

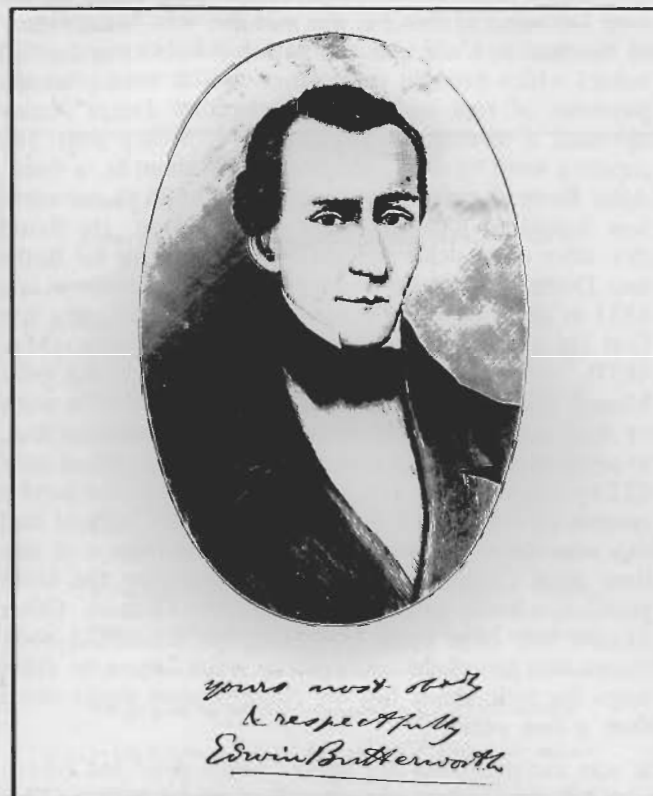
NEWS FROM OLDHAM: EDWIN BUTTERWORTH AND THE MANCHESTER PRESS, 1829-1848¹

Michael Winstanley

A glance through the footnotes of almost any study of nineteenth century society and politics is enough to reveal the debt of gratitude which historians owe to the press. Widespread acknowledgement of its importance has recently been matched by a number of excellent studies of the industry, although these have tended to concentrate on the period following the repeal of stamp and paper duties in the 1850s and 1860s when the number of titles and circulations expanded rapidly. For the first half of the century our knowledge is less complete.² Nationally the spotlight has focussed on the champions of the unstamped or radical press like Henry Hetherington and Feargus O'Connor, popular heroes of the day. In the North West specific proprietors and editors like John Taylor of the *Manchester Guardian* and Archibald Prentice of the *Manchester Times*, both of them broadly liberal in their politics, have attracted most attention.³ Despite their role as public speakers we know less about George Condy, editor of the radical *Manchester and Salford Advertiser*, or the Sowler family, owners of the Tory *Manchester Courier* and latterly the *Manchester Herald* as well. We know even less about their sources of information. Only John Harland, the *Guardian's* first full time reporter after 1830, has received any academic attention.⁴

The process through which the 'news' these provincial papers carried was defined, reported and published remains only partially understood. Much of the national and international coverage was new only to people in Manchester, the journals simply acting as ciphers, passing on items in the metropolitan press. Locally, editors themselves could double as reporters, especially in Manchester and at the regular county assizes. But to a greater or lesser extent, all the papers carried diverse items of 'district news' and 'local intelligence' from towns in south Lancashire, and less frequently, north Cheshire. These probably served a dual purpose. On the one hand, Manchester readers were kept informed of events of potential relevance to them: visits of national figures, serious breaches of the peace, political agitation, the general state of trade. On the other hand, circulation in the towns themselves was undoubtedly stimulated by the inclusion of specifically local items or gossip which had little wider significance. With the exception of Bolton and Stockport, the latter enjoying its own north Cheshire hinterland, these stray items are the only published sources we have for Manchester's other burgeoning satellite towns which lacked their own local papers until the 1850s.⁵ Who supplied their 'news' and how comprehensively and accurately the Manchester press presented it is largely unknown and unknowable. Correspondents were never publicly acknowledged. News was anonymous.

In the case of Oldham, however, there is a face in the faceless crowd. Edwin Butterworth, self-styled and appointed reporter for nearly twenty years after 1829 but better known for his credited published work, was a remarkable man. Born on 1 October 1812, he was the



Edwin Butterworth

second youngest of ten children and grew up in a literary environment. His father James (1771-1837), sometime weaver, Oldham postmaster, school teacher, poet, publisher, stationer and local historian was responsible for 'Histories' of many of the south Lancashire towns in the last two decades of his life.⁶ By 1829, at the age of just sixteen, Edwin was also in print.⁷ From then on his output was simply prodigious. As well as contributing regular press reports he inherited his father's interest in local history, writing several town histories during his life, the most famous of them being *Historical Sketches of Oldham*, issued posthumously with additional material in 1856 and reprinted as recently as 1981.⁸ Our knowledge of the region's development prior to the publication of the first Ordnance Survey maps in the 1840s also owes much to his cartographical efforts while detailed information on the mechanisms and offices of early town life are contained in his 'almanacs' and reports of charities. His role in all of these activities was widely acknowledged but his contribution to Edward Baines' *History of Lancashire* (1836) is less well known. He was effectively the lowly paid research assistant on this work but, as with many who have found themselves in similar positions, he was not credited as co-author, being given only brief, if fair acknowledgement in the preface:

