAGES. Avail yourselves then of these privileges.—Join our society . . . and generations unborn will bless your efforts." The Association was to be divided into motties or divisions, each with a president and officials. By rule 10, each member was to contribute a regular 1½d. a week to the fund, and 3d. per month for liquor. Rules 35 to 37 specified that no member should work at any shop where there was an hireling weaver or man-spinner employed, though no weaver's son learning under his father's privilege should be considered an hireling, and the same veto applied to any shop which had employed women after March 12th, 1824; nor were masters to have more than two apprentices at once. By rule 41, however, there was to be no violence, damage nor threats to masters, workmen and property. Rule 44 stipulated a fine of 2s. 6d. to any member boasting of his superior ability to work.

This association was typical of the Rochdale spirit of self-help which had already so strongly manifested itself in the provision of Sunday schools and the setting up of Sick and Burial Societies, and which was soon to set an example not only to this island, but to the entire world. In the

meantime, these Rochdale weavers inspired the famous Tolpuddle labourers of Dorset to take similar oaths of loyalty, but after the transportation of the "Tolpuddle Martyrs," the Rochdale weavers prudently revised their own initiation ceremonies. The early years of this union were particularly bitter. After a succession of strikes against competition from machinery and cuts in wages, in 1829 the weavers violently rebelled against Rochdale woollen manufacturers who had accepted a Government contract at a low price and had attempted to cut wages. The shuttles of "blackleg" weavers were taken away, and factories were attacked. Troops were called out, prisoners were taken to the New Bailey and when a crowd gathered outside this Rope Street prison, six people were killed outright by the shots of the soldier guards. When the prisoners were tried at the September Assizes, Kershaw, one of the organisers of the union, was sentenced to transportation for life; other sentences varied from 12 to 4 months of hard labour.

In 1830 there were mass meetings on Cronkeyshaw, and during 1831, when weavers' wages shrank to about 5s. a week, the *Manchester Guardian* reported that only one third of the Rochdale woollen weavers were working and that never in living memory was the town in so bad a state. The adult male weavers were fighting a losing battle: in 1839 more children in Rochdale, between the ages of 9 and 12, were employed in woollen than in cotton mills. John Chadwick's son, William, in 1833 told His Majesty's Commissioners that he employed about 100 children under the age of 18 (though none under the age of 9) at his entirely steam-powered woollen mill. The hours worked amounted to about 12 a day, from 6-8, with stoppages for meals. In woollen mills where carding alone was done by power, the uneven water supply led to irregular hours, sometimes "18 hours running and the day following 9 or 6." Children's wages were between 3s. and 4s. a week, and in Chadwick's opinion it was better for children under 12 to piece the cardings, as over that age they would be liable to get crooked. They were less apt to become crooked in cotton mills, as the work there kept them upright, but the general health of children in woollen mills was better than those employed with cotton.

It was estimated in an article printed in a Manchester newspaper in 1835 that in following a spinning machine a child had to walk 24 miles a day, and, with the journey from their homes, children sometimes walked 30 miles a day.

No man did more for the children of Lancashire than "Honest John Fielden" of Todmorden. William Cobbett and he were elected Members of Parliament for Oldham in 1832. In his 1836 *Curse of the Factory System* Fielden describes how, in the past, many thousands of children had been sent north from parish workhouses in such cities as London and Birmingham; in one case a Lancashire manufacturer agreed "that with every *twenty sound* children one *idiot* should be taken." Fielden referred to the 1833 Act for the abolition of negro slavery in the Colonies, and appealed that white children, too, should work for no more than 8 hours a day, when negroes need work no longer than 45 hours a



week, or 7½ hours daily. He relates that, in answer to outcries that the limitation of work by children would ruin the country, Cobbett made a sarcastic speech on the "most surprising discovery . . . that all our greatness and prosperity . . . is owing to 300,000 little girls in Lancashire."

Lord Ashley's Factory Act was passed in 1833 and prohibited children under 13 years from working more than 48 hours a week in factories, but not until 1847, when Fielden moved the second reading of the Ten Hours Bill, were the working hours of women and children in factories limited to 10 hours a day.

Amongst the figures quoted in Fielden's mighty but miniature booklet, Bolton, Stockport and Rochdale top the list with firms which were soon to be, or recently had been, supplied with steam-power. Within the Rochdale district, the number of such firms in 1835 was 16, and these, as in other towns, were counting on the poor for their labour. Many honest Rochdale workman must have been thrown upon the Parish through the Truck System, or through the "Tick" methods of the "Badger" shops: during one week in 1827 five local employers were fined for paying wages in goods, but, and despite various Acts of Parliament, one as early as 1701, the Truck System was not stamped out until late in the 19th century.

