

LANCASHIRE AND CHESHIRE ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY

Morris Garratt

It is not, I think, too far-fetched an idea to point to the industrial revolution in the early part of the nineteenth century as the catalyst which eventually gave rise to the formation of a number of learned societies such as ours. This unprecedented industrial growth and expansion was highlighted by the Prince Consort's Great Exhibition of 1851, which drew attention as never before to the scientific and technological changes which had taken place, and which would continue to do so in the future, developing into what some historians have termed 'a second industrial revolution'. Yet, while the emphasis in research was quite properly in the scientific and industrial fields, for many Victorians the study of the past held an equal fascination.¹

Origins of Society

At a meeting of the Chetham Society in 1878 the well-known local historian J. P. Earwaker suggested 'the formation of a Society with the object of making excursions to Lancashire and Cheshire places of historical or archaeological interest, to be conducted on every occasion by a competent antiquary, who should prepare a paper on the place visited...'. Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, this admirable proposal was not immediately taken up, but

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The Society's first officers, 1883.

O FULL TRUE UN PERTIKLER OKEAWNT

O WAT ME UN MAW MISTRIS SEEDE UN YERD WJ'
GOOIN TO TH'

GREYTE EGGSHIBISHUN E' LUNDUN,

E' EYGHTENE HUNDURTH UN SIXTY TWO,

PRINTED OER OGEN FRO TH' "RACHDE OBSERVER," OPOKEAWNT O SG
MONNY FOKE AXIN FOR IT,

'LUSTRAYTED WJ' O ROOKE O PRATTY PIKTERS:

CONTAINING LOIKEWISE

O DIKSHUNAYRY,

SAIME LOIKE US AW GAN YO E' ME TUTHER BUKE, NOBBUT
RAYTHUR IV OATHER BIGGER YO KNONE,
BE

O FALLEY FRO RACHDE.

"Ronk is nobbut th' guinea stamp,
The Mon's the gowd fur O that."

RACHDE:

PRINTED BE WRIGLEY UN SON; SOWD BE HAMILTON, ADAMS AND CO.,
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1861.

Title page of dialect account of visit to 1862 Exhibition (from the Society's Library).

it did result in the establishment of the Record Society for Lancashire and Cheshire, which therefore joined an already impressive list of historical societies in the two Counties Palatine, and which are happily still active today. These are: The Chetham Society (founded 1843), the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire (1848), and the Chester Archaeological Society (1849); and we should not overlook the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society which dates from 1781.

Enter Mr George C. Yates, FSA, who in 1880 was the secretary of one of the Manchester scientific societies that was already arranging an increasing number of excursions, and presenting papers of antiquarian interest. The Scientific Students' Association – Mr Yates' society – had been formed in 1861; in 1870 Professor Boyd Dawkins and George Yates joined this society, and two years later Yates became secretary. Joint annual excursions were held in association with the Manchester Field Naturalists' Society, founded in 1860, with an emphasis on antiquarian venues. Exhibitions at the annual *conversaciones* included



Drawing from unidentified album, c.1830, (Society's Library).

collections of arms and armour, heraldry, and pre-historic stone weapons; while papers such as 'The Foundation of Whalley Abbey', 'Stone Weapons', and 'Cinerary Urns from Wilmslow' were presented. In 1882, four years after Earwaker's proposal, Yates resigned his secretaryship of the Scientific Students' Association, and was made an honorary member; and at the beginning of 1883 he initiated moves to create a wider based society with purely antiquarian interests.

Thus was born the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society. Yates issued the first circular, calling an inaugural meeting on 21st March 1883, when he was elected as secretary, a position he held with distinction for the next twenty-five years, until his death. The name of the Society arose from a suggestion by W.E.A. Axon. A Council was formed, and at its subsequent meeting on 6th April, at which Rules were adopted, Yates' friend Professor Boyd Dawkins was elected as the Society's first President. As an aside here, I should record that on 21st March 1983 – the Society's centenary day – and without any ceremony, a bunch of daffodils was placed by a gravestone which lies close to the chapel in Swinton Cemetery and which is simply inscribed: 'George C. Yates, F.S.A. Died December 3rd 1908, Aged 73 years'.