It is due to Mr. Edwin Butterworth, who has visited all the parishes and townships of the county, without a single exception, for the purpose of collecting local

information, and to verify facts already obtained, to say that he has performed his duty with zeal, intelligence and fidelity.⁹

'The work', concludes a sympathetic historian reviewing the correspondence between Baines and his assistant, 'ought properly to be called Butterworth's *History of Lancashire*, edited by Baines'.¹⁰

Then, as now, however, freelance historical research provided a precarious income. In the early 1830s Edwin was fortunate in that he was not the sole breadwinner in his family. Until about 1834-5 his father ran a small school which brought in 1s.6d. — 2s. a week after the payment of rent and his elder brother James Junior operated a newsagency in the town, selling over 140 papers a week by 1837, and bringing in about 6s. a week. After Baines's work was completed in 1836 Butterworth was forced to look for other remuneration. He found this, after much delay and anxiety, as Registrar for Births and Deaths for the township of Chadderton from late 1837 or early 1838, by which time he had tragically lost first his mother in December 1836, his brother (May 1837), and his father (November 1837) leaving only himself and his brother Hiram, who was unable to work or fend for himself for reasons which remain unclear, to support. In his first year as registrar he received only £22.6s. gross or £16.11s. net of expenses and the patchy records which survive for subsequent years suggest that this was about the most he could expect from it at any time since Chadderton was not experiencing the same population boom as its larger neighbour Oldham. Other income was even more irregular. His household book shows that he would occasionally write letters or draw maps for individuals but the charges were never more than a few pence.¹¹

It was the provision of 'News' which provided Edwin with his chief source of income throughout his life. This activity was another of the interests which he had inherited from his father. According to the journalist and writer, Samuel Bamford, he 'used to attend and take notes of the proceedings' at the petit sessions until 'his health became bad and his son Edwin came... [and] used to take notes in his book in a small current hand'. Bamford also subsequently claimed some credit for encouraging Edwin in his career, 'seeing him there outside the bar' he 'asked him inside out of respect for his father' and continued to give him advice on his new profession.¹² In the early 1830s Edwin also worked closely with his brother James. In 1831 they together reached agreements to provide news for the *Manchester Guardian* (29 January), *Manchester Chronicle* (29 January) and *Manchester Times* (30 April). Although income from the *Manchester Times* was still being credited solely to James in 1834, Edwin was by then clearly responsible for the vast majority of other reporting in the town.¹³

It was the Reform Bill crisis of 1830-32 and subsequent election in November 1832 of William Cobbett and John Fielden, notable reformers of the day, however, which proved most valuable in launching Butterworth's journalistic career. Provincial papers, hungry for news about the electoral reform movement, responded readily to his offer to supply them with news, some, like Edward Baines in correspondence with him on historical matters, actually approaching him directly for news on 5 January 1831.¹⁴ Possibly it was this expression of interest which led Butterworth to seek formal agreements with other papers later that month. It is somewhat disconcerting for

the historian to discover just how much our view of what happened in Oldham during the subsequent decade and half relies on Butterworth's energetic scribbling. By the autumn of 1831 he was sending copy not just to liberal papers like the *Manchester Times*, *Manchester Guardian* and Baines's *Leeds Mercury* but to the Tory *Manchester Courier* (agreement 30 November 1831) and *Manchester Chronicle*, and working-class radical organs like the *Manchester Advertiser* (c. September 1831). He also reached agreement with Messrs. Egerton and John Smith on 17 November to write for the *Liverpool Mercury*, which he continued to do until the end of March 1833. In November 1832 during the build up to the general election, he tried, apparently unsuccessfully, to interest London papers like the *Globe* in hiring him as 'occasional correspondent... on such terms as may be reasonable'. Despite a subsequent attempt to broaden his base still further by corresponding with the *York Herald* in June 1838, occasional promising approaches from other papers like the London *Times* seeking out specific electoral information, and odd references in his household accounts to payment from the Chartist *Northern Star*, Butterworth relied, primarily on the Manchester press to publish his news.¹⁵