George Jacob Holyoake, a disciple of the socialist Robert Owen, has summarized the plight of the Rochdale handloom weaver: "Improved machinery had driven him to the lowest point at which he could live." Sharman Crawford, M.P. for Rochdale, told the House of conditions in the town, giving figures which showed that in 1841 over 3,000 persons were living on 1s. 10d. a week, or less.<sup>8</sup>

#### THE ROCHDALE PIONEERS.

Meanwhile, in the '30's, a significant start towards co-operation had already been made. W. Henry Brown, Holyoake's friend, in 1944 wrote a centenary history of the Rochdale Pioneers, and speaks of a society of 60 members, formed in 1830, which was prepared to sell flannel cheaply "to any of the Co-operative Societies formed on the principles advocated by Dr. W. King of Brighton in *The Co-operator* of 1828-30." As Mr. Brown mentions, Dr. King was befriended by Lady Byron, widow of the ex-Lord of the Rochdale Manor. In 1833 six Rochdale men started a "Co-operative Shop" and credit system at No. 15, Toad Lane, but, as this shop had not been legally registered, debts could not be recovered and the venture failed. It was not until August 15th, 1844, that the elected officers of the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers held their first meeting. Miles Ashworth, flannel weaver, was the president, and, according to Brown, there were, altogether, 18 officers and 14 members: a total of 32 members, of whom William Cooper, Weaver, had share book No. 32. On October 24th the Society was legally registered, and on the evening of December 21st, 1844, the famous shop at No. 31, Toad Lane was opened, having small amounts of butter, sugar, flour and candles for sale. Rule 22 of this society has provided the basic principles for

co-operative societies throughout the world and has remained substantially the same up to the present day. Briefly, this rule stipulates an interest of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent per annum per share to be paid out of profits: the remaining profits were to be paid to each member in proportion to the amount of money which he spent at the store. These "Equitable Pioneers" flourished, unlike the ill-protected "Co-operative Shop" at No. 15, Toad Lane in the '30's, and today, alone amongst other co-operative societies in the world, the parent Society at Toad Lane does not include the word "Co-operative" in its title, but holds to the title-word of "Equitable," in memory of the earlier and unsuccessful effort. Despite the "Hungry Forties," when wages dropped and cheap Irish labour flooded the town, in 1845 the Society had 74 members, a capital of £184 and a licence to

retail tea; in the following year it accepted Elizabeth Brierley, weaver, as its first female member. In the 15th year after its opening there were some 2,700 members and sales totalling more than £104,000. Its subsequent history, ever-widening scope, with particular emphasis on supporting education, is well known—in 1856, Branch No. 1 was opened at Oldham Road, and three years later there were already 5 branches. In 1867 the large Central Store was opened, at the junction of St. Mary's Gate and on the sites of the old theatre (converted from the former Wesleyan Chapel), the Beaver Inn and its unfriendly neighbour, the Temperance Hall.



*By permission of the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers Society.*

No. 31, Toad Lane: "The Stores," 1844.

During the closing years of the last war, in 1944, one hundred years after the foundation of this Rochdale Society, the international Rainbow Flag flew from the roof of the Central Store, which displayed a painted thermometer showing that the Centenary Year sales were approaching £1,000,000. The 31,500 members were now served by some 90 shops and establishments, not including such departments as exist for baking, dairying, slaughtering, boot-repairing, tailoring, building, painting and laundering, together with coal depots. No. 31, Toad Lane is now a museum which attracts visitors from all over the world: within three months during 1953, visitors included trade unionists from Burma, officials from Uganda and the Sudan, Co-operative officers from south-east Asia, from Pakistan, India, Ceylon and Jerusalem, and even an independent traveller from Mauritius.

The weavers and artisans who started such a practical and popular system of self-help were amongst the men who, at the now vanished "Weavers' Arms" and adjacent Socialists' Institute in Yorkshire Street, agitated for social reform and a People's Charter. In 1838 Fergus O'Connor spoke at a torch-light meeting of Chartists in the town; in 1839 a Radical club was formed. There were also open-air meetings at Cronkeyshaw Common in 1839, and in 1842 when there were strikes for higher wages and plugs were drawn from most of the town's factory boilers to put them out of action. During August of this year the *Manchester Guardian* reported that the police were armed with cutlasses and that thousands of people marched down Drake Street, led by "singing females." At one Cronkeyshaw meeting, provision merchants handed out bread to the mob, who "devoured it like hungry wolves." Over 10,000 Chartists met near the White House on Blackstone Edge in August, 1846, and, amongst the "wild heather upon the mountain" heard O'Connor speak of the "scamping Whigs." Although by 1849 the British Chartists had failed to enforce their demands, their fight for universal suffrage, voting by ballot, and the right of every man to eligibility for a seat in Parliament, etc., has since been mainly realised. In Rochdale, these industrial sufferers, oppressed by lack of representation and by the severe effects of the Corn Laws, found a locally born statesman ready to champion the cause of Free Trade and liberty. His plain knee-hole desk, black Court dress and many other of his possessions are now in the Rochdale Museum.

