

BYGONE
ALTRINCHAM

CHAS. NICKSON

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Nether Bar 1940.

Heath Road 

Hale

Cheshire.

BYGONE ALTRINCHAM:
TRADITIONS AND HISTORY

BY THE SAME AUTHOR :
HISTORY OF RUNCORN
SUMMER TOUR IN THE NORTH OF IRELAND
ANTRIM AND THE DONEGAL HIGHLANDS
GLENS AND DALES OF ANTRIM



THE OLD MARKET PLACE, 1858,
Town Hall on Right

BYGONE ALTRINCHAM

TRADITIONS AND HISTORY

BY

CHAS. NICKSON

WITH 64 ILLUSTRATIONS



MACKIE & CO. LIMITED
ALTRINCHAM, WARRINGTON & LONDON

BYGONE ALLIANCE

THE HISTORY OF THE
ALLIANCE

MUCH of the present work was written and
revised by me in the early days of the
Alliance in the years 1915 and 1916. But the
sketches, they were in the form of a series
of book form and in

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PREFACE

MUCH of the present work was written and contributed by me in the shape of a series of articles to the *Altrincham and Bowdon Guardian*, in the years 1905 and 1906. But fragmentary sketches, they were at the time of writing, not meant for reproduction in book form, and in now presenting them, they have necessarily been expanded, and, in some instances, have undergone a process of reconstruction. During the last thirty years, Altrincham has progressed swiftly and surely in size and importance, and the changes wrought in that comparatively short period, have, perhaps, been greater than those of the whole of the preceding century. It was, therefore, obvious that not only must the original articles be substantially remodelled, but that a good deal of additional information, relating to the rise and progress of the town from a simple wayside hamlet to a busy and populous trading and residential centre, should be included. In the endeavour to accomplish this, I have brought the record, as far as I am able, up to the year 1935. Fully realising that there are many gaps in the story which may be filled in later, for the present, my main object has been to trace broadly, the various stages through which Altrincham has passed from the earliest times, to the day when it is stretching out an eager hand for a Charter of Incorporation, and in this effort, I venture to hope that I may not have been unsuccessful.

CHAS. NICKSON.

November 1935.

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BYGONE ALTRINCHAM

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BYGONE ALTRINCHAM

CHAPTER I

THE STORY OF TRING: FOUNDER OF ALTRINCHAM

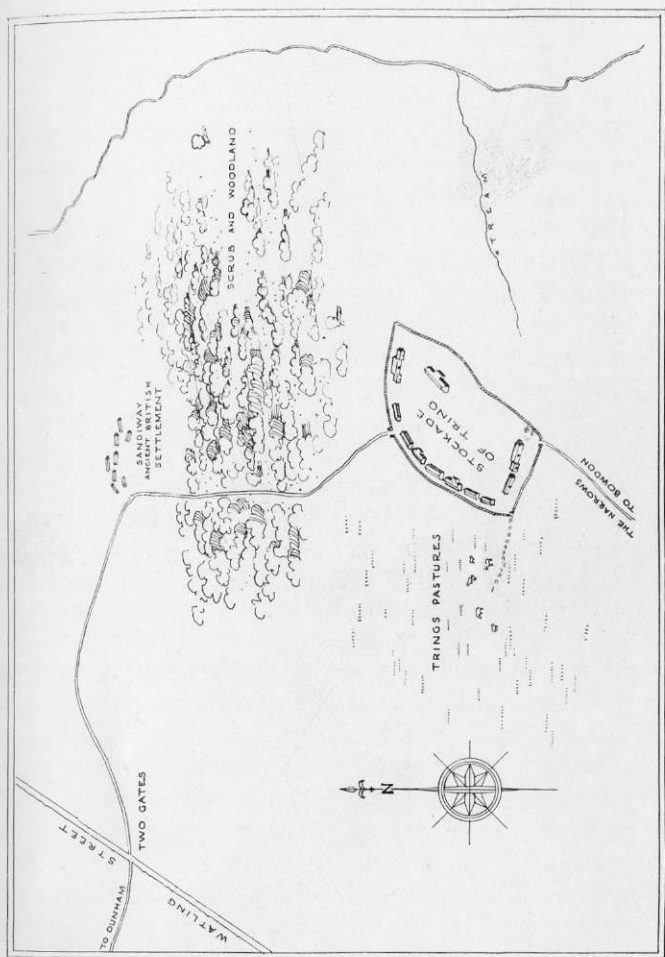
LET us begin our story of Altrincham with Tring, a Saxon settler, who probably in the eighth century or even earlier, lit his camp fires in a small enclosure which we now know as the Old Market Place. He brought with him horses, cattle, sheep and swine from his paternal home in the south and built a stout stockade for their protection against the prowling wolves and wild boars with which the surrounding forests abounded. Within the enclosure, Tring built huts of wattle and daub for himself and his herdsmen, stables for his horses, byres for his cattle and barns for his crops of hay and corn, together, no doubt, with rude and simple stores for his stocks of wool after the shearing. He thus laid what, in course of time, became the foundations of a small and thriving village to which, it may be noted, he gave a name. The stockade occupied a fairly level position almost at the summit of a hilly tract of land. Here Tring found an abundant supply of water from the springs in the still higher ground behind his farmstead. We know this higher ground to-day as "High Bank." The ground in front sloped sharply

1

from the stockade to a wild and shaggy moss in so steep and dangerous a form that toiling labourers, bent under heavy loads, spoke of the declivity as a hill to be climbed even by the strongest only with difficulty.

There can be very little doubt that the town derived its name from this ancient Saxon settlement, and the fact that it has been preserved for more than a thousand years both in spelling and pronunciation is perhaps a strong testimony to its appropriateness. The name is clearly of Anglo-Saxon origin. "Ing" was a common Anglo-Saxon patronymic, and it is to be found in the names of scores of English villages and towns either as a medial syllable or as a simple suffix. Indeed it signified the name of a clan, one of whom, during the Teutonic immigration into England settled in a forest clearing in Buckinghamshire and called the place Tring after the chief of the tribe. Mr. Kemble, one of our best authorities on English place-names, expresses the opinion that where the patronymic stands without any suffix, as in the case of Malling, Basing or Hastings, we have the original settlement of the clan, and that the names to which suffixes "ham" or "ton" are applied, mark the filial colonies sent out from this parent settlement. It is, therefore, to Tring that etymologists must turn for an accurate derivation.

Altringham, as we have already stated, began the first stage of its history in that dim and distant age when it became the place of settlement of a branch of a family who set out more than a thousand years since to found a home for themselves. Another branch of the family probably settled at Tyingham, a few miles to the north of Tring, while it is possible that other members made their home at Oughtrington.



AN IMAGINARY SKETCH OF ALTRINCHAM IN THE EIGHTH CENTURY

The first settlers in Altringham distinguished the place of their abode by prefixing the Roman word "Alt," signifying a hill or steep place, to the family name, and adding the suffix "ham" so frequently to be found in ancient documents, and meaning the enclosure or home of the family. The use of the prefix "Alt" was no doubt determined by the fact that Tring's settlement occupied an elevated situation from whose heights the eye ranged over a trackless moss and yet, further away, the leafy woodlands of Timperley. Important topographical changes have been wrought in the passage of the years, but there are abundant evidences to show that at this remote period, the hill upon which Altringham stood, was one of some prominence. Thus the settlement became known as the "hill town of Tring" or "Altringham."

The modern spelling of the word is Altrincham, although the pronunciation is Altringham with the letter "g" sounded hard. In distant places you may occasionally hear people, guided by the spelling merely, speak of "Altrin—cham" and they are surprised when told that the letter "c" in the name is sounded like a hard "g" as in the word "ring." While this slight alteration has gradually been made in the spelling, it is interesting to point out the vigorous way in which the original pronunciation has survived, and how loyally the true son of Altrincham adheres to it. It might be interesting to inquire when and by what means the letter "c" was substituted for the letter "g." One fears that the cause is to be traced to the careless and slipshod caligraphy of ancient parish clerks and other officials who do not appear to have been always certain whether "c" or "g" should be used. Therefore, with fine notions of impartiality they adopted both forms of spelling, and in the registers of

Bowdon Parish Church of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we have both styles to choose from. Sir Walter Scott in *Peveril of the Peak* spelt the name with a "g," but de Quincey in 1814, wrote it with a "c" perhaps out of deference to the feelings of the public officials of Altrincham who, for twenty years or more before that time, seem to have firmly determined upon the adoption of the letter "c," as is evidenced by their entries in the minute books of the town. This form of spelling has for considerably more than a century been consistently followed and it will probably remain so for all time.

Tring did not travel to the north alone. He was accompanied by a younger brother Don, also in search of a new home. About their bodies they wore a loose woollen garment, very like a long and unshapely shirt, made out of a rough home-made material. Leggings and shoes of the tanned skin of some wild animal were bound to the legs and feet with stout thongs of boar's hide, and a cloak, also of skin, with the hair covering inside, was a useful protection against the cold. The travellers no doubt journeyed by slow stages along the great highway of Watling Street, until they found themselves in a part of the country best fitted for their purpose as tillers of the soil and breeders of cattle. They had with them horses and herds of cattle and the rude and simple farming implements of the time, and there was no one to dispute with them the possession of any piece of land they might fix upon, and in order that the best possible advantage of the situation might be taken Tring and Don agreed to separate and take an independent line of action. Their separation occurred at a point where Watling Street fell sharply to the plain in Oldfield and to this day the place of their parting is

known as "Two Gates." Don turned his footsteps to the left and cut his way through the woods to what is now Dunham, where he found a suitable camping ground on the lines of an ancient British settlement. Tring took "the way," or, as the Saxons called a branch path, "the gate," to the right, and thus dug the foundation of a road we now recognise as Oldfield Lane. Soon after passing a clearing in the forest which, some centuries later, formed the site of Oldfield Hall, Tring and his followers found the remains of a settlement probably of an early British tribe, lying on the ground now bounded by the Wheat Sheaf Hotel, the George and Dragon Hotel, and Sandiway House, and it was not long before the smoke of their camp fires drifted above the tree tops and curled skywards. They did not, however, remain at Sandiway long. A fairer prospect lay ahead, and Sandiway was abandoned for the ground a little further on, into which Tring drove his stakes and made for himself a permanent lodging place. Sandiway was left by a path which lay across the land we now call Townfield, and its course may still be traced behind St. George's Church until it enters the Market Place. A branch of the same path threads its way behind High Bank into Dunham Road close to the Unitarian Chapel. It was along this narrow path that Tring thrust his way to discover a home and found a town.

As years elapsed and the colony grew, a branch of the family made a home for themselves on the hill of Bowdon, where they built a church of timber. A path to the church was cut in a direct line from Tring's enclosure through the wooded ground we now know as Market Street, Norman's Place and the Firs, and a close connection was maintained between Bowdon

and Altrincham by means of this simple lane, some traces of which may still be found in "The Narrows."

CHAPTER II

THE CHARTER AND THE COURT LEET

THE little settlement, from one generation to another, lived quietly in their simple homesteads, tending their cattle, reaping their crops and sending away their wool on pack-horses to the nearest port for shipment abroad. Life ran in placid channels, and it does not appear to have been disturbed even by the ravages of the Danes and the setting up of the Danelegh, when Danish customary law prevailed for more than a century and a half. The real trouble began after the Norman Conquest when Hugh Lupus, the first Earl of Chester, divided large portions of land among a number of Norman barons as a reward for their military services. A Baron Hamund or Hamo seems to have been treated with great liberality and one part of the territory of which he became the possessor included Altrincham and several other villages surrounding it. Hamo made his home at Dunham, where he built a castle on the site now occupied by Dunham Massey Hall. The Saxons, many of whom were turned off their farms, had no liking for the Norman invaders, and for at least a couple of centuries the two races lived in a passionate hatred of each other. The Normans despised the Saxons because of their strange and uncouth habits, and the Saxons scowled at the invaders because of their better way of living, their foreign tongue and their customs, which were certainly of a more refined

type than the villagers had been accustomed to. It was not until the year 1290, when Baron Hamon de Massey, doubtless in response to the prayers and petitions of his tenantry, granted them a charter, making Altrincham a free borough, and granting to the Burgesses a *guild mercatory* (or society of free traffic), together with freedom from tolls throughout the barony; and also that his "burgesses might make to themselves provosts, or mayors and bailiffs, by the common advice of myself, and of my bailiffs and theirs, and that no plea in the said burgh be determined except before me or my bailiffs." The remainder of the charter fixes the terms on which the burgages (tenures) are to be held by the lord, reserves to him and his heirs "the privilege of our oven in the said burg," and undertakes to maintain the rights thus granted to the burgesses against all people for ever.

By a charter granted by Edward I in the 18th year of his reign, Baron Hamon de Massey was granted a market on Tuesday, and a fair of three days' duration on the eve, the day and the morrow of the Feast of the Assumption of the blessed Mary, but in 1319, by a Charter from Edward II the date of the fair was changed to the Feast of St. James, the Apostle.

Another fair was one held in April. It was, however, established at a much later period, as we are told nothing of it until 1734, when it is recorded in the proceedings of the Court Leet "that the first new Fair that ever was kept or held in the spring in Altrincham was upon Thursday, 18th April, to which fair came very great choice of cattle." Four years earlier, the old Market Cross had been rebuilt by the Earl of Stamford and on its steps many of the day's bargains were concluded.

FACSIMILE OF THE ALTRINCHAM CHARTER OF 1290, SLIGHTLY
REDUCED FROM THE ORIGINAL

The Charter granted by Hamon de Massey is inscribed in Latin and the following is a free translation :—

To all faithful people of Christ that shall see or hear this present Charter, Hamon of Massey, Lord of Dunham, sends greeting everlasting in the Lord. Know ye that I have given, and by this my present Charter for me and my heirs, confirm to my Burgesses of Altrincham: That my town of Altrincham be a free Borough, and that my Burgesses of the same Borough shall have a Guild Mercatory in the same Borough, with all Liberties and free Customs, unto such manner of Guild belonging, according to the custom of the borough of Macclesfield. And that they shall be quit through all my lands, as well by water as by land, of Toll, Passage, Pontage, Stallage, Lastage and all other servile customs: Also I have granted unto my said Burgesses Common of Pasture Turbary and Bruary within the limits of Dunham, Altrincham, and Timperley, saving unto me and my heirs our improvements, and saving to me and my heirs the inclosure of Sunderland at our free will, without the contradiction of any person whensoever we shall think fit to inclose the same, so that my aforesaid Burgesses may have Common of Pasture always and everywhere for all their cattle within the bounds of Sunderland, so long as the aforesaid place of Sunderland shall not be inclosed, saving to me and my heirs in all the time of pannage in the aforesaid Sunderland, so that in that time we may have power at our will to fence in Sunderland aforesaid, without the contradiction of any persons. And when Sunderland aforesaid shall be inclosed, my said Burgesses shall have their Common up to the Hay of Sunderland aforesaid; and not beyond. It is also my will that all my Burgesses who shall have hogs in the time of pannage in my said Borough, either after the feast of St. James, and the time of pannage shall give a right Toll when they pasture within the aforesaid Commons, and they shall not go from the said Borough with their Hogs in the time of pannage. Also, I have granted to my aforesaid Burgesses, Housebote and Haybote in all the Woods of the aforesaid places (except my Hays and inclosed Woods). And also, I do grant to my aforesaid Burgesses that they shall not be impeaded out of the Portmote of the aforesaid Borough, nor shall they be interfered with out of their Borough on account of trespasses done within the Borough,

and if any of them becomes liable for any offence, he shall be amerced by his peers and that according to the degree of his offence. I will also that my Burgesses shall grind all their Corn growing upon the land of Altrincham or expended in the same Town at my Mills for the eighteenth of the full measure. I grant also that my said Burgesses may make unto themselves Presidents and Bailiffs by the common council of me or of my Bailiffs and of themselves. And that no plea shall be holden or determined in the said Borough but before me or my Bailiff. And that every Burgess shall hold his several Burgage of two perches of Land in breadth and five in length, with one whole acre of Land in the field for twelve pence to be paid to me and my heirs yearly at three times of the year by equal portions (that is to say) at the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the Feast of All Saints, and the Annunciation of the Blessed Mary, freely, quietly, peaceably, and wholly with all the liberties aforesaid. And that every Burgess may sell alien give or assign by will his Burgage to any person or persons whomsoever he will (except to the officers of our Lord the King and religious men) without the contradiction of any person or persons saving to me and my heirs our free Bakehouse in the same Borough. I truly the aforesaid Hamon and my heirs will for ever warrant the aforesaid Burgages and the Acres of Land thereunto adjoining and all the liberties above written unto my said Burgesses and their heirs and assigns against all people. In witness whereof I have set my seal to this present Charter. These being witnesses—Sir Reginald de Grey (then justice of Chester), Humphrey of Beauchamp, Richard of Massey (Knights), Gilbert of Aston, Thomas of Aston, Hugh of Baggelegh, Matthew of Hale, Henry of Dunham, John of Bowdon, and others.

The charter brought with it a large measure of contentment. Many of the hardships under which the villagers had suffered were removed, and serfdom almost entirely disappeared. Moreover, one of its immediate effects was to bring the Saxons and Normans together, and a warm friendship rapidly ripened between them. As years went on they intermarried, and gradually consummated the union by speaking

one common language—the English. Yellow and shrivelled with age the charter, enclosed in an oak box two or three inches in diameter, with an oval lid, is the most treasured relic possessed by Altrincham. The historic document has been carefully taken care of and is now kept with a few other interesting relics, in a fire-proof safe in the Free Library, where they were placed by the Altrincham Town Trust, a body formed in 1888, by order of the Charity Commissioners. Attached to the charter is the seal of Hamon de Massey but by careless handling in the past it is now crushed and broken.

The Court Leet became the recognised ruling power immediately on the granting of the charter, and up to the middle part of the last century it provided the chief means for the administration of the law. At the time the charter was granted, the town, then little more than a tiny hamlet, was described as being nothing more than a small cluster of chimneyless cottages, whose occupants were bound to use the Lord's bakehouse, while the town hall was merely a wooden shed. In his *Treatise on Cheshire* in 1609, Smith writes that "In building and furniture of their houses, till of late years, they used the old manner of the Saxons. For they had their fire in the midst of the house, against a hob of clay, and their oxen under the same roof; but, within these forty years it is altogether altered, so that they have builded chimneys and furnished other parts of their house accordingly." Webb, in his *Itinerary* in 1621, alludes to Altrincham "with its fine little market, and a town of no meaner government than the Mayor of an ancient institution to her principal officer." Sir Peter Leycester, the famous Cheshire historian, writing in the same century in his

Antiquities of Cheshire, was even less complimentary, and in his notice of Altrincham he remarks : "There are so many small cottages erected here by permission of the Lords of Dunham Massey, that it has now become a nest of beggars." Yet, even so primitive a community must have some form of government, and the Court Leet, immediately on the granting of the charter, became the ruling power and provided the chief means for the administration of the law. It is quite certain that Altrincham would not be slow to take advantage of the right to elect a Mayor under the terms of the charter, and if that be taken for granted, there has been an unbroken succession of Mayors for 645 years, a proof enough in itself to show that the machinery of the Court was not felt to be irksome or unsuited to the English character. The names of the Mayors can be traced as far back as the year 1452, but beyond that year the records are not to be found. The two first names on the list are those of Edward Massey and Richard Massey, who were possibly scions of the house of Dunham Massey, but on that point the voice of history is silent. It has always been customary for the Mayor to be elected at the Autumnal meeting of the Court Leet of the Lord of the Manor (now the Earl of Stamford) and a Jury of the Leet of the borough, which consists of burgesses only. The person chosen is, on his election, sworn by the Steward, representing the Lord of the Manor to the following oath :—

"You shall swear, well and truly to serve our Sovereign lord the King, and the lord of this franchise, in the office of Mayor of this borough, for one whole year, now next ensuing, or until another be sworn in your room; you shall administer equal justice to all persons to the best of your judgment and power; you shall diligently procure such things to be done as

may lawfully and justly tend to the profit and commodity of this corporation, and shall support, uphold and maintain the lawful customs, rights, liberties and franchises thereof; you shall, to the utmost of your power, endeavour to preserve the King's peace within this borough, and that all misdemeanours and offences committed therein be duly punished; and in all other things you shall faithfully and uprightly behave yourself, to the utmost quietness, benefit, worship, and credit of this borough and the inhabitants thereof. So help you God."

The oath is still administered in precisely the same terms as it was hundreds of years ago.

Once in power, the Court Leet regulated the market and fairs. Its constables were responsible for the public peace, and its various officials were clothed with authority for the settlement of disputes arising out of trespass. They were furthermore charged with the management of bakehouses and brewhouses, and in their hands was vested the necessary authority for securing the purity of the water supply. Regulations for the observance of decency in public were strictly acted upon. All drunkards, for example, were to be brought before the jury of burgesses which was entirely composed of freeholders, and to pay "if they bee able for every time they be drunk Vs. for the use of the poor of the parish." If unable to pay the fine they were sentenced to spend six hours in the stocks. Among the various other duties imposed on the stewards of the Court Leet was that of inquiring if highways or footpaths had been "stopped or hedged up which had been accustomed to lie open," and they were required to "present the person who shut it up, for the King's subject must not be stopped of his lawful passage to church, mill or market." Where common bridges were broken down, the Court Leet had power to order their repair by the parties

responsible and the records show that the authority was frequently exercised. The prevention of poaching was a duty discharged by the Court under the following order :—"Also you shall inquire of sleepers by day and walkers by night to steale and purloine other men's goods, and conies out of the warrens, fish out of severall ponds or waters, hennes from henrouse, or any other thing whatsoever, for they are ill members in a commonwealth, and deserve punishment; therefore, if you know any such, present them." There were also rules concerning people "who continually haunt taverns and such as sleep by day and watch by night, and eat and drink well and have nothing." If an alehouse keeper sold a pot of ale that was not a full quart, he was fined XXs.; "and Xs. for suffering any townsman to sit drinking in his house, except he be brought thither by a stranger, "and then hee may not stay there above one houre." Persons, who by cornering the market, endeavoured to obtain an extortionate profit, were severely dealt with and, for a third offence, "were to be set upon the pillary, to lose all their goods and chattles, and to bee imprisoned during the King's pleasure." The duty was imposed on bakers to make good and wholesome bread "for man's bodie, of sweet corn and not corrupted" and to give proper weight, while brewers and tapsters were to make good and wholesome ale and beere, and not to put out their signe or ale stake until their ales had been asseyed by the ale taster, "and then to sell and not before." Chimneys which, in the days of half-timbered dwellings and roofs thatched with straw, were a greater source of danger than they are now, claimed special attention, and for a department requiring peculiar knowledge and activity, there were earnest and painstaking chimney lookers, whose duty

it was to bring careless householders to justice. Then there were swine lookers, ale tasters, dog muzzlers, bailiffs, market lookers, bye-law men, assessors, leather sealers, scavengers, pump lookers, overseers and the bellman, all of them possessing executive powers such as are in these days exercised by the District Council and the police.

Mr. Alfred Ingham, F.R.H.S., in his most valuable *History of Altrincham and Bowdon*, reveals several interesting chapters in the life of the Court Leet, and points out that a most important feature of its work was the preservation of footpaths and the repairing of highways. The following entry in the records, for instance, may be taken as an illustration of this fact :—

“Whereas the styles have lately been took up and the footway stopt leading from Charles Cresswell’s, Wellfield at Sandiway Head, and so from thence through the upper end of John Smith’s higher field, purchased of Mr. John Eccles, which has been an *immemorial footroad*. We agree and order that the several owners of the fields through which the footroad did heretofore lead, to fix good and sufficient styles through their several closes or fields in pain of each £1.”

It is possible that this may have been the footpath over which Tring wound his way from Sandiway in search of a new camping ground. Of this, however, there is no evidence beyond the claim of the Court Leet that the path was an “*immemorial footroad*.”

In 1738, it was agreed and ordered :—

“That George Norman and William Royle do take down their several styles leading from Altrincham to Bowdon Church, and in lieu thereof, do place stumps and rails for the better ease and convenience of Churchpeople and other passengers, and that within one month from this time on pain of 6s. 8d.”

The path referred to in this minute was probably "The Narrows," where "stumps and rails" were maintained in use for fully a century and a half later. The two entries are enough to show that the Court Leet performed duties similar to those now discharged by the Urban District Council. Mr. Ingham, who may safely be relied upon as an authority on the practice of the Court Leet, informs us that the burgesses were all freeholders within the borough, but must be elected by the Jury of the Court Leet before they could be said to be fully qualified. For many years the Jury returned one freeholder as burgess at each Court Leet who thereupon paid a fine towards the expenses of the dinner of the Mayor, Steward, Jury, Constables, &c., which was held after the transaction of the business of the Court. This practice of inflicting a fine was not an ancient custom, as the election of burgesses was not carried out with such regularity as in succeeding years, and the Jury only elected one or two "as they thought proper," and no mention of a fine or other expenses to be paid is disclosed. It is certain, however, says Mr. Ingham, that it was long the custom for the Lord of the Manor to present to the company at the dinner a certain sum towards the expenses of the same, and the fines paid by the burgesses were added, the remainder being paid equally by the persons present, with the exception of the constables, for whom the Mayor paid as well as for himself. In the year 1820, and for several years afterwards, the Mayor gave no dinners, but only a certain sum towards the expenses of the Court Leet dinners, the rest of the funds being expended in lighting and watching the town. The practice of the Mayor giving these dinners is, however, an institution which could not have existed from the time of

the granting of the charter, as there was no fund to draw upon to meet the cost. It was probably not established until after the endowment of the Mayoralty by the Earl of Warrington with land, as the first we learn anything about the dinners was in 1749, when each burgess gave "one shilling towards the expenses of such dinner."

In 1699, the Earl of Warrington endowed the Mayoralty with an amount of land of the probable yearly value of £5. Additional land, making a total of 13a. 1r. 26p. statute measure, was conveyed by the Earl in 1716. Both gifts were made with the object of providing "for the further and better defraying of the charges and expenses which the Mayor of the Borough and his successors for the time being was and were likely to be at during his and their Mayoralty." As time ran on the land increased in value, and for some years the property was vested in a trustee upon trust for the Mayors for the time being of the borough, during their respective Mayoralties. The rent produced by the land, which was leased for farming purposes in 1863, amounted to £70 10s., and the whole was received by the Mayor and expended at his discretion. and constant complaints were made that too much of it was spent in eating and drinking at the Easter and Michaelmas Court Leets, while a substantial portion went into the private pocket of the Mayor. Some holders of the office, it is only fair to say, made substantial donations to various charitable agencies or contributed towards the cost of different local improvements, but the public refused to be placated by the doles and continued their agitation for a reform. Direct allusion was made to the subject at an inquiry held in 1848 by Sir Robert Rawlinson into the sanitary conditions of the

town, when it was strongly urged that if the rental obtained from the land could be laid out for public purposes, much good might result to the inhabitants and ratepayers generally, and Mr. Isaac Turton, the assistant overseer of that day, did not hesitate to declare that "the income from the land was at present of no use whatever, for it was spent in eating and drinking." In yet another statement, it was averred that the main qualification which the Jurors sought for in a Mayor-elect was that he should be disposed to disburse largely of his funds in the shape of good dinners and drinking bouts. Let it, however, be said that a number of burgesses who disapproved of the manner in which the money was spent, refused to attend the Court Leet or its dinners, and their action strengthened the agitation for amendment.

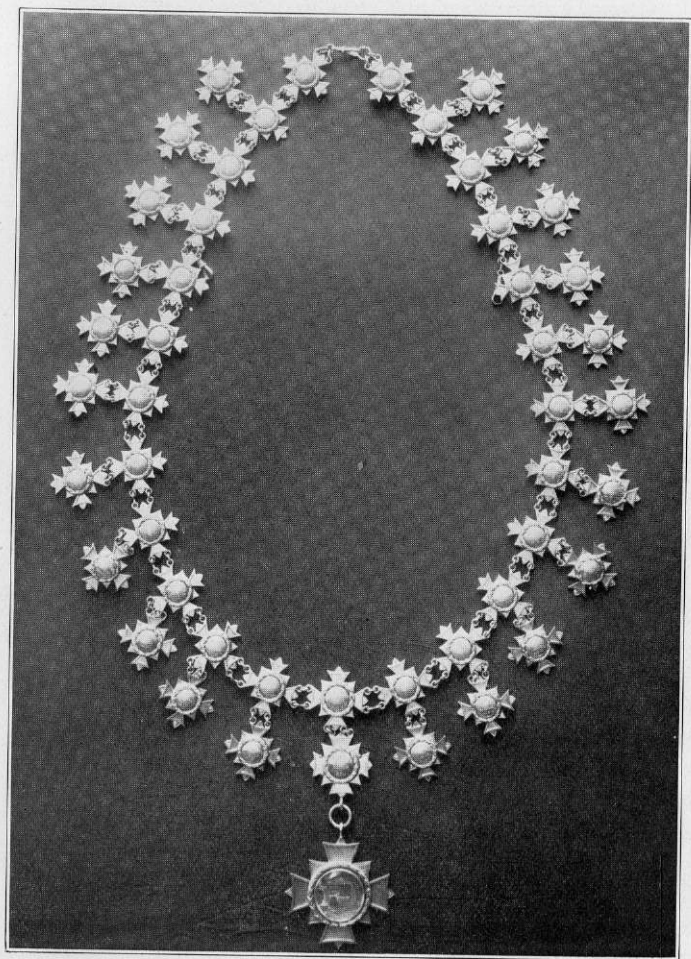
It was mainly owing to the efforts of Mr. W. Devereux Nicholls, who was Mayor in 1856 and 1857, that the old trust was placed on a more satisfactory basis. Mr. Nicholls spent the whole of the Mayoral income in accomplishing his object. In his representation of the position of affairs at this stage, he pointed out that some parts of the land were ripe for building purposes and maintained that the income could be much increased if these portions could be leased for long terms. It had also been for many years considered that the rents might be much more advantageously employed than in the manner before detailed, and that the inclination of the burgesses was very strong towards such appropriation. This Mr. Nicholls did not do with a view to decreasing the dignity of his position, and suggestions were made that the Mayor for the time being should receive a definite and sufficient sum for the due maintenance of his office, and the remainder be applied for some public

purpose as the Mayor and a committee of burgesses, chosen by themselves, might determine. There were, however, many difficulties in the way, but the object of Mr. Nicholls was gained in 1862, and with the consent of the Lord of the Manor and the Charity Commissioners the following were elected by the burgesses as trustees of what has since been legally termed "the Mayor's Land Charity":—Messrs. James Street (Mayor) J. Howard, James Southern, Mark Pierson, C. Balshaw, S. Barratt, J. Renshaw and J. A. Kelsall.

By an exchange of land in Thorley Moor, the income of the Charity was increased to £200, and by the sale of some land in 1875 it advanced to £250; still the Mayor had the sole right to receive and spend the income in such manner as he thought fit, and protests from the public were again loud and frequent. Various inquiries were made by the Charity Commissioners, and a report in 1876 states that "the Corporation of Altrincham has no municipal function and that the Mayor elected at the Court Leet has no magisterial jurisdiction." Nothing in the Municipal Corporations' Act of 1883, however, prevented the holding of the Court and the election of Mayor as heretofore, but it specially provided that such Mayor should not have magisterial, municipal or other jurisdiction." That an improvement was possible was distinctly realised by the trustees of the endowment, and in 1887 they formulated a scheme for the establishment of a Public Hall with the object of giving the inhabitants all the benefits it was possible to derive from the income. This enabled a public inquiry to be held by the Charity Commissioners in 1888, and interest was fully indicated by

the variety of proposals put forward by contending sections.

As the result of the inquiry, the Charity Commissioners determined upon a scheme under which the Mayor was provided with a fixed income of £45 a year. The order further directed that the entire proceeds of the endowment beyond that sum should be applied to the maintenance of a free library, technical schools and the local hospitals. This was accepted as a fair and equitable settlement of the century-old dispute. A new body of trustees on which the District Council is represented was formed, and every year since they have paid substantial sums to the Free Library, the Technical Schools and the Altrincham Provident Dispensary and Hospital. In 1893, by the sale of a plot of land to the Local Board of Health for the purposes of a town's yard, the income of the Charity grew to about £330 and the causes of education and the hospitals have benefited accordingly. The Charity Commissioners further directed that the Mayor's gold chain of office, a pair of valuable chairs presented by Mr. Edward Neild, to the Court Leet when he was Mayor in 1875, the scales, the brank or scold's bridle, the weights and measures used by the market lookers, the three silver-headed constables' staves, and the bell used by the town crier, should remain in the custody of the Mayor, the Chairman of the Local Board, and the Chairman of the new Board of Trustees of the Mayor's Land Charity until a Free Library was provided. The two chairs referred to are splendid examples of Altrincham craftsmanship and they are still in use at the meetings of the Court Leet and on all ceremonial occasions. They are constructed of solid oak, grown in Dunham Park, in the Jacobean



OFFICIAL CHAIN OF THE MAYOR OF ALTRINCHAM

style of the 16th century from the designs of Mr. Bernard Smith, of London. The principal chair, used by the Mayor, stands about seven feet high and the other about six feet. They are of a massive character and likely to last for ages. In the back of the chairs is a shield artistically placed on a green ground, bearing the coat of arms of the town with the motto in gold letters: "Altrincham En Avant." Underneath, on a brass plate, is the inscription:—"Presented to the Court Leet of the Borough of Altrincham, by Edward Neild, Mayor, 1875-6." They are upholstered in leather in olive and gold, of antique pattern, and the panels are also decorated in a similar manner. The back of the second chair is ornamented with the coat of arms of the Earl of Stamford and Warrington, in silver and blue, surmounted with a coronet, and the motto in gold:—"A ma Puissance." (According to my power).

The gold chain worn by the Mayor has an interesting history, which should be told now. In 1758-9 the Hon. Booth Grey, son of the fourth Earl of Stamford, was elected to the Mayoral chair when 19 years of age, and, in his honour, a silver medal was struck with the inscription: "The Honourable Booth Grey, Mayor of Altrincham, 1759." On the reverse side was the Grey coat of arms and the motto: "A ma Puissance." The Hon. Booth Grey was Member of Parliament for Leicester in 1768. The silver medal was found about the year 1866, when some effects were being removed from Dunham Hall, and Lord Stamford presented it to the Mayor, Mr. John Astle Kelsall, in 1867, by whose representatives it was subsequently given to the Court Leet. The burgesses considered that so interesting a memento should be preserved, and decided that it should form

the foundation of an official gold chain. It was, therefore, enclosed in a larger silver medal and chastely mounted, and the first link of the chain of solid gold, bearing the name of the Mayor of that year, was attached to it. Each succeeding year a similar link has been added and the chain, by this time, has become quite long enough to adorn the shoulders of the broadest Mayor who may have the honour of wearing it.

The chain bears the following inscription :—
“The centre of this Medal struck in commemoration of the Mayoralty of the Hon. Booth Grey, A.D. 1759, was originally mounted and presented in 1884 by William Griffin, Esq., a burgess, to the Trustees of the Mayor’s Land Charity for the use of the then Mayor, Ben. Riley, Esq., and his successors for ever, and re-mounted by the Mayor and ex-Mayors, 1906.” The original mounting referred to is in the Altrincham Museum. There are now 49 links on the chain, the oldest, apart from the medal of the Hon. Booth Grey, being that of Mr. Samuel Barratt, 1854. Certain Mayors, as will be seen from the list, have for some reason or other, omitted to add a link. In 1935, the weight of the chain was 25oz. avoird.

It is not a little remarkable that while the Court Leet has been superseded by other agencies, none of its powers has been repealed, and the appointment of the various officials is still just as much a part of the procedure of the Court as it was in 1290, although it is no longer necessary for them to exercise any authority. The constables, who wore blue coats with red collars, did active duty until the year 1856, when an Act of Parliament made it compulsory on the magistrates of the county to establish a police force under the Acts of 1839 and 1840. The market lookers did not

retire from the public service until the year 1878, when the manorial tolls were purchased from the Earl of Stamford for a thousand pounds, and the market became, instead of a private monopoly, the property of the public, with regulations that rendered the old office of market looker unnecessary.

It would be quite unfair to assume that while the Mayor of Altrincham is officially unable to take part in the management of local affairs, he is without influence. On the contrary, since the Mayoralty was deprived of its revenues nearly fifty years ago, the dignity of the office has increased rather than diminished, and the holders of the office have never failed to use it as a means of serving the public interest. It is not an easy matter to break away from tradition or depart from custom, and just as the people in the days of old looked to the Mayor for leadership, they yet turn their eyes in his direction whenever it becomes necessary to set a new movement on foot and a subscription is needed to head it. There are few public causes, therefore, for the last half century at least, that have failed to enlist the sympathy and support of the Mayoralty, and while unfailing in their respect to the Chairman of the Urban District Council as the chief citizen, the public have neither lost their esteem for the Court Leet nor their pride in being able to associate the Mayor with the advancement of any scheme for the general welfare. The readiness with which all kinds of useful causes have thus been aided has distinctly raised the dignity of the Court Leet, and won for each successive Mayor unbounded admiration for generous and ungrudging service. The contrast with the position before the reform is singularly striking, and we are

glad to be able to point it out if only to show that in its old age the Court Leet is full of vigour and possesses the will to serve the public.

The following is a list of Mayors since 1854 :—

1854	Samuel Barratt	1888	William Griffin
1855	John Davenport	1889	Eustace George Parker
1856	William D. Nicholls	1890	Joel Foden
1857	William D. Nicholls	1891	William Agar Renshaw
*1858	John Mort	1892	John Dale
*1859	John Mort	1893	William Griffin
*1860	John Howard	1894	William Griffin
1861	Charles Balshaw	1895	David Morrison
*1862	James Street	1896	Frederick Raymond
1863	Charles Balshaw		Barber Lindsell
*1864	Samuel Delves	1897	James Grimble Groves
*1865	Samuel Delves	1898	James Grimble Groves
*1866	Samuel Delves	1899	Samuel Thompson
1867	James Astle Kelsall	1900	James William Byrom
*1868	James Southern	1901	William Agar Renshaw
1869	Humphrey Davies	1902	William Agar Renshaw
1870	Joseph Gaskarth	1903	Edward Thomas
1871	Joseph Gaskarth		Cleathero
*1872	Matthew Fowden	1904	Alfred Golland
1873	James Shelmerdine	1905	Alfred Golland
	Mort	1906	Alfred Golland
1874	Samuel Burgess	1907	Samuel Birtles
*1875	Edward Neild	1908	Harold Gaskell Syers
*1876	William Greenwood	1909	Godfrey William
*1877	William Greenwood		Bonson
1878	John Siddeley	1910	William Shield
1879	Joseph Gaskarth	1911	Gerald Whitwham
1880	James Byrom	1912	William Cooke
*1881	George Smith		Renshaw
1882	Henry Balshaw	1913	George Faulkner
1883	Henry Balshaw		Armitage
1884	Benjamin Riley	1914	George Faulkner
1885	George Bowen		Armitage
1886	Joseph Gaskarth	1915	George Faulkner
1887	James Hamilton		Armitage

1916	George Faulkner	1925	Robert Reid Duncan
	Armitage	1926	David Stanley
1917	George Faulkner		Morrison
	Armitage	1927	James Kayley
1918	George Faulkner	1928	Arthur Gray Pickard
	Armitage	1929	Arthur Percy Hill
1919	Henry Francis O'Brien	1930	Alfred Pailthorpe
1920	William Walton Baker	1931	William Waterhouse
1921	Harry Gordon Cooper	1932	William Waterhouse
1922	Arthur Broadbent	1933	William Waterhouse
	Ireland	1934	William Waterhouse
1923	William Henry Veno	1935	William Waterhouse
1924	Thomas Clarke		

The names marked with an asterisk did not observe the rule of adding links to the Mayoral Chain.

CHAPTER III

THE OLD MARKET PLACE

VERY little advance was made by the village during the first five centuries of its existence. Its life flowed in very slow and sluggish channels. The noise of the world outside seldom reached its ears and the peace of the inhabitants was undisturbed by any event of moment. In the year 1798, there were but 185 houses, and the population could not have numbered more than a thousand. In the year 1800, the population was between sixteen and seventeen hundred, and the chief interest of the villagers lay in the broad acres and fruitful gardens which in this primitive and pastoral age hemmed in the little town on every side. A small trade was done in worsted and woollen yarn, but its life was short and it died in the opening years of the century. We are also told that in the year 1813, there were three cotton factories in operation, but they also met with an early death and left no trace behind. It is, therefore, very evident that the industries were not of much importance, and provided but a minimum amount of employment. In the cottage homes about Farthing Street, Chapel Street and Well Lane, hand-loom weaving was commonly carried on and there were a few fustian cutters at work, but agriculture and market-gardening may be said to have been the principal occupations long after the century opened.

