

THE PADIHAM POWER LOOM WEAVERS' STRIKE OF 1859

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The 1859 Padiham power loom weavers' strike was of considerable significance in the history of industrial relations in the cotton industry, simply because it represented the first sustained industrial action centred solely upon that location after the introduction of the factory system there in the late 1840s. Hence, the purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the importance of this strike in terms of both its impact upon existing labour-capital relations within Padiham itself, together with the larger ramifications for the East Lancashire Amalgamated Power Loom Weavers' Friendly Association (the 'Amalgamation') formed in 1858. Further, an examination of the issues involved reveal that the core of the problem was that of 'dictation' – managerial prerogative versus increasing trade union control in the work place. Additionally, the dispute highlighted the need for a permanent machinery of arbitration, as already existed in Blackburn. A complicating factor was that of Padiham coming within the economic sphere of influence of the Burnley masters – indeed this body was largely responsible for funding the Padiham masters during the strike, in this way prolonging the strike itself. Conversely, Amalgamation strategy consisted of using Padiham as a test case, in order to isolate the Burnley masters and consolidate their own position in conjunction with the stronger Blackburn power loom weavers' union.

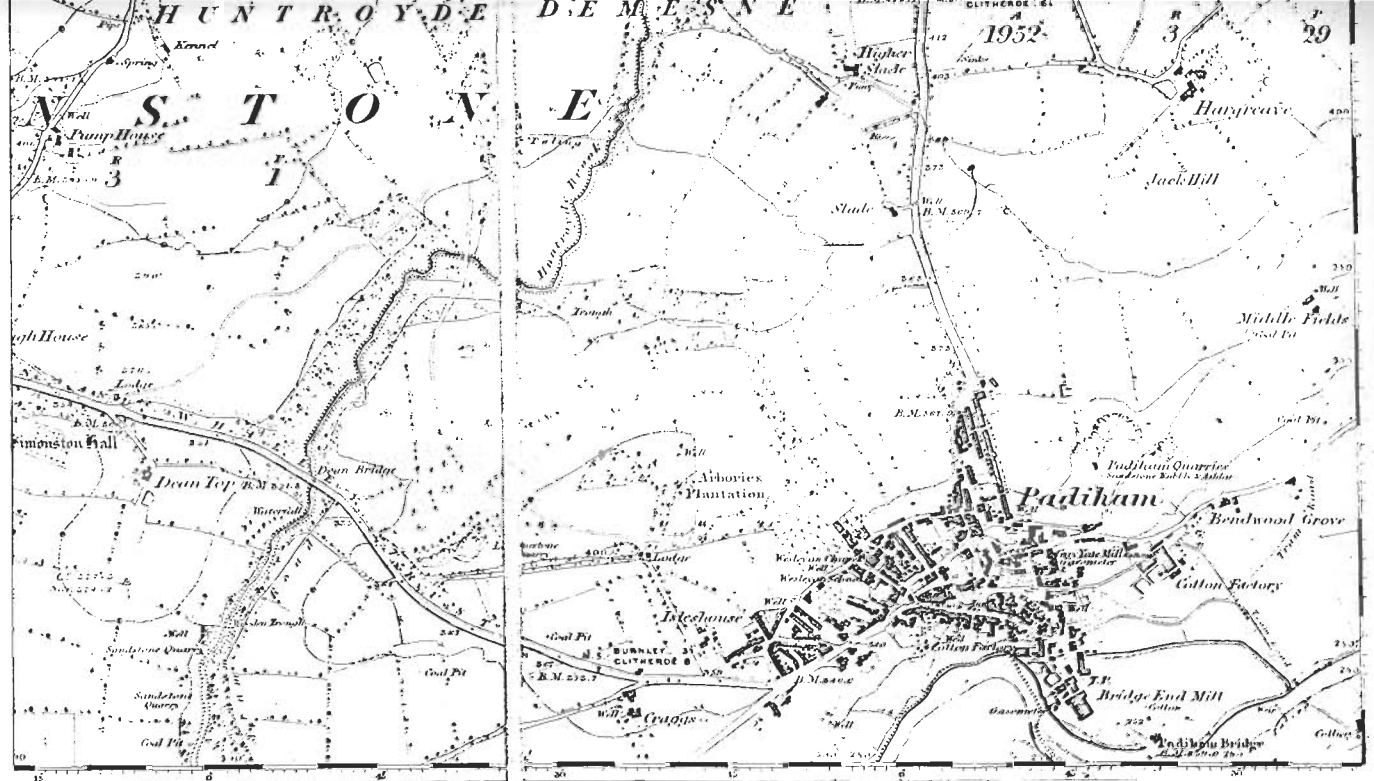
The very length of the strike itself – 29 weeks – provided a dialectical experience, which permanently changed the attitude of not only the disputants on both sides of the issue, but also

local public opinion. Indeed, power loom weavers in 18 different towns were actively contributing to the Padiham strike fund at the height of the dispute. This acted as a general stimulus to the growth of power loom weaving trade unionism throughout east Lancashire. The mass mobilisation of working-class resources and revenue is striking and leads to the conclusion that this dispute was anything but a small, localised affair. Certainly, it consolidated the Amalgamation's powerbase, as well as leading to the creation of new branches in other towns including Colne, Burnley and Barrowford. For the first time, a permanent power loom weaving trade union was established within the district, despite the combined and tenacious efforts of both the Padiham and Burnley masters to oppose this.

The Burnley Cotton Masters' Association had always strongly opposed such a development, as demonstrated in 1853 when they successfully reversed the local power loom weavers' victory during the 'Ten per Cent' strike.¹ Yet, despite their most determined efforts, by September 1859, the Amalgamation had forced the Padiham masters to recognise the 1853 Blackburn Standard List of wage rates. Further, and more importantly, the union had gained the right of direct access to the Padiham weaving sheds in order to monitor loom machinery, thereby guaranteeing the authenticity of the List. The Amalgamation's victory had other consequences; Burnley and Colne now had their own power loom weaving unions and these were to play a significant role in the local industrial unrest of 1860-1861.² Thus, a permanently organised trade



The Banks, Padiham.