#### JOHN BRIGHT AND REFORM.

The warm-hearted, immensely energetic and progressive John Bright, close friend of Richard Cobden and a frequent guest of Queen Victoria, was born in 1811 at Greenbank, Cronkeyshaw. Son of the Quaker cotton-spinner Jacob Bright, the young John Bright worked as a youth in his father's mill; made his first public speech during 1830 in the cause of the temperance movement, established his reputation between 1840-1 in opposing the legality of the Church Rate, also becoming treasurer of the Rochdale branch of the Anti-Corn Law League in 1840. He became M.P. for Durham from 1843 to 1847, M.P. for Manchester during 1847-57 and for Birmingham, 1857-89. During the American Civil War he strongly supported the North against the plantation owners of the South, and in 1847 had caused enquiries to be made towards speeding up cotton cultivation in India. Bright was the President of the Board of Trade in 1868-70 and was twice made Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, in 1873 and '80. He died in 1889 at his house of "One Ash," Cronkeyshaw, (which has lately been pulled down) and now lies buried in the George Street graveyard. In 1891 a 9-foot-high bronze statue of Bright, which is now in Broadfield Park, was erected at a cost of £2,000. Five years later another statue commemorated him at Westminster Hall, London. His feelings towards his fellow townsmen are perhaps most clearly shown by his address *To the Working Men of Rochdale* which he circulated in August, 1842, urging them to return to their employment and, in time, to gain the much desired Charter by convincing the electorate and

the middle classes, rather than provoking them by strikes. The address begins: "A deep sympathy with you . . . induces me to address you. Listen and reflect, even though you may not approve," and it ends: "I am, with all sincerity, your friend, John Bright." He wrote clearly and with good judgment: his speeches were made with an "unmatched voice" which could be both melodious and majestic. but his great oratory was only a tool for the moral strength which he gave to the country almost throughout his life.

#### HONOURABLE MEN.

The Rochdale district was indeed fortunate, during the 19th century, in possessing three men who on a national scale improved the conditions of industrial labour: John Fielden, John Bright and Charles Howarth, warper, who, more than any other Pioneer, formulated rules which eventually gave workingmen an international interest in business methods and profits. It must not be forgotten that Sir Edwin Chadwick, Poor Law Commissioner, who was born in 1800 at Longsight, Manchester, was descended from one of the oldest Rochdale families, and through him the first Public Health Act in this country was passed in 1848; also Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, born at Rochdale in 1804, became the founder of the English system of popular education: his book *The School*, published in 1847, describes how Government grants towards elementary education were distributed through "voluntary exertions," chiefly of the Church of England National Society and the British and Foreign School Society, inspectors being appointed "in harmony with the religious constitution of the several classes of schools." The first Government grant, in 1833, was an annual £20,000, increased to £30,000 in 1839 and to £100,000 by 1846. Kay-Shuttleworth commented on the intense religious zeal that had fostered the Sunday schools which were forerunners of the day schools established by the Anglican and Nonconformist bodies, for the poor. Amongst other proposals he recommended that masters should have a rent-free house and an assured income of at least £30 a year, supplemented to about £90 by "school pence" and outside contributions. In some early schools one master would teach 150 to 300 scholars, and, not unnaturally, the school attendance of those days was "short, irregular and uncertain." For purposes of comparison, it may be mentioned here that in 1815, when there were some 300 scholars at the newly founded National School (near the present Redcross Street School) the salaries of the master and mistress were £80 and £35—later reduced to £50 and £30. In 1816 an early Adult School was actually started, but failed after a proposal had been made to transfer the classes to the National School.<sup>9</sup>

Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth was High Sheriff of Lancashire in 1863 and died in 1877. Other High Sheriffs were John Walmsley of Castlemere, in 1819; John Entwisle of Foxholes, in 1824; John Smith Entwisle of Foxholes, 1849; Clement Royds of Mount Falinge, 1850; Clement Molyneux Royds (later knighted) of Greenhill, 1889. Of these occasions, the most spectacular was that of 1850: Mr. Royds was escorted

by a procession from Mount Falinge to the railway station, an ox was roasted whole for the benefit of the public, shops and factories closed down and celebrations were carried out on such a scale that the event was reported in the national press, which included an account in the *Illustrated London News* of March 21st. Two of the oldest Rochdale surnames were represented amongst the 20th century Sheriffs when in 1930 Samuel Turner (later knighted) and in 1940 Edmund Barwick Clegg (father of Sir Cuthbert Clegg) were given this honour. In March, 1955, Sir Cuthbert Clegg (whose house at Shore is within the boundaries of the Manor of Rochdale) was sworn in at Preston as the present High Sheriff of the County Palatine of Lancaster.