Although the town was of so small and rural a character, it possessed a Market Hall, built a century or two earlier in the very centre of the Square or Place which the local rulers, in their wisdom, had set apart as the seat of such trade as the little community carried on. As the principal business centre, tradesmen built their shops round its sides and transacted no small part of their trade with the farmers who came into the Square once a week to dispose of their butter, eggs, cheese and poultry and, sometimes, to find buyers for their surplus stocks of cattle, sheep and pigs. The Square was not laid out according to any settled or pre-conceived design, with the result that, in some instances, houses were built in isolated and incongruous situations and in course of time became disfiguring and obstructive features.

For this haphazard style of lay-out we must not blame the men who, with but a scanty knowledge of the graces of architecture, used the slender materials at their command to what they believed to be the best possible advantage. The "Square" no doubt owed its irregular shape to Tring, who put up his buildings to suit his own convenience and not in accordance to any special plan. Future builders followed closely on the lines laid out by him. The shops and houses, according to the taste of the period were, at the end of the eighteenth and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, of a distinctly better type than those of an earlier age, and they were generally of red brick with slated roofs. Sandwiched between them were quite a number of ancient half-timbered cottages dating back to the fifteenth century, whose solidity of construction is proved by the fact that the last of them did not disappear until well on into the

twentieth century, when its worn and wrinkled walls fell at the bidding of the District Council to widen Victoria Street.

As already indicated, the Market Place was probably co-terminous with the boundaries of the old Saxon stockade and most of the new buildings covered the ground once occupied by simple structures of wattle and daub. Except for a number of scattered farms and various isolated cottages, there were few houses to be seen. The inhabitants mainly dwelt in and about the Market Place, from which one looked down a steep slope with a purling stream of fresh water running at the foot of it, across Hale Moss, then a grazing ground for cattle and swine and a happy playground for boys in search of moths, butterflies and birds. Beyond, the plain flamed with the gold of the gorse bushes, and further away still, lay the dreamy meadows of the countryside green and still in the springtime and later tinted by the hot suns of summer. Fruitful orchards yielded a rich tribute, and in the season Altrincham market gardeners were among the first to pour their produce into the Manchester market. Every morning the stage coach with its freight of passengers rumbled along the Manchester road through Church Street, and rattled noisily over the cobble stones of the Market Place. This was the most stirring event of the day. The coach brought with it the daily newspapers, then sold at sevenpence, and the mail bags which were frequently so light as but to slightly tax the strength of a single postman who, it was said, knew the name of every man, woman and child in the town. Tuesday was a day of lively interest. Farmers then drove in with their produce and set out their stalls in the little Market Hall. Fruits of all kinds, flowers from village

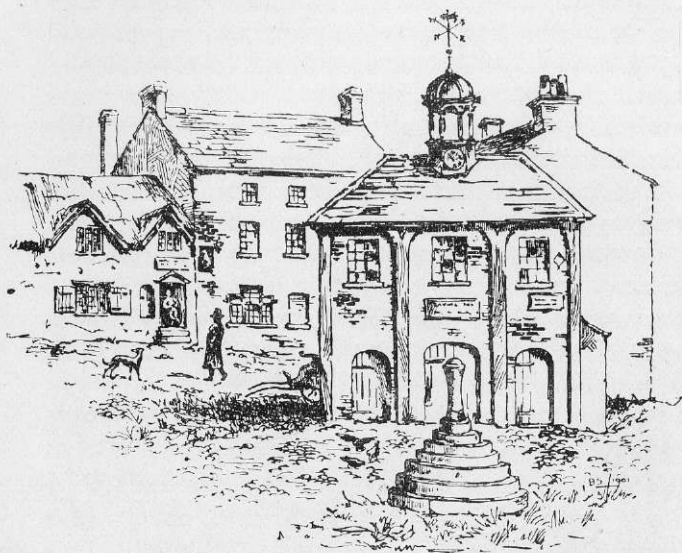
gardens and the finest products of Cheshire dairies were displayed in profusion over a wide space of ground, and the bright and animated scene was a source of interest which few of the townsfolk missed.

The gaiety of the Market Place evidently made a strong impression on Thomas De Quincey, who, in 1814, travelled by stage coach from Manchester to Chester. In his autobiographical sketches he writes that, to the best of his remembrance, the first town he reached was Altrincham—colloquially Awtrigem (evidently a distorted form of pronunciation). De Quincey pictures for us so pleasant an impression of the Market Place as he saw it so long ago, that we do not hesitate to reproduce it. He writes :—

“When a child, three years old, and suffering from whooping cough, I had been carried for a change of air to different places on the Lancashire coast, and in order to benefit by as large a compass as possible of varying atmospheres, I and my nurse had been made to rest for the first night of our tour at this cheerful little town of Altrincham. On the next morning, which ushered in a most dazzling day in July, I rose earlier than my nurse fully approved, but in no long time she had found it advisable to follow my example, and after putting me through my morning’s drill of ablutions and the Lord’s Prayer, no sooner had she fully arranged my petticoats than she lifted me up in her arms, threw open the widow, and let me suddenly look down upon the gayest scene I ever beheld, viz., the little Market Place of Altrincham at eight o’clock in the morning. It happened to be market day, and I, who till then had never consciously been in any town whatever, was equally astonished and delighted by the novel gaiety of the scene. Fruits, such as can be had in July, and flowers were scattered about in

profusion; even the stalls of the butchers, from their brilliant cleanliness, appeared attractive; and the bonny young women of Altrincham were all trooping about in caps and aprons coquettishly disposed. The general hilarity of the scene at this early hour, with the low murmurings of pleasurable conversation and laughter that rose up like a fountain to the open window, left so profound an impression upon me that I never lost it. All this occurred, as I have said, about eight o'clock on a superb July morning. Exactly at that time in the morning, exactly such another heavenly day in July did I leave Manchester at six a.m., naturally enough finding myself in the centre of the Altrincham market place. There were the same fruits and flowers; the same bonny young women came trooping up and down in the same (no, not the same) coquettish bonnets; everything was apparently the same; perhaps the window of my bedroom was still open, only my nurse and I were not looking out; for, alas! on recollection, fourteen years precisely had passed since then. Breakfast time, however, is always a cheerful stage in the day; if a man can forget his cares at any season it is then—and after a walk of seven miles it is doubly so. I felt at the time, and have therefore stopped to notice it as a singular coincidence, that twice, and by the merest accident, I should find myself precisely as the clocks on a July morning were all striking eight, drawing inspiration and pleasurable feelings from the sights and sounds in the little market place of Altrincham."

The market has grown in size and importance since De Quincey's time, but many of the striking old world scenes he so vividly describes are repeated to-day and are no less worthy of note.



OLD MARKET PLACE,

From an original Painting, presented to the Altrincham Museum by Mr. J. W. Byrom

The dominant feature of the Market Place was undoubtedly the Butter Market, erected in 1684 by Henry, Lord Delamer, who, as lord of the manor and owner of the rights of the market, would naturally be the person most deeply interested in its fortunes. An old drawing of the building shows a turret in the centre, and it is noteworthy that the little tower on the Town Hall, built by the Earl of Stamford in 1849, resembles it so closely as to indicate that the design was copied by the architect.

The Butter Market was described as a six-sided building surrounded with palisades, with an upper and a lower room. The upper floor was used as a court room while the lower one provided accommodation for the butter sellers. There was also a lock-up or, as it was more frequently called, "the dungeon," which is said to have been a most dismal and depressing place of confinement for offenders against the law. Close by were the village stocks and an ancient cross, the year of whose erection cannot be fixed with certainty. It may possibly have been erected in the fifteenth century. Neither the stocks nor the Cross has been spared. Aged and worn, both disappeared when the Butter Market was demolished in the middle part of the century.

Between the Butter Market and the Unicorn Hotel, there was at this time a quaint inn, which, judging by its plain and unpretentious appearance, was probably of the eighteenth century period. On each side it was bounded by a narrow road, paved with cobbles. Its insular position earned for it the name of "The Roundabout House." The inn is shown in an old painting, presented by the late Mr. J. W. Byrom, a former Mayor, to the Altrincham Museum, and a reproduction appears on the opposite page.

The old house was pulled down in 1845, entirely on account of the confined and congested state of the locality, and the licence was transferred to a house not very far away in Victoria Street, to which was given the name of "The Roebuck Inn."

The turret of the old Butter Market contained a bell bearing the inscription :—

Delamer 1684.

Donum pr. Nobile Henry Domine.

Cast at Little Budworth.

The date on the bell fixes the date of the erection of the Butter Market. When the new Town Hall was built, the ancient bell was hung in the turret and it is still there, serving a no less useful purpose than it did in the days of yore.

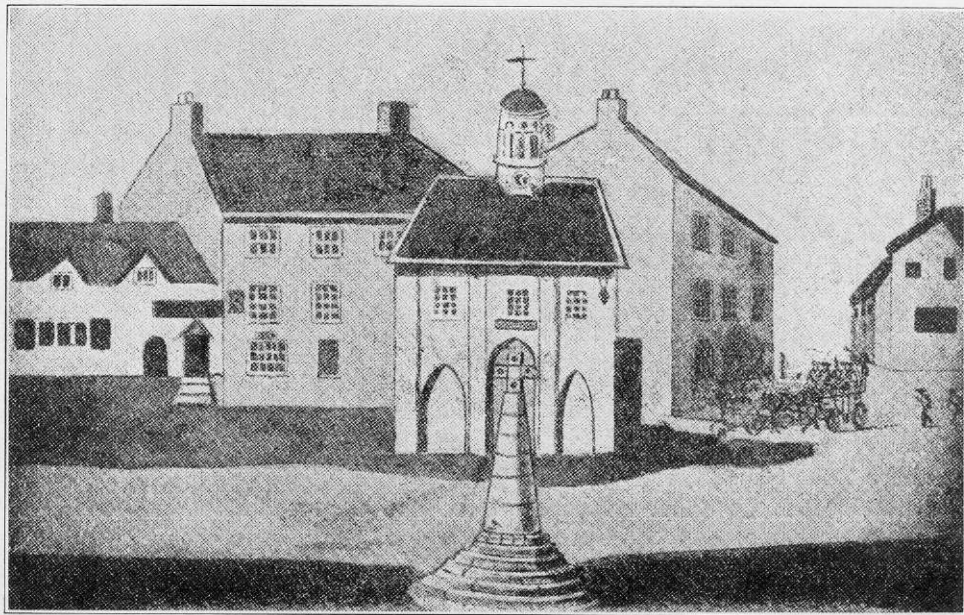
In the turret of the new Town Hall the Earl of Stamford caused to be placed a clock, and the old bell on its removal from the Butter Market was used as the gong upon which to strike the hours. The clock was constructed by Peter Clare of Quay Street, Manchester. Clare was one of the most famous clock-makers of the last century, and a fine example of his work was to be seen for many years in the Reference Library in King Street, by which the time of the city was regulated. For more than fifty years the Altrincham clock was wound, lighted and regulated at the expense of the town, but in 1899, in a sudden fit of economy, the District Council decided to discontinue the duty and for fully ten years the works were silent and motionless. The cost of restoring the turret and repairing the clock within it, was then undertaken by the Chesters' Brewery Company, who, a few years before, had purchased the Unicorn Hotel and the adjacent Town Hall from the Earl of Stamford. Since then, thanks to the good offices of the Brewery

Company, the clock has been the true and faithful servant of the public. When first placed in the turret of the Town Hall, a chain was attached to the bell, by means of which it could be swung from the Market Place as a fire alarm, and the holes bored in the projecting cornices of the building, through which the chain passed to the ground level, may still be seen, as well as the hook to which the ring was suspended high above the heads of mischievously inclined children. The manual engine of what was then a volunteer fire brigade, maintained by voluntary subscriptions, was housed at the rear of the building. The bell was used as a fire alarm until the erection of the present Police Station in Dunham Road in 1866, when new quarters in Market Street were found for the Fire Brigade by the Local Board of Health.

It is perfectly evident, therefore, that the old bell in the clock turret has swung for two hundred and fifty years and is hoary with memories. It was already in its place when Charles II died. Its note was heard when James II ascended the throne, and its clangour heralded the ascension of William and Mary, of Queen Anne and the four Georges. It proclaimed the victory of Waterloo, and its mellow sound was heard while the villagers made merry at the Bowling Green Inn and lighted a bonfire in the adjacent meadow. Again its note broke the silence when William IV was crowned, and seven years later its voice drew the townsfolk to the Market Place to acclaim the accession of Victoria. The chief purpose of the bell was, however, to summon the people to the town-mote, and in imagination we can see the fathers of the town in knee breeches and wideawakes, repairing to the Market Place to discuss in what manner they should receive the troop of the Pretender's cavalry which

passed through the Market Place in 1745 on the road to Macclesfield. The old bell sounded a solemn note about 1809, when the strange incident of the sale of a woman by her husband was witnessed by a crowd of people in the Market Place. It also trembled on the air when offenders against the law were publicly flogged. These and many other scenes of a not less exciting and interesting character were enacted under the shadow of the historic bell tower, and as one of the few links with the past which time has preserved to us, we may at least hope that the sound of the old bell, mellowed by the passage of years, may long be heard if only for the lesson it preaches of the continuity and completeness of some interesting chapters of local history.

Lord Delamer, who gave the bell and by whom the old Butter Market was built, was a notable figure in national affairs in the seventeenth century. His father was Sir George Booth, of Dunham Massey, who was raised to the Peerage in 1661 for the assistance he gave at the Restoration. Lord Delamer was his second son and succeeded to the title in 1684. His advocacy of the Bill of Exclusion led to his deposition from most of the public positions held by him. He was committed to the Tower and lay without trial for several months, when he was acquitted, without a formal accusation having been preferred against him. His ardent defence of constitutional liberty, led to his imprisonment on two subsequent occasions, and he was eventually placed on trial for high treason before the infamous Jeffreys. He claimed, however, to be tried by his peers and was brought before a special tribunal formed of 27 members of the House of Lords on January 14th, 1685. He was acquitted of the charges against him and afterwards raised a company



THE OLD MARKET PLACE, 1800

of Cheshire men and assisted in placing William of Orange on the throne. For his services he was made Earl of Warrington. He died in London at the age of 42 in 1693, and there is a fine monument in the Stamford Chapel at Bowdon Church, where he was buried. The inscription on the memorial reads as follows :—

Beneath lieth the body of the Right Honourable Henry Booth, Earl of Warrington and Baron Delamer, of Dunham Massey;

A person of unblemished honor, impartial justice, strict integrity, an illustrious example of steady and unalterable adherence to the liberties and properties of his country, in the worst of times rejecting all offers to allure and despising all danger to deter him therefrom, for which he was thrice committed close prisoner to the tower of London, and at length tried for his life upon a false accusation of high treason, from which he was unanimously acquitted by his peers on the 14th January, MDCLXXXV-VI which day he afterwards annually commemorated by acts of devotion and charity.

In the year MDCLXXXVIII he greatly signalized himself at the

REVOLUTION

on behalf of the Protestant religion and the rights of the nation, without mixture of self-interest, preferring the good of his country to the favour of the prince who then ascended the throne, and having served his generation according to the will of God, was gathered to his fathers in peace, on the second day of January, 1693, in the XLII year of his age, whose mortal remains were here entombed on the same memorable day on which, eight years before, his trial had been.

CHAPTER IV

THE TOWN IN 1800

WE shall now attempt to describe Altrincham as it was in 1800, and for most of the information upon which we found the story, we are indebted to the late Mr. John Balshaw, a well-known tradesman, born in the early part of the nineteenth century. He was at one time postmaster, and his close and intimate knowledge of local topography gives his outline a special and peculiar interest and its authenticity is beyond question. The little town, in Mr. Balshaw's day, consisted of two parts, one distinguished as Higher Town and the other as Lower Town. In the Higher Town were the Market Place and the three streets leading into it—Church Street, High Street (now known as Market Street, and Well Lane a narrow thoroughfare of ancient cottages, which at a later period adopted the name of Victoria Street. Lower Town mainly comprised George Street and the few cottages that straggled into Chapel Walks, and on towards the Downs. At this time George Street, which was destined to become one of the principal thoroughfares, was no more than a narrow lane of cobbles bounded by a few thatched cottages of wattle and daub, two or three farmsteads and a number of market gardens. The Axe and Cleaver Hotel, then a homely country tavern, lay at the bottom of the hill up which one climbed to the Market Place. Close by the front of the inn, ran a

stream, which emptied itself into a still wider brook on Hale Moss not far from the spot where, when the railway from Manchester was constructed in later years, the present level crossing was laid. The tiny stream was known in the vernacular as "Th' Gutter," and if one ventured to cross the stream from the Higher to the Lower Town, he was said to have gone "O'er th' Gutter." Moreover, there was a wide diversity in the characteristics and customs of the two localities, and a sharp line of distinction was drawn between them. The Higher Town was the proud dwelling-place of the professional and prosperous trading classes, who, it was said, affected a somewhat lofty and superior air towards their humble neighbours on the other side of the stream. Their Georgian houses in Market Street had a solid and substantial appearance and they were often alluded to as "Quality Corner," which was no doubt a tribute to their exclusive and opulent air and a friendly recognition of the social standing of the residents in this pleasant and peaceful quarter.

The ground on which Stamford Street (now known as Kingsway) was shaped in the middle part of the century, fell steeply to the stream at the foot and then went by the name of Hollow Bank. On the opposite side of the stream in George Street, were several houses with gardens, all of which were removed in 1881 to give a direct means of approach to the new railway station. Hollow Bank dropped into George Street at a right angle and was so full of peril to both pedestrians and horse drivers, that many of its dangerous features were cleared away as opportunity offered. On the right side of the Hollow, where big shops were subsequently built, was a bobbin-turner's shop side by side with a small bakehouse to

which the villagers used to convey their home-made bread. Above the Hollow, on the left side, was the entrance to Market Street. At the corner where, about 1880, a new Post Office was put up, were three cottages, and adjoining them was the tall and somewhat dignified house of red brick owned by Mr. William D. Nicholls, of the legal firm of Nicholls, Worthington and Harrop.

Next to the house of Mr. Nicholls was a school for young ladies, conducted by Mr. Herford, grandfather of the Rev. Brooke Herford, Unitarian Minister. Adjoining it was the residence of Mr. Hugo Worthington, solicitor. This was taken down in 1890, and the site, together with the spacious garden, whose boundary wall formed one side of Shaw's Lane, was utilised for building purposes. A new street (High Street) was constructed to connect Market Street with George Street and the whole of the adjacent land was rapidly absorbed by the builder. Market Street, at the time of which we are writing, did not extend beyond the present estate offices of the Earl of Stamford, where it turned abruptly into Dunham Road.

Where the new Market Hall now stands cattle were pastured and crops of grain were gathered. Opposite to the corner where now stand the Estate Offices, was the fine residence of Mr. Samuel Holker Norris, whose French windows opened on to a smooth-shaven lawn and an ornamental garden of great beauty in the summer. Several thatched cottages stood between Mr. Norris' house and Dunham Road—a quaint survival of old Altrincham. A portion of Mr. Norris' house and part of his garden were swept away in 1880 when Market Street was continued to Regent Road. The old cottages remained until 1899,

when they were pulled down to permit of the erection of a new Town Hall by the Altrincham District Council. The cottages were some of those referred to by Sir Walter Scott in *Peveril of the Peak*. In that famous work the novelist describes the journey of Julian Peveril from Liverpool to Derbyshire, and says :—"At length near Altringham, a halt became unavoidable, and a place of refreshment presented itself in the shape of a small cluster of cottages, the best of which united the characters of an ale-house and a mill, where the sign of the Cat (the landlord's faithful ally in defence of his meal sacks) booted high as Grimalkin in the fairy tale, and playing the fiddle for the more grace, announced that John Whitecroft united the two honest occupations of landlord and miller ; and doubtless took toll for the public in both capacities. Such a place promised a traveller who journeyed incognito safer, if not better accommodation than he was likely to meet with in more frequented inns ; and at the door of the Cat and Fiddle, Julian halted accordingly."

The cottages were then on the fringe of the Market Place and would be the first habitations to meet the eye of the traveller on his entrance to the town from the main highway. The Cat and Fiddle was only another name for the Red Lion Inn, an old-fashioned hostelry in the Market Place, and it was no doubt in this quiet lodging place that Julian spent the night. The row of old cottages referred to stood opposite to the present offices of the Earl of Stamford, and they were not removed until the site was required for the new Town Hall and a Fire Station when they, as well as the remaining portion of Mr. Norris' picturesque house, with its walled orchard, disappeared. The offices now occupied by the Earl of Stamford were

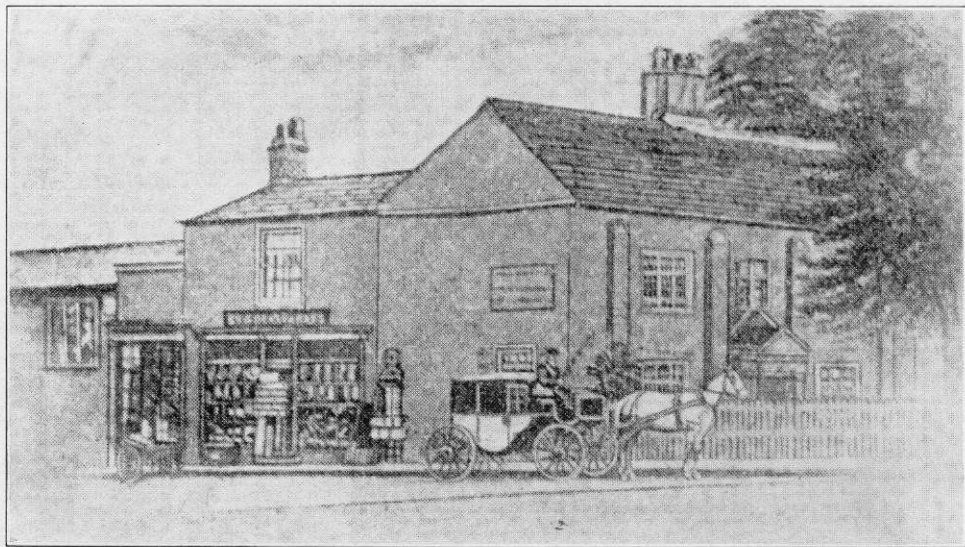
in 1835, the headquarters of the noted firm of Nicholls, Worthington and Harrop, solicitors (now Messrs. Nicholls, Lindsell and Harris). On the same side was an eighteenth century house which eventually became the home of the Local Board of Health and, more recently still, the habitation of the Catholic Institute. Several shops of modest shape, one or two of which still remain, also formed part of this side of the street. One of them was used as the Post Office. Dunham Road had not then been cut through into the Market Place, and what is now the throat of that great avenue of traffic, was the site of the Waggon and Horses Hotel—in its time of no mean repute. It was a plain, flat-fronted building, unimposing in appearance but renowned for the liberality and solidity of its old-English fare.

Here the blast of the horn of the Chester coach used to be heard every morning at seven o'clock as it drew up for a change of horses on its way from Manchester. The inn was also a favourite billeting place for soldiers, who in those far-off times frequently marched through Altrincham. Next to the Waggon and Horses was the grocery establishment of Mr. John Barrett, and between it and the Unicorn Hotel was a row of private houses and shops. The Unicorn was a place of importance as a posting station, and every morning its postillions in red jackets, laced hats, white plush breeches, brown top boots and spurs were to be found waiting for travellers. In 1851, Mr. James Byrom established an important drapery business in a shop whose site is now covered by the imposing premises of Lloyd's Banking Company. His partner was Mr. John Brownell, of Stockport, and the business was carried on under the style of Byrom and Company. The partnership continued until 1862, and in March,

1868, the business was transferred to new premises in Stamford Street which were built from plans prepared by the late Mr. Peter Pons. When direct communication between Market Place and Dunham Road was subsequently made the old shop and the Waggon and Horses Inn were taken down. In the public life of the town, Mr. Byrom took an active part, and besides occupying a seat on the Local Board, he served the ratepayers for several years in the capacity of guardian. He was Mayor of Altrincham in 1880, and remained in business until his death in February, 1886, when he was succeeded by his son, Mr. John William Byrom, by whom the best traditions of an old established and well managed house were maintained. Mr. Byrom was for many years the honorary secretary of the Literary Institute, and on the transfer of the institution to the Local Board, in 1893, he became a member of the Free Library and Technical Instruction Committee. He filled the office of Mayor in 1900-01, and on the 3rd August, 1901, with the burgesses of the Court Leet, had the honour of extending a public welcome to the Lord Mayor of London and the Sheriffs of the City of London, on the occasion of their visit to Altrincham for the purpose of laying the foundation stone of a proposed extension of the Linotype Company's works. In passing, we may note that Mr. Byrom's business premises were the first in Altrincham to be lighted by electricity.

The construction of Dunham Road and its connection with the Market Place, besides effecting a radical topographical change opened up a large area of land for building purposes. A site was obtained on the spot occupied by Mr. Byrom's shop, by Messrs. Cunliffes, Brooks and Co., for the erection of a

bank, and here sprang up a noble structure in the black and white style of architecture from the designs of Mr. George Truefitt, of London. Other changes quickly followed. The land on the opposite side of the road was secured by the late Mr. James Southern, for many years Registrar of the County Court, and here he erected a pile of offices. Just across the road was a private dwelling-house, set in a fair garden adjoining the business premises of Messrs. Bowden and Parkes. This was pulled down in 1878, in order to make way for the new Post Office and several imposing shops, which the late Sir William Cunliffe Brooks felt to be more suited to the growing needs of the increasing population. Lower down, the late Mr. W. H. Parkes also built a fine block of shop property, which still remains as a striking testimony to his energy and enterprise. Among other changes which may be noted as the result of the opening out of Dunham Road, were the erection of the new police offices and court room, and on the opposite side of the spacious premises of Messrs. I. T. and J. Gaskarth, wine and spirit merchants, whose connection with the Market Place dates back for more than a century and a half.



SHOP OF MESSRS. BOWDEN & PARKES, OLD MARKET PLACE
(Pulled down in 1878)

CHAPTER V

DUNHAM ROAD AND ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH

HIGHER up the road on the way to Dunham Park the land on both sides was developed by local builders who erected a number of modern villas of a very attractive type, mostly in brick of a faint yellow colour. With their spacious ornamental gardens they contrasted pleasantly with the thatched houses of the Old Market Place, to which they were contiguous, and it was universally agreed that Altrincham had taken a considerable step in advance. Perhaps the most prominent feature of the new road was that of St. Margaret's Church which, with its soaring spire, crowned the summit of the hill.

Although the church of St. Margaret's stands in the parish of Dunham Massey, the wide district it serves, embraces so large a part of Altrincham that it is regarded as belonging to the town, and it cannot, therefore, be passed without notice. Built by the Earl of Stamford and Warrington, the church occupies a position on the highest part of Dunham Road, overlooking the broad Sinderland plain and the wide moss lands of South Lancashire, with the bold mass of Rivington Pike on the horizon. It was designed by Mr. William Hayley, architect, of Cross Street, Manchester, and was consecrated on Wednesday, June 13th, 1855, by the Bishop of Chester. Entirely built of stone, the style of architecture is what is generally known as the Perpendicular, which was largely

followed in the fifteenth and the early part of the sixteenth centuries. The extreme length of the church is 130 feet and the width, exclusive of the transepts, 60 feet, and seating accommodation is found for about 700 persons, one third of the sittings being free. A lofty tower and spire was built at the intersection of the nave, transepts and chancel, from four moulded stone piers to an altitude of 210 feet. The spire was enriched with flying buttresses and was surmounted by a cross. On the south side of the church is the Stamford chapel, lighted by two-light windows and entered by a private door. The tower contains a peal of ten bells. The tenor bell weighs 27 cwts. 3 qrs., and altogether the peal contains 6 tons 3 cwt. 2 qrs. 10 lb. The inscription on the tenor bell is as follows:—

As queen of queens, Victoria reigns;
I sit as queen o'er music's strains,
And may her subjects loyal be
As mine! we dwell in harmony.

The smallest bell also bears an inscription. A set of 14 bells for chimes was cast, the tone being an octave higher than the ringing bells, for the special purpose of quarter chimes and tunes. The five largest of the ringing bells yield a bass accompaniment. The chime bells collectively weigh 2 tons 13 cwt.; so that altogether there are very nearly 9 tons of bell metal in the tower. Considering their weight, the peal is considered by judges to be the finest in the kingdom. A clock is placed in the tower, and the machinery in connection with it rings the chime bells for the quarter chimes and tunes.

The Earl of Stamford and Warrington, for the purpose of endowing the church with a permanent provision, in addition to the pew rents, by an indenture dated March 30th, 1855, and made



BEATING THE BOUNDS, 1901

Left to Right : J. Brooks, A. Griffiths, J. T. Hughes (Overseers), and G. E. Turton (Assistant Overseer), T. Pritchard (Relieving Officer), W. S. Stokoe (Clerk to the Urban District Council), Chas. Nickson, Ed. Bradley and Geo. Worthington

between him for the first part, her Majesty's Commissioners for building new churches of the second part, and the Rev. George Heron of Carrington, Samuel Holker Norris of Altrincham, merchant, David Reynold Davis of Bowdon, merchant, Legh Richmond of Guilsborough Park, Northamptonshire, and the Rev. John Kingsley, of Dunham, of the third part, declared his intention to provide £80 per annum to be secured upon a competent part of the Earl's freehold estate in Cheshire, and in satisfaction thereof, with the consent of the commissioners, he granted to those of the third part, two several clear rent-charges or annual sums of £43 15s. and £45, making together £88 15s.; and to provide for the repairs of the church a yearly sum of £20, by the same indenture, he conveyed a clear yearly rent-charge of £21 18s. 2d. to the said persons. It was directed by the commissioners that 200 sittings in the church should continue for ever to be free sittings, subject to the appropriation of any part thereof as the lord bishop for the time being should legally direct.

The adjacent vicarage is built on the boundary line, dividing Dunham Massey from Altrincham. The house, therefore, lies in two different townships, so that in August, 1901, when the Overseers "beat the bounds," it was necessary for the party to traverse the Vicar's study and his drawing room in order to follow the exact boundary line. This they were courteously permitted to do by the Vicar (Archdeacon Woosnam) who further provided the visitors with morning coffee. The "beating of the bounds" was again observed in 1921.

On the consecration of St. Margaret's, the living was presented by the Earl of Stamford to the Rev. John Kingsley, curate to the Rev. W. H. G. Mann,

Vicar of Bowdon. His work in the parish was conducted with great zeal and earnestness. The day schools in Albert Street were built during his incumbency and in their progress, as well as in the cause of education generally, he manifested a keen interest. The Newtown Night School won a large share of his time, and much of the early success of this educational agency was due to his efforts. His death took place on the 13th November, 1869, and he was succeeded in January, 1870, by the Rev. Richard Hodgson, a parson of the old-world type who took an extremely practical view of his duty as a parish priest. He was an unwearied visitor to the bedsides of the sick and poor, and frequently was to be seen with a big market basket on his arm as he made his rounds. It was during his incumbency that the old Wesleyan Chapel in Regent Road was acquired as a Mission Church, through the generosity of Mr. J. H. Grafton, of Overdale, Dunham Massey. After undergoing a good deal of alteration the building was opened as a branch church of St. Margaret's under the name of All Saints'. Mr. Hodgson died on March 14th, 1895, and was followed by the Rev. Charles Maxwell Woosnam. Under his energetic direction the parochial machinery lost none of its efficiency, and to many local causes—social, educational, and philanthropic—he gave an unstinted amount of service. He was actively identified with St. Margaret's Church Institute, of which he was one of the founders, and in its various interests he bore a full share of the responsibility. Ordained in 1880, the Rev. C. M. Woosnam served for two years as a chaplain to the Missions to Seamen in the Bristol Channel, on the Tyne and on the Mersey. For some time he was Vicar of St. Peter's, North Shields, and Rector of Kirby Wiske, Thirsk. While



ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH, 1858

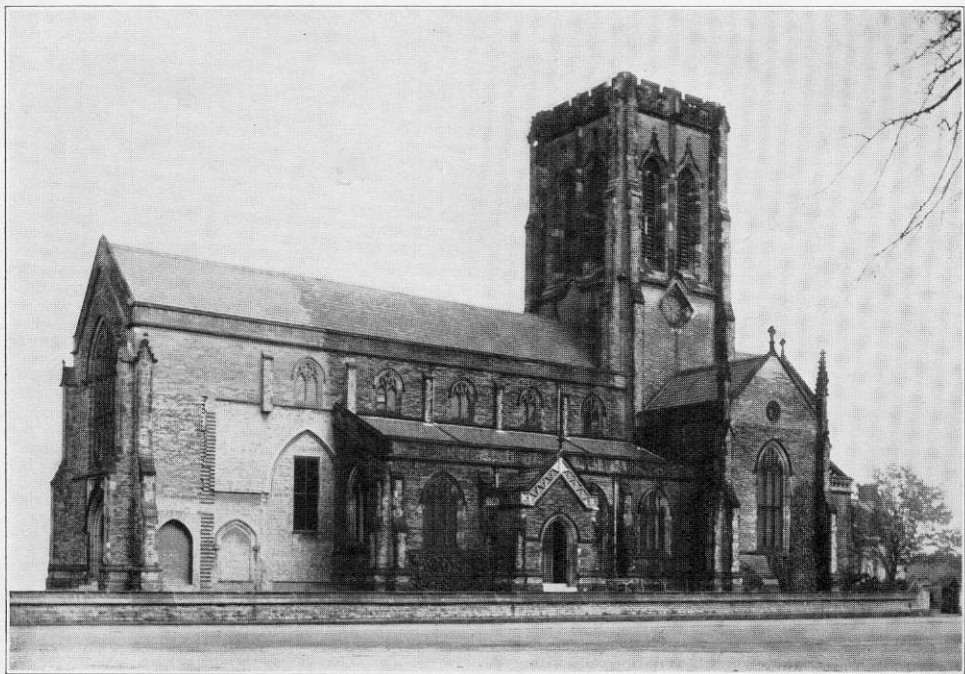
acting as chaplain to the Mersey Missions to Seamen, he was made Archdeacon of Macclesfield in 1893. Two years later, he was appointed to the Vicarage of St. Margaret's. On resigning the office of Archdeacon after a long period of service, he was appointed an honorary Canon of Chester Cathedral. Canon Woosnam gave up the living in March, 1908, owing to ill-health, and was succeeded by the Rev. Hewlett Johnson, who had acted as curate to Canon Woosnam for two years. He became an honorary canon of Chester in 1919, and in 1922 was appointed Rural Dean of Bowdon.

At the end of September, 1924, he resigned the living on his appointment as Dean of Manchester. Nine years later, he became Dean of Canterbury. Dr. Johnson was succeeded in December, 1924, by the Rev. Charles C. Potts, Rector of Stoke, Coventry. He left St. Margaret's in December, 1934, on his appointment to the perpetual curacy of Christ Church, Alsager, and to the Vicariate of St. Mary Magdalene, Alsager. The present Vicar is the Rev. G. S. Addison, who took up his duties in the parish in February, 1905. The second son of Canon Addison, he came to Altrincham after a two years' ministry at Holy Trinity Church, Bingley. He had previously been Vicar of Long Preston and Wood Norton, Norfolk.

Early in 1827, numerous fractures were discovered in the stonework of the church's famous spire and on the advice of Mr. H. C. Killender, architect, of Liverpool, a portion was taken down in April of that year. The Church Council were at once faced with a serious problem. The cross on the summit of the spire was 210 feet from the ground, and overhung one of the busiest thoroughfares in England and the Altrincham

War Memorial. Expert opinion was agreed that it was not safe in view of any gales that might occur and that, being tied to that altitude with iron clamps, it was liable to fall across the public road or upon the adjoining houses. No other course appeared to be open than to take down the spire, and the question most earnestly debated was whether the public would willingly acquiesce in what was then regarded as a permanent disfigurement of a stately fane. The work of restoration, it was emphasised, would not be undertaken for the convenience of the worshippers of St. Margaret's, but to people in far distant places to whom it was a notable landmark. It was estimated that the cost of re-building the spire from the level of the flying buttresses, would be £3,300, and from the tower level, £5,500.

An appeal was commenced for a general scheme of restoration, but in August, 1927, the original proposal to re-build the spire was abandoned. Apart from the heavy expenditure which would have been involved in the actual rebuilding of the spire, the church officials were advised by leading experts that the constant vibration from traffic would necessitate frequent attention to the spire, and that a large sum of money would have to be expended from time to time in maintaining the structure in a sound and safe condition. Bearing that in mind, and also the fact that a considerable sum was required to complete the west end of the building, it was felt that the Church Council had adopted a wise course in allowing the tower to remain without a spire. The church occupies so outstanding a position that even without the spire it still remains an important landmark, as the tower can be seen from a considerable distance when approaching Altrincham from either side of the town.



ST. MARGARET'S CHURCH, 1927

An ambitious scheme of extension was commenced in July, 1923, which would cost, even in its simplest form, £6,000. The extension scheme was proposed as a memorial to those members of St. Margaret's Parish who fell in the Great War. The object of the extension was to complete the nave which was already too short, and to provide a large and noble space for the font. Most churches, it was urged, were spoilt with their multiplicity of pews and the scantiness of their open spaces, and this robbed them of a dignity they might otherwise possess.

It was to add that lacking dignity, as well as to provide a wide entrance and one free from draughts, and to make room for a book table, notice boards, and children's corner, that the extension was desired.

There was also to be a gallery under the great west window, and some day, the organ was to be moved to its proper place at the west end of the nave, and a congregational choir was to occupy the gallery. Mr. Walter Tapper, one of the leading church architects in the kingdom, was the architect.

Although the building has been now extended, the book table and notice boards and children's corner provided, the organ and choir stalls are still in their original position.

CHAPTER VI

MORE STORIES OF THE OLD MARKET PLACE AND CHURCH STREET

THE Town Hall, erected at the cost of the Earl of Stamford in 1849, on a site adjoining the Unicorn Hotel, is now only used for social purposes and the half-yearly meetings of the Court Leet. In the basement of the Town Hall accommodation was provided for the market folk, but they were glad to remove from its shadows when the market was superseded by a spacious hall, built by the Local Board of Health at the top of Shaw's Lane. The new hall was, at that time, set in a meadow and the environment was entirely of a rural character. Changes, however, quickly followed and a populous district sprang up with the Market Hall as the central point of interest.

Situated immediately opposite to the old Town Hall was the shop of Mr. John Southern, baker. The large house adjoining it was the residence of Dr. Poole, a well-known surgeon. Constructed of red brick the house was solidly built in three storeys, as was then the recognised style, and had a strong resemblance to others in the vicinity of the nineteenth century type. In 1880, and for many years afterwards, it was occupied by Dr. W. Agar Renshaw, a medical practitioner who, during his lifetime, gave numerous proofs of his public spirit. He himself filled the office of Mayor in 1891 and again in 1901 and 1902. In

1901, he was the donor of the Mayoral robes to the Court Leet for the use of himself and his successors on all ceremonial occasions. He was a generous supporter of St. George's Church and paid the cost of widening the approach to the church from Church Street—an improvement which was regarded with high appreciation.

The houses still standing on the west side of Church Street were in occupation in 1820. That at the corner adjoining the old Town Hall, was tenanted by Mr. Joshua Ashcroft, grocer. It afterwards passed into the hands of Mr. James Grange, described in a local directory of the period as "chemist and druggist, tea dealer, seedsman, &c." Close by, was the shop of Mr. Baskerville, saddler, next door to the establishment of an old-time apothecary. On the same side were the shops of Mr. Thomas Wheatman, baker, and Mr. John Okell, wheelwright, and the stoneyard of Mr. George Barlow.

Hereabouts dwelt also a celebrated character in the person of Mr. Nathaniel Pass, sheriff's officer. As the sole representative of law and order, the name of Nathaniel Pass was one to be feared, and exciting stories of his daring and courage in hunting down criminals used to be told in places where men foregathered. Mr. Pass, who was Mayor of Altrincham in 1830, was a skilful musician, and was a member of the choir of the old Wesleyan Chapel in Chapel Walks.