Bamford boasted that as a journalist he received '30s. a week and extra expenses when he went anywhere'.¹⁶ Edward Baines, writing on 12 July 1837 to offer Butterworth temporary work on the *Leeds Mercury* during the general election, offered him two guineas plus expenses. Butterworth's actual income was much more modest and depended on him maintaining a variety of occupations. Only three papers paid him a regular weekly sum irrespective of what he sent them or what they published. Both the *Manchester Advertiser* and *Manchester Courier* initially paid 2s.6d. per week, the former raising it to 3s. per week in the mid 1830s, the latter only in June 1837. The *Manchester Times* was more generous to begin with, paying 5s. per week for Oldham news but with 7d. deducted for paper, and 1d. a line for news from Rochdale, Ashton and Saddleworth. In June 1832, however, after a complaint from a plaintiff in a robbery trial that the veracity of his testimony had been questioned in the *Manchester Times* report, Edwin noted that 'From this time, to have reduced wage of 3s. per week'. This agreement was further revised in the mid 1830s to a payment of 1d. a line before being restored to 3s. a week on 10 April 1838. For most of the 1830s and 40s, therefore, he had a guaranteed income of no more than 9s. a week from his reporting. At 1d. a line, his income from all the other papers depended entirely on the number of lines they chose to print. Since the *Manchester*



First number of *Manchester Courier*

Guardian was published twice weekly after 1836, however, he was able to get something into it most weeks. Fifty of the 104 editions in 1839, for example, carried items from him. Although these often paid handsomely, his reports on an Anti-Corn Law Meeting and a fatal accident in January of that year bringing in 6s.8d., another on a Chartist demonstration in May netting 8s.1d., on only 13 occasions did his income match or exceed 3s per issue. After 1831, except during elections, the sums received from other papers were negligible. His combined gross weekly income from registry work, newsagency, reports and miscellaneous jobs before the deduction of expenses consequently fluctuated wildly, ranging in 1839, for example, from a high of £2.6s.4d. in mid-June to a low of just 17s.11d. in late September.¹⁷

The manuscripts which formed the basis of his reports to the press have survived relatively intact in his 'Register of Oldham News', commonly referred to now as the Butterworth manuscripts or diaries.¹⁸ Written on odd scraps of paper, often the reverse side of printers' proofs of his father's published work, these accounts are a rich personal source on daily public life in the town between the summer of 1829 and May 1843. The picture they paint, although detailed, is necessarily selective and incomplete. Not only are there short inexplicable chronological gaps¹⁹ in their sequence but there is inevitably undue emphasis on public activities; the business of regular petit sessions courts, the monthly meetings of the Police Commission, at least after Butterworth had written and received permission as 'reporter for the public press' in March 1836,²⁰ the annual vestry elections of churchwardens, overseers and constables, open public meetings, strikes, visits of MPs, wakes, Whit walks, mid-winter festivities, religious events, and formal organised leisure involving the Lyceum, mechanics' institutes, sporting, musical and temperance societies, gardening clubs, political associations and travelling theatres. The space devoted to some activities, such as the Lyceum (founded 1839) and Oldham Temperance Society, also reflected Butterworth's own personal enthusiasms. But personal vignettes also litter the text, bringing to life local characters like the eccentric Jesse Ainsworth, Baptist landowner, coal proprietor and millowner, who was, he arrogantly informed the bench in 1831 while defending his gamekeeper on a poaching charge brought by a neighbouring estate, 'an esquire by birth, a baron and a knight, as well as Lord of the Manor'. Ainsworth persistently failed to conform both to norms of the time and to historians' subsequent efforts to classify patterns of social behaviour. A teetotaller, moral reformer, director of the Lyceum and trustee of the Working Men's Hall he could nevertheless still be found brawling with the miners at the temperance 'feasts' which he vainly tried to organise for them and providing hospitality for Feargus O'Connor on his visits to the town.²¹

Butterworth's Register and surviving personal papers more than compensate for the lack of a regular newspaper in the town itself since they shed much new light on the nature and reliability of reporting during this period. By comparing the register with published accounts it is possible to determine the extent to which he was the sole source of information for the press, to speculate on the relative importance of the reporter and editor in determining the final content and expression of the public product, and to consider how Butterworth's conception of 'news' in his home town differed from that of the press barons in whose politically charged journals

historians are wont to place their trust. Furthermore, the Register constitutes a rare human document, providing insights into the mind of a man who was not just an observer of, but a participant in, his community's activities, especially those of an 'improving' nature, and who had strong opinions on many issues which, if he did not feel confident enough to include them in the body of his reports, he appended as personal footnotes in his private manuscript. Far more than the selective anonymity of the press reports, therefore, they provide a consistent, attributable viewpoint on life in an early industrial town, allowing us to understand not only the man himself, but many of his fellow townsmen.

EVENTS, 1829.