Ordnance Survey Map showing Padiham, surveyed 1844.

union bureaucracy was established, which had effected a great victory and simultaneously destroyed the authority maintained by the Burnley masters over their Padiham colleagues.

From September 1859 onward, the Padiham masters came within the economic sphere of the much more powerful Blackburn masters. In turn, this development suited both the Blackburn weaving union and masters since the Padiham victory contributed to a geographical extension of stability in the field of industrial relations. From 1853 onward (when the Blackburn List was established) the Blackburn masters had pursued a more progressive labour relations policy and had recognised the permanency of weaving unionism in that locale. Thus, the Amalgamation's success in Padiham represented a logical extension of what had become the *status quo* in labour relations. Similarly, the strike resulted in a far greater degree of informal liaison between the Blackburn weavers' union and the Amalgamation, as was demonstrated by their active co-operation together during the much larger 1860-1861 Colne strike. Indeed, the winter of 1860-1861 represented a period of preparation and consolidation on the part of the Amalgamation, so that by the spring of 1861 it was ready to duplicate its strategy in regard to Colne, in order to further weaken the economic influence and authority of the Burnley masters in the district.³

The 1859 dispute also had an effect upon the Amalgamation itself. The dynamic experience of organising not only the strike, but also a highly effective support structure in the surrounding towns not only helped to consolidate the existing position but also laid the foundation for a wider amalgamation in the future, due to the fact that the Amalgamation and the stronger Blackburn weavers' union found it necessary to co-operate together. This in itself was an important phenomenon, mirrored by the growing liaison between the Padiham and Blackburn masters in the latter half of the strike, and speaks of the operation of larger economic forces at a regional level. Thus, the strike openly demonstrated the *power* of the impulse toward the establishment of *permanent* trade unions and employer associations within the industry.

Significantly, this was happening during one of the largest booms in the nineteenth century, a factor which helped accelerate such trends. Additionally, this boom brought home

the lesson that permanent trade unionism could and would exist within cotton production and force a growing accommodation between capital and labour. The lesson taught by the Padiham strike was taken to heart by certain local progressive Liberal manufacturers and resulted in such an accommodation within the district. The emergence of Lib-Lab Working Men's associations in Padiham and Burnley – certainly by the time of the 1867 Reform Act – must be seen as a direct consequence of the 1859 strike. Therefore, the strike had profound long-term political (as well as industrial) consequences, and the emergence of such Lib-Lab Working Men's associations was to prove essential to the maintenance of the Liberal powerbase within Burnley proper from the late 1860s onward.

Padiham itself had only recently started to become fully industrialised and although handloom weaving had a long history there, the factory system only came into being with the building of a direct rail link with Manchester. When the line was opened in 1848 it stimulated cotton production in Padiham, and it started to adopt a universal factory system *after* 1848. Within ten years the majority of Padiham's population of 8,000 were employed in cotton production in the township itself. Cotton production consisted of thirteen factories, of which three were spinning mills and the rest weaving sheds. Of these latter, two were involved in specialised weaving production and paid higher wages due to the specialist nature of this type of production. However, the majority of cotton masters in Padiham possessed small reserves of capital and in order to keep manufacturing costs down paid some of the lowest wages in north-east Lancashire. Therefore, it was hardly surprising that Padiham was selected by the Amalgamation as a target for strike action.

The Nature of the Dispute

As in other disputes of the period, the area of demarcation between master and union authority was the central issue of the 1859 strike. As such, the Padiham strike yields valuable data on the process of what Hobsbawm termed 'learning the rules of the game' – albeit during a period earlier than that traditionally assigned by labour historians. However, the scale and intensity of the strike in a locale which historically had not

apparently enjoyed strong trade unionism requires further explanation.

Firstly, Padiham had maintained a long history of working-class radicalism. For example, Padiham handloom weavers were involved in the large strike of 1819 and there was extensive support for physical force Chartism between 1839-1842. Likewise, a cadre of skilled working-class radicals was active within Padiham during the 1849 campaign mounted by the local Anti-Church Rates Party. A number of these working-class radicals were variously described by the *Blackburn Standard* as 'Chartists', 'Socialists' and 'Communists'.⁴ Furthermore a large majority of Padiham power loom weavers had previous trade union experience – especially when, as handloom weavers, they had taken part in the widespread strikes of 1842 under Chartist direction. Thirdly, Padiham had only recently started to convert to the factory system and consequently labour-capital relations were still only in a nascent stage of development. Fourthly, co-operative

of employment involved the police. This action created a permanent rift between the directors and the weaver-shareholders which was to have further consequences. The original decision to employ Astin had resulted in a split vote by the directors – some of whom felt that Astin's appointment smacked of favouritism; a similar consensus obtained amongst the workforce, resulting in undermining their confidence in the principles of co-operative production. An eyewitness account stated that:

Perhaps one principal reason of the failure here was the small shareholders being directors and working at the mills (because the failure of the mills brought the stores down). Take an instance. When some of the situations fell vacant the directors, to avoid personal un-pleasantness with the candidates, who were almost invariably members, cast lots who should have them. The Manager was not allowed to turn off or take on. You will at once see how these arrangements would work.⁷



Station Road Bridge, Bridge End Mill (right).

production absorbed most radical working-class energy in the town between 1848-1857, when the Padiham Cotton League Company collapsed.

The Padiham Cotton League Company had been formed in 1848 and comprised two co-operative production mills with a share issue of £5 and £20, together a cumulative capital of £10,000. Its collapse resulted from a downturn in trade, together with the fact that the company did not have limited liability status; limited liability was introduced under the parliamentary legislation of 1858, after the company's registration in 1854. The Liverpool merchants Bulley and Raffles (providing the company with raw cotton) called in its debts in 1857, due to its increasing unprofitability.⁵ Likewise, ill-feeling existed between the powerloom weaver shareholders and the directors, who were failing to give sufficient direction to the business. The climax came in February 1857 when Hartley Astin (a weaver-shareholder) was sacked and committed large-scale industrial sabotage at one of the two co-operative mills, as an act of revenge.⁶ Significantly, the method used by the directors in withdrawing Astin's contract

Likewise, the lack of limited liability created intense privation for many of the weaver-shareholders; the total loss to this group was estimated at around £11,000 (together with £2,000 for the creditors). The method of liquidation was quite ruthless and many families were thrown into total destitution. However, one group of shareholders (some of the directors) did do well for themselves and in two cases managed to gain title to the derelict mills. This group now set up as manufacturers in their own right, further consolidating the rift which had started to appear between them and the poorer shareholders at the time of the Astin case. Significantly, membership of the Padiham weavers' union increased rapidly from this time forward.