Membership

What sort of people joined the new Society? Quite clearly Yates' range of contacts was very wide, obviously having

been built up during his years with the Scientific Students' Association. Letters of encouragement came from the Earls of Derby, Carnarvon, Lathom, Wilton, and others: all of whom became founder members except Lord Carnarvon. Many of our founder members were the owners of stately homes in the area, their houses representing a cross-section of English architectural history; and by being members they would of course find it difficult to refuse subsequent requests from Mr Yates to host visits by Society members. Other early members and owners of such homes were R. H. Ainsworth of Smithills Hall near Bolton, and Mr and Mrs Charles Henry Nevill of Bramhall near Stockport, who joined the Society in 1884 and 1887 respectively, after hosting Society visits.

Founder members also included local newspaper editors, contributors to the Local Notes and Queries sections in such newspapers, and well-established historical authors such as W.E.A. Axon, a Council member from its foundation until his death in 1903, H. T. Crofton, President in 1907 and 1908, J. E. Bailey, a member of Council at his death, J. P. Earwaker, Council member from its foundation until his death, and Henry Taylor, architect, and President in 1904. Nor were professional people overlooked, with nine medical men, twelve architects and nineteen churchmen among those first members. Founders also included members from some of those earlier societies previously mentioned: eleven from the Manchester Field Naturalists' Society, twenty Fellows of the Society of

Antiquaries, and half of the Council of the Chetham Society. Libraries were not invited to be founded members but nevertheless Sir Thomas Baker, Sir James Picton, and James Finney, respectively the influential chairmen of the library committees of Manchester, Liverpool and Bolton joined the Society. There were also, let me quickly mention, ten women founder members.

In his comprehensive account of the first one hundred years of the Society, and from which much of the foregoing has been drawn, our then President had this to say in discussing membership:

There were two obvious differences between the membership lists of 1883 and 1983. 'Patronage members' had gone and of the 39 large houses occupied by such members during Yates' secretaryship only Chatsworth, an altered Knowsley and Brownsolme remained in family ownership. Many, such as halls at Atherton, Hope, Sale, Hulton, Bradshaw, Agecroft, Clarendon and Trafford, had been demolished. Others, as at Haigh, Speke, Heaton, Tatton, Bramall, Abney and Wythenshawe, were in public ownership and a few, as at Barlow, Agden and Worsley Old Hall, had commercial uses. Although libraries did not become founder members, publication of Transactions soon attracted them and by the time of Yates' death 23 public libraries had joined, 19 in northern England and three in the USA. In 1983 the importance of the Transactions were emphasised by the membership of 188 institutions with 22 libraries in the USA and others in France, Germany, Sweden and Australia. These included an appreciable number of university and college libraries. A pleasing feature was the membership of four Lancashire local history societies. Local government re-organisation in 1974 reduced institutional membership in Lancashire when some new metropolitan districts concentrated local studies at one centre and cancelled membership of borough and urban district libraries. Similarly, the creation of polytechnics eliminated membership by some former colleges of further education.²

Activities

What did this new Society do? Then, as now, it promoted a winter series of lectures covering a wide range of topics; then, as now, it organised a programme of excursions; and then, as now, it published the *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*. All these activities, of course, have been influenced by changing social and economic conditions over the past century; and in the case of the lectures, these have gradually changed in emphasis from the purely antiquarian topics of the 1880s and 1890s to the current range of interest with rather more emphasis on social and economic history. Compare, for example, the contents of the first volume of *Transactions* with those of, say, volume 87. In that first volume we have the Inaugural address delivered at Owens College, Manchester, 4th May 1883 by John Evans, being 'Some short account of the four different ages into which human progress has been divided', which is followed by 'The Wardley skull-house' by W.E.A. Axon; 'Kersal Cell' and 'Penwortham' both by George Esdaile; 'Historical notes on a Collection of Lancashire and Cheshire Autographs' by C. T. Tallent-Bateman; 'On some early MSS and printed books' by the Rt Hon the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres; 'The road over Blackstone Edge' by H. Colley-March; and 'On some fragments of an old

— HAIL MANCHESTER —

RICHARD HALL

'Hail Manchester', music composed for Manchester Historical Pageant, 1938. (Society's Library).

brass in Manchester Cathedral' by the Rev E. F. Letts. This first volume also contained a full list of members.³

By contrast, volume 87 had seven major papers: 'Wythenshawe Hall and the Tatton family' by Clare Taylor; '1642: the coming of the Civil War to Cheshire: conflicting actions and impressions' by R. N. Dore; 'The Reverend Theophilus Caleb: race, politics and religion in a south-east Lancashire village 1926-32' by C. S. Ford, the village being Lumb-in-Rosendale; 'William Cockerill: a Lancashire entrepreneur in Europe' by Alan Hitch; 'James Newlands and William Henry Duncan of Liverpool: a partnership in public health' by Sally Sheard; 'Tramways past, present and future in the Manchester area' by Edward Gray; and 'The mesolithic occupation of Heysham Head, Lancashire' by C. R. Salisbury and S. Sheppard.