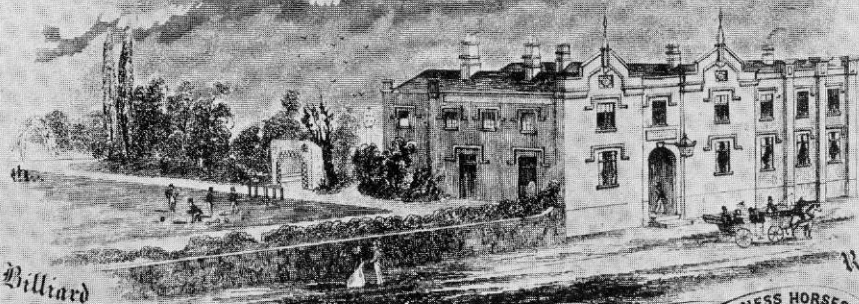
Beyond the house occupied by Mr. Pass lay the Town Fields, which were invariably used on the occasion of some public rejoicing, and a winding lane, bordered by high hedgerows and green fields, led to Broadheath. A few farms and a number of thatched cottages were the only dwellings to be seen

in a district, which in recent years has become a populous and busy centre, with a wide diversity of trading interests. In Church Street, was the Stamford Arms and Bowling Green Hotel, now known as Stamford, the residence of Mr. Geo. Faulkner Armitage. This was a celebrated posting house, and two postillions were kept for the convenience of travellers. Attached to the hotel was a large bowling green, to which some of the most famous bowlers of the day resorted for a trial of their skill. In an advertisement in which the proprietor proclaims the attractions of the hotel, it is stated that "the House commands a splendid view of the Derbyshire and Staffordshire hills and surrounding districts." This was in 1858, before the builders blotted out the view. Even so late as 1890, before Stamford New Road was built over, the Derbyshire and Staffordshire hills could be seen from the backs of the houses in George Street and on a clear day one imagined that the dusky head of Mow Cop could be discerned on the distant sky-line. The fortunes of the hotel were probably affected by the passing of the stage coach, and its surrender to the force of circumstances was a significant reminder of the changing character of the times. The hotel is now a handsome private dwelling. The owner has from time to time made additions, all of which are in keeping with the style of the original building.

Next to the Bowling Green was the house of Mr. William Pass, a lawyer of wide celebrity. Bank Street had not then been formed, and a field separated the house of the lawyer from his offices, which at a later date were occupied by Messrs. Cunliffes, Brooks and Co., bankers. The shop of Mr. John Mort was in the adjoining block. Here at the end of the

Stanford Arms & Bowling Green Hotel.

JOHN WALL.



Billiard

APARTMENTS FOR
PRIVATE FAMILIES.

Altrincham.

SADDLE & HARNESS HORSES
ON THE SHORTEST NOTICE.

Room.

NOW THE RESIDENCE OF MR. GEO. FAULKNER ARMITAGE, J.P.

eighteenth century, Mr. Mort established a drapery business, which became one of the most successful of its kind in this part of Cheshire. Mr. Mort, who was originally a handloom weaver, managed the business on old-fashioned lines, and country people, who knew the reliance to be placed on his character, made it their shopping centre. On his death the business passed into the hands of his son, Mr. John Mort, who in the middle part of last century filled a number of prominent positions, and served the public with great zeal and fidelity for many years. He held the position of Mayor in 1858 and 1859. One of his recollections was that of seeing an old woman compelled to wear the scold's bridle, or brank, for the offence of abusing her neighbours with her sharp and shrewish tongue. The order of the authorities was that the woman should be bridled and led through the town, but as she refused to walk she was placed in a barrow and wheeled through the streets, escorted by a jeering mob. This was in 1815. On the death of Mr. Mort in 1864, the business was transferred to his nephew, Mr. John Shelmerdine Mort, who was Mayor of Altrincham in 1873. Its success was continued under his management, and at his death it was taken over by Mr. G. F. Smith. Subsequently it was acquired by Mr. S. A. Smith, of Leamington, and for several years an interest in the direction devolved upon Mr. G. H. Worthington, an experienced draper, who had long been in Mr. Mort's employ as an assistant. Mr. Worthington subsequently commenced another business on his own account in Stamford New Road, which was at that time beginning to spring into notice as an important thoroughfare. Shortly afterwards the establishment which had been carried on by four generations for

more than a century was discontinued, but the premises were later entirely rebuilt and adapted to modern requirements.

It may be mentioned that the original windows in Mr. Mort's shop were placed in the property on the opposite side of the street, and they may still be examined as examples of the style affected by Altrincham tradesmen a century and a half ago.

The shop next door to Mr. Mort's was occupied by Mr. John Wyatt, a clock and watch maker of some renown. He was a craftsman of great ingenuity, and his alarms and musical clocks acquired for him a wide reputation. Some of his clocks, of which there may be some in use to-day, realised as much as £50 each. It was his practice to make every part of his clocks with his own hand, and his work could always be depended upon with confidence. The next shop was that of Mr. John Shuttleworth, joiner, whose wife dealt in sweets and muffins. The adjoining confectioner's shop was kept by Mr. Richard Renshaw, and the next house was that of Dr. Wilson, a flourishing practitioner of the old school. An entry by the side of the house gave access to three small dwellings, in which lived three families of the name of Eppleston, Leigh, and Owen. The entry was known by the name of the Pelican, and the three families were employed at the Unicorn and the Bowling Green Inns. On the other side of the entry was the shop of Mr. Samuel Renshaw, plumber and glazier, who was Mayor of Altrincham in 1821. Adjoining were some thatched cottages. We are informed by an old chronicler that an ancient public house, with the title of Horse and Jockey once stood close by, and that it was removed when Stamford Street was connected with the Market Place. One of the oldest



Photo by permission of

The Altrincham Urban District Council

CHURCH STREET, 1935

pictures of the spot does not bear evidence of this, and it is clear that if a public house stood at the place indicated, it must have been in the latter part of the eighteenth century, long anterior to the construction of Stamford Street. The house is said to have been kept by Robert Boardman, who to his duty of supplying ale to his customers united that of breeding race horses for the Earl of Stamford, and from the connection of the owner with the turf the house doubtless received its name. After the original Horse and Jockey was pulled down it is said that the name was used by the occupier of the St. George and Dragon Hotel. At a later date, the title was adopted by the owner of a beer-house in the Market Place. A noted horse, bred by Boardman, was Bay Malton, and a picture of the animal painted by Boardman's son was used as a signboard of the Bay Malton Hotel at Seamon's Moss Bridge.

CHAPTER VII

QUAINT SCENES

FROM the scenes witnessed in the Market Place, the materials might almost be drawn for the construction of a complete history of Altrincham. For several centuries it has been the chief centre of interest, and the stage upon which have moved most of those who have figured in the public and social life of the town. The entire drama of local history has indeed been played here, and in any attempt to describe the leading features of the spot and the changes it has undergone, it is appropriate to briefly recall some of the events which compose the story of the past. The Market Place was the original home of an important fair held on the eve of St. James' Day, and to its gaities regularly flocked all the people from the countryside. Established in 1319, the fair replaced one granted by charter to Hamon de Massey in 1290, and it retained a vigorous life until May, 1895, when, by petition of the Urban District Council, it was abolished by order of the Home Secretary. Whatever the fair may have been in ancient times, it could not be said in later days to be more than an occasion for public junketting, and it was regarded with high disfavour by the modern authority and the residents generally. To the booths of travelling showmen the whole of the Market Place was formerly given up, and the strident shouts of itinerant actors mingling with the machine-made music of a multitude of

merry-go-rounds, and the terrified shrieks of women as they were tossed on high by flying swing-boats, were among the least objectionable features of the yearly Saturnalia. On the erection of the new Market Hall in Market Street in 1880, the fair followed it, but it was none the less a source of annoyance to peaceful folk who lived in the neighbourhood, and there was doubtless a good deal of reason for the representations frequently made to the local authority in favour of its abolition.

On the morning fixed for the opening of the fair, the duty devolved upon the Mayor of laying down the rules for the establishment of order, and the ceremony was observed until 1894. Each year the Mayor, accompanied by the burgesses of the Court Leet, and supported by his constables, bye-law men, common lookers, dog muzzlers, market lookers, swine lookers, chimney lookers, and ale tasters, issued from the Town Hall and solemnly perambulated the bounds of the fair. The appearance of the Mayor in gold chain, and the constables with their brass-headed staves, often led to good-humoured banter, but most people looked upon the ceremony as an essential part of the day's proceedings, and frankly accorded it a respectful attention, not that it longer possessed any legal significance, but because of its faithful reflection of the customs of a past age.

No doubt, in remote times when the Mayor and constables were armed with real and definite powers, the ceremony had an impressive meaning, and it is not difficult to realise the importance attached to the mayoral procession and the oral proclamation of the regulations by the simple villagers who recognised in the Mayor the very embodiment of law and order. The last fair (St. James') was held on the eve of St.

James' Day (old style) in August, 1894, when it was opened with all the quaint and curious ceremonies which for centuries before had distinguished it. On that occasion the Mayor, Mr. William Griffin, burgesses and officials of the Court Leet, including the constables with their staves of office, made the customary perambulation of the fair and on returning to the Town Hall the following proclamation of the Court of Pie-poudre (*pieds poudres* "dusty feet"), which was the court of the baron for the settlement of all disputes arising within the bounds of the fair, was read by Mr. Alfred Ingham on behalf of the Mayor from the steps of the Unicorn Hotel :—

"Oh yes ! O yes! O yes! Draw near and hear the Queen's proclamation! I, William Griffin, gentleman, Mayor of the Borough and Corporation of Altrincham, in the name and on behalf of our Sovereign Lady the Queen, and in the name and on behalf of the Right Honourable the Earl of Stamford and Warrington, Lord of this borough, and the liberties thereof, strictly chargeth and commandeth all manner of persons resorting to this fair that they do keep the peace during the continuance thereof, upon pain of forfeiting for every assault or affray five pounds, and their bodies to prison.

"And that all manner of persons do forbear to carry any unlawful weapon or weapons, but that they leave the same at their respective lodgings upon pain of forfeiting the same weapons.

"And that all manner of persons do forbear to buy, sell or exchange any horses, mares, geldings, cows or other cattle in any stable or backyard, or any other place except in the open fair or market.

"And that all persons who bring any goods or cattle to sell above the price or value of four pence

half-penny, do pay the accustomed toll for the same upon pain of forfeiting the same goods.

“And that no town dweller do keep in or about their houses, any goods or cattle to defraud the Lord of his toll, upon pain of forfeiting for every such offence, 6s. 8d.

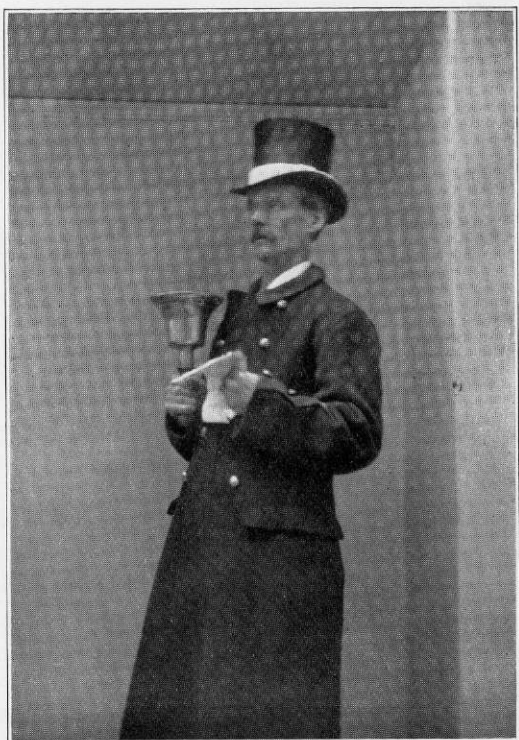
“And lastly, the said Mayor strictly commandeth all rogues, vagabonds, and other idle wandering persons who can give no just account of their repair hither, that they forthwith depart this fair, and the liberties thereof, upon pain of such punishment as this law appointed for such offenders. God bless the Queen, the Lord of this borough, the Mayor, and all her Majesty’s loyal subjects.”

Long before this, the Mayor had at his command the machinery of the Court of Pie-Poudre, but it had been in disuse for many years and was superseded by other, if less stern methods. The Court of Pie-Poudre was the speediest and perhaps the most terrible court in England, held only in fair time, when ready and immediate justice was required before the machinery of the ordinary courts could be set in motion. Purely a market court, it had power to deal with questions of contract and with slander spoken in the Market Place. All cases were decided on the spot and there were no adjournments.

The quaint proclamation is, however, suggestive of the fact that the fair was originally intended as an exchange for the buying and selling of cattle, but for several years prior to its abolition, owners of stock had deserted it, and Sanjam Fair, as it was familiarly called, became nothing more or less than an ordinary means of public amusement in which noise and disorder were the distinguishing features. Two other cattle fairs were formerly held in April and November,

and up to 1865, the Old Market Place and adjacent streets were occupied by the beasts of the field brought in by farmers and dealers from the neighbouring villages. In the walls of some of the houses not long ago, were to be found rings and hooks to which cattle and horses were fastened. Cattle breeders, in course of time, found new and more convenient channels for the sale of their stock than were offered by the confined streets of a country town, and as they began to seize the opportunities opened up by the railway, the erstwhile prosperous cattle fairs of Altrincham died from sheer inanition.

In passing, it is worth noting that Mr. William Griffin, in whose year of office the fair was abolished, did his utmost to maintain the old customs of the Court Leet and his ceremonial opening of the fair was a faithful reproduction of the scenes as one might imagine them to have been centuries before. Mr. Griffin was the first Mayor to set the example of attending the morning service at St. George's Church in his official capacity, on the first Sunday after his election. The practice has been followed every year since and "Mayor's Sunday" has taken a fixed place in the local calendar. He also gave the first Children's Ball, and with a lavish hand entertained the aged. He was especially proud of the ancient office of the Town Crier and arrayed the then holder of the office, Mr. Robert Whitehead, with a livery consisting of a long brown coat with a red collar and a tall silk hat with a band of gold. Mr. Whitehead looked the part of the old bellman and he was a popular figure for many years afterwards as he closed his "cry" with the words:—"God save the Queen, the Mayor of this town and all her Majesty's true and loyal subjects." On Mr. Whitehead's death there was no demand for



From a photo by

H. Wilkinson

Mr. ROBERT WHITEHEAD,
BELLMAN, 1888

a successor. There was not sufficient business to reward a man for his services and the post was not afterwards filled.

CHAPTER VII

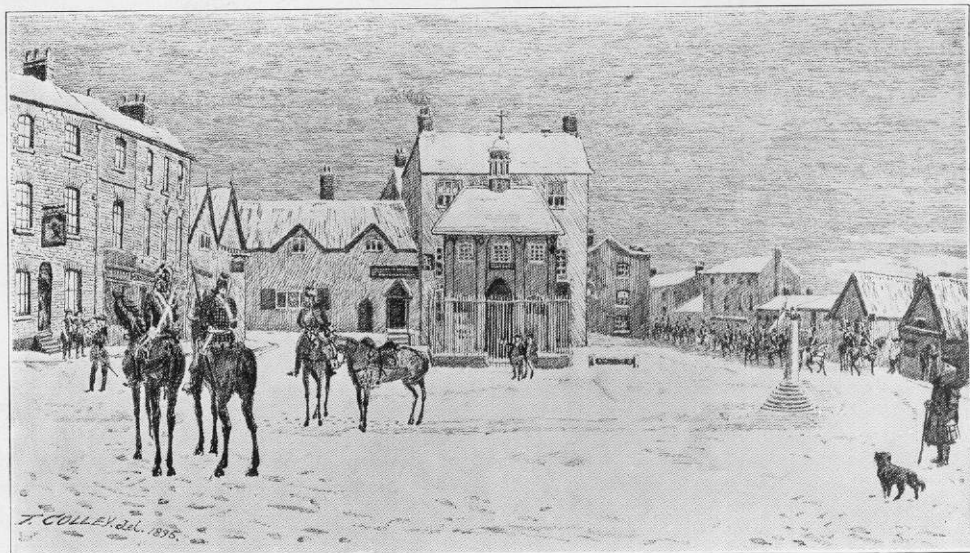
FLOODING IN THE MARKET PLACE

INTRODUCTION OF GAS

SCENES of a less peaceful character have been enacted in the Old Market Place, and, as an instance of the changes which have been carried into effect during the century is related to the law and the manner of dealing with offenders, it is interesting to recall an incident which related to Mr. William Walton, who was a watchman in 1845. He personally witnessed the event in the early part of the nineteenth century. It was the public flogging of three men in the Market Place for robbing a china shop at Sale. They were tried at Knaresborough, and sentenced to a term of imprisonment and to be flogged in the Altham Market Place. On the expiration of their term of imprisonment they were all brought in a cart to Altham, accompanied by a powerful fellow and a gentleman from Knaresborough on horseback, who had presumably been sent to see that the penalty was promptly carried out. The first to enter the punishment was a young man of about 18 years of age. His hands were tied to the cart rail, and he was stripped to the waist. He was a well-nourished, healthy-looking lad, with a fair skin. The man who had come with them in the cart then stepped up, and drawing the lashes through his left hand, a movement he repeated before each stroke, laid them with a jerk upon the lad's back. After half a dozen strokes or so, large weals rose on the victim's skin, and then he began to scream in a heartrending manner, and danced under

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From a Drawing by T. Colley

THE PRETENDER'S TROOPS DEMANDING BILLETS AT THE RED LION INN

the infliction, struggling to free himself, and appealing frantically for mercy. When he had received eighteen or nineteen lashes, by which time the blood was beginning to flow, the man on horseback interposed, and ordered him to be released, and this having been done the next culprit took his place. He was a man of about twenty-four years of age, little and spare. He had received only a few lashes when the blood came, and after that every stroke told with terrible effect, the poor wretch's back being cruelly lacerated, while he danced and screamed as the first one had done, almost maddened by the torture. Before he had received the full complement of thirty-nine lashes he was released, and the third man was tied up. This was the ringleader, and for him was reserved the severest punishment. He was a middle-aged man, broad set and strong, and when he stripped the huge muscles seemed to defy the punishment to be administered. He set his teeth when the flogging began, and neither moved nor uttered a sound as it went on, but preserved the same stoical calmness right through to the end of the thirty-nine lashes. He received the whole of his punishment without so much as wincing, and as soon as he was released walked up to the gentleman on horseback and said, "Now, if you'll just step down from that horse and stand up to me for a few minutes, I'll take another forty lashes." The punishment was witnessed by a large crowd, and a woman made herself conspicuous by her loudly expressed sympathy with the victims, and the strong appeals she made to the people to attempt a rescue.

A detachment of the Pretender's cavalry arrived in the Old Market Place on the morning of December 1st, 1745, and from accounts recorded by old men,

whose grandfathers and great-grandfathers witnessed their entry into Altrincham from Manchester, a description has been preserved. The snow lay on the ground when the troops entered Altrincham, and it is stated that quarters were demanded for them at the Red Lion, and no doubt at other licensed houses in the vicinity. One man had a singular experience with the troops. He is said to have been standing in Well Lane (Victoria Street) when a trooper, perceiving that he was wearing a pair of new boots, pointed to them and shouted: "Hoot, mon, we mun ha' your brogues." The Altrincham man was deprived of his boots, but not, as may be expected, without some resistance. Some of the troopers, it is stated, were quartered at a farm lying near to the present site of St. John's Church. Early on the morning of December 2nd, 1745, the detachment set out from Altrincham to join the main body of the Pretender's army at Macclesfield. One of the number who had straggled in the rear was unfortunate enough to get embroiled in a quarrel with mine host, George Barlow, of the Old Bleeding Wolf Inn, on Ashley Heath, by whom he was killed with his own sword. The body of the trooper was buried in Hale Road and the sword, which was kept as a relic, was for many years afterwards borne by the Foresters in their annual processions. Ultimately, the blade was fashioned into a number of knives.

In 1823, the singular scene of a wife being sold by her husband took place in the Market Place. The incident was vouched for by several persons, who were actually present at the sale and Mr. Leech, who received the evidence from an eye witness, gives a lucid version of the strange affair. He says: "One person tells of his seeing the interesting pair on their

way to market. He was going, when a boy, towards Ashley, and had got near the Bleeding Wolf, when he met a man leading a woman by a rope. "Come up," he said, and the lady, like Barkis's horse, came up accordingly. She was encouraged to do this promptly by the presence of a man behind her, armed with a stick, and prepared to support her husband's action by appropriate arguments. The husband, it appears, was not unmindful of the well-known precept that wives are more easily led than driven; but in case one method failed he had provided for the enforcement of the other." We are further told that the sale took place on the steps of the stone cross near to the Butter Market, and the square was crowded with interested people while the operation was in progress. There was apparently little competition for the woman, and the first bid was not more than eightpence. Beyond this the bidding slowly advanced to eighteenpence, when the reserve having been passed, the woman was handed over to the purchaser. The man who had ventured to sell a wife in this extraordinary manner was evidently unprepared to meet all the conditions, as at the conclusion of the sale it was discovered that he had omitted to provide his wife with a halter. As this was a recognized part of the transaction, he was compelled to procure one, and for that purpose paid a visit to the shop of Mr. Samuel Rutter, a saddler in Church Street. He was obligingly accompanied by a mob of juveniles, who crowded round the little window while the negotiations were in progress. Just as readily did they escort the man back to the Market Cross, and probably assisted him with appropriate comments as he proceeded to adjust the halter on the neck of his wife.

An account of the historic associations of the Old Market Place would not be complete without a reference to the introduction of gas into Altrincham as an illuminating agent. Prior to the year 1844, the Market Place and the narrow streets leading into it were lighted with oil lamps, provided by the Inspectors under the Lighting and Watching Act of 1832, by means of a voluntary subscription. An old print shows one of these lamps blinking dimly in the blackness of a winter's night, while a watchman hard by, muffled to the ears in a blue coat with a red collar, and carrying a lanthorn, is represented as proclaiming the hour and the state of the weather. From the funds furnished by the subscribers the watchmen were provided with watch boxes in which it was customary for them to spend some of the lonely night hours. In a record of the public officials for the year 1847, published in *The Britannia Almanac* by Mr. Charles Balshaw, we learn that the watchmen in that year were Mr. Thomas Bates, Mr. William Walton and Mr. James Ackerley. They were among the last holders of the ancient office, as very soon after the introduction of gas and the establishment of the county constabulary the old watchmen were not required.

For the first attempt to manufacture gas, Altrincham is indebted to the enterprise of Mr. George Massey, the then proprietor of the Unicorn Hotel. He was evidently a man of resource and energy, and provided the capital necessary for the erection of a small plant in the rear of the hotel on a site close by a plot of ground now used as a bowling green. As may well be imagined, the new departure raised high hopes, and we are told that when the first lamp was lighted in front of the Unicorn Hotel by Mr. William

Walton, who was then acting as a constable, there was a marked display of public enthusiasm. There was striking evidence of a popular demand for gas for illuminating purposes, and in order that the manufacture might be more fully developed, the Altrincham Gas Company was formed, with a subscribed capital of £4,000. This was in March, 1846, and the company commenced operations by acquiring the small plant laid down by Mr. Massey. The expectation of a large demand was more than realised, and it was speedily discovered that the means of production must be enlarged. Accordingly the company built new works on a site on Hale Moss, which were formally opened on the 29th May, 1847. For this and subsequent extensions the company's paid-up capital amounted to £40,000. The company was incorporated by Act of Parliament in 1872, and new shares of the value of £40,000 were issued. In 1893, further extensions were required and authority was given for the raising of an additional sum of £40,000, making a total authorized capital of £120,000. Under the Act of 1893, only 1,400 shares of £10 each were issued, upon which a premium was received of £9,573, thus bringing up the total amount of paid-up capital to £103,573. By their special Acts the company had power to borrow £15,000 on mortgage, and to issue debenture stock, also a further power to borrow on mortgage one-fourth of the amount of capital issued and fully paid-up under the special Act of 1893. The mortgage bonds of the company on the 31st December, 1904, amounted to £18,000, thus bringing up the total capital to £121,573. The expenditure up to the same period had been £115,886 4s. 10d., and the shares remaining to be issued were of the nominal value of

£16,427. Since that time a great development has taken place and the demand on the resources of the Company for lighting, heating and power purposes has necessitated a remarkable expansion of capital. The authorised share capital is now £180,000 and, in addition, the company has borrowing powers to the extent of 70 per cent. of the aggregate amount of the paid-up share capital for the time being and of any premiums thereon. At December 31st, 1934, the share capital issued (including premiums) reached the figure of £176,202 and the capital raised by mortgage bonds amounted to £109,546. As the authorised capital is now nearly all issued, the Company are expected very soon to apply for permission to raise further capital to meet the increasing demands of the public. The growth of the Company's business may be seen from the annual sales of gas :—

<i>Year.</i>	<i>Gas sold.</i>		
1872	17	million	cubic feet.
1880	28	"	" "
1900	145	"	" "
1920	262	"	" "
1933	457	"	" "

Following upon the erection of the new gas works in 1847, an extension of the system of lighting by gas was made to all parts of the town very soon after the establishment of the Local Board of Health in 1851. The old oil lamps were superseded, and gas leaped rapidly into popular favour.

It is a long stride from the day of the modest oil lamp to the brilliance of the electric light, and it took Altrincham exactly fifty-one years to accomplish it. In 1844, the last dim oil lamp in the Old Market Place flickered out, and in 1895, the first electric lamp stood as a bright testimony of the advancing

times. A private company—the Altrincham Electric Supply, Limited—with a capital of £50,000, obtained a Provisional Order in 1894, and the work of building a generating station and laying down mains was commenced in the same year. The generating station, which was built at Broadheath, between the L. and N.-W. Railway and the Bridgewater Canal, is completely furnished with boilers, engines, and dynamos of great capacity, and the arrangements are adapted for the requirements of the district for several years to come. From the station at Broadheath the mains extend through Altrincham, Bowdon, Hale, Timperley, Dunham Massey, and Ashton-upon-Mersey, for a total distance of 42 miles. At any time the District Council may exercise its power under a clause in the Provisional Order of purchasing the undertaking at the cost of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. over the amount actually expended, and in 1904, according to this provision, the District Council inquired upon what terms the company would dispose of the undertaking. The price named was £99,343. The Council had the offer under consideration for six months, but it was unable to arrive at any definite decision, and the offer was withdrawn by the directors in July, 1905.

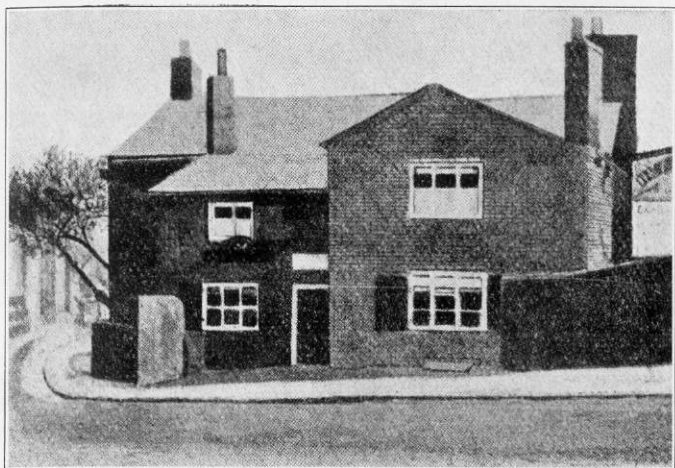
Power was also given to Sale to purchase that part of the undertaking relating to Ashton-upon-Mersey, and it was exercised in 1935 by the Sale District Council.

Mr. George Massey was made Mayor of Altrincham in 1848, an honour doubtless conferred upon him in recognition of his public services and his energy in providing Altrincham with a new and efficient means of lighting.

CHAPTER IX

GEORGE STREET AND KINGSWAY

THE year 1880 was a somewhat eventful period for George Street. In that year the Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway Company completed their new terminus in Stamford New Road, and the two original stations in Stockport Road and Railway Street were closed. Important changes quickly followed upon the scheme of concentration. One of these was the construction of a new road to connect Stamford Street and George Street with the new station. This involved the demolition of an old row of cottages in George Street, in one of which the postal business of the town was formerly conducted. The course of the new road lay across the gardens of the cottages and it soon became used as the principal approach to the station. The opening of the road set at liberty several valuable plots of ground for building purposes, and local tradesmen were not slow to seize the advantages they offered. A number of business premises were built, and thus the character of the entire neighbourhood underwent a change of the most complete kind. The present Axe and Cleaver Hotel dates from the same period. Its predecessor was a quaint hostelry, which was probably built at the latter part of the eighteenth century. The front of the house looked upon George Street, and on the Station Road side were two or three curious gables with small square windows set in white-painted frames. A garden, enclosed by a



AXE AND CLEAVER HOTEL, STAMFORD STREET SIDE



AXE AND CLEAVER HOTEL, GEORGE STREET SIDE

high wall, lay between the inn and the shop of Messrs. Bowden and Parkes, in the Old Market Place. The site of the garden is now covered with business establishments.

On the opposite side of the road, was a grassy slope where the children of the village chased butterflies or hunted for blackberries. The cutting of the new road, however, led to several developments. These commenced in 1823 by the building of a large private residence by Mr. Samuel Bruckshaw, a grocer, who carried on business in a shop in the Old Market Place now occupied by Messrs. Whitwham and Co. Mr. Bruckshaw was Mayor of Altrincham in 1820, and he may possibly have intended to occupy the home himself. This, however, he did not do, but let it to Dr. Thomas Blease, who bestowed upon the house the name of Temple Lodge. Here, Dr. Blease carried on his practice until 1868, when he built a new house for himself in Woodlands Road, which had just been formed. The shop above Temple Lodge at the corner of the Market Place had, in the meantime, passed into the hands of Mr. Thomas Bell, the principal barber of the town, and between his house was a small garden whose proud boast was a fine pear tree, the branches of which at one time overhung the road. Mr. Bell's shop afterwards became the office of Mr. Matthew Fowden, solicitor, who also made the adjoining house his place of residence. This property was subsequently purchased and occupied by Mr. Benjamin Riley, saddler and harness maker, and although there have been several changes of tenants since, it is still in possession of members of the family. The garden at a later period was seized by the builder and it is now covered by business premises.

Temple Lodge lost its character as a private residence about the year 1868. Between the house and Mr. Bell's garden, behind a pair of green folding doors was the surgery, which, by an extension to the new street, was converted into a shop and dwelling-house. Part of Temple Lodge itself was also turned into a shop with an imposing plate-glass front, and the addition of a third storey. The stone wall and railings in front were removed, and the premises were extended to the street building line. Both shops were later purchased by Mr. F. Stevenson, fruiterer and florist. The lower part of Temple Lodge was for some time used as a branch of Parr's Bank and afterwards it formed the headquarters of the Post Office. When the Post Office forsook it for larger premises in Market Street built by Sir William C. Brooks, the owner of the property, Mr. Benjamin Riley, dealt with it as he had done with the other portion, and by an extension converted it into a shop. Lower down the road were the garden, stables and coach-house. The garden at a later period became the site of the offices of Messrs. Syers and Nephew, estate agents, and Messrs. Dendy and Paterson, solicitors. Long before this time the road was known as Stamford Street and it turned sharply by the stables of Temple Lodge, behind the old cottages overlooking Lower George Street. At the opposite corner of this part of Stamford Street was the shop, with a private dwelling-house attached, of Mr. William Paulden, whose profession of apothecary was denoted by a mortar and pestle over the entrance. Below was the drapery establishment of Mr. Knowles Wilde, built by his father Mr. Geoffrey Wilde, and the ironmongery stores of Mr. George Bowen.

These completed the buildings on that side of the



Photo by

Geo. Martin

KINGSWAY IN 1865

street, which, as will be seen from Mr. George Martin's interesting photograph taken in 1865, descended into George Street by a little flight of stone steps. Station Road had not then been made, and Stamford Street at its lower end faced a row of small shops and private houses, protected from the perils of the traffic as it descended the steep slope by an iron fence, of which a part is shown in the photograph. Meanwhile, developments were taking place on the South side of Stamford Street. In 1867 Mr. James Byrom built a large shop on that side, and thus commenced a design which ended in the entire appropriation of the land for building. The house and shop of Messrs. Bowden and Parkes were pulled down in 1878 to make room for the erection of shops. Lower down, Mr. W. H. Parkes built a handsome pile of stone fronted shops, which take a worthy place among the more dignified business premises of the town. The remaining portion of the garden lying between Mr. Byrom's shop and the Axe and Cleaver was quickly absorbed by the erection of shops, two of which were subsequently acquired by Parr's Banking Co., for banking purposes. About the year 1881, Stamford Street was extended to the new station of the Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway Co., although curiously enough, the new part of the thoroughfare, acquired the name of Station Road. In August, 1908, the owners and residents presented a requisition to the District Council in favour of a change of title to Kingsway throughout the entire length. The prayer of the petition was strengthened by the fact that several other roads in the district were known by the name of "Stamford," and the suggested change was readily acceded to by the Authority, who concurred in the

view put forward that as the road was the principal thoroughfare traversed by the King and Queen, when the Prince and Princess of Wales, on their way from Tatton Hall where they were the guests of Earl Egerton of Tatton, to open the Manchester Exhibition on the 4th May, 1887, the new designation not only possessed a historical significance, but was distinctly appropriate to the business character which the street had assumed.

For many years the Pig Market was held in an open space between the Axe and Cleaver Inn and the present business premises of Mr. Geo. Bowen. It enjoyed a wide reputation, and the largest breeders of pigs in Cheshire found it convenient to use it as a place of business. In 1877, the Pig Market was abolished, and thus another link with the rural simplicity of the past was broken. A few years later, the present modern hotel was erected. On the high ground adjoining the old Axe and Cleaver formerly stood three thatched cottages, to reach which you had to climb a flight of stone steps. These are no longer there, and the gardens in which they stood are now built over. The land adjacent to the Axe and Cleaver was selected by the late Mr. George Bowen as the site of a large shop in 1871, and subsequently other shops of a similar class gave to George Street a new and more imposing aspect.

The row of shops lying between this property and High Street were simple cottages, and their conversion marked one stage of the gradual business development. Where High Street now enters George Street, were two or three thatched cottages, the most conspicuous of which was "Marble Hall," a title of sarcasm conferred upon it by reason of its somewhat dilapidated appearance. Fronting to



From a photo by

H. Wilkinson

A NOTED FIGURE EMPLOYED IN THE
PIG MARKET, GEORGE STREET, 1870

George Street, the door was reached by five steps, and in the thatched roof was a dormer window. Here once dwelt an old woman named Amelia Priestner who, besides mangling the clothes for her neighbours, undertook the duty of schoolmistress. On the gable of the house were some rudely cut figures, showing that the house was built in 1690. When the making of High Street had been determined upon in 1886, the old house, with some others in the vicinity, was pulled down, and with its removal one of the last remnants of old Altrincham disappeared from George Street. It is interesting to mention that it was at "Marble Hall" that some of the troopers of the Pretender's army were billeted while on their march from Manchester to Macclesfield in 1745. The thatched houses adjoining were demolished in the middle part of the last century to make way for the present shops, while the Methodist New Connexion Chapel, built in 1821, is old enough to have witnessed all the changes that have gone to the making of a winding lane of cottages into a busy street of shops and offices.

Between the New Connexion Chapel and Shaw's Lane, there stood until 1887 a private house, approached, like many of its neighbours, by several stone steps with an iron hand-rail. A shop adjoining it occupied a portion of Shaw's Lane, which was then not one-half its present width.

It was here that towards the end of the eighteenth century a grocery business was established by John Barrow, a prominent Wesleyan, a local preacher, and a contemporary of Nathaniel Pass. Mr. Barrow was a man of strict business habits and high integrity, and at his death his establishment was transferred to two apprentices, William Collins and Samuel Warren,

by whom the concern was carried on under the title of Collins and Warren. They effected what in their day was regarded as an important improvement in the premises, and it is stated that when a new window of not more than moderate size, made its appearance in the modest front, people came long distances to see what they felt to be a feature of remarkable business enterprise.

Leaving Shaw's Lane there was a row of thatched cottages with small diamond-patterned windows, and Beggars' Square, which yet retains some of its ancient features, was a well-known place in the very heart of George Street. Beyond Beggars' Square were several small cottages and shops, in one of which for many years was the public bakehouse of Thomas Bailey. Here it was the custom of the townsfolk to have their loaves baked every Monday morning. The charge for baking was twopence a loaf, but as the loaves in these days were made out of as much as twelve, sixteen and eighteen pounds of flour, the rate was not considered excessive. Next to the bakehouse was the house of Michael Drinkwater, market gardener, who kept two or three cows and a couple of horses. Even so recently as 1905, there were still shippons at the rear of a row of shops in George Street and a number of cows were stalled there. Many complaints were made by residents of the nuisance caused by the cattle as they were driven through the street, and eventually the shippons were closed by order of the District Council. Near to were several houses standing high above the road. Some of them were approached by seven or eight stone steps, while below were cellar dwellings. The whole of them have been demolished and in their place are to be found a row of well built shops.



OLD COTTAGE IN GEORGE STREET (pulled down in 1886)

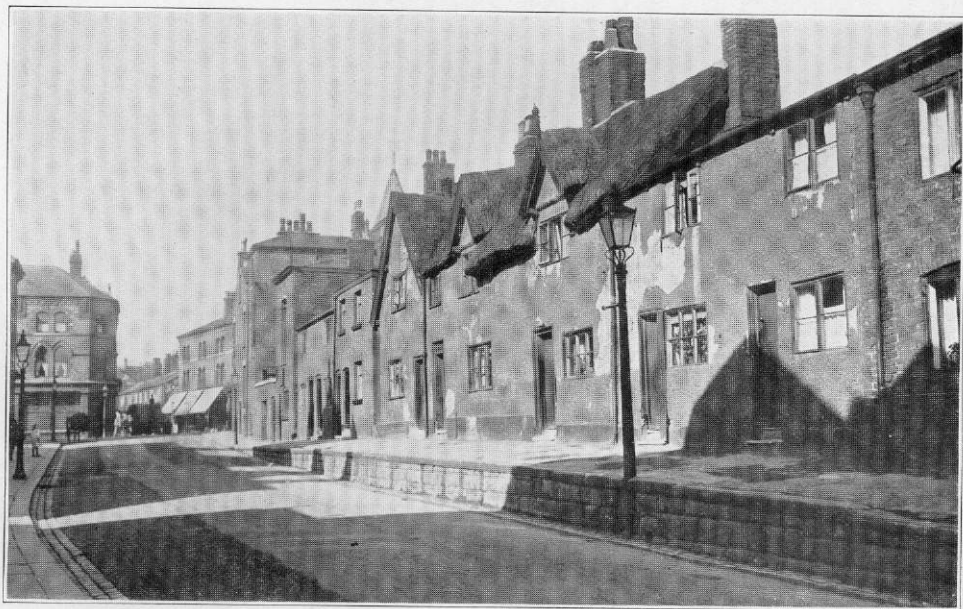
Another old house in George Street was formerly lived in by Mr. Henry Race, whose school was known as Mount House. The house, which stood in its own grounds, was a famous educational centre, and at a later period it was successfully carried on for a time by the Rev. Thomas Allin, a minister of the Methodist New Connexion Church, who had a wide reputation as a theological scholar. Adjacent to Mount House was the Altrincham Grammar School, also standing in its own grounds, which in 1865, was under the headmastership of Mr. John Turner. The Grammar School, which was reached by a short carriage drive from George Street, stood a little to the rear of the offices of the North Cheshire Water Company. Close by Mount House on a piece of rising ground known as Race's Row were two cottages, and further away at the bend of the road was the Woolpack Inn, a picturesque building of the sixteenth century type with thatched roof and white-washed walls, where the proprietor brewed his own beer. The entire character of the neighbourhood underwent a great change in the sixties and seventies.

The old Woolpack Inn disappeared, and its place was taken by a substantial hotel of an essentially modern style, while adjoining it are now business premises, which fill what was once a large garden protected by a stone wall surmounted by a green hedge. On the same site were formerly two or three cottages, whose character may be judged from the fact that their rental did not exceed eighteenpence per week.

The chief feature of George Street in 1860, was its cottages with thatched roofs and overhanging eaves. The level of the ground was much lower than it is now and most of the houses were approached by

half a dozen steps. Even at this time it could only be described as a lane, but its importance as a business centre was recognised and shops of a substantial sort began to rise. One row of sixteenth century cottages lay between Station Road and the entrance to the brewery of Mr. J. Astle Kelsall, an old-established business which was given up in 1890.

Until that time two of the old thatched cottages remained as dilapidated and mournful relics of a past age. They stood back about two yards from the present building line and the land in front was laid with round cobble stones such as at one time had been used for the paving of the entire street. In 1890, the cottages were purchased by Mr. James Hamilton, who erected in their place two spacious shops. In the next row of cottages lived for many years Mr. John Starkey, cabinet maker, who established a business in 1790 that was destined to live for more than a century. Mr. Starkey was a clever designer of furniture and an excellent craftsman, and no article was turned out of his shop that was not stamped by his own individuality. Starkey's furniture was known everywhere for its soundness and durability, and it is no small tribute to its excellence to find that chairs and tables made in the old workshops in George Street still command high prices. On his death, the founder of the business was succeeded by his son, Mr. William Starkey, who took into partnership Mr. Edward Neild. The firm was continued under the title of Starkey and Neild, and the proprietors were zealous in maintaining the high character of Altrincham-made furniture. After the death of Mr. Wm. Starkey, the business was carried on by Mr. Edward Neild, who was Mayor of Altrincham in 1875-6.