Origins of the Strike

In a report commissioned by the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science in 1860, William A. Jevons stressed the fact that the dispute was characterised by a breakdown in communications between the weavers and the masters.⁸ In particular, Jevons highlighted the role of the recently promoted masters – including those previously



The respectable citizens of Padiham muster for the Whit Walk, c. 1860.

involved in co-operative production – who were under pressure to keep running costs (especially wages) at an absolute minimum. The slump of 1857–8 intensified this trend, with the result that two masters (the individuals who had taken over the old Cotton League Company premises) started to introduce wage cuts. This immediately had three consequences. Firstly, the existing Padiham powerloom weaving union was taken into the Amalgamation as one of the founder member branches by its secretary, Abraham Pinder. Secondly, the membership of the Padiham branch of the Amalgamation started to expand rapidly – consolidating the trend which started under the old Padiham weavers' union. Thirdly, the Amalgamation commenced on a campaign to resist further wage reductions. As a result, no other Padiham firms attempted to reduce wages at this time. Likewise, the two firms which had cut wages promised to restore these as soon as trade improved.

Fuller orders within the cotton industry at the beginning of 1859 prompted Pinder and the Padiham executive to attempt to get the masters there to accept the 1853 Blackburn Standard List, in order to raise the general level of wages. Significantly, Pinder had the full backing of the Amalgamation, indicating that this body wished to use the town as a test case; if the Padiham masters could be forced to accept the Blackburn List it would follow that the other masters within the Amalgamation's area would follow suit. Additionally, since the real core of employer resistance to Amalgamation expansion was located in Burnley a successful attack upon one of its satellites would result in not only a clear victory for the Amalgamation, but also a considerable consolidation of its existing powerbase. Further, once the hegemony of the Burnley masters' could be clearly shown to have been breached, this in itself would open the way for the establishment of a permanent weavers' union at that town. Finally, the Amalgamation was assured of extensive rank and file support since the Padiham masters were notorious throughout east Lancashire for the very low wages they paid to their weavers.

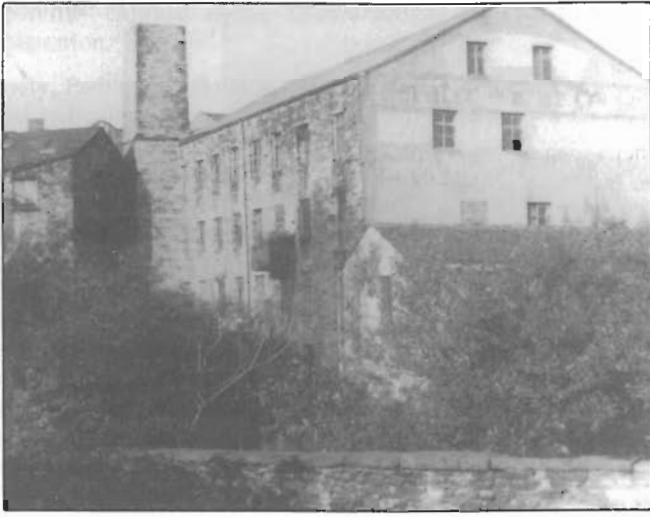
Jevons confirmed this fact by stating that *by their own admission* the Padiham masters were consistently paying 12.5 per cent below the official Blackburn List prices. However, Jevons also claimed that the 12.5 per cent deficit was 'imaginary' because Blackburn weavers were using mule warps, which produced a higher incidence of thread breakage, when compared with the throstle warps used by the Padiham weavers. Thus,

the potential for higher wages was far greater in Padiham than in Blackburn. Therefore, essentially the strike was not over wages but revolved around the 'dictation' issue. However, Jevons ignored the essential reality that without a permanent weavers' union (as already existed at Blackburn from 1854) to counterbalance the growing strength of the masters, all such argued 'equalities' would be rapidly undermined once boom conditions subsided.

The growing support amongst weavers for the Amalgamation now forced the masters to offer 10 per cent, stating that the additional 2.5 per cent could not be paid due to 'local disadvantages'. These 'local disadvantages' included the higher rail freight charges from Liverpool and to Manchester. A comparison of prices reveals that the cost to Blackburn manufacturers for the former was 10 shillings, whereas it cost the Padiham masters 12/6d. Likewise, for the latter it cost Blackburn 8/2d and Padiham 9/2d. However, as Jevons pointed out Padiham had certain local advantages such as cheaper water and land.⁹ Another advantage rested with the fact that labour was cheap, due to the local surplus of rural labour. This last point has to be taken under advisement, since most Padiham powerloom weavers had previously been full-time handloom weavers. Indeed, frequent complaints were voiced in the local press throughout the 1850s and 1860s regarding the constant labour shortage – for example in the early 1850s over 2,000 local weavers emigrated to Fall River, Massachusetts under the leadership of the Burnley Chartist Henry Holland. Thus, wages tended to remain depressed throughout the district due to the inability of the labour force to organise itself on a permanent basis.