3022.] July, 1st, died M^r. W^m. Campbell, of Oldham; for upwards of forty years a respectable draper, in that town, in which he settled, when young, being originally of Scottish extraction, aged 52.—

—July, 6th, an alarm of fire, was given, at Herringth Mill, near Oldham, but owing to the exertions of the workmen, it was got under, without affecting any material mischief.—

—July, 7th. This day the new edifice of Oldham Church, was fitted with windows, and window framed in a truly Gothic style.—

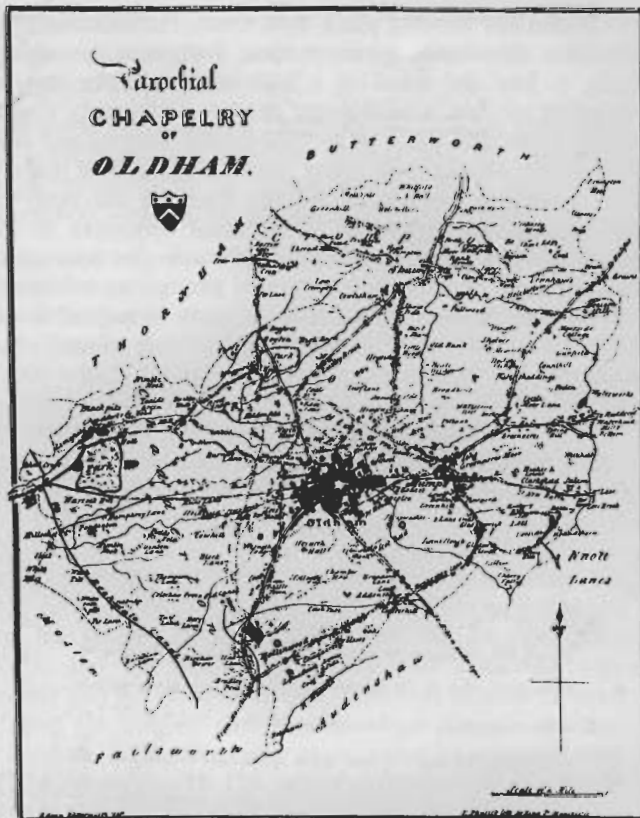
—On the evening of this day a meeting of the inhabitants of Oldwick, Rais Yate, was held near the Commercial Inn, at Rais Yate, to resolutely abstain using any more milk, till it was reduced: Butter, New gd. per lb. New Milk 3/2d. Skimmed milk 1d. and Buttermilk 1/2d. per quart; the chairman being seated on a sound ale barrel.—

—July, 8th, the annual July fair, was held at Oldham, and was remarkably well attended the weather being very fine; the show of pigs was numerous, their prices being very low; about 12s. the small pig.—

—A numerously attended meeting was held at Moorbottom, near Oldham, this evening, to consider the high prices of Milk and Butter, where resolutions were passed for the congregated to abstain entirely from using any of those articles, till they were reduced to the prices specified at the Rais Yate Meeting.—

Extract from Butterworth's 'Register of News'

In the letters which he felt he had to write to the papers refuting occasional public accusations of inaccuracy in his reporting, Butterworth always signed himself anonymously — 'Your Oldham Correspondent' and it is clear, both from their method of payment and occasional press insertions, that papers like the *Manchester Courier* regarded him as 'their usual correspondent'.²² Butterworth also claimed that he was 'the only resident newspaper reporter in my native borough'.²³ He was not, however, the press's sole source of information. Not only did all the papers contain additional items, usually of a personal but not necessarily trivial nature, which are not to be found in his manuscript, but some descriptions of the public events clearly originated from other sources. Neither the *Manchester Times*' favourable report of an Anti-Church State meeting of 26 March 1834, for example, nor the brief insertions in all the other papers, bore any resemblance to that of Butterworth's which appeared in the Anglican *Manchester Courier*. Not only



Butterworth's map of Oldham c.1832

was the language very different, but there was no consistency in estimates of the numbers present or the content and style of the speeches.²⁴ The persistence of similar discrepancies into the 1840s clearly indicates the presence of other reporters or correspondents.

Who these people were is less clear. Other local residents are known to have sent copy to the press during this period. The veteran radical campaigner and newspaper vendor John Knight, for example, corresponded regularly with O'Connor's *Northern Star* in its first year of existence. Oldham's early prominence in this paper probably owed more to his persistence than the close relationship which O'Connor had with the town or the strength of its radicalism. By July 1838, however, O'Connor's patience was wearing thin and he publicly admonished Knight and his friends for complaining about the paper's coverage of Oldham events. 'We are a little surprised', he went on, probably expressing what many other editors also felt at this time, 'at the total want of thought exhibited by many persons, as though their own little circle included all the world... Every one who sends any thing to us, thinks nobody else has ought to send'. After Knight's death in September 1838, unless O'Connor himself was personally present, reports of Oldham's radical activity were patchy and brief and the paper even had to resort to reprinting reports from the *Manchester Advertiser* for some major events. Such original reports as there were seem to have come from local Chartist activists but they bore no resemblance to those in the Manchester press or Butterworth's manuscripts so it is unlikely that he faced any competition from this quarter.²⁵ Indeed, radicals like Alex Taylor are known to have turned to him to draft reports to papers which supported their cause.²⁶ Secretaries of other associations and institutions, however, did submit official reports to the Manchester papers. Directors of the Lyceum, for example, punished the *Manchester Guardian* for its failure to publish news of its activities by refusing to stock the paper in the

newsroom.²⁷ Although it is not possible to quantify this practice it is possible that it was quite widespread.