#### *THE BURGESSES TAKE CHARGE.*

During the first quarter of the 19th century, private enterprise had launched such schemes as the Canal, Reservoirs, Gas Works and the Market Hall. Not satisfied with the "Old Charlies" and their rattles and brass-tipped truncheons, private men had even formed in 1797 the "Rochdale Association for the Prosecution of Felons" which existed until about 1823, when, also, the stocks near the Parish Church were still in use. The second quarter of the century was to see the gradual organisation of local government on much the same fundamental lines as we



John Bright and Richard Cobden, *Rochdale Central Library.*

know today. Above all other necessities of the growing town, this organisation was increasingly urgent: in 1801 there were (in round numbers) 29,000 people within the 40,000 acres of the Rochdale Parish (exclusive of Saddleworth); in 1821: 47,000; 1831: 58,000, and in 1851 the figures had risen to 80,000. Within 50 years the population of the Parish had nearly trebled.

In 1823, shortly after the Byrons had ceased to be Lords of the Manor through whose Court Rochdale, for hundreds of years, had been at least partly governed, many Rochdaliens signed an appeal to the Magistrates with regard to promoting a "Police Act," and this Act was finally obtained in March, 1825, a certain amount of local government now being entrusted to Commissioners whose qualifications included the ownership or occupation of a local building with a minimum value of £35 per annum. The duties of these 131 gentlemen comprised policing and lighting the streets, and John Lee was appointed as Law Clerk. An early pamphlet of the Police Firemen's Rules, printed in 1826, states that the keys of the Engine House at the back of the Workhouse were kept, together with "ROBERTS' SAFETY HOOD" (a protective helmet) next door to the Mount Pleasant Tavern (Whitehall Street). There was another Engine House at School Lane, with keys which were kept at the Corner House, over the old smithy. In 1830 comes the first mention of a Chief Constable, and in this year it was decided to give numbers to the houses in the streets. Mr. Henry Kelsall was in 1831 appointed as Honorary Chief Constable or "Boroughreeve" for the year, and rates were now levied at 9d. in £1.

After the passing of the great Reform Act of 1832, Rochdale was made a Parliamentary Borough and was entitled to a representative Member of Parliament, any householder paying a rental of £10 or more being entitled to vote: this condition by no means satisfied those who later clamoured for a "People's Charter." And now, for the first time, the town's boundaries were sharply defined, by the simple process of fixing a centre-point (later laid down as being "very near to the south-east corner of an archway or road leading from the old Market Place to the Roebuck Inn . . .") and, as with a pair of compasses, describing a circle with a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile radius. In the same year, the reformed Parliament set up an inquiry into the Poor Laws and from 1834 parishes throughout the country were, within a period of years, united unto unions which were almost completely controlled by the Somerset House Commissioners. The first meeting of the Rochdale Board of Guardians of the Poor took place in 1837; in 1851 the Rochdale Poor-Law Union included the townships of Blatchinworth-with-Calderbrook; Butterworth; Spotland; Wardleworth; Wuerdle and Wardle, and Todmorden. So much had this new centralised system diminished relief that in 1851 the total amount locally paid for the poor was only £4,745: this compares with the former annual average of about £3,000 for Spotland Township alone. These economies could scarcely be popular with the poor. The Reform Act itself, however, was fêted with a grand procession on August 22nd, 1832, composed of officials,

townsmen, members of societies, tradesmen and the watchmen. On this occasion, Rochdale's greatest poet and dialect-writer, Edwin Waugh, personally took part, and he has described one of the tradesmen, a printer, dressed as William Caxton, with young Waugh, wearing a blue jacket and white trousers, as one of his pages: "I remember feeling a little ashamed . . ." wrote Waugh, "and as the procession went slowly through the old market place I just took one look at our shop, and sure enough there was my employer with a crowd of his friends all looking out, and I could see a solid, unmistakable grin on all the pavement of faces in that doorway."<sup>10</sup> The words might have been written today, and probably express the feelings of young Rochdaleans through the centuries, where dressing-up and ceremonies are concerned.

The first election gave rise to more torchlight processions and eventually polling took place on December 12th, 1832, the candidates being John Fenton, banker, of Crimble Hall, (Liberal); John Entwisle of Foxholes, (Tory); James Taylor, hat manufacturer, of Spotland Bridge, (Radical). Most of the town's publicans were Tories, and, speaking many years later of early Rochdale electioneering, John Bright told of corrupt practices in his home town, where the Conservatives, or Tories, opened the public-houses for six weeks "and our people opened them for two days of the election . . .", but " . . . from that time to this no candidate of the Liberal party has been allowed to canvass, or to pay any portion of the expenses . . . I believe now that there is probably not a more incorrupt constituency in the kingdom." John Fenton, Liberal, was elected as the first M.P. for Rochdale, and John Entwisle, Tory, was successful at the next election of 1835. After that year, out of the next 21 elections, the Liberals won 17 seats, Richard Cobden representing Rochdale from 1859 until he died, in 1865, when Thomas Bayley Potter carried on the unbroken Liberal succession until 1895. Not until 1922 did the comparatively new Labour Party obtain a Rochdale victory with their nominee, S. Burgess.