SIXTEENTH CENTURY COTTAGES, LOWER GEORGE STREET
(Typical of most houses in Altrincham in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries)

Mr. Neild celebrated his year of office by presenting to the Court Leet two handsomely carved chairs which are still in use and described in another chapter.

Next door to Mr. John Starkey at one time lived a venerable lady named Betty Forster, who was said to be a specialist in the healing art. The special disease to which she gave her attention was that of jaundice, and it is said that sufferers visited her from all parts. It is no less remarkable to be told that whatever may have been the secret of Betty's power she was invariably successful, and tradition says that her patients recovered after a single interview. The fee charged by the old lady was only sixpence, which may possibly have accounted for her somewhat large clientele. Adjoining the cottage might have been seen in 1845, the milkhouse of Mr. John Ardern. This lay a few feet below the road at the corner of Moss Lane (now Cross Street). The shippon of Mr. Ardern in which two or three cows were kept, adjoined the milkhouse. Moss Lane was then a narrow winding road leading to Hale Moss. On both sides lay extensive gardens from which the owners gathered their crops of fruit and vegetables for the Manchester markets.

Some distance down the lane, at a place now covered by the stables of the Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway, was a school described in a local directory of the period as "Hale Moss Academy." The school was conducted by Mr. John Latham. The construction of the railway changed the rural features of the district in a radical way. Not the least important alteration was effected by the building of a bridge by which the narrow country lane was raised and carried across the line.

This was also the prelude to the disappearance of the pleasant market gardens and the erection of houses and shops which began to open out a new era in the trading interests of Altrincham. On the other side of Moss Lane immediately opposite to the milk house of Mr. Ardern, was the shop of Mr. Charles Layland, whose cooperage lay behind in Moss Lane. Then came four thatched cottages which stood until 1874, when the site was acquired by the late Mr. James Southern for the erection of shops. Advantage was taken of the change to improve Moss Lane by increasing the width, and not long afterwards the whole of the available building land was utilised as sites for the offices of the Altrincham Gas Company, and other business premises.

The thatched cottages which were pulled down in 1874 by Mr. Southern adjoined the private residence of Mr. Robert Shelmerdine, who was Mayor of Altrincham in 1831. At the back of the house were tastefully laid out grounds which are now mostly covered by stables and workshops. Even the house, a stately one in its day, as befitted the rank of a gentleman who had filled the honourable office of Mayor of the town, was, after the owner's death, converted into two shops. From the house of Mr. Shelmerdine, a row of small shops and still smaller cottages, whose tiny front gardens were railed off from the road, lined the street to the Orange Tree Hotel. At different times they have been removed and in their place we find shops whose style and size are remarkable by force of contrast. There was then no Grafton Street, and the cottages were continued to the Orange Tree Hotel, which was taken down on the construction of Stamford New Road about 1880. The Orange Tree, was succeeded by the present Stamford Hotel, on



THE FAULKNER'S ARMS

the immediately adjacent plot of ground. The old hotel is still memorable because of a disastrous fire which occurred on the 6th August, 1855. On that sad occasion three lives were sacrificed to the flames and much valuable property was destroyed. It was then occupied by Mr. Samuel Howard. The next house to the Orange Tree was that of Mr. Thomas Faulkner, grocer and beerseller. This was a thatched building with quaint windows of the diamond pattern. It also disappeared on the construction of Stamford New Road and in its place, hard by, was built the present hotel known as Faulkner's Arms. The shops next to the beerhouse of Mr. Faulkner were of a more modern kind. The first was occupied by Mr. Joseph Broady, boot and shoe maker. In the next shop, Mr. James Cowsill started in business as a grocer, while the third was occupied by Mr. William Ramsden, draper. All these shops were pulled down to make way for the new road and, on land slightly to the rear, were afterwards built the premises of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Banking Company and a couple of shops. Beyond, was the narrow path leading to Goose Green and immediately at the corner was one of the approaches to the old Bowdon Station, which was abandoned in 1880 on the building of a new central station and the centralization of the railway business in Stamford New Road.

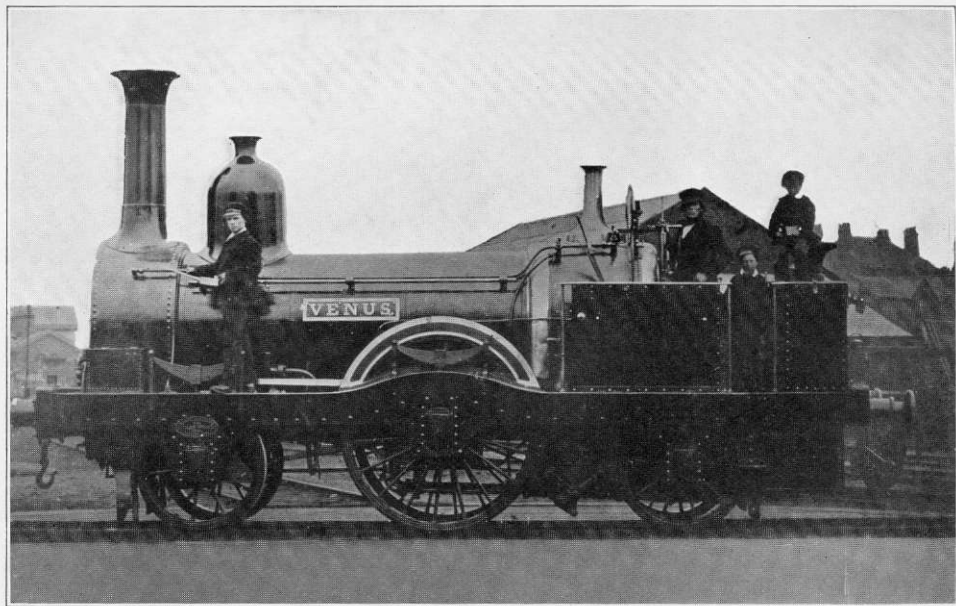
CHAPTER X

MANCHESTER SOUTH JUNCTION AND ALTRINCHAM RAILWAY.

THE Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway was opened for passenger and goods traffic on Friday, July 21st, 1849. The railway was divided into two portions—the South Junction line and the Manchester and Altrincham line. The former connected the lines at London Road Station, Manchester, with the London and North Western Railway at Ordsall Lane, Salford, its total length being about a mile and three quarters and the latter, diverging from the South Junction at Castlefield, near Knott Mill, was laid in a tolerably straight line of about eight miles to Altrincham. The Act of Parliament authorising the construction of the railway, was passed on the 25th July, 1845, and under its provisions the Company was empowered to raise a capital of £400,000 (£123,333 by loans) for making the lines together 9 miles 30 chains long. Although projected as an independent company, almost the entire capital was subscribed by the Manchester and Birmingham (afterwards the London and North Western) and the Sheffield and Manchester (afterwards the Great Central) Railway Companies, the only shares in the hands of the public being a number allotted to the Earl of Ellesmere, whose interest in the swift packets then plying on the Bridgewater Canal, was expected

to be affected by the construction of the Altrincham line. These shares were later disposed of to the two Companies named, who thus became and still remain, sole owners of the line. As a condition of the shares being allotted to him, Lord Ellesmere undertook to discontinue the service of swift packets between Manchester and Broadheath from the day of the opening of the railway. Ground was first broken for the construction of the two lines at Castlefield, about six months after the passing of the Act. Subsequently, a number of causes operated to paralyse the works for a period of eighteen months, but in the end, all difficulties, financial and otherwise, were overcome; the necessary capital was supplied and the construction of the railway was rapidly proceeded with. The heaviest portion of the work was undoubtedly the South Junction line, the whole of which was carried by means of an arched viaduct over a number of land and water thoroughfares, in what was, even at that period, a densely populated district of Manchester. The terminus was reached at Altrincham, near to the present Stockport Road level crossings, just eight miles from Oxford Road, but the line was later on extended to the foot of the Downs, where its southern terminus was placed and known as Bowdon Station. The first train from Manchester on the opening day started at eight o'clock in the morning, but as at that time of the day, most people were travelling in the opposite direction, it was not fully occupied. The first train from Altrincham left at eight o'clock, and notwithstanding some delay at Stretford, reached Oxford Road Station within the hour. It carried 65 passengers, of whom 18 alighted at Knott Mill and 47 at Oxford Road. The next train, leaving Altrincham

at 8.40, was the express, consisting solely of first-class passengers; it carried 15 passengers and accomplished the eight miles in eighteen minutes. The third train from Altrincham, leaving at nine o'clock, reached Oxford Road, within the half-hour, and conveyed 40 passengers, although two fairly filled omnibuses had left Altrincham at eight o'clock, another at a quarter past, a fourth at a quarter to nine, and a fifth at nine o'clock. The public had had but scant notice of the opening of the line for traffic, and taking this fact into account, the trains throughout the day loaded very well. The first time-tables issued by the Company indicated that Greenwich time would be kept at all the stations. There were thirteen trains each way (about every hour) from eight o'clock in the morning until nine o'clock in the evening each week-day, except Saturday, when the last train left Manchester at ten o'clock and Altrincham at half-past nine in the evening. On Sundays there were nine trains from Manchester and eight trains from Altrincham. All the trains, except the express, which was first-class only, carried first, second and third-class passengers. There was but one express each way daily during the week and none on Sunday. This train left Altrincham at 8.40 in the morning and returned from Manchester at 1.15 in the afternoon, accomplishing the journey in twenty minutes. The time occupied by the ordinary trains was half-an-hour. The fares between the termini were, by express train (first-class only), 1s.; other trains, first-class, 10d.; second-class, 8d.; and third-class, 6d. The line developed rapidly and communication with other systems was opened up at Altrincham, where it joined the Cheshire Midland, and at



FIRST ENGINE ON THE ALTRINCHAM RAILWAY, 1849

Timperley, where access was obtained to the Stockport, Timperley and Altrincham railway by way of Skelton Junction, and to the London and North-Western Company's line to Liverpool, by way of Broadheath. A striking indication of the growth of the traffic dealt with by the Company is furnished by the fact that whereas when the line was opened, only 26 passenger trains ran over it daily, there were, half-a-century later, 146, of which 81 belonged to the M.S.J. and A. Railway Company, 31 to the London and North-Western Railway Company, and 34 to the Cheshire Lines Committee. When the Jubilee anniversary of the Company was celebrated in 1899, it was stated that during the previous twelve months over 5,000,000 passengers were booked from the various stations, irrespective of season ticket holders, of whom there were an immense number. Up to that time, the expenditure on the line amounted to £1,115,927 and the capital of the Company then stood at £1,060,000 with loans of £216,666.

The railway was electrified in 1931, and on April 14th of that year, the first train made a journey from Manchester to Altrincham on the new electric line, after working under steam traction for 82 years. A week afterwards, the service was opened to the public. The first train was driven from Altrincham by Mr. George Graver, of Hale Barns, who had been a locomotive driver since 1902. So far as English railways are concerned, this was the first occasion on which a complete line had been electrified and opened for full operation on one day. In previous transformations from steam to electric traction, the process had been carried out in sections. There are two electric sub-stations—at Old Trafford and

Timperley—and each has an installed capacity of 4,500 k.w. The overhead equipment represents the most modern example of direct railway electrification; it is divided into various sections in order that in the event of faults, they can be isolated with a minimum amount of disturbance to the train service. Two new stations which were introduced at Navigation Road, Altrincham, and Dane Road, Sale, were opened in July of the same year.

BOWDON WAKES RACES

The opening of the railway impressed itself in no place more strongly than in Railway Street. Up to that time the road was without a name even, and it was regarded as being a portion of the Downs, then an open expanse, made up for the most part of meadows and market gardens, dotted with farmsteads and cottages. Here the foundations of Railway Street were laid more than two hundred years ago. On the right-hand side, going towards the Downs, was built a row of thatched cottages, in one of which, more than a century since, Mr. John Worsley established himself in business as a maker of rush-bottomed chairs. The chairs made by Mr. Worsley were renowned for their excellence and we should not be surprised to hear that in many homes in the district are yet to be found examples of his work. Other simple trades were carried on in this row of quiet and sober-looking cottages, but they were mostly occupied by market-gardeners and others employed on the neighbouring farms. Next to the Woolpack Hotel was the bakehouse of Mr. John Slater. On the opposite side of the road was a green, known as Pinfold Brow, where the most conspicuous features were a wheelwright's shop, the forge of the village blacksmith, and the timber yard of

Mr. Albinson. Hale Moss then extended itself much beyond its present borders. It immediately adjoined the green, and it was but a stonecast to its brambles and gleaming gorse from Railway Street. On what we still know as Goose Green were several cottages, where, in the summer time, roses peeped in at the windows, and perfumed the air with their fragrance. The grey porches were mantled with ivy, and the gardens were gay with flowers, while the neatly-sanded walks testified to the care of the hands which tended them. Among the residents of Pinfold Brow were John Siddall, wheelwright; James Mort, hand loom weaver; and Isaac Gardener, market gardener. On the other side of Pinfold Brow was the butcher's shop of Mr. John Rowbotham, and between it and Ashley Road, then known as Thorley Moor Lane, lay several small houses.

The Pinfold occupied the spot which was chosen many years later as the site of Lloyd's Fever Hospital. Not far away on Hale Moss was the old cock pit, where once upon a time many a gory combat was fought to a finish. The great cock fighters of the period were Thomas and Joseph Barrett and Dicky Bate from Hale, under whose direction many stirring scenes were enacted. Pinfold Brow was also another favourite spot of the sturdy sons of Altrincham, and it was here that they frequently met after lingering long at the wine cup to settle sundry points of dispute.

Hale Moss was also the home of a sport of another kind. For many years a portion of the level turf was used as a racecourse, one part of which is the present Lloyd Street. In a newspaper, bearing the date of 1753, is an announcement of one of the race meetings of that year. It sets out that the races would take

place on the 11th day of July, "on a good course," and among the rules laid down is one to the effect that liquor would not be allowed to be sold by any person who had not subscribed two shillings and sixpence to the races. The meetings were abandoned many years ago, although in the names of Racefield and Racehill, two modern residences, we have a permanent memorial of the fact that they were carried on for some time in a field in Dunham Road.

We have been shown an old poster, printed by Mr. Charles Balshaw, in the year 1837. The placard has been pasted against an old press, in the printing office of Mr. Howard, Market Street, and in some places it has suffered injury, but the greater part has been preserved. It is ornamented with two woodcuts of a number of horses being driven over a course, and then sets out the following interesting announcements :—

"Bowdon Wakes Races

will be held on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, the 25th, 26th and 27th days of September, 1837, on which occasion an individual of unquestionable talent, William Bodkin, of Bowdon, Esquire, has kindly consented to give the aid of his valuable services (gratis) and under whose able direction the patrons of rural pastimes may depend upon a treat never yet surpassed. On Monday, the sports will commence with a race for a silver cup, value eight guineas, by horses of all ages, not thoroughbred; three years old, 7 stone; one year old, 8 stone 2lb.; five years old, 9 stone; six years and aged, 9 stone 4lb. Heats : 2 miles and a distance. After which a Wheelbarrow Race for five shillings, by lads of all ages, Ugly and Pratty, entrance one shilling. Three to start, or no race. The same day the feats of the

magic pole, entrance one shilling. A leg of mutton will be placed at the top of a pole for the youth that shall be fortunate enough to bear it away, the pole being previously well greased, to render the operation of climbing the more agreeable to the parties engaged. On the Tuesday, a hurdle race for a silver cup, value ten guineas, by horses of all ages, each to carry twelve stone. Two-mile heat, and to have six leaps to each heat. Hurdles, three feet six inches. Gentleman riders in Jockey Style. After which a Jack Ass race for a good old Cheshire cheese, the second best to have a good home-made loaf, a whopper ! Three to start or no race. Entrance one shilling. The winner to be sold for £100 (if demanded). The Clerk of the Course requests that all the jockies in this race will be at the starting-post with clean faces, and not only must the hair be well combed down, but the manes and tails of their donkeys likewise in order to keep up a dignity befitting the important event. By order, William Bodkin, clerk. To conclude with a Juggling Match in a forty feet roped ring for a new halter." The poster is damaged in this part, but as the word "grin" can be made out, it is evident that one of the attractions of the day was a grinning match. The sports announced for the third day are as follows :—

"On Wednesday, a silver cup, value ten guineas, will be given by—(damaged). Weights as above. Thoroughbred horses to carry seven pounds extra. After which a Cart Horse Gallop for a spon new bridle by Thorough Bred Uns. Three to start or no race. Heats, one mile and distance. To ride with a common cart bridle bare-backed. The evening will terminate with a series of Sports, such as Bolting Hot Dumplings for a wager, Hen Racing, &c., and a variety of other sports, too numerous to mention.

The horses to enter each day for the cups before twelve o'clock. No horse to run without permission from the proper authorities." Other parts of the placard have been damaged, and several lines have been torn away altogether, but from what remains it will be seen that the Hale Moss races were not of a very dignified kind.

From the *Guardian*, of September 27th, 1862, we extract the following description of a celebration of the period :—"Bowdon Wakes—On Sunday last, there was a very large influx of visitors from Manchester and other places. The railway trains brought large numbers, and the Manchester Road poured in a constant succession of omnibuses, drags, traps, and carts of all kinds, even luries swelled the procession, crammed as full as they could hold of men, women and children, suggesting the somewhat difficult problem how one poor horse could draw such loads from Manchester and back. The park was visited by large numbers, and the inns and public-houses of Bowdon and neighbourhood were as full as they could hold. On Monday, the Foresters' annual procession took place, as detailed in another column. At the bottom of Lloyd Street there was a collection of shows, rifle galleries, swing boats standings, &c., with their amount of noise and bustle. On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, horse and pony races were run on Hale Moss, and witnessed by very great crowds of people. Here were all the features of some of the great sporting meetings in miniature, the correct card, the bell rung for clearing the course, &c., the numbers of the horses exhibited after the race was won, and even a grand-stand was available at the low charge of one penny for each heat. The various 'events' seemed to excite as much interest as

those of a more ambitious character. One race had an unfortunate termination. A poor horse broke its leg, and came in on three legs, the other hanging loosely, a pitiable spectacle. The poor animal had to be killed at once."

Even in our own day Bowdon Wakes are still celebrated, a fact which shows that old customs linger long and die a hard death. For a long time, as has been shown, the wakes were held on Goose Green and on Pinfold Brow. They invariably took the form of a rude form of merry-making, in which itinerant shows, swing-boats and gingerbread stalls were the main feature. When Goose Green and Pinfold Brow were no longer available, a portion of Hale Moss became the rallying point, but as the ground was from year to year appropriated for building, the travelling showman was compelled to betake himself further afield and for some time the wakes were annually held in September on an open space near to the Linotype Estate at Broadheath, where for a few coppers you might have indulged in a whirl of excitement such as would have astonished the quiet villagers, who, a hundred years before, held their sports in a field on the Firs. Here it was customary to organise a variety of pastimes, which it is easy to believe were a source of interest to rural folk, whose visits to such large centres of population as Manchester were only paid at rare and long intervals. A common form of amusement were the foot races, in which we are told even women took their place and contested for prizes with so much vigour that in one of the official programmes the following rule was laid down:—"The same day a race for a good holland smock by ladies of all ages, the second best to have a handsome satin ribbon. No lady will be

allowed to strip any further than the smock before starting."

This was also the rude age of cock-fighting and bull-baiting. There were many noted cock-fighters in Altrincham and Hale, and the old cock pit near to the Pinfold in Altrincham did not disappear until the railway made it its prey. But Bowdon had a spirit that rose above cock-fighting. There the villagers supported the much more exciting sport of bull-baiting, and many a stirring spectacle has been witnessed in the ring which lay between Bowdon Church and the Griffin Hotel. Here the sport-loving folk of Bowdon turned their savage dogs upon the poor terror-stricken bull, which, fastened to a stout post, fought gallantly against its adversaries, until dragged to the ground. For this achievement the owner of the winning dog was proud to receive a prize in the shape of a brass pillar. Bowdon, to its credit be it said, gave up the pastime of bull-baiting as a result of the opposition of the Rev. James Thomas Law, who became vicar in 1815. He set his face earnestly against the cruelty and brutality of the sport and succeeded in arousing public opinion to so great an extent that its continuance became impossible.

GOOSE GREEN, RAILWAY STREET AND STAMFORD NEW ROAD.

Near to Goose Green was Smith's Brow, where might have been seen the shop of Mr. James Smith, bobbin-turner. Mr. Smith was also famous for his crops of early potatoes, which had a wide reputation in the markets as Bowdon Downs potatoes. It is said that Mr. Smith carried load after load on his head to



RAILWAY STREET ABOUT 1896

Manchester, and sold them for a shilling a pound. Another old resident of the green was Mr. Isaac Garner, a shoemaker, whose fine breeds of geese garnished many a Christmas table. In another cottage dwelt Mr. George Barlow, who made blacking on a modest scale, and spent Saturdays in delivering it to his customers in order that their shoes might be bright for Sunday, when they went to hear the sermons of Parson Leicester. The trade was subsequently carried on by Mr. John Hardy, who is described in a directory published about the year 1857 as a "blacking manufacturer," Chapel Street. Amid such surroundings as we have attempted to describe, Bowdon Station was built in 1849. The opening of the station caused a stir, and many of the cottages were converted into shops, while others were swept away entirely to make room for some of the shops which still remain.

For several years, Railway Street continued to develop as a centre of trade, although the closing of Bowdon Station, in 1880, changed its fortunes to some extent. But any stagnation that may have been felt was only of a temporary character, and it retained its popularity as a pleasant parade for morning shoppers. About 1895, a further development took place, when a portion of the site of the old railway station, which was divided from the roadway by a low brick wall with a stone coping, was covered by a long row of lock-up shops of one storey in height. These were soon tenanted and the street quickened into new life. As an indication of the growing value of the property in the neighbourhood, it may be mentioned that in 1904, a not more than moderately-sized hotel changed hands at £17,500. Perhaps the fact that there were in 1904 no fewer than four banks

in the street may be cited as a proof of its importance. Another striking change occurred in 1907, when tramway lines were laid down by the Manchester Corporation to link up Altrincham with the city. The tramway was opened on May 9th, 1907, and the first ponderous electric tramcar, with its freight of passengers from Manchester, made its slow way through crowds of cheering sightseers to the terminus at the foot of the Downs. The tramcars soon sprang into popular favour and they were used by thousands of passengers daily. The lines were leased to the Corporation by the District Council for a term of 23 years. On the expiration of the lease, however, a rival in the form of the motor omnibus appeared on the scene, and in 1931, the clanging tramcars which had served a useful purpose for so long, were superseded by a fleet of swifter and less noisy motor omnibuses. The last tramcar was run on the 6th June, 1931; the tram lines were soon afterwards taken up and the surface of the roads was restored to its original condition, a work which was hailed with general satisfaction.

The construction of Stamford New Road, about the year 1880, gave Railway Street direct access to the new Railway Station. To effect this improvement, several low-built cottages were demolished as well as the old Orange Tree Inn and the thatched Faulkner's Arms. Two modern hotels were built in their place on opposite sides of the new road. Faulkner's Arms retained the name by which it had been known for at least two centuries, while the Orange Tree Tavern blossomed into the Stamford Hotel. The land through which Stamford New Road was shaped, was mainly occupied by orchards and vegetable gardens, all of which are now covered with shops and offices.



Photo by

J. Ingham & Sons, Bowdon

STATION BUILDINGS, STAMFORD NEW ROAD

Probably the first shop to be built on the road was that of Mr. Thos. J. Farrell, now occupied by Messrs. Hawker and Co. It was followed by one on the opposite corner, built by Mr. S. Okell. Lower down the road, opposite the main entrance to the station appeared the private house, the surgery and the stables of Mr. W. H. Pugh, Veterinary Surgeon. Then Mr. James Cowsill, with an enterprise, that the future character of the road fully justified, built a large pile in yellow brick, near to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Bank. Others, who quickly perceived the growing advantages of the new road for business, were Mr. C. H. Skipper, Mr. Hugh Cawley, who erected several fine shops, and Mr. J. H. Brown, the builder of the Post Office and the adjoining block of handsome shops from the designs of Mr. John Macnamara, a well-known local architect. This wave of building was continued by Mr. G. W. Bonson, cabinet maker, Mr. J. Batchelor, and Mr. William Berry, and to-day there is not a single trace of the gardens which, as late as 1890, bordered both sides of the road. In 1905, Mr. J. H. Brown built an imposing block of property, adjoining Altrincham Station, which comprises a large number of shops and no fewer than eighty-four offices of a type and magnitude hitherto unfamiliar to Altrincham.

This bold and handsome block of property is shown in the accompanying photograph and may be taken as a typical example of the rapid progress Altrincham was making. Further away, in the same road, are the Jubilee Baths, built in 1901, in commemoration of the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. The scheme was begun in 1897, during the Mayoralty of Mr. F. R. B. Lindsell, who so actively interested himself in the memorial that he was able

to raise a sum of about £3,700 in subscriptions. Of this amount a sum of £700 was expended in public entertainments and the balance £3,052 was applied to the erection of the public baths. The total cost of the work was about £6,000, and the remainder of the money was provided by the District Council, in whose hands the property is now vested. A second swimming bath was added by the Council in 1909, together with eight private baths, at a cost to the Council of £4,483, while in 1933, a completely new filtration plant was installed. Since then, the street has made further development. Many shops have been erected, while one of the latest examples in modern enterprise is to be found in the bus station, with a fleet of omnibuses ready to take one to any and every part of the country. A little further away is the Altrincham Picture House, erected in 1913, by a local company of shareholders. Every available site in the road has thus been appropriated in less than thirty years, from the time the first brick was laid.

Let us now retrace our steps to Railway Street and Ashley Road. On the left-hand side of Ashley Road there stood, until about the year 1870, a pleasant-looking thatched house in the occupation of Mr. Hough, carrier. It was removed on the construction of Oxford Road from Ashley Road. Here also lived Mr. William Royle, boot and shoe maker, and a little higher up, on the same side were the cottages in one of which young Oswald Leicester established his Sunday School, in 1783. There was until about half a century ago a flight of wooden steps outside the cottage, leading to an upper room in which the school was held, but these have been removed and the entrance is now bricked up. The cottages are still standing. A row of cottages stood on the right hand



[[Photo by

J. Ingham & Sons, Bowdon

RAILWAY STREET ABOUT 1900

side of Ashley Road on the site of the present premises of the Union Bank of Manchester. These were built probably at the end of the eighteenth century, and they remained until 1876, when they were demolished to make room for shops. The house at the end nearest to Railway Street was for several years prior to its removal, occupied by Mr. J. B. Brierley, coach proprietor; the second was tenanted by Mr. Bowland, and the third by Mr. Sumner. A familiar feature at the gable end of the last house was a fine pear tree, whose snowy mantle of blossom in the early spring time was a picture to which all eyes were directed. Between the house and the narrow lane now known as St. John's Road, was a garden and a field forming part of the Downs.

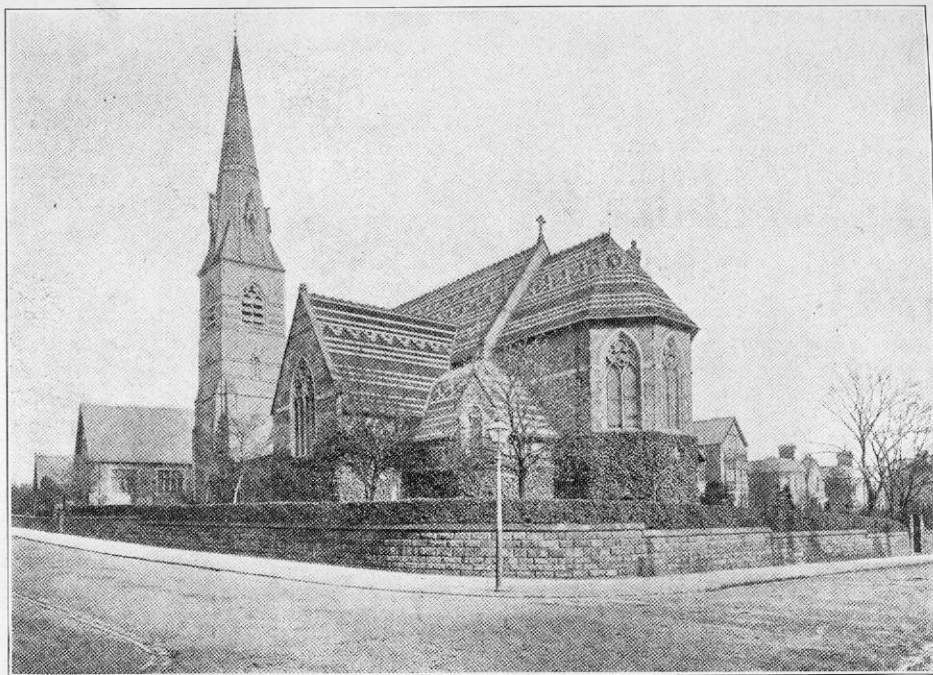
The site of St. John's Church was filled by the farm buildings of Mr. Ralph Pickstone. The shippens and stables were on the side of the road now occupied by the church and the house was immediately opposite.

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

St. John's Church was opened on the 14th December, 1866. Standing on an elevated site, its shapely spire gives a dignified appearance to Ashley Road. The style of architecture is what is known as "Early Decorated," and various kinds of stone have been employed in the construction of the building.

The schools, parish room, and vicarage, which adjoin, are built in a style to harmonise with the church, and the entire group, so tasteful and symmetrical in form, lends to the district an air of culture and dignity. Since the erection of the church, the population has rapidly increased, and on every side are to be found new streets and rows of houses, packed closely together. The pastoral features of the past have been

quite obliterated, and changes follow each other in such swift succession that, to most of us, the simple cottages and farmsteads of Thorley Moor Lane have become but a fading memory. The growth of the population in that part of St. John's parish described as Newtown, led to the establishment of a mission at a comparatively early period in the church's history. In 1888, the need for church extension became urgent, and after careful consideration the erection of the daughter church of St. Elizabeth's was resolved upon. The erection of the church was part of a general scheme of extension which included the building of St. Peter's, Hale, and St. Alban's, Broadheath. The difficulty of obtaining a site in St. John's parish, precisely in the neighbourhood where the church was most required, was a serious one at the outset. The population was dense and building sites were practically unobtainable. By the generosity of Mr. W. J. Crossley (afterwards Sir Wm. J. Crossley, M.P.), the obstacle was eventually removed. Mr. Crossley, who was one of the committee primarily interested in the scheme of extension, purchased nine cottages in Pownall Street, five of which he generously placed at the disposal of the committee. This put into their hands a capital site, upon which the present church of St. Elizabeth was built in 1890, from the designs of Mr. John Macnamara. The cottages were removed, and after providing for the church, sufficient space was left for a public road from Pownall Street into Newtown. Hitherto these two districts were isolated from each other, and the new road supplied a means of inter-communication, the necessity for which had long been recognised. The gift of the site by Mr. Crossley, valued at £750, was supplemented by a donation of £1,000 from the



From a photo by

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

J. Taylor Hughes

family of the late Mr. S. Lord, Oakleigh, Ashton-on-Mersey, and other subscriptions made possible the erection of a church which cost over £2,000.

The first vicar of St. John's was the Rev. F. Wainwright, M.A. Mr. Wainwright, who was born in London on the 16th June, 1837, was educated in Liverpool, chiefly at the Collegiate Institution now known as the Liverpool College. He passed through the Lower and Upper Schools, and in the summer of 1856, gained the Canning Exhibition, which enabled him to proceed to Trinity College, Cambridge, where in 1859 he obtained a scholarship with other prizes, and in 1860 he graduated in Classical Honours. He then took up an assistant mastership at his old college in Liverpool, and continued on the staff for four years. At the end of that time he decided to relinquish a scholastic career and undertook the curacy of Bowdon under Archdeacon Pollock. Mr. Wainwright had not been settled in Bowdon more than a year when a start was made with the erection of the new church of St. John the Evangelist, and the first incumbency was offered to him by the joint committee, who represented the existing parishes of the neighbourhood. He accepted the offer, and, in September, 1865, a regular service was begun in the British School by way of forming the nucleus of a congregation for the proposed new church, which was consecrated by Dr. Jacobson, Bishop of Chester, on the 14th December, 1866. With the subsequent development of the parish, Canon Wainwright was conspicuously identified, while in the public life of the town he took a share. Completing the full period of fifty years as Vicar of the Parish on October 15th, 1915, he shortly afterwards resigned the living and, for a few years, undertook the lighter duties of the small country parish of

Bollington, near Altrincham. His death took place suddenly in November, 1927, in his 85th year. On Thursday, November 10th, he had been calling on several friends in Altrincham during the course of the afternoon, and when walking over Hale Road railway bridge, in the direction of his residence, The Cottage, Broomfield Lane, Hale, he apparently had a seizure, and was seen to stumble and fall in the roadway. He was removed to his home and became unconscious and remained so until his death on Saturday, November 12th. The remains were laid to rest in the burial ground of Bowdon Parish Church, and a service at St. John's was conducted by the Bishop of Chester (Dr. Paget), who also officiated at the graveside.

The Rev. Napier Malcolm, who succeeded Canon Wainwright, was instituted on November 1st, 1916, and continued his duties until his death, after a prolonged illness on October 19th, 1921. The Rev. E. H. Hughes Davies, formerly Vicar of Rainow, was instituted as vicar on January 28th, 1922, and remained until December, 1930, when he left to take up the vicariate of Bridgwater, Somerset. The present Vicar, the Rev. Thomas E. Lee, Vicar of St. Stephen's, Flowery Field, Hyde, was inducted on February 20th, 1931.



COTTAGE IN ASHLEY ROAD (where first Sunday School in Cheshire was established)

CHAPTER XI
INSANITARY CONDITIONS AND A
PUBLIC INQUIRY

SO far we have confined our attention to a description of Altrincham in its first stages of physical growth, and have outlined the period when houses were built without oversight and without the least semblance of method or regularity, but in whatever place might suit the fancy. We must now diverge for a time in order to obtain some picture of the results of this crude and careless style of building. In 1831, the population had increased to 2,708, in 1841 to 3,372, and in 1851 to 4,488. The town was thus expanding, if not rapidly at least with certainty and with a clear indication of further advancement. Strange to say, however, little effort had been made by the Vestry and the Surveyors of Highways to provide a system of drainage, and as houses sprang up, many in congested courts and narrow alleys, the effect was alarming in the extreme. Sewage was turned into the road, where it remained until dried up by the sun or was washed away by heavy rains. In the cottages of the poor the standard of comfort was very low and they were often smoky and damp, with whitewashed walls and small ill-fitting windows. Bathrooms were almost unknown, and even those who could afford what was, at that time, a luxury, found the utmost difficulty in keeping their baths supplied with water, which was obtained from the public pumps and wells. The

death-roll from sickness caused by the deplorable insanitary conditions, increased with the growth of population every year and staid and sober townsfolk in their alarm began to consider the question seriously.

The Vestry accordingly instructed Mr. Isaac Turton to prepare a report which was presented to a meeting of the Sanitary Committee, on the 25th July, 1849. It was the handwriting on the wall, and its publication caused widespread alarm and reproach. Its main purport was that the greater part of the town, particularly cottage property, had no drainage and that typhus fever and dysentery were the direct result.

The issue of the report was immediately effective. A petition, signed by 155 ratepayers, was forwarded to the Local Government Board with a prayer that an Inspector might be sent to hold an official inquiry under the provision of the Public Health Act, 1848. Obviously, the aspiration of the ratepayers was to take advantage of the new Act, and obtain for the town efficient machinery for the management of local affairs, and the movement in that direction was conducted with a commendable amount of public spirit by a number of leading residents who realised the danger to which the health of the public was hourly exposed by reason of former indifference and neglect. The petition met with a speedy response, and a long and painstaking inquiry was conducted by Sir Robert Rawlinson, the famous Sanitary Engineer. The evidence presented to him more than confirmed the report of Mr. Isaac Turton. The great need of a water supply and a thorough system of house drainage were two of the vital points insisted upon. In one part of the town it was stated that there was

only one pump for about 150 houses, while it was complained that the quality of the water was not above suspicion. Complaints were also made of the irregular arrangements of house property generally, but, more particularly, in regard to cottages which were often in a foul condition. Some of the tenants, it was averred, kept pigs on the premises and as there was no system of drainage and a most imperfect form of pavement, the surface near the houses was foul and offensive to sight and smell. Matters were made worse by the fact that filth was trodden from the soddened earth outside and carried into the houses. The squalid state of affairs was worse in some parts of the town than in others and special mention was made of Hope Square, a court off Chapel Walks, which was said to be unpaved, undrained and in a filthy condition. In the centre there were open middens or pits, and these were full of the refuse of a year or more. Reproach was also cast on Chapel Square and Beggars' Square, both of which places were unpaved and without drainage. The Inspector was told by the official witnesses that there were 26 common lodging houses in the town, with an estimated nightly population of 546 vagrants and others, but the figure was frequently exceeded by overcrowding. These houses were described as being in an extremely dirty and unhealthy state. Altrincham apparently was a fertile breeding ground for the germs of disease and it became necessary to build a temporary hospital for fever patients who overflowed from the wards of the workhouse. Testimony was given by several doctors that typhus fever prevailed in the town every year and, not unfrequently, with great severity, as also did dysentery and other forms of sickness which originated almost always in

the unpaved, undrained and ill-ventilated squares and alleys inhabited by the working-classes, from which typhus fever, often of a very malignant character, spread to the better streets and affected the shopkeepers and others, and occasioning great alarm among all classes of the inhabitants. The estimated death rate was stated to be the rather staggering one of 29.54 per thousand of the population.



THE OLD MARKET PLACE 1890

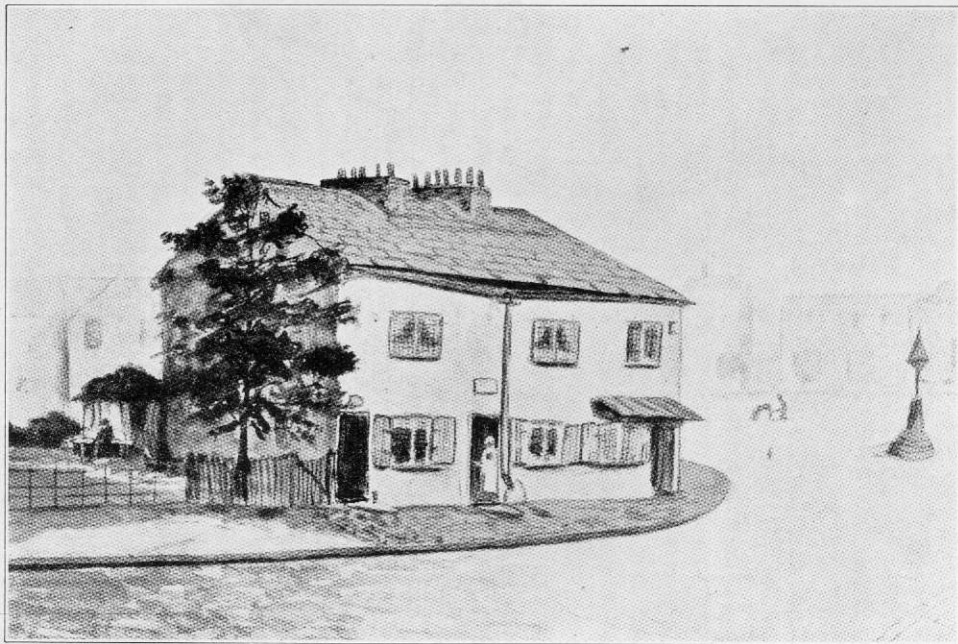
CHAPTER XII

THE LOCAL BOARD OF HEALTH

SIR Robert Rawlinson's report to the Local Government Board woke the town from its lethargy. Public composure was much upset by its shocking disclosures and everybody who could lent a hand in bringing about the formation of a Local Board of Health in 1851. The members, composing the first Board were :—Messrs. R. Broadbent (chairman), Samuel Barratt, Jesse Blew, Robert W. Bennett, Edward Joynson, Thomas Marsden, John Mort, W. Milnes Millington and William Warren. The Board acquired the powers of the Board of Surveyors, who were mainly responsible for the repair and improvement of the highways, as well as some of the duties of the overseers and the ancient Vestry. The town was then beginning to stretch out its arms, and the indications of growth, which began to manifest themselves upon the opening of the Manchester South Junction and Altrincham Railway offered ample scope for a spirited policy on the part of the new Authority. How much has been accomplished, by steady and persistent effort, may be gathered from a comparison of the town of to-day with the mis-shapen town of ninety years ago. From the narrow, ill-paved and badly-lighted lanes of those times, a great stride has been taken. Public and private enterprise has been fruitful of change, and in the more spacious thoroughfares of to-day, with architectural examples that bespeak a

flowing tide of prosperity, Altrincham has put on a new face and shaken off nearly all the traces of its original character. The disappearance of old landmarks is one of the penalties of the modern spirit of improvement, and upon the removal of some of the picturesque memorials of a past generation a feeling of regret not unnaturally arises. But changes were inevitable if Altrincham was to fulfil the destiny marked out for it as the centre of a residential district which embraced the green slopes of Bowdon, the leafy lanes of Hale, and the pastoral dales of Dunham Massey. To these fair prospects the opening of the railway gave Manchester a convenient means of access, and although the invasion has now deprived them of many of their rural beauties, it was doubtless the determining factor in moulding the future of Altrincham.