Manchester papers also relied on other reporters who visited the town especially for pre-announced occasions. The *Manchester Advertiser's* reporter, for example, apologised for failing to report what was said at the dinner which followed Fielden's and Johnson's address to their constituents on 7 January 1839, 'being compelled to return to Manchester in consequence of the advanced period of the week'. Clearly not invited, Butterworth could only write that he was 'unacquainted' with the 'circumstances attending' the event.²⁸ Freelance reporters also ventured into what Butterworth obviously regarded as his territory. In a personal aside beneath his entry in the *Register* describing what were literally vitriolic attacks by workers on a master joiner and his manager in late February 1834, he criticizes reports in the *Manchester Courier*, *Manchester Chronicle*, and papers in Bolton and Liverpool on 1 March which were 'different accounts from mine... I suppose the Middleton meddling petty fogging Reporter issued them. Oh! How some disgrace the Press'. Clearly incensed at this, he continued to note discrepancies in other reports over subsequent weeks although his relations with Middleton's John Fielding was later reported as being cordial, even close.²⁹ Fielding was probably the 'Middleton correspondent' who also sent the first report on the election of June 1835 to the *Leeds Mercury*, although on this occasion, since Baines had specifically requested information from Butterworth but it had arrived too late, Edwin did receive payment.³⁰ For a short while after April 1833 Edwin and James lost their contract with the *Manchester Times*. 'You will be so kind as to discontinue your reports from Oldham', wrote Prentice, 'as we intend to be otherwise informed'.³¹ Editors themselves are also known to have ventured outside the town for important occasions, so it is quite possible that Condy himself, for example, was responsible for many of the lengthy reports which the *Manchester Advertiser* regularly carried.

Even when reports are recognisably Butterworth's there are often differences between the manuscripts and the published versions, especially in the longer items. In some cases the amendments are simply stylistic. Whereas Butterworth's own manuscript and the *Manchester Advertiser* for 29 August 1840 both referred to the state of trade in Oldham as 'in a languid state', the *Manchester Courier* described it as 'unsatisfactory. The sale of goods is languid' and the *Manchester Times* as 'in a depressed languid state'. The similarities are too great to admit any other interpretation than that Butterworth was the originator of all the reports. Other amendments were even more minor. The substitution of 'mere youths' for 'boys' in the *Manchester Courier's* otherwise verbatim description of the crowd who followed the Chartist leader, Peter MacDouall, on 29 August 1840, for example, hardly affected the substance of the report. Yet others, however, although comparably small, did significantly affect the impression which was imparted. The liberal *Manchester Times* report of this event on the same day, (5 September) differed only fractionally from that of the *Manchester Courier*, but it was nevertheless distinctly more sympathetic, neglecting to mention that the speaker had just been released from Chester gaol and that his carriage was 'hired', preferring to describe his associates as 'leading Chartists' rather than 'Radical spouters'. Even more serious discrepancies occurred between the reports of Fielden's and Johnson's visit two days later. On this

of the detailed speeches and debates which Butterworth meticulously noted down and commented on at great length. Possibly he did not submit this extended version to the press, although his parting comment that he would 'not have given these manifold personal sayings at such length but to expose the littleness and folly of the sayers' suggests that he intended it for publication.

Printed accounts of the regular activities of the town's judicial and political authorities are also much less detailed. The cases of drunkenness, wage disputes, disorderly behaviour, offences against the gaming and licensing laws, and failure to pay rates which occupied so much of the JPs' attention at petit sessions rarely received a mention. Without them we are left with a very skewed perspective on the nature of lawbreaking and working-class activity in Oldham during this period.³⁶ There is also no indication of just how fiercely contested were the elections of township officers at the annual vestry meetings, and little on the nature of the Police Commissioners' monthly proceedings which were often far from orderly and straightforward. The meeting on 6 April 1836, for example, was a particularly momentous one for the town attracting a large number of commissioners eager to hear at first hand 'the alleged misconduct of Mr Chadwick, head beadle, in relation to a felony', and it had to be adjourned to a large upstairs room of the Albion Inn. Butterworth's full and lively account of the interrogation reflects this intense local interest; the *Manchester Courier*, the only paper to allocate any space at all to it, simply described it as 'a long and tedious discussion'. There is also no mention of the embarrassing humiliation which Oldham's elite endured during the process of adjournment which goes a long way to explaining their subsequent enthusiasm for erecting new civic offices.