In 1837, the Police Commissioners met for the first time at the Police Room, Smith Street, instead of at their previous meeting-place, the Wellington Hotel. Benjamin Heape, Honorary Chief Constable, publicly proclaimed the accession of Queen Victoria during this year. Two years later, the report of the Watch Committee gives an interesting account of offences: in 1839, out of 640 persons who appeared before the magistrates, 284 were charged with disturbing the peace; there were 152 misdemeanours, 61 vagrancies, 45 assaults on officers, 38 felonies and 9 burglaries. Other offences include 1 highway robbery, 1 cutting and maiming, 1 malicious shooting, and there were 2 deserters, 4 runaway apprentices and 6 cases of carts being left in the streets.

In 1840 it was ordered that streets were to be regularly watered and swept by the Scavengers; next year, at a meeting when 141 Commissioners were present, James Erving was appointed as Surveyor and Valuer. In 1844 William Whittle Barton, Chair Maker, was appointed Surveyor at a salary of £150 a year.

By an 1844 Act, Rochdale was divided into three wards, of which Wardleworth supplied 27 Commissioners, Castleton, 21, and Spotland, 12, the total number being reduced to 60 Commissioners who were now elected by persons qualifying as Parliamentary voters. (From this year onwards, Rochdaliens were forbidden to thatch their roofs or to use dogs for drawing carts). It was these 60 Commissioners who bought for the town the Rochdale Gas Light and Coke Company, at a cost of £26,500, and two years later, in 1846, five committees were appointed, for Finance, Paving and Sewering, Lighting, Fire Service and the Gas Works: the last Committee promptly supplied 364 gas lamps to supplant the "old oil lamps."

In 1853 a most important "Rochdale Improvement Act" incorporated general Clauses Acts concerned with the Commissioners, Land, Gas Works, Cemeteries, Markets and Fairs, Town Improvement and Town Police. The number of Commissioners was further reduced to 42, the qualificatory limit of £35 was cut to £25.

On the 9th September, 1856, a Charter of Incorporation was granted to the Town and Borough of Rochdale, which now became a Municipal Corporation whose Mayor, Aldermen and Burgesses were entitled to a Common Seal, Armorial Bearings and Devices, and were empowered to acquire and purchase lands and possessions within the district, also, not exceeding £10,000 "by the year," outside the district.

Of the three Rochdale wards, Castleton and Wardleworth were each to return 12 Councillors, and Spotland, 6; there were to be 10 Aldermen. The profusely bearded Zachary Mellor, who remained in office for over 40 years, was appointed as the first Town Clerk and was directed to make out an alphabetical Burgess List (under the 1835 Municipal Reform Act, members of town councils were to be elected by the votes of rate-payers). The first Mayor of this Municipal Corporation was John Bright's brother, Jacob Bright (Commissioner), 1856-7. For some time the Commissioners continued to officiate, but under an Act of 1857 the government of the town and the Commissioners' property were transferred to the Corporation. In the same year the College of Heralds entered the Borough Arms, which contained the martlets (or swifts) used by the Chadwick family and by the Elands; both Chadwicks and Elands were traditionally connected with Rochdale's Saxon thane, or lord, Gamel. The predominant colours of the Rochdale Arms are black and silver; the two main features are the sack of wool and the cotton plant. Heraldically, the Arms are defined as: *Argent* a woolpack encircled by two branches of the cotton tree flowered and conjoint proper; a bordure *sable* charged with eight martlets of the field; and for a crest on a wreath of the colours a mill-rind *sable* and above a fleece *argent* banded *or*. The Latin motto is "Crede Signo," or "Believe in the Sign." In 1871 the Mayor's Badge and Chain were ordered by the Council, the cost not to be more than £265, and they were made of 18 carat gold, enamelled, by Messrs. Hasluck Bros. of Hatton Gardens, London. The Mace and Mayoress's Chain were presented by Samuel Turner, Mayor, 1901-2 (and later knighted, as



his nephew and name-sake was, also), to commemorate the Coronation of King Edward VII in 1902. Both the silver-gilt Mace and the Mayor's gold Chain are enamelled and jewelled, and they were made by Messrs. Elkington and Co. of Manchester. In 1947 Mr. Harold Thomas gave the Deputy Mayor's Pendant. The Corporation regalia is now insured for £2,425.

Before passing to a summary devoted to the work of the Municipal Corporation it may be fitting to take a last general retrospect of Rochdale as it was at the time when the first corporation officials took up their duties.

#### *ROCHDALE RETROSPECT.*

The area of the newly incorporated Borough was 1,141 acres, and the population was estimated to be 34,545, with an average of 5 persons to each inhabited house. The trade of the town has already been outlined; its public buildings now included a Billiard Room at Baillie Street, as well as the Toad Lane Theatre, and, for the town's edification, rather than pleasure, there were the Athenaeum at Reed Hill (Yorkshire Street); the Odd Fellows' Literary Institution at School Lane; the People's Institute at the Public Hall, Baillie Street, and the Temperance Society's Hall, Toad Lane. Apart from the horse omnibuses to other towns, similar omnibuses from the Reed and the Wellington Hotels linked up the centre of Rochdale with the Railway Station. In 1818 a "Philharmonic" musical society met fortnightly at the "Flying Horse" but an 1823 document shows that this public house did not allow "gaming with Cards, Draughts, Dice, Bagatelle, . . . Bull, Bear or Badger-baiting, Cockfighting," etc. This was three years after the last bull-bait in the Roch, when part of the bridge battlement was broken down by the press of the crowd and seven people were killed. Cock-fights were permitted at the Grammar School as late as 1830.