The Local Board immediately gave its attention to a scheme of efficient drainage, and as the first step raised a loan of £3,000. By the plan then adopted, the sewage was conveyed to Timperley Brook, but the method proved unsatisfactory. Complaints were constantly made, of the pollution of the brook, and the pressure for an altered scheme ultimately became so great that the Local Board was compelled to adopt measures less open to objection. The sewage was, therefore, diverted from Timperley Brook in 1869, and conveyed to Woodcote Farm, at Sinderland, which was taken on a lease of twenty years from the Trustees of the Earl of Stamford and Warrington. Here the irrigation principle was followed with so much success that on the expiration of the lease the freehold of the farm, comprising over 75 acres, was purchased for a sum of £11,000. Several years later an additional area of 75 acres was bought and Altrincham



COTTAGES AT THE FOOT OF THE DOWNS, 1800

thus acquired sufficient land to meet the requirements for a long time to come. Under the direct management of the Local Board and the Urban District Council, the operations at the Woodcote Sewage Farm have been attended with highly satisfactory results, and the expenditure on the important sewerage extensions undertaken by the Council and the purchase of the land has been more than justified. There has been a marked reduction in the death rate. For example, in 1933, it did not exceed 12.2 per thousand of the population, which is in striking contrast to the percentage of 29 in 1850. For this highly satisfactory state of affairs, considerable credit is no doubt due to the energetic action of the Council in the abolition of privy middens and the adoption of the water carriage system. The capital expenditure in respect of the privy conversions has amounted to £17,520 of which £9,320 has been provided out of revenue. There are now only 20 privies remaining in the district and these are gradually disappearing. The vigorous policy of the Council, in this work alone, has unquestionably had a material effect on bringing down the death rate and making the town a sweeter and more desirable a place of residence.

Most of the sewerage schemes, undertaken by the Local Board of Health and the District Council, as well as the construction of many new streets and numerous other public improvements, were carried out under the direction of Mr. John Stokoe, who, from 1870 until his retirement in December, 1905, held the dual offices of Clerk and Surveyor, and it is largely owing to his diligent and capable services that the town breathed a sweeter and purer air. After his retirement, owing to ill-health, Mr. Stokoe served the

District Council as consulting Clerk until his death on April 4th, 1906. Mr. Stokoe was succeeded on his retirement by his son, Mr. W. Stanley Stokoe, as Clerk and by Mr. H. E. Brown as Surveyor, under whose able direction the later public improvements initiated by the District Council have been carried out with a zeal and earnestness for which too much cannot be said. Mr. Stokoe retired from his position as Clerk in 1932, owing to illness, and he was succeeded by Mr. A. Glossop, the present Clerk. More of the Council's spirited and progressive work in giving the public wider and cleaner streets and in improving the aspect of the town generally, will be described in later chapters.

While engaged in the construction of a complete drainage system, the Local Board also gave attention to the question of a water supply. Up to this time, the inhabitants had to rely on the meagre flow of primitive pumps and open wells. One of the latter was in Lower George Street on the pavement opposite the present Free Library and upon what is now Victoria Street it bestowed the name of Well Lane, and to the adjacent thoroughfare it presented the designation which is still retained in "Springfield Road." There was also a copious flow of water from a spring on Hale Moss, and from this source, more than any other, it was hoped to obtain the future supply for the town. Numerous experiments were made with the object of testing the possibility of pumping the water to a tower which it was proposed to erect on the Downs, but on account of the hardness of the water it was decided to abandon the project. Other suggestions were under consideration from time to time, but a fear that the provision of water could only be made by adding seriously to the



THE MARKET HALL AND MARKET STREET, 1905

public financial burdens, paralysed the action of the Local Board. The courageous stroke that might have placed the ratepayers in possession of the public water supply was not made. Weak and timid counsels dogged the laggard steps of the Authority, and while it halted and hesitated, the opportunity was taken advantage of by private enterprise. In 1857, the North Cheshire Water Company was formed under the Joint Stock Companies Act of 1856. The company which was incorporated in 1864, obtained what amounted practically to an inexhaustible supply, from the mains of the Manchester Corporation, and they kept pace with the requirements not only of Altrincham, but of Bowdon, Hale, Timperley and Dunham Massey also, by carrying out important extensions as occasion arose. Early in 1897, the Company committed themselves to a further large expenditure, in order that a largely improved and increased supply might be at the command of a rapidly advancing district. Some years ago, the Company sold their undertaking to the Manchester Corporation from whom the town now obtains a direct and abundant supply.

THE NEW MARKET

As years went by and the population continued to grow steadily, the Butter Market was found to be much too small for the accommodation of its large and increasing body of patrons. A larger and more convenient hall, with wider outdoor space, became an imperative necessity, and the Local Board in an ambitious and enterprising spirit, decided that it was

the Authority upon whom the responsibility of providing it must rest. Negotiations were therefore opened with the Earl of Stamford and Warrington, who owned the Market Hall and collected the tolls, and as a result, the whole of the powers and privileges of the Earl were transferred to the Local Board for a thousand pounds. The Authority also undertook the erection of a new Market Hall in a more open situation. The site ultimately fixed upon was at the corner of Shaw's Lane and Market Street, a neighbourhood much improved in recent years by the removal of several old and dilapidated buildings. The Market Hall was built at a cost of £5,133. It was opened in 1880, and judging by the busy and animated aspect of the Market every Tuesday since, one may conclude that it rejoices in a large measure of popularity. With the removal of the business, the Old Market Place was shorn of some of its former glory, but no regret was felt when it meant the closing of the dismal vault underneath the Town Hall in which the butter sellers once found shelter. With one accord the country traders willingly abandoned their old ground and gladly exchanged their cramped quarters for the ampler space and the greater facilities provided by the new market.

Under the fostering care of the District Council, the Market made long and rapid strides, and in the year 1930 the whole of the outside space was boldly enclosed and covered in with a glass roof, supported on light iron pillars. Various other improvements were made in the main building, with the result of adding very materially to the general convenience. The limits originally set to the Market were soon outgrown, and in 1932, the Council resolved to open the



Photo by

Jas. L. Brown, 3, Stockport Road, Ardwick

THE NEW MARKET PLACE IN 1900

Market for business on a Saturday as well as on Tuesday. This course of action met with immediate success and the Council in thus increasing the usefulness of the market and in extending its popularity as a place of business of wider range and diversity, found an ample reward in the substantial revenues which have since been forthcoming. The covered market comprises 2,080 square yards, with 154 stalls, and the uncovered portion 845 square yards, with 48 stalls. From 1930, when the annual income from the rents of stalls was £3,884, the receipts advanced in 1934 to £4,889.

While these changes were rapidly transforming the central part of the town, others of no slight moment were shaping themselves on the outskirts. Probably the most striking and significant was made by the opening of Stamford Park in 1880. The site, comprising a total area of sixteen acres, was conveyed by a deed of gift to the Local Board by the Earl of Stamford. It then formed part of the common land of Hale Moss, a favourite camping-ground of several bands of gipsies who scratched a bare livelihood by peg and basket-making. Some of their tents were still to be found on the Moss until 1890. The dedication of the land to the public had the direct result of benefiting Altrincham by the possibilities it afforded of effecting a desired improvement in the amenities of the neighbourhood. The ground was cleared, the swamps were filled up, and the whole space was enclosed and laid out with a taste that has deservedly won the highest admiration. The total cost of the park to the rate-payers, including some unfortunate legal proceedings, which ensued after the laying out of the site, was £7,587. Pains have been taken to enhance the

attractive aspect of the Park in every possible way, and the spaces appropriated for the purposes of bowls, cricket and football as well as open-air bathing, are singularly popular.

THE RECLAMATION OF HALE MOSS

For many years before the opening of the Park, the claim of the Trustees of the Earl of Stamford and Warrington to the ownership of Hale Moss, was strongly disputed by the public, and they openly resented the action of the Trustees in exercising the power to give away any portion of it.

For the complete account of Hale Moss and the many changes in its fortunes during a century or more, we must now turn to the story contributed in 1908, to the *Altrincham, Bowdon and Hale Guardian*, by Mr. Alfred Tarbolton, the first Chairman of the Hale Urban District Council. Originally, the Moss covered no less than 60 acres and stretched from Hale Low to Railway Street. The boundary between Hale and Altrincham cut through the centre from north to south in the shape of a dog's hind leg. Only 32 acres were actually in Hale, so that as far as the remainder of the land was concerned the name was a misnomer. Grove Lane turned up into Hale Low and Moss Lane was but a rude, rough bridle-way. Where the runlet once flowed from a roadside pipe, just past the sweet-rush beds, a boring was made in 1853-4, with the intention of providing the township with water, but the triassic rocks, into which it was sunk, proved too hard for the projectors, and they made terms with the North Cheshire Water Company instead. Stamford Park Road preserves the line of a footpath leading to Pinfold

Brow or Goose Green, as the south-west extremity of the Moss was called, and another led from the junction of that road with Moss Lane through what is now Stamford Park, to the end of Mayor's Road.

The erection of the Gas Works necessitated a road thence from Altrincham of a more finished character. This was made in 1847, the year after the Altrincham Gas Company was registered for the purpose of purchasing the gas-producing plant of Mr. George Massey near the Unicorn Hotel, as described in another chapter. Several artificial channels had already been dug across the Moss for drainage purposes, and the formation of one of these a century before, is thus related in "*Harrop's Manchester Mercury*" for the 10th March, 1741 :—
"Manchester, March 3rd. We hear from Altringham that last Saturday night, a new cutt or sluice was finish'd upon Hale Moss, and a small Boat sail'd down it, the whole of this work being undertaken and compleated by Mr. Alderman Taylor, who is a person well skill'd in Waterworks. As the Boat sail'd down the Sluice the Inhabitants of the Town (who were assembl'd for the purpose) fir'd in platoons and were commanded and exercis'd by Captain Newall. So soon as the Firing was over, each Person drank a Bumper of Success to the Arms of the British Nation and to that Navigation."

When the Railway, with its terminus at Goose Green was made, portions of the Moss, amounting to about three acres, were sold by Lord Stamford, in 1848 and 1852, and some additional parts were enclosed near Denmark Street. This action excited the resentment of the populace who, headed by a local solicitor of the name of Cluley, caused a great disturbance and they pulled up the fences. The Earl

however, continued to sell off plots to builders and from that time until 1902, the alleged rights of the public over the Moss formed the subject of heated controversy in the course of which, a good deal of wild and irresponsible language was used both in the local Press and from public platforms.

As Mr. Tarbolton points out, the only persons who have a legal right of interest in a common, are the lord of the manor as owner of the soil, and those individuals who are entitled to rights of common. Now Hale Moss was admittedly a waste, lying within the manors of Hale and Altrincham, of which the Earl of Stamford was lord and, therefore, owner of the soil. Rights of common in the Moss, that is, of taking some part (as distinguished from the whole) of any natural product, might have been gained (*a*) by express grant, (*b*) by custom, that is habitual usage which had become established as the general mode of action prevailing in the community, or (*c*) prescription, that is, immemorial usage of a personal as distinguished from a popular character. And just as rights might have been acquired by continuous usage, so they might have been lost by long disuse, or the disappearance of the product in respect of which the rights were exercised.

There is evidence that in the middle part of the nineteenth century, the Moss was extensively used for grazing cattle, horses, donkeys, ducks and geese, by the inhabitants of Altrincham and Hale without hindrance and free of charge; that the boundary between the townships was not defined by any fence, but that the whole area was used indiscriminately; that gorse and turf were taken away in large quantities—the former being used by bakers for heating their ovens—and that anyone who was so-minded



HALE MOSS : NATURAL STATE

This swamp has been drained and is now covered by the shirt-making factory of Messrs. Bannerman & Co., Ltd.

could, and did, freely cut a load of gorse or sods without interference. But rights of common can only exist in certain defined persons or classes of persons, and not in such a nebulous and fluctuating body as "inhabitants," "ratepayers" or "householders."

By Hamon's Charter, those of the inhabitants of Altrincham who were burgesses, were expressly granted common of pasture and heath turbary within the boundaries of Doneham, Altringham and Tymperleigh, saving to the baron and his heirs, his inclosures, and also the right to inclose Sundreland, whose association with Timperley in the Charter and other public records, and with Northenden and Baguley in Domesday Book, is a strong proof that the locality intended, is that shown in Gough's edition of Camden's *Britannia* (1805), and again in Fowler and Greenwood's map of Cheshire (1819), and again in Swire and Hutchings' map (1828), as Sunderland Green in the south-east corner of Timperley township, and that Sir Robert Rawlinson in his report of 1851, which led to the formation of the Altrincham Local Board of Health, and Professor Tait, in his *Mediaeval Manchester*, are both mistaken in identifying it with Sinderland "the low land between Dunham and Carrington Moss."

Apart from these rights in the burgesses of Altrincham, there is no satisfactory proof of commonable rights at all. But, assuming that there were, experience teaches that the profit of cattle kept on enclosed land far exceeds that derived from such as are pastured on wastes, and that where land once held by numerous petty tenants in a purely agricultural locality becomes accumulated in

comparatively few hands in the neighbourhood of a rising town, the practice of pasturing on a waste automatically falls into desuetude. Again, the introduction of coal in such a locality removes the necessity or desire for using gorse and turf for fuel, and the drainage of a waste tends to diminish the quantity and quality of peat. In the middle of the last century there was, undoubtedly, good pasturage and excellent water on the Moss, but the quality of the grass rapidly deteriorated, and the exercise of the privileges gradually declined, so that by the end of the seventies it had been practically abandoned to vagrant gipsies.

The down-grade process was described by Mr. Robert Burgess at the dinner to celebrate the opening of Stamford Park. "As time went on," he said, "the gorse disappeared, and with the gorse, the geese and a good many other things. The Moss served as the battle-ground for dogs and men, and what with men fighting, women quarrelling, girls crying, boys shouting, dogs barking, donkeys braying and geese screeching, it was a pretty bedlam. There were a number of dangerous pits filled with stagnant water, or fever beds, which often served as receptacles for dogs, cats and rats with sundry other animals, both dead and alive, that I have neither time nor inclination to name. These lay festering in the sun, polluting the air and spreading their dark and deadly influence all around, and thus endangering the health of the public."

But although the general public cannot acquire a right to wander over a waste at their own sweet will, yet if the owner of the soil tacitly permits them to cross it in a defined track for a certain length of

time, the law will presume the dedication of a way to them. So it has never been denied that the public had acquired such an easement over the bridle-way and footpaths across the Moss. And the law goes further still. It allows customary, as distinguished from prescriptive, rights in the nature of easements to be claimed by the inhabitants of particular places over village greens and kindred spaces for the purposes of sport and recreation. It is a matter of common knowledge that on the Moss for many years there was a cock-pit half-way down what is now Denmark Street, and a racecourse higher up, and that cock-fighting, men-fighting, racing, eel-spearing, and all kinds of sport were carried on, that religious camp-meetings and other outdoor assemblies were held and that lectures were delivered. In fact, it was open and free to the general public, whether inhabitants of Hale or Altrincham or not; but how far, if at all, it partook of the nature of a village green, and how far, if at all, its uses for the purposes named gained for such inhabitants a quasi-easement for sport and recreation, is more than doubtful.

The vestry minute-books of Altrincham are silent on the point, and those of Hale contain one entry only—a resolution passed on the 25th March, 1855, in the following terms:—"That the ratepayers of Hale agree to give over to the Earl of Stamford all the real and presumed rights which we have as ratepayers in Hale Moss on the following conditions, that his Lordship shall keep open and maintain in good repair the roads now existing, or any other road or roads which may hereafter be made on the said Moss, and that the said roads shall be kept and repaired from time to time at his Lordship's own cost without any charge on the township of Hale."

It is thus plain that these ratepayers regarded the means of access over the Moss as of greater importance than any rights of general user, but as "ratepayers" they could have no rights of common, and even if they had customary rights for sport or recreation, the resolution would not bind their successors. There were no other rights over Hale Moss which could be possessed by the ratepayers of Hale, and the resolution apparently accomplished nothing, and was valueless.

It is to the credit of Lord Stamford that he never sought to shirk the issue, and that he at length boldly applied under the Inclosure Act, 1845, for the inclosure and allotment of the Moss. On the 20th May, 1862, a public inquiry was opened at the Unicorn Hotel, Altrincham, by Mr. J. J. Rawlinson, and he afterwards proceeded to the Moss, where some forty persons gave their names as claiming commonable rights. Unfortunately, the proceedings were abortive, and, in the books of the Board of Agriculture, are merely marked "abandoned," the reason for which has been variously given. One story is that the Earl's agent was dissatisfied with Mr. Rawlinson's declaration that he should base his apportionment on the original area of the Moss, irrespective of any sales off, leaving the Earl to settle with the purchasers as best he could, and also that he should allot ten acres from the choicest part of the Moss for public recreation. Another tale is that only one claimant, a man named Barratt, could substantiate his claim, and that he was compensated by the grant of a commensurate plot. It is certainly strange that, although the Earl continued to sell off building plots, no action was taken by any claimant. No one seems to have treated the alleged



Photo by

Jas. L. Brown, 3, Stockport Road, Ardwick

LAKE IN STAMFORD PARK

existence of commonable rights in a serious spirit, and future discussion was confined to health and recreation.

At a meeting of the Altrincham Local Board in 1866, Mr. Joseph Gaskarth moved that a recreation ground was necessary for the town, and indicated the Moss as a convenient site, but difficulties were successfully raised. In 1869, the project was revived, only to be rejected at a stormy ratepayers' meeting. It took definite shape in 1878, when Lord Stamford offered, through Mr. John Siddeley, the then Mayor, about eight acres for a public park and recreation ground. This the Board gratefully accepted, and in August of the following year, the offer was enlarged, first to twelve acres, and finally to sixteen. The park was formally opened on the 23rd October, 1880, by Mr. Gaskarth, who then combined the offices of Mayor and the chairman of the Local Board. There was a grand procession and between three and four thousand people stood round him at the flagstaff. A banquet in the evening, at the Old Town Hall, was attended by about 150 of the principal inhabitants, and every speech was full of the most fulsome and effusive praise of his Lordship, for his munificence. "Sixteen acres of land in any portion of the kingdom," said the Chairman, Mr. Gaskarth, amidst thundering applause, "is a magnificent gift, but sixteen acres of land in Cheshire, and near a town like Altrincham, must be acknowledged to be most valuable, and Lord Stamford must have the full credit of having conferred a great benefit upon the town." There can be no doubt that the gift was generously accepted as a final settlement of any public claims to the Moss and it

was never contemplated that there should be any further friction on that score.

The remainder of the Moss quickly assumed an increasingly degraded aspect. Frequent debates took place at the meetings of the Altrincham Rural Sanitary Authority, punctuated by reports from Dr. Fox, the Medical Officer, and from committees, who visited the spot. The difficulty was to fix responsibility. A great deal of objectionable tipping took place, and on the 31st July, 1888, the dead body of a child was found in a heap of ash-pit refuse. A fortnight later, the question of the Moss cropped up incidentally, at an inquiry held at the Court House, by an Inspector on behalf of the Charity Commissioners, under the Municipal Corporations Act, 1883, to ascertain whether any property belonged to Altrincham which could be applied for the public benefit. Many prominent local men attended, but the evidence all went to show that the rights of common, granted by Hamon's Charter, even if applicable to Hale Moss at all, were no longer exercisable by the burgesses, but had fallen into disuse, that even if still exercisable they were worth nothing, for there was no land upon which they could be properly exercised, and that the sixteen acres given for the park were more than equivalent to what would have been allotted to the public on an inclosure award. No one even attempted to substantiate a right over the Moss, and the Inspector plainly stated that mere ownership of property would not confer it.

In 1892, the Gas Company promoted a Bill to increase their capital, and for other purposes which involved the laying of a tramway from the railway sidings along Moss Lane to the Gas Works, and the

construction of what the *Guardian* at the time, designated "a wide and convenient road in place of the existing rude and rough track across the muddy Moss." Hitherto, the "track" had been repaired by the Race Committee, the brickmakers and other private individuals for their own conveniences; but on the 3rd March, 1893, the Company agreed with the Highway Board that for a payment of £250, the latter should make the road, as agents for the Company, as a matter of convenience, and not qua highway authority, and without responsibility for future maintenance.

On the 7th of June, in the same year, the Rural Sanitary Authority resolved that steps be taken for acquiring a lease of the Moss under the Allotments Acts, 1887, at the expense of the Hale township, but the overseers called a meeting in opposition, and an almost unanimous resolution of protest was passed. The Sanitary Authority, therefore, proposed to abandon the idea, but on the remonstrance of Dr. Fox decided to ascertain first what arrangement could be made with the Stamford Trustees. When it was found that they required £20 rent for 20 acres, and the removal of any allotment at 28 days' notice, the terms were considered entirely prohibitive.

The condition of the Moss was again discussed by the Rural Sanitary Authority on the 1st August, 1894, when Dr. Fox stated that the respective owners should be compelled, if possible, "to rail in their respective portions, and thus remove a continually increasing amount of disgusting defilement, which could be described as nothing less than an atrocious scandal," an opinion endorsed by Mr. J. McKenzie, the Inspector of Nuisances, who said that "there

were many further complaints of slaughtering horses and cows thereon, and the unprotected state of the Moss was an invitation and an encouragement for such work to go on." A notice was thereupon served on the Stamford Trustees "to protect the land by having the same fenced in with a suitable fencing," with which demand they forthwith proceeded to comply. But directly they did so, there was another outcry, and as soon as the Local Government Act, 1894, had come into operation a meeting took place, between the three newly-created bodies, the Altrincham Urban District Council, the Bucklow Rural District Council, and the Hale Parish Council, at which a joint Hale Moss Committee was appointed to consider the improvement of the Moss, and the prevention of nuisances, and also to formulate a scheme for keeping it as an open space for the benefit of Hale and Altrincham.

On instituting inquiries, the committee were unable to ascertain that there were any rights of common in the Moss, and satisfied themselves that there were no such rights capable of being enforced or regulated by any public authority. They then approached the Stamford Trustees, who received them in a friendly and sympathetic spirit. While stoutly maintaining their absolute ownership of the Moss, free from any such rights or easements, as had been claimed, they expressed their desire to help the Councils to put and keep it in a proper sanitary condition. They pointed out, however, that as Trustees they could not give anything without receiving something in return; and ultimately an agreement was entered into, on the following lines. Lying between Hale Road and the Moss, in the township of Hale, was a quantity of valuable building

land belonging to the trustees, which they were unable to develop, because of its northerly fall, and the consequent impossibility of draining it by natural means into the Hale Sewerage system. In consideration of their being allowed to drain this land through the Altrincham sewers, the trustees were to convey to the Altrincham Council, nearly four acres at the easterly end of the park to extend it in that direction, and over two acres at the corner of Moss Lane and Gas Lane for the benefit of the inhabitants of Altrincham, and the whole extent of the Moss, north of Moss Lane, from the last-mentioned plot eastwards, consisting of over fourteen acres to the Hale Parish Council, for the benefit of the inhabitants of Hale, subject to such terms as to the reception and treatment of the sewage as might be agreed between the owners of the lands and the Altrincham Council.

An elaborate deed, embodying this agreement, was prepared and submitted to the Parish Council for execution, but it was then discovered that a clause had been inserted providing for the payment by the Rural Council to the Altrincham Council of an annual sum per house built, equivalent to the Altrincham General District rate for the time being, such annual sum to be a special charge on the entire township of Hale. The rate at that time was 2s. 7d., in the £, and was destined to rise, and the Parish Council deemed the demand so extravagant that it turned its attention to the possibility of the Rural Council itself dealing with the sewage by means of Shone's pumping system. The Rural Council was converted to the opinion that this could be satisfactorily achieved at a very much cheaper rate, and the consideration for the

conveyance of the Moss land vanished into thin air and the whole scheme went to pieces.

With a view of settling the vexed question of public rights, as far as Altrincham was concerned, the Stamford Trustees in November, 1899, conveyed to the Council 1a. 2r. 8p., being so much of the plot at the corner of Moss Lane and Gas Lane as lay within the urban district, for a cash payment of £50, free from restrictions, except a veto on chemical works or public nuisances. The Hale Urban District Council, which held its first meeting on April 9th, 1900, had not long been in existence before it found it necessary to investigate the alleged public rights over the Moss, and after careful deliberation, entered into an agreement of compromise with the Stamford Trustees, which was sealed in October, 1901, and is briefly to the following effect. The Trustees sold to the Council three acres lying between Moss Lane and the Gas Works for £96 15s., and 6.970 square yards of land in Ashley Road, lying between the Girls' Home and the New Farm, at a perpetual chief rent of £14 10s. 4d., per annum. Both plots were to be used for public purposes, and on the Moss plot, a refuse destructor might be erected, with a chimney, not exceeding 50 feet high. Sufficient buildings were to be maintained on the Ashley Road site to secure the chief rent. The Trustees undertook to make the footpaths, kerbs and channels of Moss Lane and Stamford Park Road, adjoining their property, and the Council agreed to make the roadway to the extent of 24 feet between the channels in Moss Lane.

The drainage question still remained undisposed of, and the Altrincham Council was asked if it could not moderate the way-leave rent, which was considered

so excessive by the old Parish Council. Certain of the Altrincham ratepayers had never given up the idea of re-opening the abortive negotiations of the old Hale Moss Committee, and they induced their Council to make overtures to the Stamford Trustees with that object. The Trustees received the Council in their usual courteous manner and, in final satisfaction of all possible claims and grievances of the people of Altrincham in respect of the Moss, the Trustees sold to the Council for £500 a plot of land in its own district called Pollitt's Field, lying between the plot already purchased by the Council and the Gas Works, and also ten acres of land in Hale skirting the northerly side of Moss Lane, and being part of the fourteen acres which, under the abandoned scheme, would have gone to the old Parish Council. One portion of the Moss conveyed to the Altrincham Council was subsequently let to the Altrincham Association Football Club, and another portion to the Altrincham, Hale and District Allotments' Society the purpose of the Council being to preserve the land as an open space for all time. The conveyance was sealed by the Altrincham Council on the 1st April, 1902, and in the following September, the Council entered into an agreement with the Hale Council to take its sewage from the north watershed on the following basis :—When the sum of £350 was reached by a rate of 10d. in the £, that was to be the maximum payment until a rate of 9d. in the £ would produce £350, when the payment was to be 9d. in the £, and when the sum of £450 was reached by a rate of 9d. in the £, that was to be the maximum payment until a rate of 8d. in the £ would produce £450, when the payment was to be 8d. in the £, and so continue on all property

then erected or thereafter to be. The proposed pumping scheme was then definitely abandoned. This amicable termination of a dispute of seventy years' standing, gave general satisfaction and it was agreed on every side that the Trustees of the Earl of Stamford and Warrington had acted with the utmost consideration to all parties interested in the matter.

After the settlement, the Moss was drained and developed for building and before many years had elapsed new roads were constructed, rows of houses were built, together with two large Council Schools, while over one of the deepest swamps which was cleared away, the walls were reared of the shirt-making factory of Messrs. Bannerman and Co., Ltd.

FIRST HOUSING SCHEME

After the opening of the park, there was a rapid development of the district in its vicinity and an agglomeration of houses soon covered the open spaces. The need for more houses became very urgent in 1905 and 1906, owing to the increase of population, and as private enterprise was apparently declining, the District Council took the matter into careful consideration and directed its Surveyor, Mr. H. E. Brown, to prepare a plan for the erection of a number of workmen's dwellings, close by Stamford Park, on a plot of ground, already in its possession, in Urban Road, which had been reclaimed from Hale Moss. Mr. Brown brought considerable enthusiasm to bear on the task entrusted to him and he was successful in producing a scheme which met with immediate approval. It comprised a plan for 26



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The Altrincham Urban District Council

THE MECHANICS' INSTITUTE, VICTORIA STREET

houses at a cost of £4,260, and the entire project was eventually completed in 1908, under the direct supervision of Mr. Brown. Compared with the schemes carried out by the Council in later years, it is perhaps of small proportions, but, as an early example of the new style of cottage architecture, it is in every sense admirable and many other authorities have not been afraid to imitate it.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY, MUSEUM AND THE "JOHN NEWTON" ART GALLERY

Under the Public Libraries Acts, a Public Library was established in 1892. Its foundation was largely aided by the enlightened and spirited action of the Directors of the Literary Institution, whose property, which then consisted of a large public hall, library, newsroom and classrooms, was of the probable value of £4,000. Recognising that the possibilities of its usefulness would be largely increased by the adoption of the Libraries Acts, the Directors generously acceded to an invitation to transfer it to the management of the Local Board.

The annals of the old Literary Institution form an interesting page in the history of Altrincham. Its first home was in a small house in Well Lane (now Victoria Street), of which we give a picture on the opposite page. In this unpromising place it began its work in 1847. On the survey of the township of Altrincham, made for Mr. C. E. Cawley in 1852, by Mr. John Newton, the building is described as the "Mechanics' Institute." The prospectus of the band of young and energetic men who launched the scheme, stated that the object was "by means of a well-selected library, a reading or news room, lectures and evening classes,

to supply to the young men of the neighbourhood opportunities of mental cultivation and improvement at a cheap rate; at the same time that it affords to the adult inhabitants a rational and agreeable mode of spending their leisure hours."

For nearly five years the cottage in Victoria Street was used with so much success, that the directors conceived the idea of providing the members with a building of their own. Accordingly, in 1852, premises were erected on the site of the present Public Library at a cost of £800, and the name was changed to that of the "Literary Institution." A lecture hall was added in 1866, at a further cost of £800, and the whole of the money was raised by public subscription. The old hall was destroyed by fire in November, 1878, but the damage was repaired in the following year. Until the year 1892, the directors maintained a lending library, a news room, and various educational classes. On the adoption of the Public Libraries' Acts in 1892, the directors, as we have said, acceded to the request of the Local Board to transfer the whole of the property to the town, and on acquiring the premises the Local Board acted in a liberal spirit. The Technical Instruction Act was adopted, and a rate was levied for the establishment of further classes. They were assisted by a grant of £486 from the Cheshire County Council and some private subscriptions, and with this to help them they decided upon an important extension. The adjoining land with its cottages was purchased and cleared, and here were built the Lending Library and Reference Department, News Room and Technical School, while, at the other end, the large Public Hall was extended and improved. The enlarged premises were opened on the 5th May, 1894, but pending their

enlargement, the library was carried on in a temporary building now used as a home for the nursing staff of the Altrincham Provident Dispensary and Hospital in Market Street. The building, which was then known as the Oddfellows' Hall, had been used for many years by the Stamford Lodge of the Manchester Unity Order of Oddfellows and before that by the Altrincham Building Society. The total cost of the project was about £6,000, of which a sum of £5,100 was raised by a loan on the rates.

On the passing of the Education Act, 1893, the Technical School was transferred to the Education Committee of the Cheshire County Council under an agreement with the Altrincham Urban District Council. It was managed by a joint committee, consisting of representatives of the Administrative Sub-Committee for Education, and the Councils of Altrincham, Bowdon, Hale and Bucklow. The Technical School was carried on with highly satisfactory results until 1923, when the classes were transferred to the Navigation Road Evening Schools where, in 1935, there were nearly 400 Students in regular attendance.

In 1927, the Council realised that the Library's resources had become inadequate to meet the growing demands upon them and instructed the Library Committee to prepare a plan for the extension of the premises. While the question was under consideration, a generous friend of the institution offered to contribute £1,000 towards the cost of a new Lending Library, which gave the movement just the impetus it needed. The offer was accepted by the Council, and immediate steps were taken to provide the necessary enlargement. The plans for the extension were prepared by Mr. John Cocker, and the

contractors were Messrs. Martin Stone and Son. The total cost was £3,200. It is in part a memorial to the late Mr. John Newton, to whose exertions the local adoption of the library movement was mainly due. The extension was formally opened on May 19th, 1928, by the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres.

About the year 1898, a Museum was established on the upper floor of the Central Library, largely as the result of the personal interest of Major Harry Pollitt, a son of Sir William Pollitt, who made many notable gifts, which formed the nucleus of what has since grown into a diversified and valuable exhibition. Other gifts followed, among them being a collection of Egyptian antiquities, presented by the late Sir William Cunliffe Brooks, and a fine collection of British birds' eggs, given by the late Mr. John Hillkirk. In 1934, the Council decided to establish an Art Gallery, to provide circulating art exhibitions. Accommodation was specially provided in the Central Library premises and the "John Newton Art Gallery" was opened by the Earl of Stamford, on October 1st, 1934.

The present Library system comprises the Central Library, and two part-time branch libraries, while the following departments are in active operation :—Adult Lending Library, Reference Library, a general Newsroom, and a separate Ladies' Reading Room, separate Children's Library and Reading Room, and a Library Lecture Hall opened in 1934. A branch library was opened in 1931, for the convenience of readers on the Council's estate at Oldfield. In 1933, Miss Florence Beckett retired from the position of Librarian, on the completion of 40 years' service, and she was succeeded by Mr. W. G. Bosworth, deputy Borough Librarian and curator of



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H. Wilkinson, 13, Ashfield Road, Altrincham

CENTRAL LIBRARY, MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

Burton-on-Trent. The Children's Library, which was opened in 1928, contains about 3,000 books, specially chosen for young readers and over 30,000 volumes are issued every year. Winter lectures are a notable feature of the library work, and they were attended by some 6,000 children during the 1934—5 session. "The Florence Beckett" Lecture Hall was officially opened on February 15th, 1934, by Mr. Thos. Clayton, then Chairman of the District Council. The room has seating accommodation for 120 persons and is equipped with electric lantern and screen, an illuminated speaker's reading pedestal and a speaker's dais.

When the Library was first opened in 1892, there were but 4,000 volumes on the shelves. This number has now grown into 29,000. By agreement, the residents of Bowdon are also served by the Altrincham Library, on payment of an annual sum of £90, and a part-time branch for the issue of books is provided in Bowdon. There are now over 6,000 borrowers on the books of the Library, and in 1934—5, the total number of books issued was 169,288. It may be added that the Public Hall, which is a wing of the Central Library, Museum and Art Gallery, is licensed under Act of Parliament for singing, dancing and dramatic performances. The main hall is 76 feet by 36 feet, and has tip-up seating for 500 persons and a well-equipped stage. All that we have thus briefly outlined has developed from the seed sown in 1847, in the little "Mechanics' Institute" in Well Lane.

THE CEMETERY AND SOME PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

The Cemetery in Hale Road, in the adjoining township of Hale, was constructed by the Local Board at a cost of £9,189, and was opened on

November 21st, 1894. The site, comprising some ten acres of land, was tastefully laid out and the attractive aspect of the grounds was enhanced by the handsome stone chapel in the centre, built from the designs of Mr. Wm. Owen. When the Local Board in 1891, proposed to purchase the site, the inhabitants of Hale, in whose township it was situated, led by the Rev. Canon Hignett, then the Vicar of Ringway, offered a strong opposition and a costly inquiry extending over several days, followed. At first, a decision was given by the Home Secretary against the selected site, but this was reversed by his successor at the Home Office, Mr. H. H. Asquith (afterwards the Earl of Oxford) in 1892. The Cemetery marked the completion of one of the most important undertakings of the old Local Board, and in its conception and execution it worthily represents the zeal which set in, in the closing years of the Authority to meet the requirements of the community, in view of the early closing of the ancient burial ground at Bowdon Parish Church. The total number of interments in the Cemetery to March 31st, 1934, was 8,344, and the number of purchased graves was 4,038.

At the same time, the Local Board was successful in initiating and carrying out several important street improvements, all of which, more or less, contributed to the convenience of the growing population. In 1870, the narrow road leading from Market Street to Norman's Place was opened to its present width at a cost of £1,000. Formerly the road, which was aptly described as "The Narrows," was only available for the passage of a single vehicle. It was a source of danger, and, although the improvements involved the sacrifice of some curious old landmarks, public

safety, no less than the necessity of a new outlet for the increasing population, imperatively called for a change. About the same time a new road was made over the land popularly known as "The Patch," from Norman's Place to Dunham Road. How much the improvement has been appreciated may be judged by the large number of residences which now skirt the road. A prominent site in Market Street was secured by the Conservative party for the erection of a club, which was built in 1882 at a cost of £2,000. In 1896 that admirable example of the Church's activity known as St. Margaret's Church Institute was built on the adjoining site at a cost of £3,000 and, as a further testimony of the growing popularity of the road, it may be mentioned that the District Council subsequently secured the site formerly occupied by the residence of Mr. S. H. Norris, J.P., for its new Public Offices. How much has been done by property owners in the formation of new streets may be gathered from the fact that from 1876 to 1897, sums amounting to £17,500 were expended in this direction alone. This is, of course, quite apart from the large amounts annually spent by the Local Board upon such repairs and improvements as were from time to time necessary.

On the passing of the Local Government Act, 1894, the Altrincham Urban District Council came into existence. The last meeting of the Local Board was held on the 28th December, 1894, under the chairmanship of Mr. George Bowen. With the largely increased powers conferred by the new Act, the Council quickened the pace of local government, and various "new departures" denoted an active and enterprising spirit. One of the first works of the new Council was to spend £3,500 upon a variety of

street improvements. It is only fair to state that the project was shaped by the Local Board on the eve of the transfer of its powers, and the District Council may, therefore, be said to have acted in a strictly executive capacity. One part of the scheme provided for the removal of the ancient "cobbles" in the Old Market Place and relaying with square setts. The Council also revealed a commendable desire for the adornment of the town by planting the middle of the Old Market Place with shrubs and flowering plants, and at once effected a decided change, which, in course of time, was pursued in other directions. Another important work was the construction of the spacious Town's Yard in Moss Lane. This involved the purchase of an extensive plot of land from the trustees of the Mayor's Land Charity at an annual chief rent of £86 13s. 4d., and the entire scheme, which cost upwards of £2,500, was completed early in 1897.



Photo by

OLD MARKET PLACE ABOUT 1900

J. Ingham & Sons, Bowdon

CHAPTER XIII

THE DISTRICT COUNCIL

FOR electoral purposes Altrincham was, under the Local Government Act, 1894, divided into five wards named North, South, East, West and Central respectively. To each ward three representatives were appropriated. The Local Board comprised only twelve members, but the larger amount of work to be performed by the establishment of fresh interests made an increased representation desirable, if not absolutely essential. The change was effected after an inquiry on the 24th May, 1894, by a Committee of the Cheshire County Council. The County Council further directed that Altrincham should return a poor law guardian for each ward, thus increasing the total number returned by the township from four to five.

The first election of members to the District Council took place on the 15th December, 1894, and in the following month the new authority was invested with all the powers formerly exercised by the Local Board. The chairman, under the provisions of the Act, was placed on the Commission of the Peace, while a number of duties hitherto discharged by the magistrates, such as the issuing of game licences, became part of the ordinary business of the Council.

The composition of the first Council was as follows :—

North Ward : T. H. Vernon, John Newton,
*C. Pierson.

South Ward : George Drinkwater, Joseph Hill,
Isaac Watts.

East Ward : A. Barker, John Palmer, T. H. Caine.

West Ward : E. Yarwood, Jas. Boyd, Jas. Gott.

Central Ward : R. Gatley, J. Drinkwater, G.
Bowen.

At the first meeting of the Council, Mr. George Bowen, was appointed chairman and he occupied the position until April, 1896, when he was succeeded by Mr. John Newton, whose name is now introduced in order that a small tribute may be paid to his memory. As a Civil Engineer of wide reputation, Mr. Newton freely rendered invaluable service to the town, and it was almost wholly due to his public spirit that the Free Library and the Technical Schools were established on so broad and liberal a basis. He was the leader in many other progressive civic movements and a bust, to his memory, worthily finds a place in the Free Library in whose development he maintained a keen and active interest until his death in December, 1896.

An extension to the boundaries of the township was made by Order, dated 21st September, 1920, after an inquiry by the Cheshire County Council. At that time the District Council had under serious consideration a scheme for the erection of workmen's dwellings at Oldfield, and as the site lay in the adjoining township of Dunham Massey, strong

*Mr. Pierson resigned his seat in March, 1895, and the Council filled the vacancy by appointing Mr. George Allan.

representations were made that this particular area, if not the entire township, should be added to Altrincham. The County Council concurred with this view, and while refusing to join on the whole village, conceded a slice of 763 acres which the Council, as will be told later, developed as a Housing Estate. The County Council also sanctioned the formation of a sixth ward with three members to represent it on the District Council. The acreage of the Dunham Ward then added increased the total area of Altrincham from 662 acres to 1,425.