Each issue of *Transactions* contains the text of one or more of the papers recently read to the Society, together with a selection of the best papers submitted for publication on all aspects of the local and regional history of the two Palatinate Counties. Papers embody the fruits of much original research, while others may offer new insights, interpretations or re-evaluations of previously published work; all in their various ways illustrate the wide diversity of historical research now being undertaken. Earlier volumes contained such unusual contributions as 'The Oxnoble Potato: a study in public-house nomenclature', 'Old Tavern Pots', and 'Notes on clay tobacco pipes and clay pipe makers in Cheshire', in addition to the more standard items.

Volumes issued so far have been 'miscellaneous' in content, that is, the papers in a given volume have not been related to each other, and whilst this pattern will undoubtedly remain the general rule, it is planned to supplement this by occasional 'thematic' volumes. For

THE
Lancashire Dialect ;
 OR,
 THE ADVENTURES AND MISFORTUNES
 OF A
LANCASHIRE CLOWN :
 IN A
DIALOGUE
 Between
 TUMMUS o' WILLIAM's, o' MARGIT o' ROAF's, UN
 MEARY o' DICK'S, o' TUMMY o' PEGGY's.
 TO WHICH IS ADDED,
Lancashire Hob and Quack Doctor :
 ALSO,
A GLOSSARY
 OF THE LANCASHIRE WORDS AND PHRASES,
 &c. &c.
 —————
 BY TIM BOBBIN, ESQ.
 —————
 Some write such sense in prose and rhyme,
 Their works will wrestle hard with Time :—
 Some few in Virtue's cause do write ;
 But these, alas ! get little by't :—
 Some write to please ; some do't for spite ;
 But, want of money makes me write.—TIM BOBBIN.
 —————
 Preston :
 PRINTED AND SOLD BY L. CLARKE, 143, CHURCH-STREET.
 1822.

*Title page of Tim Bobbin's "The Lancashire Dialect",
 (Society's Library).*

example, volume 91 (scheduled to appear in 1996) will be a *festschrift* for Norman Dore, while the following volume in 1997 will be a commemorative volume in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the foundation of the Diocese of Manchester.

Ever since its inception the *Transactions* has published a General Index in each tenth volume (individual volumes are indexed also). As his contribution towards the Society's Centenary in 1983 the present writer compiled an Index to the first 80 volumes (1883-1979) of the *Transactions*.⁴

The Society also publishes off-prints of the major papers for more general sale, though in limited quantities. We have also, in the past, reprinted a number of original titles such as *The Early History of the Railway Ticket* by J. B. Edmondson (first published 1878); *Life in Manchester (1847)* by Mrs Gaskell (reprinted 1968 with an introduction by J.A.V. Chapple); *History of the Manchester Railways* by William Harrison (1882, reprinted 1967), and *A Statistical Sketch of the County Palatine of Lancaster* by Edwin Butterworth (1841, reprinted 1968).

In its early days excursions were an important feature of the Society's activities. In the first three months of its existence, for instance, visits were made to Halls at Worsley, Ordsall, Wardley and Kersal, and later the Society visited places further afield. Many of these visits were to places not normally open to the general public. Much of this of course has now changed. Although on occasions we are still able to visit houses in private ownership – we recently visited Rode Hall, Cheshire – many of these buildings are now in public ownership, whether by the National Trust, a local authority or a commercial concern; and whereas at

one time travel was by carriage, conveyance or wagonette, and even branch-line railway, today's excursions are generally made by private car.⁵

The earliest visit out of the country was to the Isle of Man in 1889, and later, visits were undertaken to Holland (1906), Normandy (1926), the Loire region of France (1928), Belgium in 1929 and Brittany in 1938. It was also a previous practice to hold Whit Week Conventions at such venues as Cheltenham (1932), Southampton (1935), Folkestone (1938), Shrewsbury (1949), Lincoln in 1950 and at Norwich in 1952. The last of these Conventions was held in Guildford in 1956. Although foreign visits are now out of the question, we have re-introduced visits to more local places of interest. In 1994 we visited Rode Hall and the Englesea Brook Museum of Primitive Methodism, Lytham Hall, and Middleton – a walking tour guided by the present writer – while 1995 will see visits to the Moravian Settlement at Fairfield, and to Stockport for another walkabout. In addition links are being forged with local societies: in 1993 we joined Stockport Historical Society at their Conference, and we were joint sponsors with Macclesfield Heraldry Society of a lecture in Wilmslow by one of Her Majesty's Heralds.