Why were the Padiham masters prepared to offer even 10 per cent at this time? Jevons asserted that the 'the Padiham masters were naturally anxious that their promising prospects of trade should not be interfered with by a strike' and were thus more amenable to the Amalgamation's demands.¹⁰

However, the point of issue fell into two halves and on these there was to be no compromise. Firstly, the Amalgamation demanded the right of access for its officials onto the masters' premises, in order to carry out essential tasks such as the measurements of looms, to guard against any violations of the system of allowances given under the Blackburn List because of differing widths of looms. The Padiham masters were



Smithgate Mill

prepared to accept the principle of the allowance system, but its implementation was problematic since the Amalgamation insisted upon using its own officials. This was interpreted by the masters as an invasion of their rights and an erosion of their authority. A subsidiary point of dispute was the Padiham masters' practice of charging *in advance* for gold bobbins. Gold bobbins were used to edge the finished woven cloth at a cost (to the operative); one gold bobbin could be used on up to seven cloth pieces. The price was then redeemable at ½d per piece. This practice was condemned as 'tyranny' at at least one strike meeting.¹¹

The second fundamental issue was the right of the Amalgamation to negotiate directly with the employers. The masters insisted upon negotiating only with their own workforce and on an individual basis in order to prevent the Amalgamation from developing a position of strength. At this point Jevons commented that 'masters by their unwise and illiberal conduct, had thrown their men into the arms of the Association', thus intimating that the real troublemakers were such figures as Pinder.¹² However, a more likely explanation rests with the accumulation of worker grievances, together with a growing distrust of the new masters who had instituted wage reductions in the first place. Thus, the origins of the strike can be found in the build up of antagonisms on both sides, which led to a breakdown in dialogue. Likewise, the economic boom conditions obtaining engendered increasing confidence within the workforce regarding its ability to organise itself in the face of an increasingly united opposition by the masters.

The polarisation between masters and operatives can be judged by the events involved in one of the final negotiation meetings to take place before the strike started in March 1859.¹³ Angry voices were raised against the two new masters formerly involved in co-operative production. Many operatives were incensed at this *volte-face* on the part of their former comrades, and at this point negotiations broke down, even though the masters were about to offer the 10 per cent rise in prices. The masters now began a propaganda campaign whilst simultaneously negotiating funding with the Burnley Masters' Association. The Burnley Masters' Association agreed only to give monies to the Padiham masters on the understanding that the dispute involved the 'dictation' issue and not just a wages settlement. The Padiham masters now posted a notice at each of their premises announcing that 10 per cent was offered but 2.5 per cent withheld due to 'local disadvantages'. This was clearly unacceptable to the Amalgamation and the strike commenced on 17 March 1859, when 870 power loom weavers, 61 tenters, 6 overlookers and 6 warehouse boys of the six mills under dispute walked out.¹⁴

The Strike – Initial Stage

According to Jevons four of the weaving sheds remained in full production throughout the strike; two sheds paid higher wages due to the specialist nature of their type of manufacture; the other two had agreed to the full demands of the Amalgamation.¹⁵ Thus, an important weavers' support base existed within Padiham itself which was able to provide a consistently substantial contribution to the strike fund. For example, the Padiham contribution for week ending 10 April was £21. 0s. 0d; for week ending 23 May, £28. 1s. 0d. Comparison with those of Burnley (population 30,000) demonstrate a much stronger response in support of the strike by the Padiham weavers.

The role played by the Padiham strike committee during the initial phase of the dispute now requires analysis. A number of significant factors immediately make themselves apparent. Firstly, Amalgamation strategy was strictly adhered to by the Padiham strike committee throughout the dispute. Secondly, strict organisational discipline over rank and file membership was maintained by Pinder and the strike committee. Thirdly, a flexible system of liaison was maintained between the Padiham strike committee and the Amalgamation executive committee based in Accrington, so that the direction and ultimate objectives of the strike always remained under the strict control of the Amalgamation itself. Hence, the internal solidarity of the Amalgamation was never compromised or threatened from within – despite employer and 'neutral' third party attempts at this. Good relations with the press were also encouraged by Pinder and the strike committee, especially during the later part of the strike. Finally, the strike committee directly funded a network of paid agents within an increasing number of towns, in order to propagandise and liaise with local Amalgamation branches – and indeed to encourage the establishment of new branches as in the case of Burnley, Colne and Barrowford. Thus, the operation of the strike itself must be seen as an instrument for enhancing and extending the powerbase of the Amalgamation throughout the district. The central problem, as seen by both the Padiham strike committee and the Amalgamation executive committee, was that of Burnley.

Burnley was the major cotton manufacturing centre of the district and as such represented the greatest potential area for Amalgamation recruitment. However, a twin problem existed which prevented the Amalgamation from expanding its influence within the town. Firstly, organised employer resistance to worker organisation had existed in Burnley for many years; the Burnley Masters' Association funded the Padiham masters to the tune of £7,000 during the strike.¹⁶



Wonder Mill.

Secondly, worker apathy within Burnley persisted until the second phase of the strike – this was due in large measure to the influence of local figures such as Charles Owen, who tended to dominate the Burnley radical working-class group located at Bradshaw's Temperance Hotel.¹⁷ Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the Burnley problem tended to occupy the executive and strike committees' discussions from the very start of the dispute. For example, an Amalgamation executive committee meeting was held on Wednesday 30 March at the Amalgamation headquarters at Accrington. Taylor, executive committee deputy to Padiham, commented upon a meeting of Burnley, Colne and Barrowford manufacturers convened the previous week, and stated that there existed a need to recruit potential weavers' leaders in Burnley, in order to bring the fight home to the enemy. Further, he said that 'if their eyes were opened to a sense of duty, the manufacturers of Burnley would not dare assist the manufacturers of Padiham to decrease the poor weavers'.¹⁸ Taylor next outlined Amalgamation strategy regarding fund raising and recommended an extensive and systematic collection, both house-to-house and in each mill (a levy at 1d per loom) throughout east Lancashire. Additionally: 'He hoped they were ready to defend their own interests in Burnley' and condemned the Burnley operatives for their lack of zeal in supporting the Padiham strike in its first week of life.¹⁹ At subsequent Padiham strike committee meetings such proposals were fully implemented for the district on a permanent basis, although the decision to subscribe was put to the membership in the various branches on a weekly basis; an affirmative and unanimous vote was regularly returned for each branch right up to the end of the strike in September.