A grandstand had been put up at the Bagslate Racecourse in 1845, and in 1850 James Pilling's "Lady Eden" won the Manor Cup and the Borough Cup; the Rochdale Hunt had held a steeplechase as early as 1839: J. S. Entwisle was then entering upon a 30 years tenure as Master of the Hunt. The Rochdale Cricket Club (one of the oldest in the north of England) had been in existence since 1824; in 1854 and again in 1858, a Rochdale XXII engaged an All England XI: one of the players for Rochdale, Hunt of Manchester, was killed by a train while on his way to the Rochdale Station after the 1858 match.

In 1856 an eel, weighing 7 lbs., and over 3½ feet long, was caught in the Canal. It is said that fish had last been caught in the Roch about twenty years before this. Public wrestling and running were still popular at the turn of the half-century; naked prize-fights took place at not particularly secluded sites: in 1865 evidence was given concerning a fight between a Rochdalian, James Hoyle, and an Irishman named Mulloy: "Hoyle had a pair of small drawers on and shoes and stockings. Mulloy was quite naked, except having on his shoes and stockings. . . . They struck and kicked each other very much."<sup>11</sup> This particular fight was

at, of all appropriately named places, Sparth Bottoms. When clogs were worn at such contests, shin-bones were likely to be laid open by the iron-tipped toes of the clogs, whose soles were often made of alder-wood, with uppers cut from the old oily leather of loom beam rollers. Gentlemen settled their disputes with more finesse and sometimes with less bloodshed: in 1837, according to Robertson's *Social and Political History of Rochdale*, a duel was fought on the site of the present Castleton Cricket Ground, between a Rochdale surgeon, Mr. Walter Dunlop, and a Manchester gentleman, Mr. Broadbent, but the umpire deceitfully presented them with unloaded pistols. Robertson's *Old and New Rochdale* also gives an account of an 1844 trial of a fortune-teller, at which it was stated that there were 12 astrologers in the Rochdale district. It is not difficult to believe that fortune-telling was then popular, when, even today, horoscopes are regularly printed in some, at least, of the daily papers.

The first Rochdale newspaper was the *Rochdale Recorder*, published on January 6th, 1827, six years after, and at the same price as, the *Manchester Guardian*: 7d. Out of this price, however, a stamp duty of 4d. had to be paid on each copy and there was also a duty on paper, and a tax on advertisements. The proprietor of this weekly paper was Joseph Aston, but after 15 months, having lost money on the venture, partly because Rochdaliens preferred to advertise by means of bell-men and bill-stickers, Mr. Aston was obliged to let his expensive and short-lived fledgling die. W. W. Hadley, himself once an editor of the *Rochdale Observer*, has told of other attempts at periodical publication, including, in 1844, Jesse Hall's *Spectator*; in 1847 Edward Taylor's early *Pilot and Rochdale Reporter*, and in 1853 John Phillips' *Rochdale Sentinel*, but it was in the year of the Municipal Charter that the *Rochdale Observer and General Advertiser*, price 2d., was published in February, 1856, by two printers, Robert and Joseph Lawton, who had acquired Mr. Phillips' office at No. 2, the Butts. After various adventures, in 1858 this *Rochdale Observer* was owned by five proprietors, Owen March, J. H. Moore, Oliver Ormerod, John Petrie, Jnr., and W. A. Scott—since when, for nearly 100 years, the unflinching strength and prestige of Rochdale's Liberal newspaper has been maintained through control by generations of the Scott family, present proprietors of a newspaper which has been staffed with such fine writers as Hadley (later editor of the *Sunday Times*), Mince, Doran, Carvill and the present editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, Wadsworth. It is of interest to remember that the son of the Rochdale historian, Robertson, was at one time a *Rochdale Observer* reporter. For a time, also, William Hale White, now better known as "Mark Rutherford," contributed regular articles.

Many Lancashire dialect writers have been aided by the local press, and particularly by the *Observer*—it is due to such authors and poets that, in the words of the Dialect Writers' Memorial above the Esplanade, ". . . the strength and tenderness, the gravity and humours of the folk of our days . . ." have been "preserved for our children, in verse and prose that will not die . . ." Four Rochdale writers and their verse are

commemorated by this monument: OLIVER ORMEROD (1811-1879), "Aw sed awm o Rachde felley . . . "; EDWIN WAUGH (1817-1890), "Come whoam to thi childer an me . . . "; MARGARET REBECCA LAHEE (1831-1895), "When we lay down life's shuttle . . . "; JOHN TRAFFORD CLEGG (1857-1895), "Say nowt again folk behind their backs . . . ". If the Memorial (built in 1900) had had more than four sides, perhaps the name of RICHARD ROME BEALEY (1828-1887), "My piece' is o' bu' woven eawt . . ." might have been added. WILLIAM BARON, or "Bill o' Jack's," came later, dying in 1927.