Day schools are now an important element in our programme. Recent examples have included 'The Cotton Industry' (which also included a visit to the *Cotton Factory Times* exhibition at the National Museum of Labour History), 'Ancoats', 'The Manchester Ship Canal', and in the current year 'Friedrich Engels and the Condition of the Working Class in Manchester'.

For many years after its formation lecture and Council meetings were held in Chetham's Library, and in more recent times these were held in Manchester Central Library, always on Friday evenings: indeed, to paraphrase the BBC, 'Friday night was Antiquarian night'. The decision of the City Council to close the Library on Friday evening has forced us to go elsewhere; and a survey of members revealed that many of them, and not just the older ones, were not keen on coming into the City centre on dark winter evenings, nor did Friday seem to be as universally popular as in the past. We now offer our members a basic pattern of lecture – day school – lecture each side of the Christmas/New Year period, with the Annual General Meeting being held in February. These events are held at different venues on different days of the week to give members the widest possible choice. With the development of the excursion programme to include visits in spring and autumn, and not just in the summer months, we now provide a year-round programme.

Library

The Society also maintains its own Library which is housed in Manchester Central Library, access being available via the Local Studies Unit. It was formerly treated as a 'Special Collection' but is now integrated into the main stock of the Central Library, but each volume bears the Society's bookplate and remains the property of the Society. The books are available to *all* readers using the Central Library but for *reference only*; members of the Society may borrow items for home reading upon production of the Society's Library Ticket. In addition to books presented by members, and essential purchases, the Society's Library also contains long runs of the journals of those other societies with whom we exchange copies. These include the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, the Chetham Society, the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and

Archaeological Society, the Yorkshire Archeological Society and the Halifax Antiquarian Society. A catalogue of the Library was last issued in 1968 but this is now out of date, particularly as the Library has recently undergone an extensive re-organisation, with much material not relevant to our region being discarded. A new and completely revised catalogue is now being prepared.

The Society has a long history of involvement in the conservation of buildings and sites, and this remains an active area of interest. We are represented on the Manchester Conservation Areas and Historic Buildings Panel, and we maintain a close liaison with other similar bodies. Where appropriate we make representations upon proposed development plans affecting listed or other historic buildings and on other conservation matters.⁶ At present the Society is working with other societies to ensure that Mrs. Gaskell's former home in Plymouth Grove, Manchester receives the protection and conservation that such an historically significant building deserves.

The Society has an accommodation address at The Portico Library and Gallery, 57 Mosley Street, Manchester M2 3HY. For further information about the Society please contact either the **Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Terry Wyke, Department of Economics and Economic History, Manchester Metropolitan University, Mabel Tylecote Building, Cavendish Street, Manchester M15 6BG**, or the **Hon. Secretary, Morris Garratt, 59 Malmesbury Road, Cheadle Hulme, Cheadle, Cheshire, SK8 7QL**, tel: **0161 439 7202**. The annual subscription is £10.00 which includes the annual volume of *Transactions*. All lecture meetings, day schools and excursions are open to non-members and all interested persons are most welcome.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Mr V. I. Tomlinson for permission to make use of his paper and to Mr E. A. Rose for his constructive comments on the first draft of my paper.

NOTES

- 1 For the national picture see P. Levine, *The Amateur and the Professional Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England 1838-1886* (Cambridge, 1986), and, more locally, A. G. Crosby, *A Society with No Equal: The Chetham Society 1843-1993* (Chetham Society, 1993).
- 2 V. I. Tomlinson, 'The Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society 1883-1983' in *Trans. LCAS*. 83 (1985) 1-39.
- 3 The first volume also contained a coloured frontispiece, 'A General View of the western slope of the Blackstone Edge Road'.
- 4 Morris Garratt, 'An index to the principal contents of 'Transactions' vol.1 (1883)-vol.80 (1979)' in *Trans. LCAS*. 82 (1983) 169-282 arranged by subject and author, and 'An index to the supplementary contents of 'Transactions' vol.1 (1883)-vol.80 (1979)' in *Trans. LCAS*. 83 (1985) 199-254 arranged by subject only.
- 5 For an account of some of the problems encountered by one of my predecessors see Morris Garratt, 'Mr. Wardman's visit to Cheshire' in *Trans. LCAS*. 88 (1992) 104-115.
- 6 See, for example, 'Report of Council 1992' in *Trans. LCAS*. 88 (1992) 126 for recent reports.

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