THE TOWN HALL

The District Council, then occupying an old private dwelling-house in Market Street as its headquarters, built the new Town Hall in Market Street, on land already bought for the purpose, in 1900, together with a Fire Station and public mortuary at a total cost of £7,000. The Town Hall, built from the designs of Mr. C. H. Hindle, of Manchester, is certainly one of the best pieces of architecture in the town. It is of red brick, with stone dressings in the Jacobean style, and the windows, with their stone mullions, have a striking appearance. The Council Chamber is a spacious and well proportioned apartment, and the decorated windows, in which are displayed the arms of the Earl of Chester, the Earl of Stamford and various other famous county families, enhance the general effect. The building contains committee rooms and a number of offices for the use of the Clerk, Surveyor, Sanitary Inspector, the Medical Officer of Health, the Chief Financial Officer and other officials. The building was enlarged in 1930, at a cost of £7,000, to find

accommodation for the growing number of departments necessitated by the increased population and the additional work of the Council. Mr. Hindle prepared the plans for the important extension but owing to his death before the scheme could be commenced, the plans were taken over by Mr. F. H. Brazier and the undertaking was completed under his direction.

In the area of the Town Hall is the Fire Station, the Public Mortuary and the residence of the Chief Officer of the Fire Brigade. The Fire Station is fully equipped with every modern appliance for dealing with outbreaks of fire, and possesses two motor fire engines, and a fire escape, and two motor ambulances. The District Council has organised a permanent brigade to deal either with fires or accidents and a well-drilled and efficient corps is prepared, night or day, for the service of the public at a moment's notice. The staff comprises a Chief Officer, Second Officer, and a strength of eight permanent firemen and sixteen retained firemen.



Photo by

THE TOWN HALL

J. Ingham & Sons, Bowdon

CHAPTER XIV

OLD LANDMARKS DEFACED

MANY old landmarks were trodden out by the iron heel of the Manchester, South Junction and Altrincham Railway.

The chief changes in local topography which the railway made, lie between the level crossing at Stockport Road and Barlow's crossing some three or four hundred yards away. Until the middle part of the last century, the features of the district were chiefly pastoral. Emerald meadows, rustling corn-fields and pleasant orchards spread on every side, and in the topmost boughs of a leafy wood, was a colony of crows. From Hale Moss a brimming brook shaped its course towards the road which now leads to Barlow's crossing by the side of the railway line, where it turned the wheel of an old worsted and wool-combing mill owned by Mr. Hugh Jepson, who found employment for about twenty pairs of hands. The brook emptied its waters in the mill-dam, which was afterwards filled up to form the site of the railway company's engine sheds.

Nearer to Altrincham were once the saw-mills of a Mr. Delves, but these were demolished long before the construction of the railway, to make way for a factory built by Mr. Booth, a Manchester manufacturer. In one part of the factory was a bobbin turner's shop in which about a dozen bobbin turners were employed. This establishment was conducted

by a Mr. John Anderton. By the side of the factory lay a street of cottages called Cinder Street, but the name was subsequently altered to Mill Street after the mill with which its fortunes were linked. Adjoining the factory was the large corn-mill of Mr. John Lupton, who was Mayor of Altrincham in 1832. The row of cottages in Derby Street were occupied by the hands of the neighbouring factory, and in the vicinity was a large private residence known as Mill House. This was demolished in 1910 and the site, together with the adjoining orchard, was covered with dwelling-houses. The houses in Meadow Bank were not built until after the appearance of the railway, and although they look upon nothing more attractive than a minor artery of traffic between Altrincham and Manchester, the name of the terrace is still suggestive of rural environment. The position selected for the first station in Altrincham was near to the present level crossing at Stockport Road, and it had not been there long before the wants of travellers were met by the erection of the Railway Inn. Soon afterwards, Barrington Road was carved through the fields and gardens lying between the station and Broadheath, and very quickly the land became dotted over with private residences.

Before either the railway or Barrington Road had been thought of, the first house between the old mill-dam and Altrincham was that which yet stands at the corner of Barrington Road. It was then occupied by a gentleman named Bagshaw, and a pleasant garden which now forms one side of the road ran back deeply to the fields in the rear. Adjoining this residence, was a malt-house for the grinding of malt, for many years in the possession of

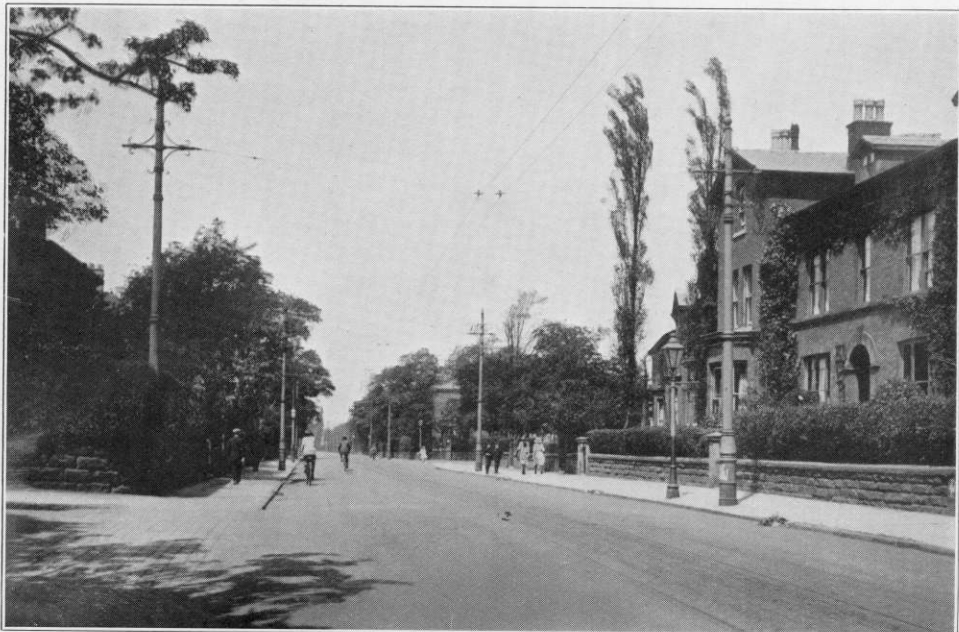


Photo by

Jas. L. Brown, 3, Stockport Road, Ardwick

BARRINGTON ROAD.

Mr. John Barratt. Spring Bank House, once the residence of Mr. John Siddeley, Mayor of Altrincham, was then the home of Dr. Pearson. The site is now covered by the Altrincham Hippodrome. A few yards beyond were the gates leading to the farm of Mr. Pass, a gentleman who combined agricultural pursuits with the study of law. Springfield Road had not then been made, and the farm extended to Church Street, where Mr. Pass had his offices. Next to the entrance of the farm was a ladies' school, of which a Miss Wrangham was the head. On the opposite side of the road was a barn adjacent to the present Malt Shovels Hotel, and behind it were a number of irregularly built cottages. The title bestowed on the locality by the natives was that of Back-o'-th'-Barn, and although at a later period the erection of the lock-ups suggested the more appropriate designation of Police Street, the original name is yet occasionally heard. It was in Police Street that Mr. James Mitchell carried on business as a thread manufacturer and grocer. Police Street was a much pleasanter spot than it is at the present time, and there was not a house without its flower and vegetable garden.

Adjoining the Malt Shovels were a number of cottages, now converted into shops, and on the hill on the opposite side of the road were two or three cottages whose gardens rested snugly and securely behind Victoria Street and Church Street. From its elevated situation above the road the place acquired the name of the Top Hillock, a title now no longer heard. Even the cottages have gone and their place has been taken by a row of modern shops. There was a well at the bottom of Victoria Street, then known as Well Lane, and as it was the chief source for the

supply of water to this part of the town it was known as the Big Well. This was the centre at which all the town gossip was turned over, and it was not unusual to see a dozen women grouped about the well in the early morning with pails and jugs.

A story is told of an old man who lived near to the well of the name of John Royle, who formerly carried on business as a horse-breaker. Among the natives he was known as Carely Royle, and in his way he was a singularly interesting character. A big man with an appetite sharpened by exercise and an out-of-door life, he is said to have been able to consume two quarts of porridge every morning for his breakfast; and it was part of the day's pleasure to see him engaged upon this task while seated on a horse block in front of the Malt Shovels Hotel. The public derived no little entertainment from this homely exhibition—probably quite as much as did kindly Mrs. Darbyshire of the Malt Shovels, who, because of Royle's solitary life as a bachelor, charged herself daily with the duty of providing him with a wholesome meal. At the bottom of Stamford Street was the smithy of Mr. John Foster, and on the rising ground opposite to the present Public Library and Art Gallery were some quaint sixteenth century cottages which, some years ago, were taken down. In one of these lived Mr. William Ashley, overseer of the parish. The land on the opposite side of the road was not built upon until 1852, when it was chosen as the site of the Altrincham and Bowdon Literary Institute. Here, also, there was an excellent well and a pump, from which the inhabitants obtained a portion of the water required for domestic purposes. Some distance away from the site of the Literary Institute was a row of

cottages forming one side of Lower George Street, which stood until 1892, when they were demolished to make room for the Free Library and Technical School.

For a long time before the construction of Stamford Street and Station Road which are now the principal means of communication, the only link of connection between George Street and the old Market Place was Shaw's Lane, in those far-off times known as Barnum's Lane. One side was occupied by a large garden behind a high red-brick wall, and the other by two or three thatched cottages, and the stables of the farm situated on the land which, in 1880, became the site of the Conservative Working Men's Club. By this narrow road vehicles made their way from George Street into what was then known as Windy Harbour, a locality now recognised as Market Street. From Dunham Road, the main entrance to Market Street lay between a row of thatched cottages and the offices of the Stamford Estate. This road was extremely narrow, and as it entered Market Street at a right angle accidents were of frequent occurrence. On one occasion a carriage was driven into the window of one of the houses in Quality Corner. Of the three occupants two were hurled through the window into the room, and one of them died as the result of the unfortunate accident. In order to remove so serious a menace to public safety, the Local Board, as before stated, gave Dunham Road a direct communication with the Old Market Place. At the same time, the authority at a further cost of £1,000, opened out a narrow lane leading from Market Street to Norman's Place and "The Narrows."

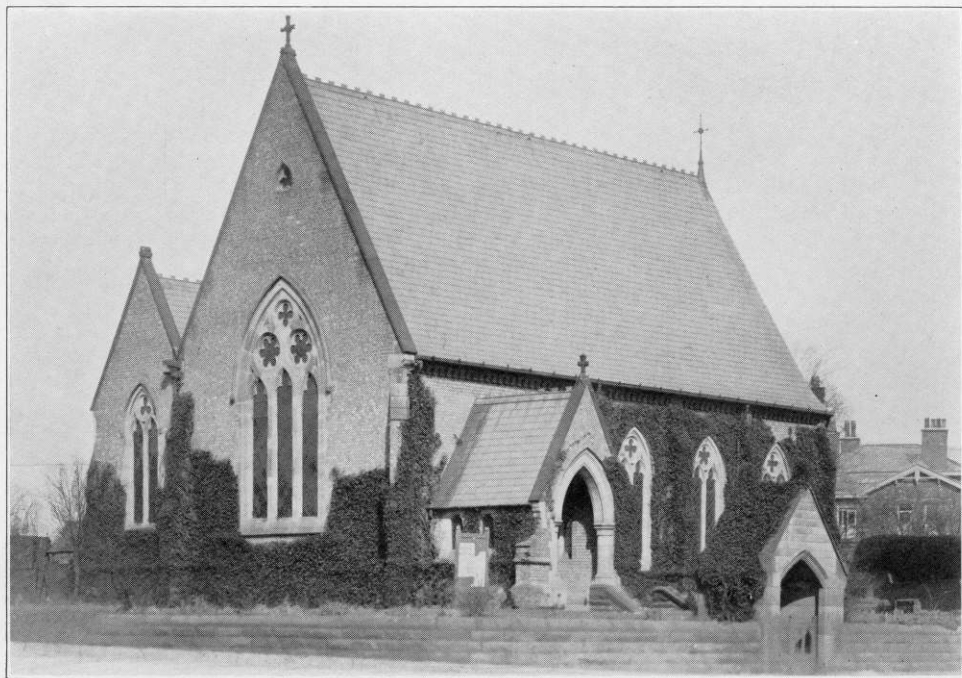
About the same time a new road was made over the field known as "The Patch," lying between the end

of Norman's Place and Dunham Road. That the improvements were appreciated is proved by the fact that the whole of the vacant land is now covered with private residences and public buildings.

The New Market Hall, built by the Local Board, forms a portion of the boundary of Shaw's Lane, and with the erection of a good deal of new property in the locality, it was not long before what was once a mere cow track, began to put on all the airs and graces of a town street paved with granite setts. The direct effect of the widening of the lane was to open out additional building land and the greater part was secured by Mr. Martin Stone, a well-known local builder, for the erection of dwelling-houses and shops.

DUNHAM ROAD CHAPEL

Of the ancient landmarks in the old lane only one now remains. It is that of the first chapel, built by the Unitarians in Altrincham early in the nineteenth century. The Unitarians have a long connection with the district. The mother chapel at Hale was erected in 1723, for the use of the Presbyterian Minister, Mr. Waterhouse, who had been evicted from Ringway Church. The successors of Mr. Waterhouse in the ministry were the Revs. Hugh Worthington, junior, Isaac Worthington and Robert Harrop. The last-named resigned his charge in 1816, but his death did not occur until 1837, when he was ninety-one years of age. It was during the pastorate of his successor, the Rev. William Jevons, that the Chapel in Shaw's Lane was built and it continued in use until 1872, when the present handsome chapel, and the adjacent Sunday School, in Dunham Road, were opened. Attached to



UNITARIAN CHAPEL, DUNHAM ROAD

the chapel in Shaw's Lane, was a small burial ground abutting on the lane, in which had been interred the remains of many well-known Altrincham residents, and on the departure of the congregation the whole were reverently removed and re-interred in the quiet God's acre of the parent chapel at Hale. Subsequently, the old chapel was used for meetings of a private and public kind. At one time it was occupied by the local corps of the Salvation Army, and, still later, as the home of a social club. It was afterwards a dance hall, then an auction mart and, ultimately, a theatre, whose doors were closed by order of the magistrates in 1933, on the ground that it did not conform to modern requirements. The tiny burial ground was, some years ago, covered by a modern house and shop which effectually conceal the historic chapel from the road.

The present Unitarian Chapel in Dunham Road was opened on Wednesday, December 18th, 1872, when the special preacher was the Rev. Charles Beard of Liverpool. The minister then was the Rev. Edward S. House, B.A., who was succeeded by the Rev. J. T. Whitehead, B.A. The Rev. J. E. Odgers, B.A., who followed Mr. Whitehead, held the pastorate for eleven years and had as his co-pastor during two years of that time, the Rev. Frank Freeston. On Mr. Odgers' departure in July, 1894, the Rev. Arthur W. Fox was appointed. He resigned in 1897, to engage in literary pursuits, in which he won no little distinction, and some years later held the position of President of the Manchester Literary Club. Mr. Fox was succeeded by the Rev. Dendy Agate, who found time to devote some attention to various forms of public work. For some years he was a member of the old Public Library and Technical

School Committee and after the formation of the Local Education Committee, was co-opted a member. He was a member of the Technical Classes Committee, and in April, 1908, was elected Chairman of the Committee of the Public Library and Museum. He was also a member of the University Extension and Oxford Local Examination Committees and a Vice-President of the Bowdon Literary and Scientific Club. He resigned the pastorate in 1916. Mr. Agate was succeeded in 1917, by the Rev. Edgar I. Fripp, who ministered from that year until 1921. The Rev. A. H. Biggs, the present minister, took charge of the church in 1922. Near to the chapel is the parsonage built in 1900 out of the legacy of £1,000, given for this purpose by Mr. C. C. Dunkerley, a former prominent member of the church.

CHAPTER XV

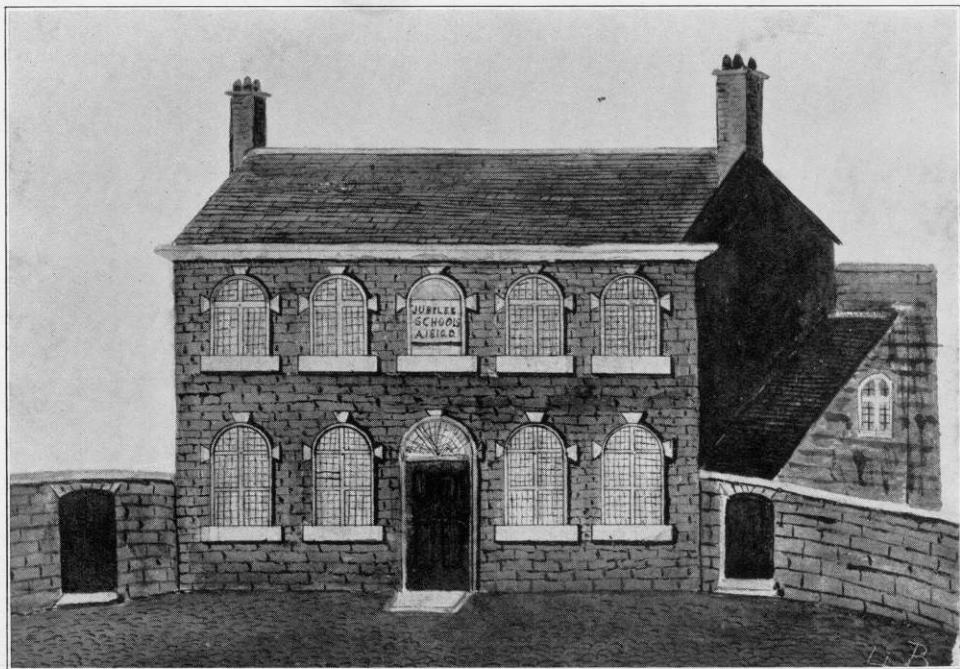
CHURCH STREET AND ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH

CHURCH Street obtained its name on the erection of St. George's Church in 1799. It was then a narrow thoroughfare skirted by thatched cottages, a few shops and, here and there, a trim garden. As a matter of fact it could hardly be described as more than a country lane, ill-paved and meanly lighted, with just width enough to permit the passage of the mail coach from Manchester to Chester, and the rumbling carts that rolled into the Market Place with produce from the country. On becoming possessed of a church the winding lane began to assume a more dignified aspect, and the new name bestowed upon it added not a little to its importance.

The church of St. George's is a standing memorial of the zeal of the Rev. Oswald Leicester, who in the latter part of the eighteenth century was an active pioneer of religious and philanthropic work in Altrincham. Mr. Leicester was the son of an Altrincham grocer who belonged to the Wesleyan denomination. As a member of the Wesleyan Church he was greatly influenced by the teaching of the Rev. Samuel Bradburn, the Wesleyan minister then stationed in Altrincham, and at a quite early age he became fired with religious enthusiasm, and on many young men of his own age his personal example had a considerable effect. The Sunday School movement had only been originated some few years earlier and

Mr. Leicester determined to make some attempt to prove if the soil of Altrincham was favourable to its growth. Accordingly in 1783, he engaged a room over a cottage in Ashley Road, then known as Thorley Moor Lane, and gathered around him a number of children for Bible study. In this simple way, the first Sunday school, which in subsequent years, became part of the parochial machinery of St. George's, was established. The little school prospered, and Mr. Leicester's father, who was favourably impressed by the work, built for him a school and lecture hall in Norman's Place, where for a number of years the zealous young man conducted a school, to which duty he added that of giving addresses on Sunday evenings. The building, which is now a private residence, is the first on the right hand side of Norman's Place. Deciding to take holy orders and to devote his life to the service of the Church, Mr. Leicester went to Oxford and by earnest study prepared himself for the career of his choice. During his residence at Oxford, St. George's Church was built for him, and he became the first incumbent, an office which he held until his death in 1832. His residence was at Highfield, in Dunham Road, a house built for him by his father.

The chapel of St. George was consecrated by the Bishop of Chester, as a chapel of ease to Bowdon Parish Church, on August 20th, 1799. It is set forth in the sentence of consecration how George Harry, Earl of Stamford and Warrington, and other pious and well-disposed persons, with the consent of John Baldwin, clerk, vicar of Bowdon, had contributed a considerable sum of money for the erection of St. George's Chapel, and it also makes Oswald Leicester, John Darbyshire, and Samuel



From a photo by

H. Wilkinson

ST. GEORGE'S JUBILEE SCHOOLS, 1810

Gratrix the first trustees of the property and requires the curate of St. George's Chapel to assist at the Holy Communion in Bowdon Church on the first Sunday in July, August and September. Mr. Leicester did not allow his duties as a minister to interfere with his Sunday school work, and immediately on his return from Oxford he resumed with assiduity his role as a teacher of the young. In 1810, under Mr. Leicester's direction, the first Jubilee School was built to commemorate the Jubilee of George III. This school stood at the south-west corner of the present auction mart of Mr. John Arnold. Here Mr. Leicester was to be found every Sunday morning and afternoon engaged earnestly in the work he loved. Punctually, we are told, at nine in the morning and at two in the afternoon, he would walk in his black gown into the school and open first the girls' and then the boys' school with prayer. Then he would question the first class on the Collect for the day, and the second class on the New Testament, the rest of the school listening, and so on until the close of the school, when he would walk at the head of the scholars down the street to the church and there conduct the services.

Mr. Leech, to whose "Tales and Sketches of Old Altrincham and Bowdon," we are indebted for this sketch of Mr. Leicester, says that as a minister he was very successful, and his influence in the neighbourhood was most beneficial. His sympathy with the sick and his boundless charity to the poor made him known and beloved in all the countryside. No sooner did he hear of a case of sickness, even so far away as Baguley or Hale, than he saddled his pony and rode off to visit the person. On his return home he would have a parcel of wine and delicacies made up, and when the friends of the invalid came it would be

ready for them. By kindly acts such as these he endeared himself to everybody and bound himself to his friends by the tenderest ties. Either on foot or trotting into the country on his little pony, Mr. Leicester was a familar figure, with his knee-breeches, silver buckles at the knee, low shoes with large buckles, and his hair close cut and powdered. In this quaint costume, the Rev. Oswald Leicester moved about among the people and was universally received with love and respect.

He was pre-eminently a catholic-minded man, as was shown by the fact that he never held services on Sunday evenings in order that some members of his congregation might attend the services at the Wesleyan Chapel in Chapel Walks. Many of them took advantage of the opportunity thus afforded while the choir went almost in a body with violins, bassoons and bass fiddles and occupied a place assigned for their use in one of the galleries. The chief service of the year was that held in commemoration of the Sunday school anniversary. This always took place on the Sunday before Bowdon Wakes, when the old church was invariably crowded. Even the aisles and steps would be occupied with worshippers, and it was not an unusual thing for the collection to amount to as much as fifty pounds, a sum in those distant days regarded as very considerable. The service was generally of an impressive character, and at a given signal the scholars would rise in the middle of the sermon and the minister would proceed to address them and their parents with great earnestness and power. The music was also a special feature and the ordinary forces of the choir were strengthened by the addition of an imposing array of wind and stringed instruments.

The diary of Mr. Walter Aston, F.R.I.B.A., who spent a month in Altrincham in 1825, gives a picture of one of these services. He writes under the date of September 18th :—"In the afternoon it rained very hard, so my sister and I stayed in the house, but Mr. Moxon went to St. George's, where there was a charity sermon preached by a nephew of Mr. Leicester's for the benefit of the Sunday School. After service the weather cleared up a little, so we had a grand procession which, had it rained, could not have taken place. The first that came was the apparitor in a red cloak and a cocked and pinched hat, then Mr. Leicester, looking as large in his own conceit as the Archbishop of Canterbury, then his nephew, who seemed more careful of his gown than appearances, for he had it tucked up under his elbows. After him came the girls, then the boys, guarded on each side by men who carried sundry-shaped long sticks in their hands, for which they found constant employment in knocking the poor lads' knowledge boxes, to keep them in something like order, and the rear was composed of some hundred men and women, who had come for miles round to see this grand procession. The children, when they got into the school had, by way of treat, each a bun and a drink of hot ale, flavoured with either rum or gin. I forget which, for which reason a greater number go to school on that day than any other in the year."

Mr. Aston, to whose diary we are indebted for this vivid and interesting story, was the grandson of Mr. Joseph Aston, an old Manchester worthy who is described in the Dictionary of National Biography as "journalist, dramatist and miscellaneous writer." He opened a stationer's shop at 84, Deansgate, in

the year 1803, and here, on the first of January, 1805, he issued the prospectus of the *Manchester Mail*, published at sixpence and professing "no political creed." From 1809 until 1825, he was the publisher and editor of the *Manchester Exchange Herald*, a Conservative journal. Afterwards he removed to Rochdale where he started the *Rochdale Recorder*. He died at Chadderton Hall on the 19th October, 1844, and was buried at Tonge, near Middleton. Apart from his ordinary journalistic work, Mr. Aston acquired considerable repute as an author of several volumes of poetical and prose works.

Whatever may happen to have been the practice in supplying the scholars with spiced ale, it may safely be said that it is no longer followed. Mr. Leicester held the living until his death in 1832, and a tablet on the south wall of the chancel was erected to his memory. He was succeeded by the Rev. George Ranking, who held the incumbency for two years. The third incumbent was the Rev. Wilmot Cave Brown Cave, during whose term of office (1835) the "Female Jubilee School of Industry" was founded. In one of the annual reports from the pen of Dr. Orton who was the incumbent from 1843 to 1856, the objects of the school, are indicated in the following paragraph: "Piety and industry is the motto inscribed on the door of our school. The Bible and the needle are the two only instruments unremittingly and prayerfully employed for these purposes, with such other information imparted as may tend to make the scholars respectful to their superiors and attentive to all the duties of their subordinate situation in society." The Vicarage of St. George's was built in 1837, and in the same year an organ was erected in the west gallery of the church.

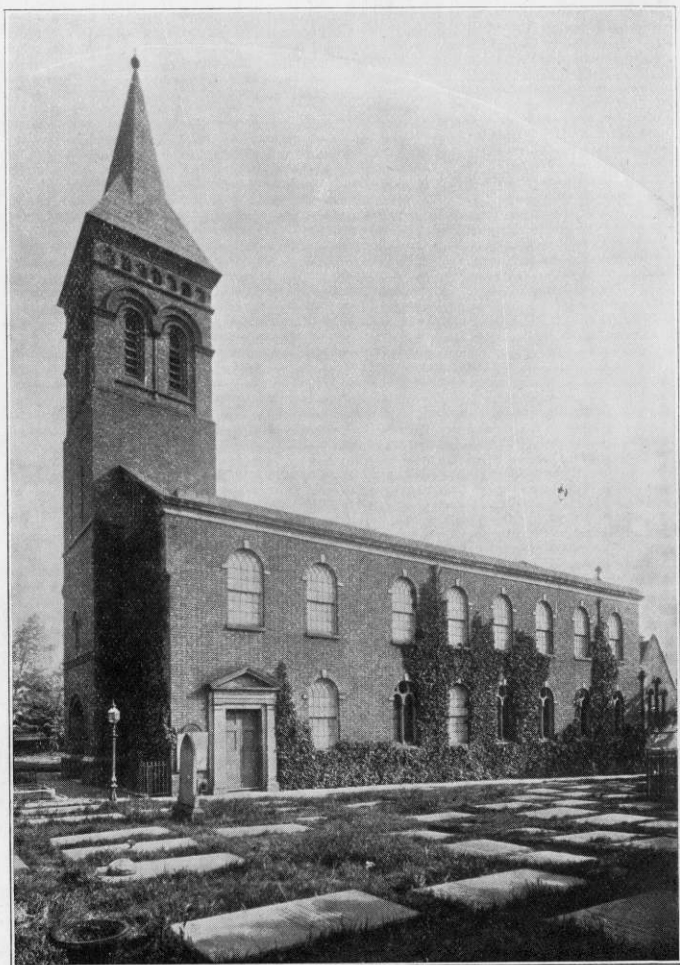
During the incumbency of Mr. Cave, a service at St. George's was once interrupted in a very singular manner. The preacher was engaged in delivering his sermon when he brought his observations to an abrupt conclusion with the words:—"My dear brethren, I perceive there is a fire in the Market Place; let us hasten to extinguish it." The congregation hastily departed to render what assistance they could in putting out a fire which had seized on the thatched roof of the shop of Mr. Lupton, iron-monger.

Mr. Cave, was the incumbent from 1834 to 1843. In 1838, the coronation of Queen Victoria was commemorated by special services when the churchwardens' staves, which are still used on occasions of importance, were carried for the first time. The date inscribed on the staves is that of the Coronation year. On the retirement of Mr. Cave in 1843. the Rev. Dr. Francis Orton was appointed the incumbent, and it was during his ministry that the mission services were commenced at Broadheath on a boat chapel moored in the Bridgewater Canal. On his resignation he was succeeded by the Rev. John B. Honnywell, to whose energy was due the establishment of the Infants' School, in 1857. In the following year the church was enlarged. This was effected by the removal of the wall at the west end and by an extension of the building in that direction. Mr. Honnywell did not hold the living for more than a year or two, when he resigned on account of his wife's illness, and for a short period the Rev. Thomas Brierley was the curate-in-charge.

In 1859, the Rev. George London became the incumbent of St. George's. Soon after the commencement of his ministry, the old Jubilee School

was demolished, and new schools near to the church were built at a cost of £1,814. A scheme for the enlargement of the church was undertaken in the following year, when the east wall was removed to permit of an extension at that end. This improvement was effected at a cost of £1,098. In 1860, the chapel-of-ease was converted into a district church, and in 1868, the district was formed into a separate parish with a vicarage. Further improvements were carried out in 1869, when the approach at the east end underwent reconstruction. At the same time a plot of land was added to the churchyard at the west end. The cost of the improvement was £445. During the next decade the population of the parish increased rapidly, and with the object of meeting new requirements, fresh enterprises were taken in hand in Sinderland Lane, Broadheath, at a cost of £435, and the services in the old boat chapel were discontinued. The upper portion of the church tower was built in 1874, and upon this work the parishioners expended £437. The following year a new schoolroom was built in Oakfield Street, another outlying portion of the parish on a site presented by Mr. Joseph Gaskarth. For this work, which was only a part of Mr. London's plan for strengthening local educational resources, the parishioners found £589. Even at that time Mr. London was interesting himself on the subject of an important addition to the central school buildings near the church, and in 1879, he successfully completed the erection of a new infants' school at a cost of £1,020.

The appearance of St. George's, which had always been a plain building of brick, was greatly enhanced in 1886, by the addition of a chancel. Upon this elegant work a sum of £1,760 was expended. Meanwhile



From a photo by

H. Wilkinson

ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, 1799

the mission work at Broadheath was developing at a fast rate, and in 1891, the schoolroom was provided with a chancel. The amount expended on this scheme for the adaptation of the school to regular church services was £716. The name of St. Alban's School Church was given to the enlarged building, and the indications fully justified the congregation in anticipating a still larger development in the near future. In 1893, greater accommodation was needed at Oakfield Street School, and the demand was met by the erection of a new building, the cost of which was met by subscriptions amounting to £487. The Rev. George London died on the 16th April, 1893. For some years he had been in a delicate state of health, and in 1890, he actually took the step of resigning the living in order to undertake the lighter and less exacting duties of the country parish of St. Mark's, Dunham Massey, which had been offered to him by Archdeacon Gore, vicar of Bowdon. By a special arrangement, however, this course was not acted upon. The parishioners generously undertook to relieve Mr. London of some portion of his responsibilities by providing the stipend of a second curate and, at their earnest solicitation, he was prevailed upon to retain the living until his death.

Mr. London was succeeded in June, 1893, by the Rev. William Maurice Bonner Lutener. He proved a worthy successor to Mr. London, and devoted his energies to the development of an important scheme of church extension, and the improvement of the school buildings. The chief memorial of Mr. Lutener's work is to be found in the church which under his direction was entirely rebuilt in 1896 and 1897. The necessity of extensive repairs to the fabric became evident in 1895, and it was determined by

the church officers to utilise a legacy of £1,000, which had been made by Miss Fox, in making a complete restoration of the nave in commemoration of the centenary festival.

On an examination of the building by experts it was discovered that something more than mere renovation of the old building was necessary, and after long and anxious consideration the Building Committee decided to abandon the attempt to restore and to undertake the much more ambitious but infinitely more costly scheme of rebuilding. The plans of Messrs. Paley and Austin were accepted, and the task of demolishing the old structure with its high galleries and deep pews was commenced in July, 1896. The period occupied by the rebuilding was sixteen months, and during the whole of that time the regular services of the church were held in the Literary Institute. The design provided for greater floor space than was possessed by the old church, and it was decided not to replace the galleries, while open benches of a modern style were substituted for the original pews. The cost of the work was about £5,500, the whole of which had been supplied by the parishioners by the time of the dedication services on November 17th, 1897. At the same time a piece of ground at the west end of the churchyard was presented by the late Mr. Henry Fairbrother, which was levelled and planted with grass and trees, with the result that the immediate surroundings of the church were materially changed. The generosity of other subscribers also enabled the wardens to re-lay the whole of the churchyard, and to further improve the west end approach. On the completion of this important scheme, the parishioners gave their attention to the erection of a new

classroom and the provision of a playground at St. Alban's School Church, involving an expenditure of £650. The work was carried out in 1898. A year later, the development of Broadheath as an industrial centre made still more urgent the duty of building a new church, and they at once commenced to discharge it with so much vigour that the church of St. Alban's became an accomplished fact, and the dedication ceremony by the Bishop of Chester, took place on November 8th, 1900. The church costing upwards of £5,000, is of the decorated style of architecture, from the designs of Messrs. Austin and Paley, of Lancaster. For the external facing, local bricks were used, and for the interior, bricks and moulded terra-cotta work from Northwich. The arcades, except the arches, and the dressings of the windows and doors are of Runcorn flecked stone. The roofing is of red tiles. Messrs. Stelfox and Son, of Northwich, were the contractors and the masonry portion of the work was carried out by Mr. G. Rathbone, of the same town.

St. Alban's was separated from St. George's in 1911, and formed into a new parish of which the first Vicar was the Rev. L. W. Thomas, who for some time was on the clergy staff of the mother church. His induction took place on January 30th, 1911, and on his resignation, the Bishop of Chester appointed the Rev. F. C. Bozman, Vicar of St. John's Church, New Springs, Wigan, to succeed him on September 25th, 1912, and since that time he has carried on the work of the parish on vigorous lines. In 1914, a comfortable vicarage was built on a site adjoining the church from the designs of Mr. John Cocker, with Mr. Roger Oldham, the vicar's warden, as consulting architect. The contract was executed

by Mr. Richard Potts for £1,441 5s. In 1935, a start was made with the building of a large and well-equipped parish hall to designs prepared by Mr. John Cocker, at a cost of £4,000. The hall, situated on land already owned by the church, has a frontage to Lindsell Road, and, in style and appearance, it harmonises most effectively with the church and vicarage. It is of no definite period, but tends towards the form of the seventeenth century. The main hall will easily seat 450 persons, and a large platform is provided suitable for theatrical performances.

The Rev. W. M. B. Lutener, who did so much to add to the efficiency of the educational agencies of the parish, resigned the living of St. George's in 1902, on the acceptance by him of the country parish of Knighton, in Radnorshire.

He was succeeded by the Rev. Ernest R. Tarbuck, whose induction took place on the 25th March, 1902. During his incumbency the day schools were renovated inside and out, and brought up to modern requirements of ventilation, playground accommodation and sanitary improvement. The cost of this work was about £750. A new organ was put into the church by Messrs. Brindley and Foster, of Sheffield, at a cost of £1,350, and additions were made to St. Alban's Mission Church by way of a commodious vestry and a bell tower, with various internal improvements at a cost of £600.

Meanwhile other improvements were effected in the environs of the church. Land was bought in front of the vestry door, adjoining the entrance from Church Street which enabled the Council to double the width of the pathway and form a carriage drive. A plot of land was later purchased for a bowling

green and the site of a parish hall, between the vicarage garden and the Stamford Bowling Club. The entire scheme involved an expenditure of £4,000. On behalf of the project, Mr. Tarbuck laboured with unflagging zeal for more than two years, and had the satisfaction of seeing the consummation of his work when the Church House was opened by the Bishop of Chester on the 15th June, 1908.

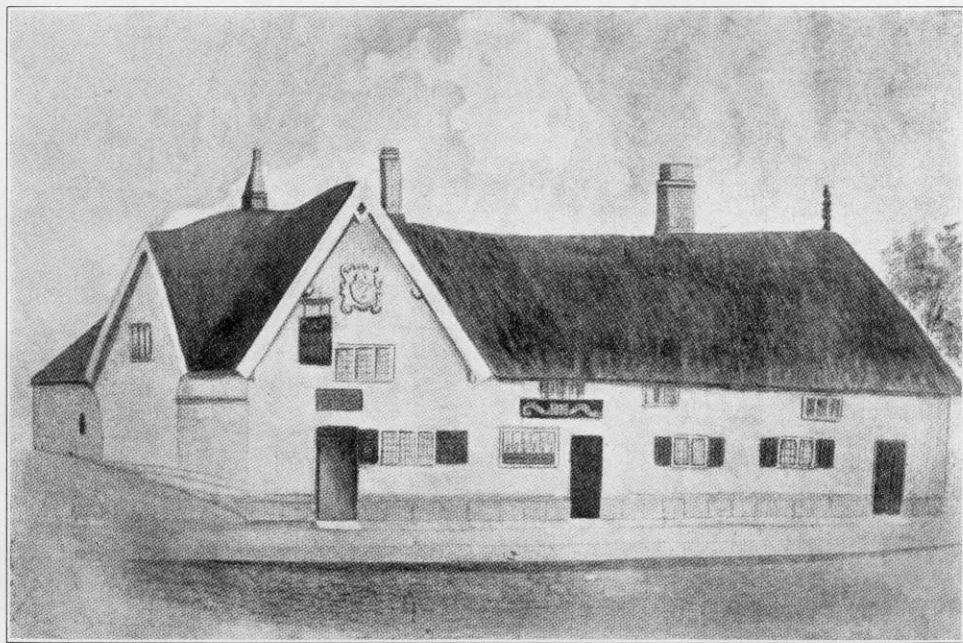
Resigning the living in 1914, Mr. Tarbuck was instituted to the Vicariate of St. Mark's, Dunham Massey, on June 18th, of the same year. He was succeeded on July 23rd, 1914, by the Rev. E. S. Oliver, who held the living until the end of 1925, when he was followed early in 1926, by the present vicar, the Rev. W. H. F. Palin.

CHAPTER XVI

REGENT ROAD AND NEW STREET

EVEN now Regent Road is less than the recognised width of a public thoroughfare, but once it was barely more than a narrow passage in which two vehicles could not have passed each other. It was badly lighted, and its pavements were of a very crude pattern. On the right hand side of the entrance from Railway Street, stood the Woolpack Hotel, whose thatched roof was so low that a moderately sized man could have reached it from the street with his hand. On the opposite side was a cottage. Adjoining the house was an open space, overlooked by the back windows of the cottages in Railway Street. Close by was the bakehouse of a man who was familiarly known as Johnny Slater. Over it was a room, to reach which it was necessary to climb up from the outside by a flight of steps, which was called "Jacob's Ladder." In this room, a century and a half ago, dwelt a family of the name of Boyle, who were the first people of Irish nationality to settle at Altrincham. They had probably been attracted to the town by its fame as a market-gardening centre, and were destined to be the forerunners of a prolific race whose descendants show their affection for the locality by still abiding there.

Then there was a row of small houses, one of which was licensed for the sale of beer. It was conducted on rather strict lines by a landlord who was opposed to liberal drinking. One of his rules was to refuse to



OLD WOOLPACK INN, RAILWAY STREET
(Pulled down in 1865)

change a gold-piece for any of his customers belonging to the working class. "Nay," he would say, as the coin was flung on the counter, "thi wife has more need of that; tak it home, and if tha's any to spare tha' may come back." Above this simple beer-house was Farthing Street, now known by the name of Albert Street. On both sides of this short cul-de-sac were cottages in whose cellars the occupiers carried on business as silk weavers. The schools which fill the vacant land on the right-hand side had not then been built. They were not established until after the erection of St. Margaret's Church in 1855. Where the Grapes Inn now stands was a house separating Farthing Street from Chapel Street, which obtained its name from the fact that the old Wesleyan chapel was at the corner. In those days the front of the chapel was protected by stout iron railings, but these were removed when the Congregationalists obtained possession, and the space thus acquired between the chapel and the street was utilised for the provision of a vestibule, while on the vacant land adjoining was built the Guild room which is now used for public meetings of various kinds in connection with All Saints' Church.