Rochdale Central Library.

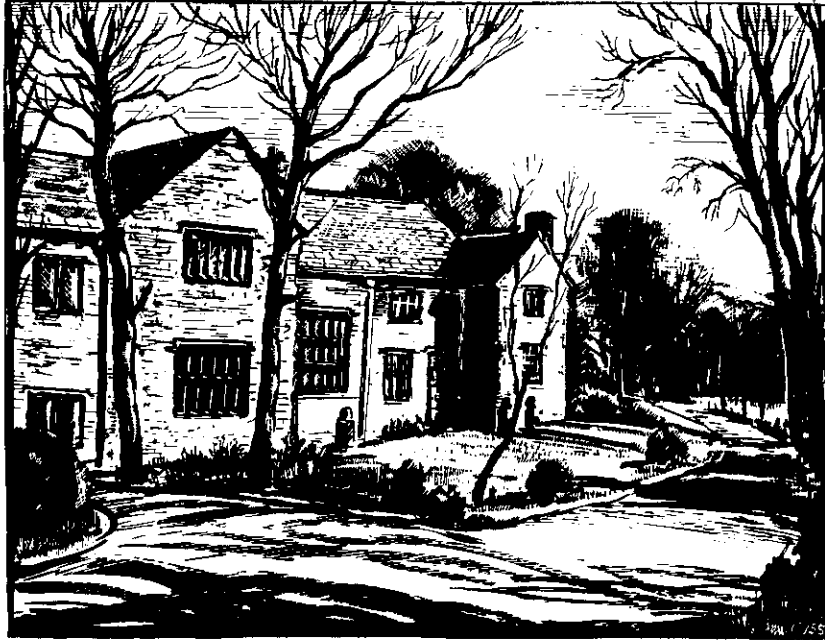
Edwin Waugh.

The *Observer* was challenged in 1857 and 1858 by a Tory paper, the *Rochdale Pilot*, which failed, only to be revived by Joseph White and then later kept alive until 1868 by Malcolm Douglas (both of whom were former editors of the *Rochdale Observer*), but in 1871 the *Pilot* died out, three years after Douglas left Lancashire. The next rival to the *Rochdale Observer* was the *Rochdale Times* of 1870—a newspaper which ceased between the two World Wars, but whose title has lately been revived.

In 1856 Rochdale stood in the balance between the late 17th century "pretty neate towne built all of stone" and the 20th century proud County Borough of today. Two writers have candidly expressed their views on such a Rochdale as the first Mayor and Corporation saw before them. George Jacob Holyoake, whose history of the Pioneers was first written in 1857, spoke of a Rochdale which had "a little bridge that

spans, like a rocking horse, an imaginary stream, in which there is nothing liquid but the mud," continuing, "The town is in the shape of a teacup, with a gutter at the bottom and a burying ground upon the rim," and yet, he says, "The people are immensely before the town, which . . . will, no doubt, yet assume the magnificence which is gradually being imported into Bradford, Leeds, and other places . . ." Ruskin, who, after 1855, lectured at many such "other places," stayed at Rochdale in February, 1859, before visiting Bradford where, during a lecture, he spoke of "The Wood," the old house on the site of the present Town Hall: "Just outside the town I came upon an old English cottage, or mansion, I hardly know which to call it, set close under the hill, and beside the river, . . . with mullioned windows and a low arched porch; . . . the garden, blighted utterly into a field of ashes . . .; the roof torn into shapeless rents; the shutters hanging about the windows in rags of rotten wood; before its gate, the stream . . . black as ebony and thick with curdling scum; . . . the furnaces of the city foaming forth perpetual plague of sulphurous darkness; the volumes of their storm clouds coiling low over a waste of grassless fields, fenced from each other not by hedges, but by slabs of square stone, like gravestones, riveted together with iron."