In order to achieve this objective, Pinder and the Padiham strike committee had to maintain strict discipline over rank and file membership, not only with Padiham itself but also within the new branches established. This in part explains the existence of *two* distinct executive bodies co-ordinating the conduct and disposition of the strike – ie. the Padiham strike committee and the Accrington-based Amalgamation executive committee. In essence, the former took charge of the epicentre of the strike, as well as conducting an extensive recruitment campaign in the neighbouring district encompassing Sabden, Burnley, Colne, Barrowford, Marsden and Brierfield. This was achieved by the establishment of a network of paid agents, seconded to Pinder's strike committee by the Amalgamation. The latter body was responsible for providing an extensive support organisation based in each town maintaining an Amalgamation branch. Likewise, it employed its own paid

agents (at 30 shillings per week) in order to liaise with both the Blackburn weavers' union executive and certain town-based weaver union executives remaining outside Blackburn or Amalgamation control. Hence, as the strike progressed the level of subscriptions from each branch rose, due to the increasing efficiency demonstrated by both executive bodies.

The strength of internal discipline amongst the Padiham weavers can be demonstrated by the following case. Jeavons reported that in mid-July a group of Padiham tradesmen formed a 'Mediation Committee' in a determined attempt to break the state of impasse in negotiations.²⁰ This committee then sent representatives to the various masters and received permission to inspect their mills, in order to verify measurements necessary to the implementation of the Blackburn List allowances system. It was found that the allowances offered by most of the masters were up to List standards. However, the role played by this self-appointed body was rejected by both sides. The masters, although prepared to allow the Mediation Committee to continue to verify List allowances would under no circumstances allow an Amalgamation official to accompany them. Both the executive and strike committees rejected the Mediation Committee's offer out of hand because of the intransigence of the masters over this issue. Thus, the Mediation Committee approached ordinary rank and file members and attempted to put the offer directly to them. In the upshot, one operative (probably a strike committee member) asked for a show of hands in order to ascertain who was in 'support of the executive'; immediately after the vote was taken the operative left the meeting, taking every other weaver with him. Apart from a demonstration of union solidarity, what was significant here is the alertness of the strike committee to any attempts to undermine its authority – either of an internal or external nature. Another vital element necessary to the maintenance of rank and file discipline was the skilful use of propaganda, which is essential to the winning of any war. This took two forms. Firstly, the organisation and system of meetings ensured a sustained level of rank and file enthusiasm. Indeed, this factor alone was responsible for the successful Amalgamation penetration of Burnley. Essentially, meetings were of two types and held on a regular weekly basis. Firstly, small and exclusive gathering of deputies and executives discussing strategy and topline decision-making. Secondly, large, general meetings at which rank and file members attended; the latest news on the progress of the strike was announced, together with the amounts collected at each branch. Both at Accrington (Wednesdays) and Padiham (Sundays) executive meetings would take place first, usually at the



Padiham Railway Station c.1860.



Rev. E.A. Verity.

law of natural rights in relation to their workers justified such workers in organising themselves in the face of such 'tyranny'. Most importantly, Verity was vocalising the rising working-class consensus that workers required *permanent* trade unions in order to adequately protect themselves from the wide-sweeping effects of the now permanently established *laissez-faire* economy.

Verity, in conjunction with both executive bodies, organised a series of open-air support meetings in Burnley. The first was held at Turf Moor on Saturday 11 June, at which 800 were present. The *Burnley Advertiser* reporter commented both on the festive atmosphere which was provided by the Padiham brass band and the presence of Pinder and Elijah Holt (Blackburn weavers' union executive) who chaired the meeting. Verity spoke at length of the need of Burnley operatives to 'liberate' themselves, since they were 'Englishmen' and not 'black slaves'. (An interesting allusion to the current critical US situation.) An attack was then launched upon the Burnley masters for their 'chicanery', together with their attempt to prevent the operatives from hearing his voice '*lest he should create in them aspirations to become more sensible beings, and throw off the shackles of slavery*'. Reference was made to Pinder, whom Verity referred to as their 'detective policeman' who would ruthlessly hunt out all 'sham manufacturers' and provide a remedy for the extremely low wages common in Burnley. However, there existed no magic formula. What was required was a strong weavers' union, in order to counter the 'cunning' of the 'sham manufacturers'. Verity then referred to his support for the Ten Hours Bill years previously and that he

had not changed, that he would continue to support them in the coming struggle. The speech was concluded by stirring exhortation 'support the strike'.²³

The impact of Verity's presence at these meetings cannot be overstated, for as the summer drew on local support for the strike increased. In all Verity organised a total of 29 'monster' meetings with the largest estimated attendance of 2,500 on at least two occasions (Burnley – 21 June and 23 August) and 2,000 on three (Burnley – 2 and 20 August; Colne – 24 July). Indeed, as Verity started to vary his venues, by organising support meetings at Colne, Barrowford and Padiham, he provided another useful service for the Amalgamation. An analysis of the pattern of Amalgamation meetings at this time reveals that the executive meetings carried on as normal, but newspaper coverage of such tended to decline. Whereas the high profile afforded by the pro-press campaign had suited both executive bodies during the early months of the strike, once the delicate and elongated process of negotiations started the executives were able to work in relative obscurity, which now suited their purpose. Likewise, Verity started to whip up trouble for the Burnley masters at precisely the point at which funding to the Padiham masters became problematic. Similarly, Verity's ceaseless attacks upon this group tended to rob them of legitimacy in the eyes of their Blackburn colleagues. Significantly, the Burnley masters took no part in the final negotiations – this role was reserved exclusively for the Blackburn masters themselves.

The choice of Verity as 'masthead' for the strike was prudent for another reason. Whilst the *Burnley Advertiser* editor was notoriously anti-union in his attitude, he held the large Liberal nonconformist cotton manufacturers of the town in even less regard. Hence Waddington was quite happy to print Verity's animated and vitriolic attacks upon this group. Conversely, Waddington also disliked Verity intensely and hence was prepared to print Verity's speeches in order to allow him to condemn himself out of his own mouth. In this way Waddington was able to accommodate two conflicting desires and felt that he could score points over the disputants on both sides of the issue. Whatever the case, Verity served a useful purpose in diverting local middle-class attention away from the real issues simply because whilst he was allied to the Amalgamation he was not part of it. (Presumably, if Verity's campaign had backfired, he would have made a very convenient scapegoat for both the Amalgamation and the Masters.) Whatever the case, Verity acting in capacity as 'masthead' drew attention away from the real union activists and allowed them to negotiate from a position of increasing strength. Verity likewise drew the fire of the local press, which prevented this body from interfering *via* the time-honoured ploy of raising false issues at strategic moments. Although Verity could have proved an expensive liability, his value to the Amalgamation far outweighed such potential hazards.