Chapel Street, upon whose face the hand of time has scrawled a rude autograph, was a very different place, as old residents would have told you, a century ago. The houses were few, and each had its garden where the blushing rose and the gay wall-flower scented the air. Across the adjacent meadows the grey church of Bowdon could be seen, and on fine Sunday mornings it was the custom of the people to gather about their doors to see the worshippers enter the building. The fact that this was possible is a testimony to the open character of the Downs

between Altrincham and Bowdon. Several small industries flourished at one time in Chapel Street, such as bobbin-turning and silk weaving, and in an old directory is to be found the name of John Hardy, a blacking manufacturer. Probably the business with which the public were most familiar was the bakery establishment of Mr. John Southern, whose foundation goes back to the year 1820.

In that year, Mr. Southern, who belonged to Millington, began life as a baker and opened a small shop opposite to the Unicorn Hotel in the Old Market Place. He was a Wesleyan, and between him and Mr. Nathaniel Pass, who chiefly ruled the affairs of the village at that time, there was a strong friendship. Mr. Southern's energy and aptitude for business were soon recognised by Mr. Pass, and he offered to build him a house and a bakery in Chapel Street. Accepting the offer, Mr. Southern removed to Chapel Street, and established a business which is still conducted on successful lines by his descendants at Hale. The founder of the business used to say that he heated his ovens at first with gorse gathered from Hale Moss, a practice no doubt rendered necessary by the high price of coal in those distant days. Mr. John Southern was not only a good baker, but a kindly neighbour, and his benevolence among the poor of the district attached them to him by a strong link of affection. He was a firm adherent of the Wesleyan cause, and was the first local preacher from this district to have his name entered on the plan. The deeply religious character of John Southern influenced him in his business, and at one time a funeral was not complete without the cakes supplied by him. In those days "funeral cakes" were handed to the persons who attended a funeral, just as gloves

and black silk scarves used to be, and those made by Mr. Southern which were neatly folded in paper fastened with black sealing wax at both ends, were in popular demand. On the paper were printed verses composed by Mr. Southern, whose purpose was to soothe the bereaved.

Between Chapel Street and New Street stood a few cottages, but New Street was only partially built upon. Indeed, a few years earlier it had not been formed, and the farm of Mr. Geoffrey Alcock extended from the Downs to Chapel Walk. It was through this farm that New Street was eventually constructed.

CHAPTER XVII
ST. VINCENT'S CHURCH

IN 1858, the Roman Catholic Church of St. Vincent de Paul, which takes its name from the celebrated French priest in the reign of Louis XIV, who was canonised, was erected in New Street. Before that time, services had been held in a chapel improvised out of a cottage in New Street and, previous to that, in a small house in George Street, near to the present shop of Mr. James Cowsill. In this cottage Mass was first celebrated in 1847. These cottages served the faithful until 1858, when two cottages in New Street were bought by Father Alcock who erected there a church and presbytery. A stone church was built in 1860 on the private property of Dr. Brigham, but it was never made over to the diocese, and it was sold with the rest of the property after Dr. Brigham's death. For forty-seven years, Catholics worshipped at New Street, when the premises were found to be inconvenient and inadequate to the needs of a Catholic population then estimated at 1,700. A public meeting of the congregation and friends was held and a 50,000 Shilling Fund was opened. Very soon afterwards, land was secured at the junction of Bentinck and Groby Road and here, on one of the most commanding sites in the town the walls of a handsome church were eventually reared. On the 22nd October, 1903, a decisive step was taken, when the first sod was cut in preparation for the digging of the foundations. The



Photo by

ST. VINCENT'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

Lilywhite & Co., Brighouse

foundation stone was laid on the 18th June, 1904, and many prominent public men were present to witness the ceremony and lend their support. A procession, headed by the Altrincham Borough Band, was formed at the church in New Street, and made its way to the site. The Mayor (Mr. E. T. Cleathero), wearing his robes and the gold chain of his office, members of the Court Leet and other representatives of the public life of the town, joined the procession. At the ceremony, it was announced that the sum of £2,500 had already been subscribed towards the total of the required amount of £6,000. On the return of the Mayoral procession to the Old Town Hall, the Mayor was thanked, by Mr. John Farrell, on behalf of the Catholics, for his attendance at the ceremony.

The church was opened for worship on the 1st October, 1905. The Rector was then the Rev. Father Christopher Ryder, the assistant priest being the Rev. Father E. D. Kirby. The Rev. W. F. Stanley, of Stockport, a former Rector, was present to see the consummation of the effort he had begun five years earlier. His Lordship, the Bishop of Shrewsbury, preached from the text "And they shall build Me a sanctuary, and I will dwell in the midst of them." Among the congregation were the Mayor and Mayoress (Dr. and Mrs. Golland); Mr. E. T. Cleathero, the ex-Mayor; and Dr. and Mrs. W. A. Renshaw, ex-Mayor and Mayoress.

The exterior walls of the church are of small red Ruabon bricks, with terra-cotta dressings. The windows have been boldly treated without mullions, and they reveal considerable taste. They are filled with cathedral glass. A fine effect has been obtained in the nave, with its lofty open-timbered roof and

tastefully decorated Gothic arches, supported on stone capitals, pillars and bases which separate the nave from the aisles and two side chapels. The organ gallery is of oak. The architect was Mr. Edmund Kirby, F.R.I.B.A., of Liverpool, and the sole contractor for the erection of the building was Mr. M. McDermott. Of graceful proportions in the early English Gothic style, there is seating accommodation for 500.

The interior appointments of the church are quite in keeping with the handsome exterior, and many rich and costly adornments have enhanced its general beauty. A new organ valued at £2,000 has also been erected. The Silver Jubilee was commemorated with all possible solemnity in October, 1930. The late Canon Welsh was for 25 years, in charge of the parish, and his work has lately been commemorated by the placing of a wrought-iron screen at the Baptistry, and the erection of a Celtic marble cross over his grave, the cost of both memorials having been subscribed by the parishioners and friends. The Presbytery, adjoining the church, was the gift of the late Mr. Peter Kelly, in memory of his wife. An addition to the Presbytery to provide increased accommodation suitable for three priests has recently been made at a cost of £700. The present Catholic population of the parish is between 4,000 and 5,000.

The Church of St. Hugh, at West Timperley, was opened in 1931, and since then a Presbytery and hall have been added. This Mission was formed to relieve pressure at St. Vincent's. In August, 1935, a new Catholic Church at Wythenshawe was opened and the Rev. Father Dalton, from Altrincham, was the first Rector.



ST. VINCENT'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH
(Interior View)

The Mission of St. Vincent's at Knutsford, was formed in 1861. Before that date it was served from Altrincham. There are Catholic schools in Hamon Road, Altrincham (mixed), and the Infants' school is in Thomas Street. The Catholic Institutions are the Loreto Convent, Dunham Road, Convent of Our Lady of The Vale, Bowdon Vale, Convent of the Franciscan, Missioners of St. Joseph, Dunham Park, (formerly the residence of Sir William Veno).

LIST OF RECTORS

Rev. M. O'Reilly, 1847-53.

Rev. J. Berry, 1853-55.

Rev. W. Walton, 1855-58.

Rev. H. Alcock, 1858-76.

Very Rev. Canon O'Brien, 1876-98.

Rev. W. F. Stanley, 1898-1903.

Rev. C. Ryder, 1903-07.

Very Rev. Canon Welsh, 1907-1931.

Very Rev. E. D. Kirby, R.D., 1931.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DOWNS

HISTORICALLY, the story of The Downs is simple and uneventful. A hundred years ago its fair slopes were covered with fertile pastures and richly cultivated gardens, with here and there a farmstead, and a few isolated cottages with whitewashed walls and thatched roofs. The roads were narrow and winding, bounded by thick hedges and overhung with leafy boughs. The principal path by which the villager climbed the hill to Bowdon was by a road from the present Railway Street, which wound a devious course by way of The Firs to the grey and historic church. The Firs, then known by the much homelier title of Burying Lane, was a name doubtless conferred upon it by the fact that through it were borne to their last resting place, the bodies of the dead. As may be gathered from the present name, the road lay deep in the shadow of some tall firs that had weathered a century's storms. The lane was barely more than a sandy track, on each side of which the grassy borders were shut in by clumps of bushes and venerable trees. Of the old fir trees there are now very few left. Their place has been taken by modern villas and orderly gardens, and in the new aspect put on by this suburban retreat hardly a shred of its original character has been retained.

From the old Burying Lane, a path known as Turf Lane, led to Dunham Road. As may be



THE HIGHER DOWNS

gathered from the name, the path lay across a turfy soil, damp and springy to the foot even in the driest day of summer, and it would be difficult to recognise in it the present St. Margaret's Road, with its many fine residences and spacious gardens. Quite as remarkable has been the change in Stamford Road, formerly known as Sandy Lane. This road, which is now bordered with modern houses of a good class, was in 1840 exactly what the natives called it—a sandy lane. Near to the present Heald Road was Heald Common, in the central part of which a broad pool tempted the angler. Both the common and the pool have disappeared, and they now lie beneath stylish houses and macadamised roads.

In the Civil War in 1644, Bowdon Downs was disturbed by no incident more important than that it was the halting place of the army commanded by Prince Rupert in the operations for the relief of Chester, which was then besieged by Sir William Brereton, a prominent Parliamentary leader. We are told by William Davenport, a Royalist chronicler, of Bramhall, that Prince Rupert "marcht up to Cheadle, where the Parliament's forces ran away." Four years later a meeting of the Lieutenancy was convened at Bowdon, and a resolution was agreed to "that three regiments, consisting each of 600 men strong, should be raised." There was, however, little inclination on the part of the natives to enrol themselves under the banner of the King, which may have been due to the strong local influence exerted by Sir George Booth, who was an active supporter of the Parliamentarians. Beyond the fact that the Downs were crossed by Prince Rupert's forces on their way to Chester, the district was not moved by the great civil strife, whose dreadful note was so plainly

heard in other places, and it remained what it had ever been, a peaceful and pastoral spot, over which the melodious bells of Bowdon Church chimed a noble benison.

More than two centuries and a half ago, Bowdon Downs was the scene of a tragedy which filled more than one home with sadness. It was on Bowdon Downs, in a field that afterwards became known as Radcliffe's Croft, that Robert Radcliffe, of Wythenshawe, the sixth and youngest son of Sir Alexander Radcliffe, of Ordsall, who had married the widow of Mr. William Tatton, of Wythenshawe, and by her was progenitor of the Radcliffes, of Foxdenton, was killed in a duel with Sir Samuel Daniel, of Tabley, on the 20th February, 1685, he being then only thirty years of age. The cause of the quarrel is not known, but the legendary story of the duel was put into verse in the last century by Thomas Barritt, the Manchester antiquary. The verses set forth that Sir Alexander had a son, and the following is a quotation of a portion :—

And he was Robert named,
Whose haughty conduct made his conduct blamed,
For on a day some friends in Cheshire met,
Some pleasant circumstance to celebrate.
But so this Robert, ere he went to bed,
Had with Sir Daniel quarelled.
The next day Robert out a-shooting went,
But still his mind upon revenge was bent.
By accident he met Sir Samuel
On Bowdon Downs, for so the people tell,
And fight he would, till one of them should die
Ere they did part, and that immediately.
Sir Samuel says, "I see how discord ends ;
I never thought but sleep had made us friends."
"No parley, man," says Robert ; "fight I will,

Or with my gun at once I will you kill."
"Well," says Sir Samuel, "if to fight I must,
My sword is not the sort I wish to rust."
Then fight they did, and on the sandy downs
Rash Robert fell, covered with blood and wounds.
Some country men did then his body move
From where he died unto some ground above,
Which little spot, as people yet do say,
Is called the "Radcliffe's Croft" unto this day.
From thence to Northen Church he was convey'd,
In Tatton Chapel there his corse was laid.
O'er him a stone does still remain to tell
By what sad circumstance this Robert fell.
Thus, in a fatal hour he lost his life,
And left at Withenshaw a widow'd wife.
Of fifteen generations now not one
Is left, of father, uncle, brother, son.
After this time the Radcliffes did decay ;
They dissipated Ordsall and its lands away.

As thus quaintly related by Barritt, the body of the duellist was buried in the Tatton Chapel in Northenden Church on the day following the fight. The stone which covered his remains is carved with a long and fulsome Latin epitaph. It was removed on the rebuilding of the church, and it is now on the north side of the churchyard. According to the inscription, Radcliffe was "of illustrious descent, of comely appearance, pious towards God, and unfailing in his worship; loyal to the kind, faithful to his friends, courteous to all, and a vigorous combatant. But the age being unworthy of such a hero, and heaven permitting it, he perished, strange to say, in a sword fight, in the presence of a few spectators, on the 20th of February in the year of our Lord, 1685, in the 30th year of his age."

The Dog Kennels were a familar feature of the Downs in 1855. They were situated on the land

immediately adjacent to the two houses occupied by Mr. Bowland and Mr. J. B. Brierley, at the junction of the Downs and Thorley Moor Lane. This land is now covered with shops and houses, but in those days it was almost entirely devoted to agricultural uses. At the Dog Kennels was kept a pack of harriers belonging to Mr. Isaac Harrop, a son of the Rev. Isaac Harrop, who was pastor of the Hale Unitarian Chapel for the long period of forty-six years. The kennels were in charge of John Walker, a local celebrity in a green plush jacket, waistcoat and breeches, leggings, and a low black hat, with a broad band of gold braid. On the opposite side of the road were fertile fields and pleasant gardens. Immediately above the road leading from the Downs into Wellington Place, whose date is fixed by the victory of the iron Duke at Waterloo, were two tiny cottages and a house of larger dimensions, belonging to the eighteenth century. Beyond them was the farm of Mr. Geoffrey Alcock. The house and farm buildings stood on the roadside, and the gardens and meadows covered a greater part of the district which is now known as New Street. Adjoining Mr. Alcock's house were some gardens, and next to these was the house of Mr. Postles, a gentleman of some position, who might often have been seen driving about the neighbourhood. His ordinary attire was a brown coat, a low-crowned hat, knee breeches and buckled shoes. In a list of the Mayors of Altrincham, the name of Mr. John Postles occurs for the year 1806.

Where the large residence known as the Red House now stands was the house of a Mr. Whitehead, a gentleman of private means, who acted as a kind of benefactor to the neighbourhood. He was the owner of three or four cows, and it was his practice to

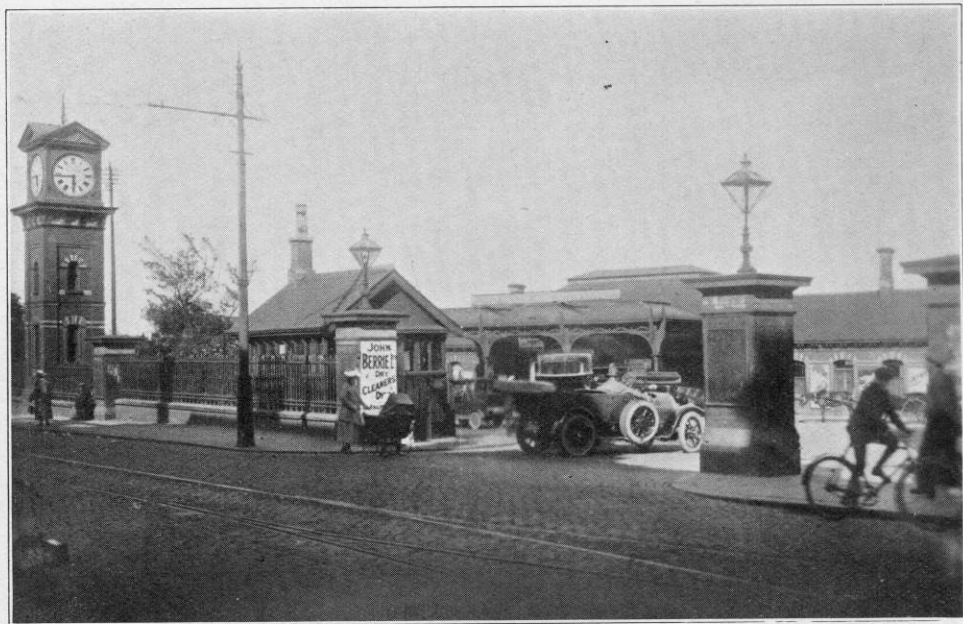


Photo by

Jas. L. Brown, 3, Stockport Road, Ardwick

ALTRINCHAM RAILWAY STATION

dispose of their milk to his neighbours at the nominal price of three-halfpence per quart. Every night and morning it was their custom to resort to the shippens in Woodville Road, with their cans and jugs, and to bear away the warm supplies of milk so bountifully and cheaply provided. The site of Park Field, was occupied by an ancient thatched house, to which a loom-shop was attached. Here for many years lived Mr. John Brown, on whose looms were woven dainty fabrics for Manchester warehouses. In front of the house there was a large tree, beneath whose shady branches the tired traveller on his way to Bowdon Church often remained to rest and enjoy a brief talk with Mr. Brown. The house was known as the Half Way House, from the fact that it used to be considered as the half-way point between the Altrincham Market Place and Bowdon Church. In those days the church might have been reached from Altrincham across the fields by a footpath, known as "The Narrows." The Downs lost their rural character on the introduction of the railway in 1849. Manchester merchants and opulent city tradesmen saw in the sunny slopes and green gardens a desirable place of retreat from the noise of town traffic, and it was not long before all rural landmarks were swept away to make way for the smart villas and the terraces of the new comers.

CHAPTER XIX

BOWDON DOWNS CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

A description of the Downs would not be complete without some account of the various religious causes which, at different times during the course of the last century, established themselves in the neighbourhood. The first place of worship to be built on the Downs was a small building erected about 1830 in the garden of Mr. Grafton, by the followers of a clergyman who had seceded from the Church of England. Of the early history of the little chapel there is no information of a reliable character to be obtained, but the church does not appear to have flourished, and even the name of the clergyman who established it cannot be found, either in written document or carven marble. The building was at the foot of the Downs, on the right-hand side, and some parts of it, which may still be traced in the gable behind one of the shops were appropriated for business purposes when the Downs began to assume its new character as a commercial and residential centre. Before its conversion, however, it was destined to play an important part in the religious history of the district, as the cradle of large and influential present-day churches.

The history of the Bowdon Downs Congregational Church is inseparably associated with the Downs, and the following brief chronicle is taken from the interesting narrative of the Rev. Henry Shaw, who, in 1900, published "The Story of the Church of

Christ of the Congregational Order meeting at Bowdon Downs, 1839-1900." The first attempt, says Mr. Shaw, to establish a church in the district was made in 1803 by the Rev. James Turner, who was so long and honourably associated with the church at Knutsford. Mr. Turner, who was born at Shaw, near Oldham, in March, 1782, was apprenticed to a bookseller in Manchester, and was one of the many young men who, a hundred years ago, came under the spell of the Rev. William Roby's influence. Entering the ministry, after a course of training at the College at Rotherham, he was sent in 1802 by Mr. Roby to preach at Knutsford. In 1808, he accepted an invitation to become the minister of the church, and retained the appointment until 1863.

In the course of Mr. Turner's journeys between Manchester and Knutsford, it occurred to him that an attempt should be made to found a church in Bowdon or Altrincham, and he accordingly secured the co-operation of a widow named Mrs. Cox, a member of the church at Gatley, in whose house—a thatched cottage near to the Altrincham Market Place—he commenced services in 1803. The attempt however, had to be abandoned in consequence of the lack of local sympathy and support. After the lapse of a number of years, a second attempt was made by the Rev. Joseph Whitworth, father of the late Sir Joseph Whitworth, but although the movement received the support of the Cheshire County Union it met with no great success, and the effort was again given up. In 1839, a third venture was made, which proved entirely successful. The small chapel at the foot of the Downs, the use of which had been relinquished by the clergyman who founded it, was purchased through the liberality of Mr. Ibotson

Walker and others on May 6th, 1839, for £465, a sum which the legal charges and the cost of certain necessary alterations raised to £588. The little sanctuary was opened for public worship on July 4th, 1839, when the services were conducted by the Revs. Dr. Raffles, of Liverpool, and S. Luke, of Chester, and by the Rev. James Turner, of Knutsford, by whom 36 years earlier the first seed had been sown. During the first year the church had only ten members, but in the following year it was determined to invite a minister to undertake the duties of the pastorate.

The invitation was accepted in April, 1840, by the Rev. John Earnshaw, whose ordination was shortly afterwards conducted by the Revs. John Ely, of Leeds, James Hill, of Chapel Street, Salford, James Turner, of Knutsford, and G. B. Kidd, of Macclesfield, who gave the charge to the church and congregation. After four years of earnest work, Mr. Earnshaw resigned the pastorate in March, 1844. His successor was the Rev. John Flavel Stenner, who entered upon his charge in 1844. In the same year the church, which had steadily increased in numbers, appointed as its first deacons, Mr. Ibotson Walker and Mr. William Burrow. The ministry of Mr. Stenner was terminated by his resignation in 1847. Still quoting from Mr. Shaw's interesting record we find that "the next minister, the Rev. John Wilkinson, entered on his work on July 18th, 1847, with every prospect of years of happy and useful service. During his ministry a movement for the erection of a larger and more convenient place of worship, which had been growing in strength for several years, culminated in the erection of the church on the Higher Downs. Mr. Wilkinson, however, did not live



ASHLEY ROAD, 1895

to rejoice in the consummation of his work. After a brief and successful ministry of ten months, his life reached its close on May 2nd, 1848. A month later, in June, the old chapel, which was subsequently converted into a Sunday and day school, was vacated, and the new building, to the cost of whose erection Mr. Thomas Simpson and other friends in Manchester had generously contributed, was dedicated in a solemn and impressive service conducted by the Revs. Dr. Raffles, Dr. Vaughan, of Lancashire College, Seymour Porter, and Francis Tucker. The first minister of the church in its new home was the Rev. Henry Christopherson, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, who accepted the call to the pastorate on March 25th, 1849, and began his work on April 8th. At his recognition service the Revs. Dr. Vaughan, Dr. Stowell, of Rotherham College, James Parsons, of York, and James Turner assisted, whilst the Rev. Dr. Raffles gave the charge to the church and congregation After seven and a half years of devoted and faithful service, Mr. Christopherson resigned the pastorate on October 20th, 1856, in consequence of the delicate condition of his wife's health. The members of the Church learned of his decision with unfeigned regret, and, for a short time, encouraged the hope that he might be induced to remain their minister. They suggested that he should reside at some distance from Bowdon, and generously and thoughtfully offered to place a conveyance at his disposal, and to bear the heavier financial burden which such a residence would necessitate. But Mr. Christopherson, though deeply grateful for their consideration, felt that his work would suffer if he lived elsewhere, and was constrained, therefore, to abide by his decision. Shortly afterwards he

removed to London, and became the minister of New College Chapel, St. John's Wood. The Rev. H. T. Robjohns, B.A., a student of Western College, who occupied the pulpit in April, 1857, accepted an invitation to succeed Mr. Christopherson, and on July 12th, he began his ministerial life at Bowdon.

THE BRITISH SCHOOLS

"During his pastorate new schools were built. The need of premises better adapted to the work of the school than the old chapel at the foot of the Downs, which had been used for the purposes of a day and Sunday school since 1848, had long been keenly felt, and at the church meeting, on January 27th, 1859, it was decided to provide the desired accommodation. An appeal was made at the meeting for funds to carry out the object, and the sum of £1,026 was immediately subscribed. A Building Committee was thereupon appointed, consisting of Messrs. S. Rigby, Charles Whitehead, William Milne, and Joseph Thompson. The committee, after experiencing considerable difficulty, finally secured a favourable site, in Oxford Road, and at the church meeting, held on February 20th, 1860, reported what they had done, and asked for further financial help. In answer to their appeal an additional sum of £936 was promised. The work was at once begun; and the opening of the new building in Oxford Road which cost £2,600 was celebrated by a social gathering on January 4th, 1861. Three days later a meeting of the scholars was held in celebration also of the event. It was expected that the premises would have been opened free of debt, but the amount realised from the sale of the

old building was less than had been anticipated, and when the accounts were settled there was an unfavourable balance of £288. In April of the following year that liability, with a liability upon the church, was extinguished.

"In the spring of 1861, Mr. Robjohns accepted an invitation to the pastorate of the church at West Clayton Street, Newcastle-on-Tyne, and presided for the last time on April 3rd at a meeting of the Bowdon church.

"Mr. Robjohns was succeeded in the pastorate by the Rev. A. J. Morris, of Holloway, in response to an invitation addressed to him on October 16th, 1861. He commenced his ministry on the first Sunday of January, 1862, but after preaching on the first three Sundays in January, his health broke down, and as the minister of the Downs Church he never preached again, although nominally he was the pastor of it for two years.

"For several months the pulpit was supplied by various ministers; then, in the autumn, when it became clear that Mr. Morris's illness would be a very protracted one, the Rev. T. M. Herbert, M.A., was appointed to discharge the duties for three months—an engagement which was prolonged to April of the following year, and then to the end of it. In August, 1863, Mr. Morris, who was undergoing medical treatment at Buxton, visited Bowdon, and wished to resign his anomalous position as minister of the church, but his friends would not listen to his suggestion, and replied to a letter of resignation which he sent on August 22nd, that arrangements had been made to supply the pulpit to the end of the year, and asking him to withdraw his letter. In December, however, a deputation visited him at Buxton, and,

on receiving their report of his condition, the church, with sorrow and reluctance, accepted his resignation on January 13th, 1864. Throughout that time of suspense and trouble, the church prospered. The Rev. T. M. Herbert gave himself loyally to its service, the offerings of the people suffered no diminution, a more earnest spirit was infused into the engagements of the Sunday school, and evangelistic work was carried on with greater vigour. The pressure of calamity only inspired the church to steadier and more unselfish effort. A kindly hand was stretched forth to help the struggling cause at Lymm; the mission at Hey Head was brought into closer association in 1863, and in the same year oversight was assumed of the church at Gatley—a connection which was maintained until 1869. In 1864, the mission at Mobberley became one of the evangelistic interests; mission work was also begun at Broadheath, while the church at Partington, which had long been labouring under difficulties, found its burden made lighter by the generous help and sympathy of the friends at Bowdon, and a year later evangelistic work was commenced at Baguley, resulting in the erection of a chapel in 1868, and in the formation of an independent church in 1872."

An invitation to the pastorate was extended to the Rev. Henry Griffiths, F.G.S., of Newington Chapel, Liverpool, on June 29th, 1864. Mr. Griffiths decided to accept it, and he entered upon his ministerial duties on the second Sunday of October. Under his direction the congregation took up the question of the enlargement of the church with great earnestness, and a representative committee was appointed for the purpose of raising the necessary funds. At the

outset a proposal was made in favour of the erection of an entirely new chapel at an estimated cost of £7,000, but this was finally abandoned in view of the difficulty of obtaining a suitable site, and the alternative plan of extending the existing building was resolved upon. With its style of Early Perpendicular Gothic, the design of the enlargement was made to harmonise. The addition took the form of transepts with galleries, which not only increased the proportions of the church in a very material way, but enhanced the dignity of its architectural features. The cost of the scheme was about £3,000, and the enlarged church was opened for public worship on Easter Sunday, April 12th, 1868. In the same year a new organ, by Jardine, of Manchester, was opened by the late Mr. John Mills, who, from 1868 to 1883, was the honorary organist and choirmaster.

Mr. Mills, who, as the founder and managing director of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Banking Company, was a prominent figure in the commercial world, was a musician of great originality and taste, while his published poems show him to have had more than ordinary literary power. A memorial in the church bears the inscription :—"In memory of John Mills, of Northwold, Dunham Massey, honorary organist and choirmaster of this church from 1868-1883. This tablet was placed here by the choir in recognition of his devoted service, October, 1897."

•The church, during the pastorate of Professor Griffiths, made many advances, and among the new departures upon which it entered was the opening of a mission at the British Schools. The schools at that time were entirely surrounded by fields and gardens. Even the road had not then been made, and of the evidences of the growth that subsequently set in

there were none. Since then, however, the entire aspect of the district has been altered. Houses have been built, roads and streets have been constructed, and the locality is now one of the most prosperous and populous parts of Altrincham. For some time services were held at the British Schools, but they were given up on the re-opening of the old chapel on the Downs by the Rev. A. Dewar. His successor was the Rev. W. B. MacWilliam, under whose ministrations so much progress was made that the old Wesleyan Chapel in Regent Road, which was vacated in 1866, on the erection of a larger chapel in Bank Street, was purchased. On the 10th April, 1868, the Rev. C. Aylard entered upon his duties as the pastor, and for some time he laboured with great assiduity and success. The mission, however, was transferred to the British Schools in 1873, where under the ministrations of Mr. John Adamson, it prospered for several years. On his death, Mr. Adamson was succeeded by Mr. W. M. Ainsbury, who for a number of years rendered devoted service.

The decision to develop the mission work at Broadheath, and to erect a new church in Ashley Road, Hale, led to the discontinuance of the services at the British Schools, although the institution was still maintained as a public elementary school of a highly successful kind and for the purposes of a Sunday school. Additions have been made to the main building at various times, and in its direction its managers have ever displayed the utmost energy and judgment. A tablet on one of the walls bears this tribute to the memory of one of the most ardent supporters of the institution—
“To the memory of Samuel Butler, for twenty-eight years superintendent, and seven years teacher of the



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Jas. L. Brown, 3, Stockport Road, Ardwick.

OXFORD ROAD, 1895.

Sunday School meeting here; this tablet is erected by his fellow officers, his fellow teachers, and the scholars, all of whom honour his fidelity and love to recall his name."

The Day Schools gained a wide reputation under the headmastership of Mr. John Ferguson, whose period of service extended over many years. On his retirement, he was succeeded by Mr. A. W. Boucher, who fully maintained the traditions and the high scholastic character of a popular educational centre, which has left an indelible impression on the life of Altrincham.

The pastorate of Professor Griffiths covering a period of nearly eleven years, closed on the 27th January, 1875. His friends showed how gratefully they appreciated his services, and how lovingly they regarded him. A testimonial fund was opened, of which Mr. William Armitage was the treasurer, and Mr. W. A. Arnold the secretary, and a sum of £2,128 was raised, which was invested with the Manchester Corporation in the purchase of two annuities, one of £100 for Mr. Griffiths, and another, a joint and survivor annuity of £100 for Mr. Griffiths and his wife. After leaving Bowdon, Mr. Griffiths made his home in High Barnet, of whose church he was for several years the minister, and where he found time to engage in congenial literary work and study. His last years were spent at Isleworth and Bushey Heath, where he died on August 14th, 1891, at the ripe age of nearly eighty years."

On the resignation of Professor Griffiths, the church invited the Rev. Alexander Mackennal, B.A., who was then minister of the Gallowtree Gate Church, Leicester, to accept the pastorate. The

invitation was sent to him on the 15th December, 1876, and his letter intimating his acceptance was dated December 19th. He commenced his ministerial duties early in the following year, and the claim that under his firm and inspiring guidance, which extended over a period of twenty-eight years, the church rose to a position of commanding influence in the Congregational order, is one that is perfectly justified.

With the varied activities of the Bowdon Downs Church the new pastor identified himself with characteristic energy, and under his inspiring direction there was a marked development of interest not only at the centre, but in the rural districts of Broadheath, Bucklow Hill, Partington, Baguley, and Mobberley, where missions were established and maintained. In order to provide means of accommodation for the various societies connected with the church, a handsome and well-appointed church parlour and a fine lecture hall were built at a cost of £2,540. The additions to the conveniences of the church were formally opened on the 29th November, 1882. The distinguished services rendered by Dr. Mackennal were recognised in 1887 by his election to the chair of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and in the same year, he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the University of Glasgow. Two years later, he paid his first visit to America on official business, when he went as representing the Congregational Union, at the Triennial National Council of the Congregational Churches of the United States. The conference met at Worcester, Mass., and on the same visit Dr. Mackennal met the Congregational Union of Ontario in Toronto. Soon after his return to England, he

threw himself earnestly into the work of the federation of the churches, with the importance of which he was profoundly impressed, and he acted as secretary to the meeting of the representatives of the different churches—Presbyterian, Congregational, Baptist, Wesleyan Methodist, Methodist New Connexion, Primitive Methodist, United Methodist Free Churches, Bible Christians and the Society of Friends—which was held in Manchester in 1891. The Congress arose out of a private meeting at the house of Mr. Percy Bunting, at which the desirability of drawing the Evangelical Free Churches into closer communion was considered. Some months afterwards, Dr. Mackennal received a request to endeavour to arrange for a Congress in Manchester. He invited several leaders of the Free Churches to a private meeting and they determined to summon the Congress. Appointed secretary to make the arrangements, Dr. Mackennal subsequently became secretary to the Congress. A second Congress was held in Leeds and there have since been annual meetings. The third Congress resolved upon the adoption of the name of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches, with a president annually elected and regular meetings in March. Dr. Mackennal held the post of secretary until 1898, when he was appointed president. The purpose of the Federation which was to weld the churches together into closer fellowship and co-operation, and to enable them to declare their common judgment on matters of social and national import, may be said to have been fulfilled, and it was largely due to Dr. Mackennal's statesmanlike qualities, and his lofty enthusiasm and intense earnestness, that this was effected.

Dr. Mackennal went a second time, in 1898, as the English representative to the Triennial Council meeting at Portland, Oregon. The chief reason for conferring a second appointment upon him was in view of the International Council, which was to meet in Boston the following year. It was felt that as he had been Secretary of the first International Council in London in 1891, he would be able to help the American Committee in its final determination as to the course of business. He travelled to Portland by the Canadian Pacific Railway, along the border between Canada and the United States, and the week of his journey was that of the first and decisive American victory over the Spanish in Cuba. In his address to the Council, he congratulated them on the issue of the war, and spoke of the grave international responsibilities thus coming on the American people. The following Sunday was Independence Day, and Dr. Mackennal was invited to address a town's meeting in the theatre. This led to the presentation to him by "the citizens of Portland" of a flag, "the Stars and Stripes." The next year Dr. Mackennal was English Vice-President of the second International Council of the Congregational Churches, and served the Council in that capacity in Boston. In 1901, he delivered the "Carew Lecture" to the Theological Seminary in Hartford, Conn. His subject was "The Evolution of English Congregationalism." The course of six lectures was afterwards delivered at the Theological Seminary of Chicago, and in the same year it was published in volume form.

For some years Dr. Mackennal was one of the chief reviewers for the *Nonconformist*, and was one of the editors of the *Review of the Churches*. He was the first president of the Altrincham and Bowdon Evangelical

Free Church Council, and for several years had a seat on the Board of Governors of the Altrincham Provident Dispensary and Hospital. In 1891, he was appointed to succeed Dr. Dale as Chairman of the Council of Mansfield College, Oxford, and besides delivering two courses of lectures, he was a frequent preacher at the College, and was resident lecturer on pastoral theology in 1893. On his death the Council of the College passed the following resolution :—"The Council of Mansfield College desires to put on record its sense of the eminent services rendered by the late Alexander Mackennal, Doctor of Divinity, to all the Free Churches of England, but especially to those of the Congregational order, and to this College, and through it to the Christian ministry in all the Churches. It desires also to express its profound regret at the loss his death has inflicted on our religious institutions in general, and Mansfield College in particular. He took a leading part in its foundation, and has been its chairman since the retirement of Dr. Dale, in 1891. He was at once a scholar and a divine, suave yet firm, gracious in spirit and speech, kind yet courageous, thoughtful and courteous as a chairman, considerate to candidates, affectionate to students, the devoted friend alike of the tutors and the members of the Council and the Board. He would have adorned the headship of any institution, for he was wise and statesmanlike in counsel, upright in conduct, clear-sighted in policy, reserved and restrained in temper, conciliatory in word, and in deed fearless, honest and honourable. Details never wearied him, nor the labour needed for their mastery. We desire to express our gratitude to God for the gift of so good and so wise a man as our late Chairman, and we instruct

the Secretary to inscribe this resolution in the minutes and the Principal to forward the same to his family."

A desire that Dr. Mackennal should be relieved of some portion of his pastoral duty in view of the claims made upon his services in the larger life of the church found expression in 1891, when it was decided that an assistant should be appointed. The first minister to be appointed to that position was the Rev. J. Kirk Maconachie. He was a student of the Western College, and commenced his duties in January, 1892. Mr. Maconachie held the position of assistant until July, 1893, when he accepted an invitation to succeed the Rev. Dr. Finlayson as minister of the Rusholme Church. On the 1st September, 1893, the Rev. M. F. Peterson, M.A., of the Edinburgh Theological Hall, was appointed, and he filled the office until April 14th, 1895, when he resigned to go to the Clarendon Park Church, Leicester. He was succeeded in October, 1895, by the Rev. J. Hutchison, of the Lancashire College, who retired in May, 1897, to become the pastor of the church at St. Ives, Huntingdonshire. The Rev. W. Moncrieff, M.A., who studied at the Theological Hall, Edinburgh, succeeded him in September, 1897. Mr. Moncrieff resigned the position in 1901, on his acceptance of the pastorate of the church at Bournemouth, and he was succeeded in September, 1903, by the Rev. John Holden, of Norwich.

DR. MACKENNAL'S FORTIETH YEAR AND DEATH

The completion of the fortieth year of Dr. Mackennal's ministerial life was celebrated by a large gathering at Bowdon in May, 1898, and he was

the recipient of an illuminated address from the congregation.

At the end of March, 1904, he took part in the annual meetings of the Federation at Newcastle-on-Tyne, where he contracted a cold. Although not feeling well he travelled to London to preach at the induction of the Rev. Dugald Macfadyen as minister of the Highgate Congregational Church, on April 3rd. He was the guest of Mr. and Mrs. Wenham, of Highgate, at whose house he arrived on Saturday, April 2nd. When he rose on the Sunday morning, the effects of the chill from which he was suffering were much more marked, and he said he had had a shivering fit, but assured his friends that he felt quite well enough to fulfil his engagement. It was deemed wise, however, to seek medical advice, and the result was that the patient was ordered under no circumstances whatever to leave his room. The closing chapter of Dr. Mackennal's life has been pathetically related by the Rev. Dugald Macfadyen in *The Life and Letters of Alexander Mackennal, B.A., D.D.* He writes:—"The story of the next three months is one which the watchers in the sick room will readily understand, though few have gone through the experience with so good a patient. At first Dr. Mackennal was confident that he would be well again in a few days. He would look out the trains to Altrincham. Then he planned a short holiday with his sister, Mrs. Chambers, at Sidmouth, to give himself a chance for recovery. But meanwhile his temperature kept rising and falling, and the doctors would not hear of his being moved. Dr. Schorstein, of the London Hospital, came out to see him, and after his consultation those who tended him knew that it was

doubtful if Dr. Mackennal could recover. Friends came to see him from far and near, and many who were not allowed to see him made their pilgrimage to Hampstead Lane; 'for,' they said, 'Mackennal is a man I entirely respect and admire' There was a day when he sent for me, and said that now he was 'committing all into other hands than his own.' He spoke a few words of personal counsel, talked to me on the subject of my last sermon, and said, 'There has come to me of late an apprehension of spiritual realities so vivid as to be almost overwhelming. I feel I shall never be able to express either in speech or writing, the truths I have seen; and I think, Dugald, this may be a preparation for those things which God has prepared for them that love Him.' On Thursday, June 23rd, the end came. The body of Dr. Mackennal was brought to Bowdon, and the great funeral service, at which an address was delivered by the Rev. Dr. Fairbairn, was attended by a distinguished gathering representative of every shade of religious and political thought.

At a meeting of the congregation in September, 1904, an invitation was extended to the Rev. John Holden, M.A., who since September, 1903, had filled the position of junior pastor, to succeed Dr. Mackennal. He accepted the invitation, and commenced his duties on Sunday, October 1st. Mr. Holden resigned the pastorate in March, 1913, and was succeeded in September, 1914, by the Rev. Leyton Richards, who had charge of the church until July, 1916. Mr. Richards was absent from his charge throughout the rest of the Great War, until June, 1919. He resigned his appointment in December, 1924, and it was not until September, 1925, that the new minister, the Rev. John Whale

commenced his duties. He relinquished the position in January, 1929, and was followed by the Rev. G. K. Davies, the present minister in July, 1929.