...the room became crowded and fears were expressed as to the firmness of the floor. A resolution of adjournment was unanimously passed, and the Commissioners conceiving the Free Grammar School would be in readiness for them, proceeded thither, but admission could not be obtained as a meeting of the Bible Society had taken previous possession. Thus situated, destitute of accommodation in their small mean public room, and unable to procure one more commodious, the Commissioners stood for some time in the street near the school — the circumstances did not fail to occasion remarks from several of the evident want of a town hall...

When Alfred Power, Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, paid a two-hour visit to the town on the evening of 6 January 1837 to consult leading inhabitants about the proposed boundaries for the new Poor Law Union, Butterworth was there pestering him about obtaining a post as registrar, but also noting every individual's contribution and Power's conciliatory responses. Little of this appeared in the press, although the town's extended opposition to the new measures undoubtedly reflected frustration and anger at the way Power reneged on all his promises, disregarding strongly voiced, but initially far from universally hostile, local opinion.³⁷

As all this implies, the printed text is devoid of much of the rich vibrancy of provincial town life, its characters and its concerns. Uninvolved Manchester press barons neither cared about nor understood the intensity of feelings which seemingly trivial local affairs aroused in the hearts and minds of Butterworth and his fellow townsmen, and

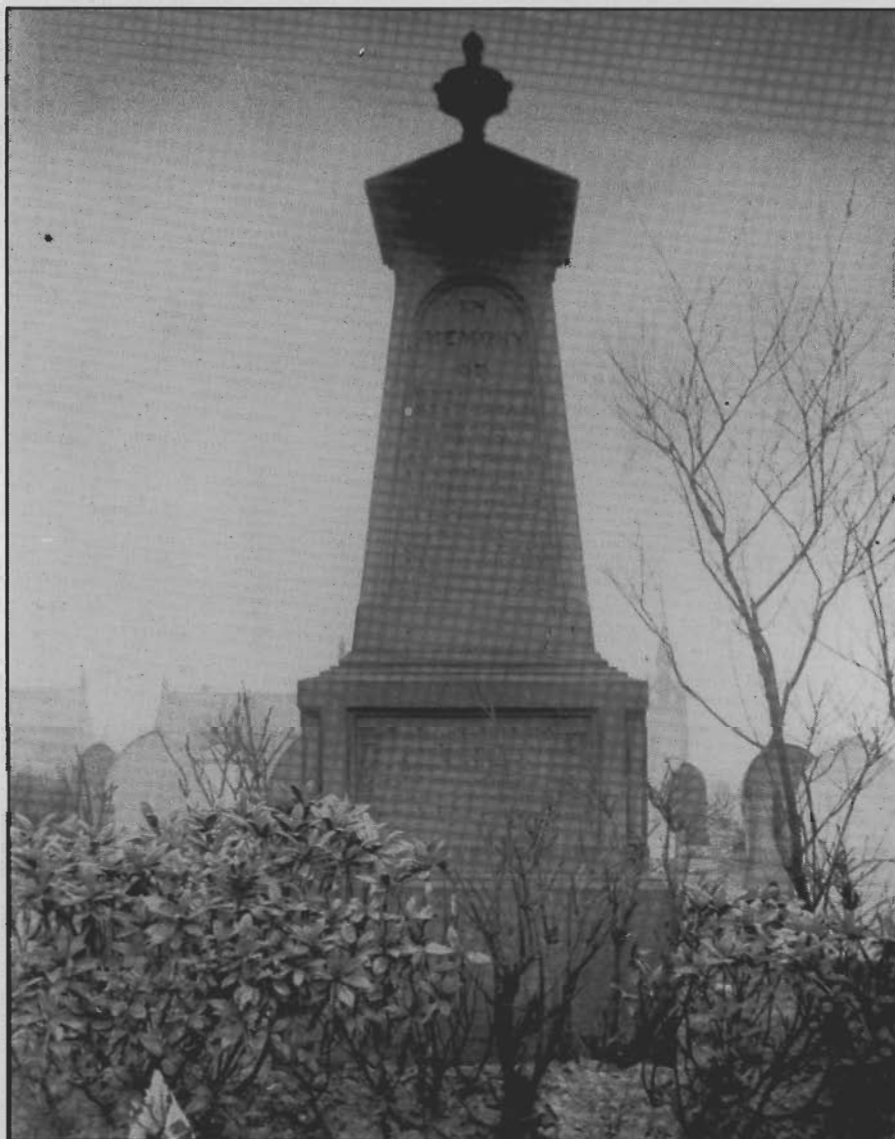
they saw no reason why their readers elsewhere should want to read about them.