The fate of Captain Ogden's 17th century house "The Wood" was typical of many old halls throughout the Parish, most of which, limited in size by the length of the old oak beams, were too small and inconvenient for the 19th century manufacturers. These gentlemen, influenced indirectly by Ruskin's forceful prose, built themselves new mansions which had a vague connection with Mount Olympus: porches with classic pediments and gardens with small lakes surrounded by rockeries and artificial walks through rhododendron bushes - on the whole, however, due to Lancastrian good sense, these houses were squarely built of stone, with high sash windows (perilously cleaned by young girls) and large, airy rooms which needed small armies of maids to dust the solid mahogany furniture and the highly moral paintings of Highland cattle and religious or classical allegories. "Many hands make light work" seems to have been the order of the day: Joseph Worrall's locally printed 1832 *Domestic Receipt Book* gives many directions for making home-brewed ale or beer; mahogany was to be scoured with Bath brick to make it "look like new"; oxalic acid and powdered rottenstone would polish brass and copper; men's hats were cleansed with logwood and verdigrease; the application of salt reduced the risk of madness from dog-bites—the advice concerning dogs with mange was simply "Throw them once or twice into a tan-pit"; cholera might be cured by drinking plentifully of a mixture of rice-water, sugar and a little laudanum; barm was recommended for typhus—ominously, Worrall gives no directions concerning drains: such plumbing as existed would be unventilated and dangerous. On the whole, the well-established 18th century buildings, often with shapely brick walls and Adam fire-places and furniture, were not only more attractive, but safer and more comfortable than the new mansions. Of the old halls, some were given false fronts and were modernised,



Stubble Hall, 1955.

*Stanley Warburton.*

but most were allowed to become ruinous or were pulled down to make room for new buildings.

The fortunes of the ten halls chosen in this book to illustrate part, at least, of the development of Rochdale through the ages are perhaps typical of the scores of halls throughout the Manor and Parish: of the ten, four have almost completely vanished, two are in ruins, two have been rebuilt more than once and two remain on their ancient sites with their 16th and 17th century walls, respectively, still standing. All, however, were selected partly because they survived into the 20th century: Amen Corner (most of it) was pulled down in 1908; Belfield Hall in 1916; Castleton Hall in 1920 and Chadwick Hall in 1952. All that remain of these are a few stones of Amen Corner, taken up to Falinge Park; the grass-grown outline of Belfield Hall in the angle of the railway and the new Albert Royds Street; a pear-tree from the orchard of Castleton Hall, at Bosworth Street, near New Barn Lane, and some rough rubble of Chadwick Hall (which was used as a pig-sty during the last War), off Bury Road. The ruins of Schofield Hall, roof-less and half gone, can be seen against the moors above Rakewood, Hollingworth Lake; almost due west of Rakewood, and on the other side of the Lake, the tall twelve-gabled Clegg Hall, seen from a distance, appears intact. It is more easily reached by way of Dye-house Lane, off the Halifax Road, and on approaching it, birds may be seen flying through the roof. Although the Ashton mullets are still faintly visible above the door, hens are the only occupants of this still picturesque and reputedly haunted hall. Pike House, near Littleborough, was considerably re-modelled in 1704; Healey Hall was rebuilt as late as 1774.

A little way along the Bury Road, Oakenrod Hall may be reached by a grassy footpath starting from a row of Ruskin's "gravestones, riveted together with iron." It is now divided into three parts, one of which keeps its carved oak staircase. Very fortunately, the finest and oldest of all ten stone halls, Stubley, north-east of Clegg and on the Halifax Road, is inhabited by its owner, and, well-preserved, maintains its dignity. From the north and west, the 16th century timber frame can still be seen: the upper rooms of the west wing are below the roof of the banquet hall. Stubley once possessed a 1528 date-stone, engraved, no doubt, by the order of Robert Holt of the satin waistcoat and damask-lined gown.

Not one of these halls is now owned and tenanted by a Belfield, Butterworth, Chadwick, Clegg, Gartside, Healey, Holt or Schofield, but these names survive in plenty within the Rochdale Borough and the Rochdale Parish: the burgesses and voters of the town today now govern Rochdale. Let them remember the 14th century burgesses and men of Rochdale who took their names from Saxon, or earlier, clearings and lived in timber dwelling-places: the old stone houses which now remain on a few of these sites are the very birthright of old and new Rochdale. Ruskin saw the pangs of the newly born chartered borough; much has been done and many improvements have been made since then, but now, before it is too late, the burgesses of 1956 should recall his words again, as quoted by that devoted lover of Rochdale halls, Henry Fishwick: "Buildings are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us. The dead have still their right in them. . . . What we ourselves have built, we are at liberty to throw down; but what other men gave their strength, and wealth, and life to accomplish their right over does not pass away with their death; still less is the right to the use of what they have vested in us only. It belongs to all their successors."

One has only to visit Towneley Hall, over the Bacup boundary, to see the pride with which the young and old of Burnley inspect their heritage. At Halifax, the recently opened Shibden Hall is collecting a wealth of material which would otherwise be lost, as many of Rochdale's treasures have already been. Early in this century an unavailing appeal to preserve Belfield Hall was made by the august Victoria History of the County of Lancaster; within the last few years it has been decided that the task of preserving Clegg Hall (which is not within the Borough) would cost too much: under the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947, Chadwick Hall was listed for preservation, if possible, but it was already too late.

Stubley Hall is not at present within the Borough, but modern boundaries are not particularly permanent. Given the will of men who are "immensely before the town," Stubley, at least, could be safe-guarded for the future. If this were done by the voters of today, then there is little doubt that, in the words of the Rochdale Journeymen Weavers and Spinners of 1824: "generations unborn will bless your efforts."