The strength of working-class support for the strike can be judged by the financial reserves built up by the Padiham strike committee by the end of the dispute. The strike fund for week ending 18 September stood at £900.9.6½d.²⁴ This amount was in no small measure due to the ceaseless activity of the indefatigable Verity, who successfully harnessed radical working-class impulses to the theme of permanent trade unionism as representative of the best means of defence for the weavers. However, by September both Verity and Pinder became victims of their own success, when a division occurred over the settlement of the strike. This division threatened to destroy not only the spontaneous alliance between the Amalgamation and the Blackburn weavers' union, but also the internal integrity of the Amalgamation itself.



Co-operative Spinning Mill, Padiham.

The Settlement

The role of the powerful Blackburn Cotton Masters' Association now needs to be analysed. The second phase of the strike had seen the increasing involvement of other Amalgamation branches in a support role. Nor had this development been restricted just to the area coming under Amalgamation oversight. The weavers of both Blackburn and Preston had contributed consistently to the Padiham strike fund throughout the dispute; in the case of Blackburn, weaver contributions had risen from £50 at the strike's beginning to a staggering £106.13.1d for week ending 18 September. However, the strain on the Blackburn executive was starting to show by 15 August, when the Blackburn masters sent a deputation to Padiham in order to resolve the impasse. A report was issued (dated 17 August) and published simultaneously on 19 August in the *Manchester Guardian* and *Manchester Examiner and Times*. The report stated that an open recognition of the 'dictation' issue was now declared and an attempt at reconciliation was proffered. In essence a compromise formula was invoked, whereby individual weavers employed by the master concerned would be allowed to 'monitor' machinery and despatch the results directly to Pinder. This compromise was not new – indeed one of the Padiham masters remaining in full production had initiated this system in his own mill in March 1859. However, the Padiham executive's growing distrust of the collective body of employers (especially the new masters) prevented the wholesale implementation of the compromise 'monitoring' system. Why did it take until September for this system to be accepted by both sides?

Firstly, the Padiham masters were well able to resist the strike simply because the Burnley masters' association had agreed to fund them at a rate of 2s 6d per loom.²⁵ On this basis the Padiham masters formed themselves into a self-styled 'Masters' Defence Association' backed by the prestige of the Burnley masters. However, the overall impact of Verity's intensive support campaign was to diminish such prestige and force this body into a defensive posture. Even Waddington felt obliged to print an editorial on 23 July defending his reporting of the strike. A concerted attack was then made upon Verity, who

presented a high profile target, in the following weeks. Perhaps the best indicator of loss of prestige on the part of this body was the fact that no Burnley master was invited by the Blackburn masters' deputation to participate in negotiations. A comparison with the close liaison existing between the Burnley, Blackburn and Preston masters during the 1853 Ten Per Cent strike is instructive.²⁶ Thus, although the Padiham masters were in a position to withstand the strike for an indefinite period, the loss of moral support on the part of the Burnley masters from July onward must have been telling. Likewise, the Padiham strike committee was occupying a similar position of strength and was aided by the relative longevity of the boom; both sides were engaged in a war of attrition.

Secondly, the Blackburn masters involvement resulted from the decline in status of their Burnley counterparts. Similarly, the longer the strike continued the greater the threat that the dispute would escalate and damage the delicate labour relations system built up in Blackburn since 1854. Fractures in this system started to appear by early September and the tremors were felt even in Burnley. The Blackburn loomers, twistors, beamers and drawers held a meeting on Monday 5 September and demanded an immediate 10 per cent rise,²⁷ which was rapidly followed by Hornby's acceptance.²⁸ Simultaneously, the newly-organised Burnley loomers, twistors and beamers put in an identical demand, which was granted by the masters on 14 September.²⁹ Hence, the longer the Padiham strike continued the greater the possibility of a large scale confrontation; because the Padiham and Burnley masters had lost the initiative (certainly by July). It became incumbent upon the Blackburn masters to resolve the situation. The failure of the Mediation Committee only reinforced this conviction and impelled the Blackburn masters to a course of positive intervention.

If this development was alarming to the Blackburn masters, it was even more so to the Blackburn and Accrington-based union executives. The very real danger of a rank and file revolt existed; as long as the dispute was restricted to Padiham and the other branches remained in a supportive role all would be well. Conversely, if individual branches started to make independent demands this could well undermine executive

authority and legitimacy. Significantly, a split occurred at a late stage of negotiations regarding a wholesale acceptance of the 'monitor' system as proffered by the Blackburn masters. This resulted in placing the Accrington and Blackburn executives on one side of the issue and the Padiham, Colne and Burnley branches on the other. Pinder all along had resisted the 'monitor' system and demanded the right of *full* access for Amalgamation officials. At the final negotiation meeting held at Blackburn on 14 September Amalgamation deputies voted for a full acceptance of the offer.²⁹ According to Jevons this agreement was condemned by the rank and file membership (especially in the dissident branches) as a 'sell-out'; the Padiham strike committee adding its voice to the discontent at a meeting held at the Oddfellows Hall on 19 September. Verity publicly backed Pinder and urged a continuation of the strike.³¹ At this point both the Blackburn and Accrington executives threatened not only to withhold further contributions, but to actively support the Padiham masters. Verity now rounded on these 'sham weavers' at a meeting in Burnley on 27 September and linked the present struggle with the franchise issue. Further, he stated that the Burnley masters were now starting to waver in their resolve; at least one master was about to accept the Blackburn list and six other firms were being petitioned by weavers.³²

'The Padiham Strike Was Somewhat Settled'