Butterworth's income, therefore, was highly dependent on outsiders' perceived significance of events in his town vis-à-vis other parts of the country. This was especially so by the early 1840s as income from the newsagency, which he had taken over after his brother's death, plummeted. From selling around 145 papers per week at the time of his brother's death in May 1837 the number dropped steadily to around 50 four years later, partly as a result of the trade depression, partly, one suspects, because Butterworth's business ability was limited.³⁸ With the decline of Chartism, the ending of the trade depression and reduced level of industrial conflict in the town in the mid-1840s, broader interest in Oldham probably waned. Financial difficulties were compounded by his growing obsession with producing his own mammoth, definitive history of Lancashire. By the mid-1840s there is evidence that the mundane activities on which he relied to provide him with sufficient income to live were being neglected and that his health was failing. It is perhaps significant that no account books exist after the early 1840s and that there are increasing gaps in his Register of news before it finally ends in May 1843. Letters he received from the Manchester press suggest that he was increasingly unable to cope. The Sowers' exasperation is evident in a letter of 14 September 1845 in which they complain bitterly about his failure to submit regular accounts. Just over a year later on 19 April 1846, Mr Leresche of the *Manchester Advertiser* wrote to ask 'why it is the Oldham news does not arrive till Friday afternoon after 4 o'clock and also if you intend to give it up altogether'. On 1 April 1848, the *Manchester Chronicle's* James Wheeler terminated his contract 'other arrangements having been made'.

By this time Butterworth was in financial straits and his health was suffering. According to Dr Abraham Leach eleven years later, 'Mr Butterworth, in his latter days, was so poor that if it had not been for the assistance he received from a few working people he would have died in the Workhouse, or have been starved to death'.³⁹ Speaking earlier in the year Bamford recalled that he had met Edwin in April 1848 and found him 'quite melancholy and depressed in spirits'...

...He [Bamford] tried to introduce subjects of a cheering nature, and after talking of a variety of things they parted. The next thing he heard was that Edwin was terribly ill. He and Mr Fielding of Middleton went to see him and found him in his little chamber at Busk, very poorly, almost insensible, his recollection wandering and his sight nearly gone. He saw that he was in the extremity of his disorder, which was a bad type of typhus fever. That was the last time he saw him, for he died the day following. [19 April 1848]

He was buried in an unmarked grave in St Mary's churchyard, a small band of loyal friends having clubbed together to raise the necessary funds. Only then did most of his fellow townsmen come to recognise the value of his historical scholarship. In April 1849 a public subscription was mooted to purchase Butterworth's extensive library and manuscripts for the Lyceum, the proceeds to be put into an investment fund to provide a regular income for his sole surviving relative, his brother Hiram, who was in 'indigent circumstances', his 'mental condition... such as to make him dependent on the



Butterworth's Memorial, Greenacres Moor Cemetery

charitable'. Realising that the collection was being slowly dissipated and that Hiram was in urgent need of support, James Platt, of the local engineering family, purchased the remaining works and deposited them in the Lyceum from where they were later transferred to the public library.⁴⁰

Over a decade later in April 1859 a small group of literary enthusiasts, some of them old friends of Butterworth, opened a public subscription to erect a permanent memorial to him over his grave. Thwarted in this by the disturbance it would cause to other corpses, they were obliged to pick a new site in Greenacres Cemetery. Unveiling the cenotaph on 2 December the Revd. R.M. Davies considered that the memorial 'helped to wipe a reproach from their old town' and 'would stand out as evidence of Oldham's veneration for the memory of one

of her gifted though lowly sons'.⁴¹ Today, however, it stands unvisited, neglected, unrecognisable. Only the most determined and well informed pilgrim can locate it at the back of a huge bank of rhododendrons which obscure it from the main walkway and hide its inscriptions in their foliage. Yet, as the epitaph concludes, 'the works he left proclaim the rest'. Butterworth and his contemporaries would be surprised to find that his news reports now have a value equal, if not superior, to his historical labours, but he for one, would doubtless appreciate the value which current historians place upon them far more than a lifeless stone memorial erected in his honour. One can only hope, however, that given time, even this might be restored to its former glory as Oldham comes to recognise again the true value of the man it commemorates.

NOTES

- 1 This article arises out of broader examination of Oldham politics and society, c1820-1860 funded initially by the British Academy. I would like to express my appreciation of the help given by staff of Oldham Local Studies Centre.
- 2 Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (1985); S.E. Koss, *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain: Vol. I, The Nineteenth Century* (1981); A. Lee, *The Origins of the Popular Press in Britain, 1855-1914* (1976). For the earlier period see Jeremy Black, *The English Press in the Eighteenth Century* (Croom Helm, 1987). For a longer view, G. Boyce, J. Curran and P. Wingate (eds), *Newspaper History from the Seventeenth Century to the Present Day* (1978), Michael Harris and Alan Lee (eds), *The Press in English Society from the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries* (1985) and G.A. Cranfield, *The Press and Society: From Caxton to Northcliffe* (1978).
- 3 On Manchester see especially D. Ayerst, *Guardian — Biography of a Newspaper* (1971) and D. Read, *Press and People, 1790-1850* (1961).
- 4 D. Read, 'John Harland: "The Father of Provincial Reporting"', *Manchester Review*, vol.8, 1958, pp.205-12.
- 5 Dates of establishment of first regular successfully sustained newspapers in surrounding towns are: Ashton 1855 (*Weekly Reporter*); Bolton 1831 (*Chronicle*); Burnley 1853 (*Advertiser*); Bury 1853 (*Gazette*); Middleton 1857, (*Albion*); Oldham 1854 (*Chronicle*); Rochdale 1856 (*Observer*); Stockport 1823 (*Advertiser*).
- 6 Giles Shaw, 'James Butterworth of Oldham', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, vol.XXVI, 1908, pp.124-32.
- 7 *Biography of Eminent Natives, Residents and Benefactors of the Town of Manchester*, (Manchester, 1829).
- 8 The latest edition was published by E.J. Morten, Didsbury.

- 9 Edward Baines, *History of Lancashire*, (1836), p.xi.
- 10 Giles Shaw, 'Edwin Butterworth: his life and labours', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, vol.XXII, 1904, p.68. For further acknowledgement see entry in *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol III, (1886), p.549.
- 11 Oldham Local Studies Centre (OLSC), Butterworth Household Accounts 1834, 1836-40.
- 12 *Oldham Chronicle*, (Supplement) 9 April 1859.
- 13 OLSC, Butterworth Accounts with Newspapers 1831-, Household Accounts 1834.
- 14 Bound volumes of letters OLSC. All subsequent references to correspondence are from this source, dates in text or footnotes.
- 15 Household Accounts, 26 Dec 1837, 13 March 1838.
- 16 *Oldham Chronicle*, 9 April 1859.
- 17 Prentice to Butterworth, 15 May 1832, Account with *Manchester Times* June 1832, 1837-41.
- 18 Microfilm in OLSC and Lancaster University library. He initially described them as a record of 'trivial events'; 'news' was only referred to in 1830.
- 19 The recognisable gaps are July 1829-March 1830; Nov 1833- mid Feb 34; Jan-June 1838; July-Nov 1839; Jan-July 1840; July-Oct 1841; March-May 1842. Presumably these were accidentally mislaid or destroyed since much of his manuscript history of Lancashire was later reported to have been 'carried away or sold to shopkeepers for wastepaper' after his death, Revd. R.M. Davies; *Oldham Chronicle*, 3 Dec 1859.
- 20 Oldham Police Commission Minutes, 2 March 1836, Oldham Local Studies Centre, PCO 1/1; his case for admission is eloquently expressed in a long letter, Butterworth MSS, 15 Feb 1836.
- 21 Butterworth MSS, 3 October 1831; 19 July and Sept 1838.
- 22 *ibid.*, letters to *Manchester Courier*, 22 Feb 1834, to *Manchester Advertiser*, 15 Feb 1836. *Manchester Courier* reference 22 Feb 1834 in response to letter from Baptist minister, T. Fureaux Jordan.
- 23 Butterworth to Registrar General, 24 Oct 1836.
- 24 *Manchester Courier*, *Manchester Guardian* and *Manchester Advertiser*, 29 March; *Manchester Herald*, 1 April; *Manchester Times*, 2 April 1834.
- 25 *Northern Star*, 21 July 1838; 12 Jan 1839; 24 Oct 1840.
- 26 Household Accounts, 12 Feb, 1 April 1837 'Writing report for *Champion* for A Taylor E.'
- 27 *Manchester Advertiser*, 4 April 1840.
- 28 *ibid.*, 8 January; Butterworth MSS, 7 Jan 1839.
- 29 Butterworth MSS late Feb-early March 1834; *Oldham Chronicle*, 9 April 1859.
- 30 Edward Baines to Butterworth, 27 June 1835.
- 31 Prentice to Butterworth, 13 April 1833.
- 32 William Hargreaves to Butterworth, 28 July 1838.
- 33 J. Halland to Butterworth, 1 July 1842.
- 34 Edward Baines to Butterworth, 19 November 1836, 3 March 1837; William Hargreaves to Butterworth, 28 July 1838.
- 35 Household Accounts, 11 February 1839, 'G. reports allow' for non-inserted articles'
- 36 Butterworth's portrayal is very different from that in John Foster's controversial analysis of social relations in Oldham in this period, *Class Struggle in the Industrial Revolution*, (1974).
- 37 This developed within two weeks; Butterworth MSS, 20 January 1837. For press reports of Power's meeting, *Manchester Courier* and *Manchester Advertiser*, 14 Jan 1837.
- 38 Newspaper sales books, 27 May 1837-26 Dec 1841.
- 39 *Oldham Chronicle*, 3 Dec 1859.
- 40 A. Tait, *History of the Oldham Lyceum, 1839-1897*, (Oldham, 1897), pp.23-4; Shaw, *op.cit.*, 1904, p.70; *Manchester Examiner*, 24 April 1849.
- 41 *Oldham Chronicle*, 3 Dec 1859.



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