The final end came in late September, when Pinder and the strike committee finally accepted the reality of the situation. The dispute had been long and bitter and certain concessions gained at the expense of the local masters, but at a price. The internal divisions arising from the final settlement now created

temporary difficulties which threatened the fragile alliance of the Blackburn and Accrington executives and these were not to be resolved until the following year. In terms of concrete gains the Amalgamation had weathered the storm and internal unity was preserved simply because boom conditions were to carry on for another year at least. In addition, the strike had rapidly increased Amalgamation membership, which according to one source now stood at 1,410 members.³³ In terms of new branches Colne is perhaps the representative example. Established in May this branch could by November of the same year return three representatives to the executive, whilst maintaining a balance of £70.³⁴ Likewise, according to Verity, the strike had gained the Padiham weavers an additional £2,000 in wage advances, together with a further £18,000 for weavers from other branches.³⁵ Similarly, the prestige and power of the Burnley masters had been diminished, making the establishment of weavers' unionism possible in that town, as witnessed by the weavers' pay demands of September.

However, a curious air of unfinished business pervaded the termination of the strike. Indeed, Verity was still actively campaigning in Burnley in October stressing the need for further strike action in the spring. The central issue of full access remained unresolved, together with the precise nature of the working relationship obtaining between the branches and executive of the Amalgamation. At Verity's last meeting,³⁶ held at the Burnley market place on 18 October there were uttered the prophetic words, '*the Padiham strike was somewhat settled ...*'. Unresolved tensions and contradictions were to find their expression in the even more bitterly contended Colne strike of 1860-61, a strike which was to be twice as large and double the duration of the 1859 strike at Padiham.

NOTES

1. H.I. Dutton and J.E. King, *Ten Per Cent And No Surrender* p.104.
2. *Burnley Advertiser*, 12 November 1859.
3. *Burnley Advertiser*, 2 April 1859.
4. *Blackburn Standard*, 18 April 1849.
5. *Burnley Advertiser*, 19 June 1858: The Padiham Cotton League Company only declared one dividend (£800) in its lifetime.
6. *Burnley Advertiser*, 28 February 1857.
7. *Burnley Gazette*, 5 October 1867: This article was based on a specially commissioned poll carried out by the *Burnley Gazette* in order to demonstrate the 'folly' of co-operative production. Indeed, the article revealed that the loss of faith in the principles of co-operative production was total and that no possibility existed that this would ever be re-established in Padiham.
8. W.A. Jevons, *Account of the Weavers' Strike at Padiham in 1859* From the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, 4th Annual General Meeting Report (1860) Paper to Committee on Trade Societies p.435.
9. W.A. Jevons *op. cit.*, p.440.
10. W.A. Jevons *op. cit.*, p.440.
11. *Ibid.*, p.451.
12. W.A. Jevons *op. cit.*, p.441.
13. *Ibid.*, p.438.
14. W.A. Jevons *op. cit.*, p.443.
15. W.A. Jevons *op. cit.*, p.442.
16. W.A. Jevons *op. cit.*, p.443.
17. *Burnley Gazette*, 14 November 1868.
18. *Burnley Advertiser*, 2 April 1859.
19. *Ibid.*
20. W.A. Jevons *op. cit.*, p.454; *Burnley Advertiser*, 30 July 1859.
21. *Burnley Advertiser*, 2 April 1859.
22. *Burnley Advertiser*, 4 June 1859.
23. *Burnley Advertiser*, 18 June 1859.
24. W.A. Jevons *op. cit.*, p.470; *Burnley Advertiser*, 24 September 1859.
25. W.A. Jevons *op. cit.*, p.443.
26. H.I. Dutton and J.E. King *op. cit.*, p.42.
27. *Burnley Advertiser*, 17 September 1859.
28. *Ibid.*, 24 September 1859.
29. *Ibid.*
30. *Burnley Advertiser*, 24 September 1859.
31. W.A. Jevons *op. cit.*, p.463.
32. *Burnley Advertiser*, 1 October 1859.
33. *Ibid.*, 12 November 1859.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Burnley Advertiser*, 12 November 1859.
36. *Ibid.*, 22 October 1859.

TABLE ONE
REPORTED AMALGAMATION SUBSCRIPTIONS
TO 1859 PADIHAM STRIKE FUND

BRANCH	MONTH	MONTH	MONTH	MONTH
	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
	£. s. d.	£. s. d.	£. s. d.	£. s. d.
ACCRINGTON			162. 0. 0.	134. 0. 0.
BARROWFORD/NELSON			18. 12. 8.	26. 4. 6.
BLACKBURN			351. 5. 7.	395. 10. 0.
BOLTON/HALSHAW MOOR			55. 1. 5.	64. 0. 0.
BURNLEY			48. 10. 0.	39. 5. 0.
CHORLEY			35. 12. 7.	34. 10. 0.
CHURCH			113. 19. 7.	84. 0. 0.
CLITHEROE			111. 13. 2.	70. 0. 0.
COLNE			8. 9. 6.	29. 19. 8.
DARWEN			154. 18. 2.	170. 0. 0.
ENFIELD			86. 0. 0.	68. 2. 0.
GREAT HARWOOD			76. 1. 10.	75. 0. 0.
HASLINGDEN/CRAWSHAW			16. 0. 0.	17. 2. 3.
LEIGH/TYLDESLEY			36. 9. 9.	33. 19. 0.
PADIHAM/SABDEN			93. 4. 7.	104. 13. 3.
PRESTON			188. 0. 0.	104. 13. 9.
RAMSBOTTOM			6. 6. 8.	8. 10. 6.
TOTAL	265. 11. 10.	1256. 10. 10	1562. 5. 6.	1459. 9. 11.
	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER	TOTAL
	£. s. d.	£. s. d.	£. s. d.	£. s. d.
ACCRINGTON	136. 0. 0.	71. 0. 0.	109. 0. 0.	
BARROWFORD/NELSON	27. 10. 0.	20. 10. 10.	42. 13. 3.	
BLACKBURN	440. 0. 0.	343. 0. 0.	370. 13. 1.	
BOLTON/HALSHAW MOOR	80. 0. 0.	61. 9. 5.	73. 17. 7.	
BURNLEY	47. 0. 0.	70. 0. 6.	103. 0. 0.	
CHORLEY	36. 0. 0.	28. 10. 0.	30. 0. 0.	
CHURCH	114. 0. 0.	77. 0. 0.	109. 0. 0.	
CLITHEROE	48. 0. 0.	48. 0. 0.	62. 0. 0.	
COLNE	33. 10. 0.	48. 0. 0.	72. 0. 0.	
DARWEN	170. 0. 0.	130. 0. 0.	145. 0. 0.	
ENFIELD	33. 0. 0.	46. 0. 0.	66. 0. 0.	
GREAT HARWOOD	100. 0. 0.	60. 0. 0.	87. 0. 0.	
HASLINGDEN/CRAWSHAW	29. 14. 9.	23. 0. 2.	32. 14. 4.	
LEIGH/TYLDESLEY	36. 0. 0.	27. 0. 0.	36. 0. 0.	
PADIHAM/SABDEN	97. 15. 8.	67. 14. 3.	82. 3. 7.	
PRESTON	140. 1. 8.	102. 0. 0.	118. 2. 8.	
RAMSBOTTOM	14. 17. 1.	6. 9. 6.	7. 1. 8.	
TOTAL	1583. 9. 2.	1229. 14. 8.	1546. 6. 2.	8903. 1. 1.

NB. March and April weekly returns incomplete.

SOURCE: *Burnley Advertiser*
Accrington Free Press

TABLE TWO

PATTERN OF REPORTED AMALGAMATION RELATED MEETINGS

TOWN	LOCATION	PURPOSE	NO. OF MEETINGS	SPEAKERS
MARCH				
PADIHAM	Oddfellows Hall	Gen/Exec	3	Fielding, Pinder
ACCRINGTON	Bay Horse Inn	Gen/Exec	3	Pinder, Taylor
CLITHEROE	—	Support	1	—
APRIL				
PADIHAM	Oddfellows Hall	Gen/Exec	11	Lawless, Pinder, Taylor
ACCRINGTON	Bay Horse Inn	Gen/Exec	5	Mangham, Taylor, Whittaker
BURNLEY	—	Support	1	Taylor.
MAY				
PADIHAM	Oddfellows Hall	Gen/Exec	5	Fielding, Mangham, Pinder
PADIHAM	The Banks	Gen/Support	2	Fielding, Pinder
PADIHAM	Trade School	Negotiate	1	Pinder
ACCRINGTON	Bay Horse Inn	Gen/Exec	4	Birtwistle, Mangham
BARROWFORD	Co-op Co. Lot	Support	2	—
RAMSBOTTOM	—	Support	1	Mangham
HARWOOD	—	Support	1	Verity
JUNE				
PADIHAM	Oddfellows Hall	Gen/Exec	4	Lawless, Pinder
PADIHAM	Trade School	Negotiate	1	Pinder
ACCRINGTON	Bay Horse Inn	Gen/Exec	3	Kinder, Smith, Pinder
ACCRINGTON	Park Shed Lot	Gen/Support	2	Mangham, Taylor
ACCRINGTON	Peel Institute	Support	1	Verity
BURNLEY	Turf Moor	Support	1	Verity
BURNLEY	Market Place	Support	2	Verity
BURNLEY	All Saints Ch	Supp. Sermon	1	Verity
BLACKBURN	Rechabite Hall	Support	1	Verity
JULY				
PADIHAM	Oddfellows Hall	Gen/Exec	6	Lawless, Mangham, Pinder
PADIHAM	The Banks	Gen/Support	6	Verity
PADIHAM	Trade School	Negotiate	1	Pinder
ACCRINGTON	Bay Horse Inn	Gen/Exec	3	Pinder, Pollard, Taylor
ACCRINGTON	Park Shed Lot	Gen/Support	1	Verity
BURNLEY	Market Place	Support	5	Verity
BARROWFORD	Co-op. Co. Lot	Support	1	Verity
COLNE	Cloth Hall	Support	1	Verity
HARWOOD	—	Support	1	Verity
ENFIELD	—	Support	1	Verity
BACUP	Mechanics Inst.	Support	1	Verity
AUGUST				
PADIHAM	Oddfellows Hall	Gen/Exec	7	Lawless, Mangham, Pinder
ACCRINGTON	Bay Horse Inn	Gen/Exec	3	Kinder, Smith, Mangham
ACCRINGTON	Albert St Lot	Gen/Support	1	Taylor
ACCRINGTON	Chapel St Lot	Gen/Support	1	Mangham
BURNLEY	Market Place	Support	5	Verity
COLNE	Cloth Hall	Support	1	Verity
COLNE	Mill Green	Support	1	Taylor
COLNE	Wheatley Lane	Support	1	Mangham
BLACKBURN	Old Bull Hotel	Negotiate	1	Pinder
HARWOOD	Hotel	Support	2	Pinder, Verity
ENFIELD	Prim. Meth. Ch	Support	1	Verity
CRAWSHAW	Black Dog Inn	Support	1	Mangham
HASLINGDEN	Oddfellows Hall	Support	1	Pollard
SEPTEMBER				
PADIHAM	Oddfellows Hall	Gen/Exec	9	Lawless, Mangham, Pinder
PADIHAM	Trade School	Negotiate	1	Pinder
PADIHAM	Oddfellows Hall	Settlement	1	Pinder
PADIHAM	Hargreaves Mill	Shopfloor	1	Pinder
ACCRINGTON	Bay Horse Inn	Gen/Exec	3	Lawless, Pinder, Verity
ACCRINGTON	Peel Institute	Gen/Support	1	Verity
BURNLEY	Market Place	Support	6	Dyson, Verity
BLACKBURN	Old Bull Hotel	Negotiate	1	Pinder
CLITHEROE	—	Support	1	Verity
SABDEN	Oddfellows Hall	Support	1	Mangham
CHURCH	Greyhound Inn	Support	1	Mangham

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SOURCE: *Burnley Advertiser*
Accrington Free Press