BROADHEATH CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The establishment of the branch church at Broadheath dates from the year 1859, when the district was of a wholly rural character. The earliest services were held in a hired boat, moored on the Bridgewater canal, at a point opposite to the place where at a future date a school was built, in Navigation Road. In 1860, the boat services were transferred to a room in the Iron Foundry, and their success was greatly aided by the assistance of the late Mr. John Rigby, of the Mount, who manifested the deepest interest in the welfare of Broadheath. Subsequently, the services were held at a house in Wharf Road, and at a still later date, they were carried on in a house in Manchester Road. So much progress was made that in 1864, a small chapel was built in Navigation Road by the Bowdon Downs Congregational Church, through the Rural Mission Committee. There were then no indications of the industrial expansion which has been so marked a feature of Broadheath in recent years, and it was confidently expected that the modest chapel would be adequate for the requirements of many years to come. Commercial interests were almost exclusively represented by the goods and passenger stations of the London and North-Western Railway, whose line from Warrington to Stockport passed through the heart of Broadheath, the warehouses of the Bridgewater Trustees, and a small iron foundry, where a few moulders and labourers were employed. The foundry

subsequently became known as the Borax Works, while further changes were effected at later periods. From 1864 to 1874, the mission was in charge of Mr. W. Fielden. In 1881, it was placed under the care of Mr. Stephen Nicholls, by whom the work was steadily developed on sound lines.

The erection in 1883, of the Atlantic Engineering Works, by Messrs. George Richards and Company, Ltd., brought a new population to the district, and in 1886, schools were erected in connection with the mission. The building was not only used as a Sunday School, but for the purposes of elementary education, and under the management of an active and capable committee, it soon became recognised as the principal educational centre in a locality whose population every year began to grow. In commemoration of Mr. John Rigby, who was rightly regarded as the founder of the mission, the committee conferred upon the new schools the name of the Rigby Memorial Schools, and they are still known by that title.

Meanwhile Broadheath was in a state of transition, and the eighties and nineties were remarkable for the important additions made to its industrial interests. The canal and railway offered convenient facilities to manufacturers in search of suitable sites for works in localities favoured by low rates, and with room for expansion, and the establishment of the large concern of Messrs. George Richards and Co., was but the beginning of the new commercial era. Large works were built in 1894, by Messrs. Luke and Spencer, Ltd., makers of grinding machines and emery wheels; the Thornton-Pickard Manufacturing Co., Ltd., makers of cameras and photographic apparatus; the Altrincham Electric Supply Limited, and Messrs. H. F. O'Brien and Co., oil merchants, whose advent



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LINOTYPE HOUSING ESTATE

was followed by the erection of houses and shops for the accommodation of a new population of an entirely industrial character.

A still greater change took place on the 25th February, 1896, when a large part of the Oldfield estate was purchased by the Linotype Company. The total area acquired by the company was about thirty acres of which four were covered with spacious workshops and offices, completely equipped with modern plant, for the manufacture of the linotype composing machine and printing machinery. The rest of the land was utilised by the company for the erection of workmen's dwellings. Builders quickly seized upon the opportunity, and embarked upon building operations in other directions in so enterprising a manner that very soon the pastoral features of Broadheath became but a pleasant memory. Even the main road between the canal and Altrincham, which not long before was bordered by a few old-fashioned cottages and green hedgerows, was a marked spot, and where once overhanging trees threw deep shadows on the dusty highway and wild honeysuckle scented the summer air, are now shops and houses and even three imposing banks.

Besides the firms already mentioned, other undertakings found Broadheath a convenient place in which to plant their standards. In 1896, Tilghman's Sand Blast Co., Ltd., makers of sand blast apparatus, took over the machine tool works of George Richards and Co., Ltd., when they transferred their works from Sheffield, and seventeen years later, built another large manufactory on a ten-acre plot. Messrs. H. W. Kearns and Co., Ltd., machine tool makers, built their manufactory close by about 1908. Other concerns are those of Meldrum Bros.,

Ltd., general engineers, and makers of refuse destructors; the Budenburg Gauge Co., Ltd., makers of pressure gauges; the Castleton Steam Packing Co., Ltd., makers of steam and hydraulic packings; the Churchill Machine Tool Co., Ltd., machine tool makers—principally “Precision” grinding machines; C. S. Madan and Co., Ltd., bronze founders; Blackwell’s and National Roofings, Ltd., roofing felt manufacturers; the Record Electrical Co., Ltd., electrical engineers; the Radium (Broadheath) Ltd., boot and shoe dressings manufacturers; Lord Bros. (Broadheath), Ltd., tin canister manufacturers; the Alliance Colour and Chemical Co., Ltd., aniline colour manufacturers; Frederick J. Hampson, Ltd., matting manufacturers; Sherratt and Hughes, printers; Charles Price and Sons, engineers; the Automatic Scale Co., Ltd., and the Lancashire Road Roller Co., Ltd. The total number of hands employed in the various works is between four and five thousand, in addition to many others who are engaged in different minor industries.

In 1898, the Rural Mission Committee reported to the Downs Church that in their opinion the character and extent of the population called for the erection of a new and more spacious church building, and for the appointment of a minister able by education and character to undertake the pastorate, and at the end of 1899, a joint representative committee, elected annually by the Downs Church and the members of the church at Broadheath, took over the charge of the extension of the cause. Mr. S. Nicholls resigned his appointment in 1899, in consequence of failing health, and it was determined to give effect to the opinion of the Rural Mission Committee to proceed

with the erection of a new church, and to appoint an independent pastor. A large plot of land with an approach from Manchester Road had already been secured at a cost of £800, in anticipation of this step, and in addition, in order to effect a reduction of the rent on the site of the old chapel and school, a sum of £200 was paid. In October, 1900, the Rev. Will. D. Thomas, a student of Cheshunt College, was ordained to the pastorate. Immediately on his appointment Mr. Thomas devoted himself to the work of advancing the scheme for the erection of the new church, and the undertaking was so heartily supported that the foundation stones were laid on the 26th July, 1902, and the new church was opened on the 29th September, 1903. The entire work involved an expenditure of £4,500. Mr. Thomas resigned the pastorate in November 1916, to go to Congleton, and he was succeeded by the Rev. Miles Williams, the present minister, in May, 1917.

HALE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

The readiness of the members of the Bowdon Downs Congregational Church to respond to new claims upon their liberality was further illustrated in 1899, by the establishment of the Ashley Road Congregational Church, Hale. Here, as at Broadheath, a new residential district had grown up, and early in 1897, the feeling that the religious needs of the neighbourhood could only be adequately served by a separate church found general expression.

A plot of land was secured on the main Ashley Road, containing 4,220 square yards, giving ample room for the school church, and a main building in front. The foundation stone of the school church was laid on May 21st, 1898, by Dr. Mackennal. The

school church was built by Messrs. Wm. Lambert and Son, from the designs of Messrs. Wm. Waddington and Son, at a cost, including the furnishing, heating, and lighting, and the laying out of the grounds, of £3,868 16s. 11d. A further sum of £641 5s. was spent in the purchase of the site in order to reduce the chief rent to £5 per annum, making a total of £4,510 1s. 11d., towards which at the time of opening £3,593 18s. 7d. had been promised, including £500 from the Lancashire and Cheshire Congregational Chapel Building Society. The school church was opened for public worship on May 4th, 1899.

The origin of three Congregational Churches, whose history has thus been briefly described, is, therefore, to be traced to the movement which commenced in the little chapel at the foot of the Downs in 1839.

TRINITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

In the same modest chapel was also established the Bowdon Presbyterian Church, on the 22nd December, 1867. The first session, which was appointed on the 7th January, 1868, consisted of ministers and elders from the Manchester Presbytery. On the 19th November, 1868, the Rev. W. T. Johnston, afterwards Dr. Johnston, was called to the charge. He accepted the call, and was ordained in the following January. Mr. Johnston, who was a native of Greenock, was educated at Glasgow University, and had officiated for a year in Free St. John's, Edinburgh, and for a year in Woolwich. On his appointment, the number of the congregation on the rolls was 35, and there was also a small Sunday School. He resigned the charge in December, 1885, to undertake ministerial duty in Worcester. During his

pastorate the congregation largely increased and in 1870, it was decided to build a new church. The site selected was in Delamer Road, where a handsome church was erected, in the Gothic style of architecture. The appearance of the building is enhanced by a spire of 120ft. in height, and adjoining the main building is a fine lecture hall. The church, whose cost exceeded £6,000 was opened on the 22nd September, 1872. In 1883, the church commenced a mission in a small room in Victoria Street. This organisation in a few years outgrew the home in which it was formed, and in April, 1891, a new Mission Hall in Stamford Street was opened. The Rev. W. T. Johnston was succeeded by the Rev. Robert Tennent Cunningham, who was inducted on the 10th March, 1887. Mr. Cunningham's brief pastorate ended with his sudden death at a meeting of the Manchester Presbytery on the 10th September, 1888. The Rev. Wilson Cowie, who accepted the call of the church, was inducted in September, 1889. He held the pastorate until his death, after a short illness, on the 27th February, 1901, and was succeeded by the Rev. R. M. Gray, on the 6th October, 1901. Mr. Gray was followed in May, 1913, by the Rev. R. J. Wright, who left in September, 1918, to take charge of the Somerset Road Church, Bolton, and on the 26th March, 1919, the Rev. Lewis G. Tucker was inducted as minister. At the end of May, 1934, Mr. Tucker resigned to take up the pastorate of St. Andrew's Church, Cheltenham, and he was succeeded on the 13th February, 1935, by the Rev. G. Armstrong Bannister.

THE BAPTIST CHURCH

The little Downs sanctuary was destined to become the birthplace of a fifth church. After its vacation by

the Presbyterians in 1872, it became the home of the Baptists of the neighbourhood, who first formed themselves into a church in 1872, under the leadership of the Rev. H. J. Betts. In 1874, the Rev. W. S. Llewellyn began a vigorous pastorate, which extended over seven years. His ministry was made memorable by the erection of the present commodious chapel in Hale Road at a cost of £3,000. The building, which is Italian in character, was erected from the designs of Mr. William Owen, and it has accommodation for 500 worshippers. The successor to Mr. Llewellyn in the pastorate, was the Rev. Henry Mowbray, who was appointed in 1881. In 1887, the pastor and a number of the members seceded, and formed themselves into a new church, which met in an iron structure, erected on what was then a plot of waste ground near the old Bowdon Station, off Railway Street. The Rev. H. C. Leonard, M.A., was called to the vacant pastorate in 1888, and remained with the church for some two and a half years. He was succeeded by the Rev. W. H. Perkins, M.A., whose brief ministry of three months was followed by an interregnum ending in the voluntary disbanding of the church and the closing of the doors in January, 1892. Three months later the church was re-opened, with the Rev. Henry Mowbray as honorary pastor, who brought back with him the congregation he had formed at the Iron Church in Railway Street. On the 5th March, 1893, the pastorate was accepted by the Rev. F. Cowell Lloyd. Mr. Mowbray continued to act as honorary co-pastor for a further period of one year and nine months, when he resigned the position to take up duty at the Mission Hall of Mr. W. J. Crossley, Openshaw. On Mr. Lloyd's arrival, there was a debt on the church property of £800, and it

was an extremely difficult matter for the congregation to meet their financial obligations, owing to the interest on the debt. Mr. Lloyd, however, attacked the matter with so much determination that by 1897, he achieved what had hitherto been regarded as an impossible task, in liquidating the entire debt, and placing the church on a thoroughly sound financial basis. Since then the church has steadily grown in numbers and influence and in 1902, it voluntarily ceased to receive the generous financial aid that had for so many years been rendered through the Home Mission Fund of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association of Baptist Churches, and became, for the first time, an entirely self-supporting church. Mr. Lloyd resigned in January, 1917, to go to Denmark Place Baptist Church, London, and was succeeded in May, by the Rev. Gordon Hamblin, who, in September, 1919, left to go to Bethany Baptist Church, Crowder. From February, 1920, to September, 1925, the minister was the Rev. E. G. Keene. He was appointed minister at Newport, Isle of Wight, and from November, 1926, to November, 1932, the church was in charge of the Rev. E. R. Fowles, now the pastor at Walmer, Kent. The present minister, the Rev. W. G. Barnes, accepted the pastorate when a student in May, 1933, and on the completion of his training, he took charge in October, 1934.

METHODIST NEW CONNEXION CHURCH

The Methodist New Connexion Church had its birth early in the century in the kitchen of Mr. Walter Watson, in Norman's Place, where services were held for a time under the direction of Mr. Joseph Gleave. As the cause prospered, the little

congregation bought a site in George Street and erected the present chapel in 1821. Behind the chapel and adjoining it, a two-storied building was raised, which was used both as a day and Sunday school. The church grew gradually under the ministry of the Rev. T. Allin, widely known as preacher and author, who settled in Altrincham on retiring from circuit work. With his daughter, he established a "Seminary for Young Ladies" at Mount House. As the Connexion possessed no college at that time, Mr. Allin received a number of students and prepared them for the ministry of the Church. He was followed by the Rev. John Mills, who founded a boarding school for boys, first in Norman's Place, afterwards at Woollam House. The minister succeeding Mr. Mills was the Rev. S. Hulme, who won wide fame as an eloquent preacher. He died in the year 1902, at the ripe old age of 94 years, and left a valuable collection of books to the denominational Training Institute for Ministers, Ranmoor College, Sheffield. The present Sunday School on a plot of ground behind the chapel was built in the year 1860. About this time, owing to an alteration in the circuit arrangements, the church was deprived of a resident minister, and for several years it laboured under difficulties, financial and otherwise. The clouds did not disperse until 1874, when the Rev. T. Scowby became superintendent of the circuit. By his zeal and earnestness he infused fresh life into the congregation, and by dint of great effort they succeeded in clearing off the chapel debt of £400. The stimulus given by Mr. Scowby was well sustained by the Rev. Samuel Smith, when, after a long and useful career, extending from 1834 to 1877, he returned to his native town. Under Mr. Smith's pastorate, the



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GEORGE STREET ABOUT 1900

church gathered strength and various improvements both to the Sunday School and the chapel were carried out.

THE PRIMITIVE METHODISTS

Various other religious bodies have found in Altrincham a fertile soil into which to dig their roots, and not the least vigorous among them is the Primitive Methodist Church in Oxford Road. The members began their services in 1835, in a loft over a stable in Newtown, and in 1878 they were strong enough to build a chapel, with a Sunday School in a semi-basement below, at a cost of £1,212. The cause prospered and in 1921, it was decided to build new school premises on a site adjoining the chapel in Oxford Road, as a memorial to Mr. Frederick and Mrs. Kean, who had rendered long and distinguished service both to the church and the school. The new school was opened in July, 1922, and named "The Kean Memorial School."

WELSH CALVINISTIC METHODISTS

The Welsh community also have a church of their own (built in 1903) in Willow Tree Road, a fine avenue, cut through a field to connect Hale Road with Ashley Road, by Mr. J. H. Brown, who built a long terrace of substantial houses, on the site in the nineties. Before building their chapel, the Welsh people held their services in a small meeting room, and annually held a big rally in the British Schools, which was always the occasion of a festival of song and the flow of oratory. At one of these meetings,

Mr. David Lloyd George was present and delivered an inspiring speech on Welsh music.

SALVATION ARMY

The Salvation Army has carried on an active religious work in Altrincham for more than fifty years. For ten years, the local corps occupied the old Unitarian Chapel in Shaw's Lane, when land was purchased behind Beggars' Square in George Street as a site for barracks, which were opened on December 7th, 1901. General Booth, the head of the movement, visited Altrincham on August 14th, 1906, in the course of his famous motor-car campaign, from Inverness to Plymouth, and in the afternoon, addressed a public meeting in the Public Hall, after being officially welcomed by Mr. Samuel Birtles (chairman) on behalf of the District Council.

THE NEWTOWN NIGHT SCHOOL

Nor must we omit to mention the Newtown Night School, which was carried on under the management of Mr. Henry Barratt for over thirty years. The movement was commenced in 1858, on a non-sectarian basis, by the Rev. John Kingsley (Vicar of St. Margaret's), and Messrs. John Carlisle, William Armitage, C. W. Grundy and William Milne. Shortly afterwards, Mr. H. Barratt undertook the control, and maintained an active interest in its work until his death in 1897. There is a penny bank and three nights a week are devoted to secular instruction. On Sunday evenings two services are held for children and adults.

CHURCH OF CHRIST

The members of the Church of Christ, too, have a small chapel in Ashfield Road, which was formed about 1900, to form a connection between the Manor

Road district and Hale Road. In the erection of the little Tabernacle, a prominent part was taken by Mr. Robert Gatley, a former Chairman of the District Council and Mr. James Sumner, and the progress of the cause owed much to their active and useful services.

CHAPTER XX

WESLEYAN METHODISM.

JOHN WESLEY'S VISITS TO ALTRINCHAM

JOHN Wesley himself sowed the first seed of Wesleyan Methodism in Altrincham in 1738. There is no record of his having preached in the town on that occasion, but it may be concluded that the object of his visit was to meet in council the little handful of those who were friendly to his cause. Wesley arrived in Altrincham on the evening of a day in March, and writes in his journal :—"Being faint in the evening, I called at Altringham, and there lit upon a Quaker well skilled in, and, therefore, as I soon found, sufficiently fond of controversy. After an hour spent thereon (perhaps not in vain) I advised him to dispute as little as possible, but rather follow after holiness, and walk humbly with his God." On Sunday, May 28th, 1745, Wesley was again in Altrincham, and writes :—"I preached at 5 (as I had done over night) about a mile from Altringham on 'Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation.' A plain man came to me afterwards and said, 'Sir, I find Mr. Hutchings and you do not preach the same way. You bid us read the Bible and pray and go to church; but he bids us let all this alone, and says that if we go to church and sacrament we shall never come to Christ.' " This early morning service to which Wesley refers is supposed to have taken place under the shade of a pear tree in the orchard of

Mr. Priestner, on Oldfield Brow. In 1747, he again preached at the same place to a much larger congregation, of which he writes :—"Though many of them had been hurt by doubtful disputations, they now began again to take root downward and bear fruit upward."

On the same occasion Wesley visited Booth Bank, Millington, and here was formed the parent church in the present Altrincham circuit. Of his visit to Booth Bank, Wesley writes (1747) :—"In the evening I preached at Booth Bank among a quiet and loving people, but a famous Ana-baptist teacher, Joseph Pickup by name, had lately occasioned some disturbance among them. He had given them a particular account of a conference he had had with me on the road, what he said, and what I said, and how he had stopped my mouth with the 17th article. In the morning I told them the plain fact. I had overtaken him on the road, and we rode half a bow-shot together, but did not exchange five sentences till we parted." At Booth Bank, lived John and Alice Cross, plain and homely farmers, whose feet rarely took them beyond the sound of the bells of the ancient church at Rostherne. They gladly welcomed the early Methodist preachers to their house, and a pulpit was fixed in their largest room. A society was formed, and Alice Cross was made the leader. It is said that she influenced her husband by one day exclaiming, 'John Cross, wilt t'a go to heaven wi' me? If not, I'm determined not to go to hell wi' thee.' " John Pawson, one of the early preachers, in describing the character of Alice Cross, says, "She was one of the most zealous, active and spiritually-minded women I ever knew." The farmhouse was licensed for preaching before any Methodist chapel

was built in Manchester, and for generations the place was the happy home of Methodist itinerants. Alice Cross wrought ceaselessly, warning, praying, relieving distress, assailing gentle and simple with her plain exhortation, defending the persecuted Methodists, and when no preacher appeared, delivered an address, although she never occupied the pulpit herself. The first Cheshire quarterly meeting was held in the famous farmhouse. On one occasion it is recorded that Mrs. Cross stopped the Cheshire hunt when passing her house and addressed Lord Stamford and Sir Harry Mainwaring, "who listened to her warning and rode on." Mrs. Cross died in 1774, aged 65. Her husband died in 1795. Mr. Pawson describes the personal appearance of Alice Cross as being remarkably neat and plain, and adds: "Never wearing a border on her caps, which were made of linen, pinned in a plait on the forehead, and tied under her chin, her features were strongly developed, so that even in those days of primitive simplicity, she presented an appearance not easily forgotten. I had heard a good deal about Alice, and when I first went to the house she was standing in the doorway. She was dressed exceedingly plain, but remarkably clean, and if I can form any just idea how a person would look who had just come from a world of happy spirits, I should suppose that she very nearly resembled such a one; and I seriously think, more so than any woman I ever yet saw in the whole course of my life."

Four visits were paid altogether by Wesley to Booth Bank, and among the itinerant preachers who received hearty welcome and hospitality there were John Nelson and Joseph Guildford. Of this early period in the history of local Methodism, some

memorials have been preserved by Mr. David Cross, of Timperley, a lineal descendant of the family at Booth Bank. One of these is a boot-jack, made by John Nelson. It is rudely fashioned out of a piece of deal which has evidently never known a carpenter's plane, and the opening for the insertion of the boot heel is simply cut in a V shaped form. On the panes of glass in the window of what was known as "The Prophet's Chamber" were not a few inscriptions written by the brave-hearted evangelists who there found a welcome, and on one of them is inscribed "John Wesley," which is said to be an authentic signature. There are also several others inscribed: "Faith without works is dead, Ed. Pyke." "Go on to perfection." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart. November the 12th, 1766, J. Allen." "Joseph Guildford preached here 1764. God is love." Another valued relic was for many years in the possession of the Taylor family in the shape of a tea-pot which was used on Wesley's visits to Booth Bank, and on which his name was inscribed. Of this memento, however, there is now no trace. The last recorded visit of Wesley to Booth Bank was in 1753. Of this event the following entry appears in his journal:—"I met Mr. C——, late gardener to the Earl of W——. Surely it cannot be. Is it possible the earl should turn off an honest, diligent, well-tried servant who had been in the family above 50 years, for no other fault than hearing the Methodists?" The meeting-house served its purpose for nearly ninety years. A chapel was opened in 1834, and a gallery was added in 1838. Booth Bank was successively included in the Manchester, Cheshire, Northwich, Warrington, Manchester Fourth and Altrincham circuits. It is now

one of the most honoured places in the Altrincham circuit.

Two other visits were paid by Wesley to Altrincham. On April 30, 1761, he writes :—"I rode to Altrincham. We had four rooms which opened into each other, but they would not near contain the congregation, so that many were obliged to stand without. I believe many were wounded, and some much comforted. Perhaps this town will not be so furious as it has been." The comment on the fury of the town relates to the opposition with which Wesley was assailed, and he described how in many places the mob, urged on by magistrates and other persons in authority, to use his own words, were disorderly, rude and furious. Of the situation of the preaching room used by Wesley in 1761 there is no record, but we may assume that it was on or near to the site on which the congregation he had succeeded in forming subsequently erected their first chapel in Chapel Walk, now known as Regent Road. In one of his early visits, however, Wesley preached in Church Street, near the site of St. George's Church, as well as in various other parts of the town. The little chapel in Chapel Walk was opened on the 17th February, 1788. The service of the Church of England was used on the occasion, and Mr. Abner Partington officiated as clerk. The chapel was plainly built, and in the interior there was little attempt at ornamentation. The shape of the building was square, and on all sides were galleries, in one of which the choir and a number of instrumentalists were accommodated. Opposite to the pulpit was an old timepiece, which after the close of the chapel in 1765, was removed to the branch Post Office, in Railway Street. When that office was given up the

clock passed into the possession of the proprietor of the Stamford Hotel, in Railway Street, where it may still be seen. In this small chapel the services of the Wesleyan Methodists were regularly held until the erection of the larger chapel in Bank Street, in 1866. Altrincham was one of the first chapels settled under the celebrated Deed Poll, in which they are described as "The conference of people called Methodists."

In April, 1790, Wesley paid his last visit to Altrincham and preached in the chapel in Chapel Walk. Although he was then 87 years of age, there was no abatement of his activity as may be gathered from the following entry in his journal at the beginning of the year:—"I am now an old man, decayed from head to feet. My eyes are dim, my right hand shakes much. However, blessed be God, I do not slack my labour—I can preach and write still." The date of Wesley's visit to Altrincham was April 5th, 1790. He was then on his way to Northwich, and the following record is made in the journal:—"Called at Altringham. I was desired to speak a few words to the people in the new chapel, but almost as soon as I got thither, the house was filled, and soon after more than filled. So I preached on I. Pet. 1-3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again with a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,' and many praised God with joyful lips."

In 1793, Joseph Benson, President of the Conferences of 1798 and 1810, preached and met the classes at the chapel and "was grieved to see the people so slack and the work decaying." (Macdonald's "Life of Benson," p. 249). Later in the same year, Benson was again in Altrincham to

investigate the case of a class leader, "a lamentable case." His remark upon it is characteristic: "I bless the Lord we were favoured with His presence, and notwithstanding the dreadful fall of one of the leaders, I trust the work will now revive. The members of his class seemed in general much affected with his fall, and filled with compassion for him" (Ib. p. 255). Dr. Adam Clarke appears to have preached in the chapel in 1795, and that he had good reason to remember the skill and sound workmanship of an Altrincham bootmaker is evident from his statement that he was supplied by some worthy of the town with a pair of boots in which he declared he had walked more than seven thousand miles (Biography by Etheridge, p. 178).

In 1791, at the first Conference after Wesley's death, Manchester became the head of a circuit in which Altrincham was included. but in 1811, Altrincham was separated from Manchester, and was formed into an independent circuit, with the Rev. Thomas Edward as the minister. In 1813, there seems to have been some doubt as to the power of Altrincham to maintain its position as a separate circuit, and it was re-united to the Great Bridgewater Street Circuit with this note: "Brother Edmund Grindrod is to reside at Altrincham." In 1814, another change was made, and from that year to 1826, there was no resident minister. In 1827-8 the Rev. T. H. Bewley, of the Fourth Manchester Circuit (Bridgewater Street), was appointed to reside in Altrincham. In 1838, the Altrincham circuit was re-formed, and the Rev. Amos Learoyd was appointed to change one Sunday in every three weeks with the ministers of the Bridgewater Street circuit. This arrangement lasted until the year 1850,

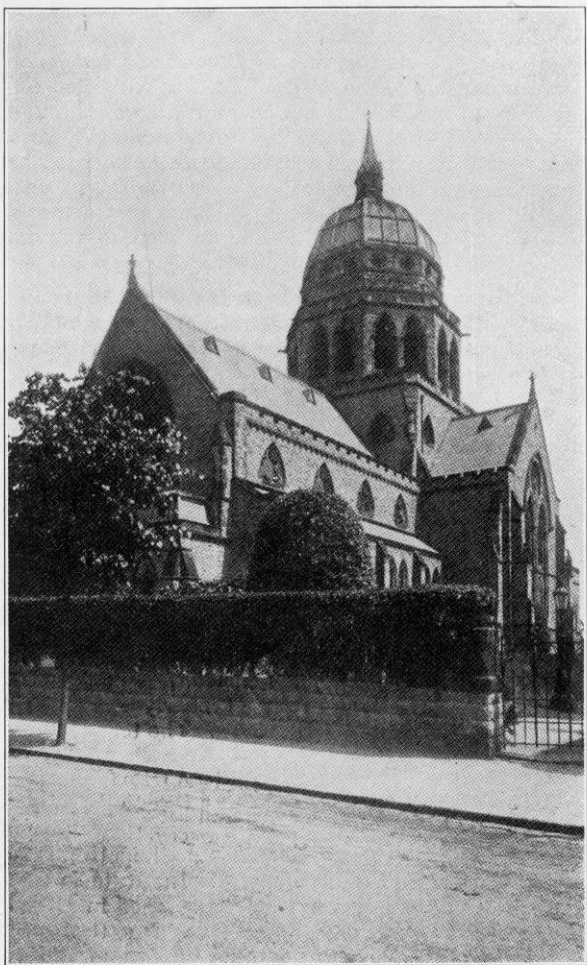


Photo by

J. Ingham & Sons, Bowdon

BOWDON WESLEYAN CHURCH

when the Altrincham circuit was separately formed and supplied with two resident ministers. In 1856, the junior minister was appointed to reside at Sale, then called Sale Moor, and this arrangement was continued until the division of the circuit in the year 1886, when Sale became a separate circuit.

BOWDON WESLEYAN CHURCH

The modest chapel in Chapel Walk was for many years the centre of a vigorous religious life, and to its influence and enterprise may be traced the establishment of the present strong and active daughter church of Bowdon. Although there was no chapel or school in Bowdon prior to 1857, society classes, cottage meetings and occasional preaching services were held in private houses, and it is not a little noteworthy, that for fully half a century Bowdon Methodism appears to have been maintained within full sight of the Parish Church. With the growth of population it was found that the chapel of 1788 was too small for the increased number of worshippers, and the circuit quarterly meeting, held on March 24th, 1852, sanctioned and recommended the erection of a new and commodious chapel in a central situation for the inhabitants of Altrincham and Bowdon, provided a suitable site could be obtained and sufficient funds raised to meet the Conference regulations. Considerable difficulty was experienced in obtaining land and it was not until 1855, that the promoters were able to complete the purchase from Mr. James Atkinson West, of a part of a field called "Bell Clapper," and afterwards "Bell Field," between Stamford Road and Rose Hill. The plot was a little more than half an acre in extent, and it

was conveyed to a body of trustees. The foundation stone of this first Bowdon chapel was laid on the 4th June, 1856. It was opened on Wednesday, March 25th, 1857. The chapel, which was Gothic in style of that description known as English Perpendicular, was built by Mr. Thos. Penk, of Manchester, from the designs of Mr. Simpson, of Leeds, and its seating capacity was for 300 people. Its entire cost, including the organ, was £1,974 12s. 5d., and with the exception of £200 the whole amount was raised soon after the opening services.

Having freed themselves from the burden of debt, the members of the church felt themselves at liberty to devote themselves to evangelistic work, and the three movements deserving of special mention are the Primrose Cottage Mission, the Sunday School, and the Peel Street or Hale Road Mission. These were originated on the 15th June, 1858, when, at a meeting held in the chapel vestry, it was resolved to hold cottage services on Tuesday afternoons at various places. The first services were held on the 27th June, one at the house of Mr. Rawlins, 3, Primrose Cottages, and another at the house of Mr. Johnson, Peel Causeway. Two other places were afterwards added—Mr. Hooley's, Dobb Lane (the road now called Park Road, running from Ashley Road to Hale Road), and Mr. Faulkner's, Lower Houses, a small group of houses on the way to Sinderland. The services at Lower Houses were afterwards conducted from Altrincham, and those at Peel Causeway had to be given up through a change of tenants, and on the death of Mr. Hooley, the cottages in Dobb Lane were pulled down. The work at Primrose Cottages continued and prospered for a number of years after. An adjacent cottage, one of

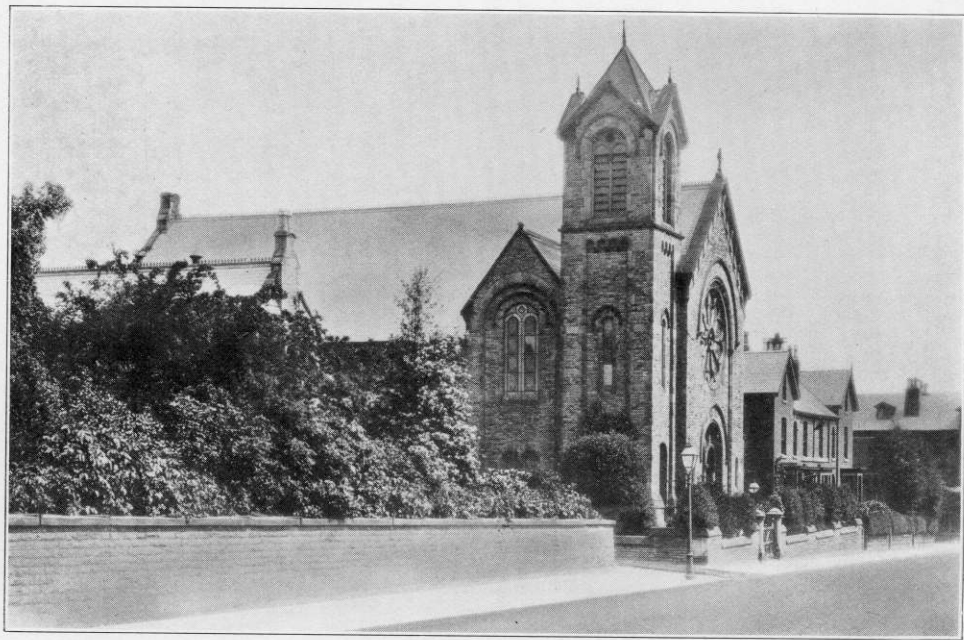
several bearing the euphonious name of "Brickhill Row," was rented. In it were held preaching services, class meetings, and mothers' meetings, until the work was transferred to the present chapel in Vicarage Lane. The circuit was indebted to Mr. Edward Potts for the gift of land on which the chapel, which was opened on January 10th, 1883, stands.

On February 19th, 1866, Mr. Thomas Buck, then one of the superintendents of the Bowdon School, took a cottage in Peel Street, Hale Road, at a weekly rental of 3s. 8d., for the purpose of establishing a Sunday School and preaching room. It was modestly furnished at a cost of £1 6s. 9d., and was opened on the following Sunday, February 25th, by Mr. Buck, assisted by Mr. William Johnson, and Mr. Laidlar. There were 13 scholars present. For about eight years the school was worked as part of Bowdon School, its officers being appointed by the Bowdon Committee, and its teachers by the Bowdon Teachers' Meeting. It afterwards became self-governing. In 1878, a school chapel was built largely through the energy of Mr. Thomas Garfitt, and between it and Hale Road sufficient land was purchased to permit of the erection of a new chapel, should the development of the cause justify such a step. The expansion of the neighbourhood from 1890 to 1895, was so rapid that the members of the congregation determined to commence the erection of the new chapel on the site acquired for the purpose. On the 26th May, 1897, a new chapel, fronting to Hale Road, which had been erected at a cost of £2,459, was opened, towards the cost of which the sum of £2,240 was obtained by subscriptions and various efforts. The Chapel Committee made a grant of £100 without interest to be repaid in ten yearly

instalments, and this represented the only debt at the time of opening.

BANK STREET WESLEYAN CHURCH

While so much had been accomplished by the Bowdon Society, the parent church in Chapel Walk had not been standing still. Every year it became stronger and more active, and in the sixties the members seriously began to consider the question of the erection of a larger chapel. To a proposal to build a chapel in Bank Street, liberal aid was forthcoming not only from the Wesleyans themselves, but from prominent members of the Church of England, who saw much to admire in the progressive work of eighty years, and recognised in the undertaking an appropriate memorial in whose provision they might rightly share. So warmly was the scheme supported that the foundation stones were laid on the 22nd March, 1865, and the opening services were conducted on the 10th May, 1866. The chapel was built from the designs of Mr. C. O. Ellison, of Liverpool, in the Byzantine style of architecture, with a bold frontage to Bank Street, or, as it is now called, Woodlands Road. The structure is of freestone, and the effect of the design is heightened by a campanile at one of the angles. Accommodation is found on the ground floor for 600 worshippers, and in a gallery across the south end of the building for 260. The organ in the old chapel in Chapel Walk was removed to the new chapel and re-erected in the gallery. This work, with such additions and improvements as were found to be necessary, involved an expenditure of over £100, which was raised by the late Mr. John Balshaw, who, for nearly forty years, acted as organist. The total cost of the chapel exceeded



BANK STREET WESLEYAN CHURCH

£5,000. A lecture hall adjoining the chapel was built in 1887. The cost of the hall was about £1,000, thus bringing up the total cost of the premises to £6,000. Extensive alterations were made in 1891, and a new organ, built by Messrs. Brindley and Foster, Sheffield, was provided at a cost of £600.

The old Wesleyan Chapel was disposed of to the members of the Congregational Church and services were commenced there in 1868 by the Rev. Charles Aylard. On the transfer of the church to the British School, the services were discontinued and the chapel was purchased by Mr. J. H. Grafton, Overdale, Dunham Massey, by whom it was presented to the Church of England.

Concurrently with the extension of the church in Altrincham, rapid strides had been taken by the Bowdon Society and the necessity of a larger chapel than the one in Stamford Road began to make itself felt in 1871. This was during the ministry of the Rev. Josiah Banham, to whose energy it was chiefly due that funds were obtained for the commencement of the erection of a structure which if from the point of architectural dignity alone is one of the finest examples of church property in the Manchester district. Early in 1874, plans were approved of a chapel to seat 700 on the ground floor, and building operations were begun. The ceremony of laying the foundation stones took place on Thursday, May 14th, 1874. The new chapel was opened on June 7th, 1880. The chapel, which was built from the designs of Mr. W. H. Brakspear, is a good specimen of the 13th century Gothic, and occupies a commanding position in Envile Road. It is cruciform with a tower carried on massive piers and arches at the intersection of the transepts with the nave.

The tower is carried but a short distance above the roof ridges when it breaks off into an octagonal lantern surmounted by a dome. The nave, which is spacious and lofty, measures 85 feet 6 inches in length to the chancel arch, and 51 feet in clear height to the ridge of the roof. The clear width of the nave and aisles is 45 feet 10 inches. The building will seat 700 persons on the ground floor and has facilities for the accommodation of 200 more by the erection of transept galleries. In 1882, a Sunday School was built, and in 1884, the trustees determined to complete the original building scheme by the erection of a minister's house. This was soon afterwards commenced and it was finished during the following spring. Both the schools and the minister's house were erected from the designs of Messrs. Potts, Pickup and Dixon, of Manchester. The entire cost of the chapel, schools, and manse was £19,264 3s. 9d., towards which the trustees received £2,100 from the sale of the old chapel and school. The remainder, with the exception of about £3,000 was raised by means of donations and collections. The debt remaining on the property was cleared off in 1889. The site of the old chapel in Stamford Road, it is interesting to note, was utilised for the erection of villa residences, while the school was acquired by Mr. A. J. Pearce for educational purposes.

NEW STREET SCHOOLS

A Sunday School in connection with the old chapel in Chapel Walk, Altrincham, was established in a small room in New Street, in 1798. The original purpose for which the building was erected

cannot be discovered. New Street had not then been made into its present shape and the room could only be reached by crossing through the fields. It is believed that the place was built by the members of some small denomination, who afterwards found it impossible to continue their work. At all events the Wesleyans entered into possession, and as it was not far distant from the chapel they found it highly convenient for their purposes. From time to time additions were made to the original building in the form of class rooms and the enlargement of the Infants' schoolroom.

For many years the denomination carried on a public elementary school, and by their liberality and enterprise the members proved their keen interest in all matters affecting education. In its early history the school had to face various difficulties, and the managers were compelled to close it in June, 1862. It was, however, re-opened on the 3rd March, 1873, and the school entered into occupation of enlarged premises. Mr. Charles B. Winn, was appointed to the charge of the school on the 7th January, 1884. At that time there were 72 scholars. Under Mr. Winn's direction rapid progress was made and the school soon became recognised as an education centre of great importance and influence. In February, 1902, the Board of Education suggested to the managers the necessity of providing new premises. In 1904, notice was given that the continued recognition of the existing premises was impossible, and the managers had no alternative but to face the early closing of the premises. The erection of a new school near to Stamford Park was commenced in the same year by the Education Committee of the County Council, and to this school,

the scholars in attendance at New Street were transferred on April 27th, 1906.

Some years after the erection of the chapel in Bank Street, the town began to extend rapidly in the neighbourhood of Hale Moss and the members of the congregation began seriously to consider the desirability of establishing mission services. Their first step was one of great modesty. It was merely the renting of a room in an old fustian cutting factory, now used by the firm of Messrs. Litherland Bros., coach builders, in Hamon Road, and here for some years a Sunday School and preaching services were conducted, and in 1883, it was determined to build a school-chapel with accommodation for 250 scholars. A site was obtained in Borough Road, and on the 8th September, 1883, the memorial stones of the new building were laid. The school was built from the designs of Mr. Edward Potts by Mr. J. Pennington at a cost of about £800. Besides the main room, it contained an infants' room, two vestries for senior scholars, and a classroom. It was opened on the 13th February, 1884. The mission is now a vigorous branch of the parent chapel and not very long ago, the premises were entirely rebuilt.

In 1866, a mission was commenced in Broadheath. For its direction several members of the Bank Street church made themselves directly responsible, and the care with which they laboured is to be seen in the present handsome and commodious school-chapel on the Manchester Road. The cause was commenced in a simple form in a cottage adjacent to the railway station. As it developed, two other cottages were taken, and the three were connected. On the ground floor, the apartments were turned into classrooms, while the bedrooms above were formed into a meeting

place of fairly large dimensions, and here for several years a Sunday school and preaching services were carried on. In 1896, the development of Broadheath led to the contemplation of a new departure, and with promises of a substantial measure of support, it was determined to proceed with the erection of a school-chapel for the accommodation of 400 scholars. A prominent site in the Manchester Road was accordingly secured, and the building was opened on October 6th, 1897. The cost of the undertaking was £2,600.

CHAPTER XXI

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

AS will already have been gathered, the town, from the dawn of the nineteenth century up to the present time, has not turned a deaf ear to the claims of education. With the opening years of the century, a really national system was commenced, when undenominational and Church of England schools were established, and since then the progress has been steady and continuous. The two undenominational schools were the British, in Oxford Road, and the Rigby Memorial, in Navigation Road. The remainder were voluntarily maintained by the respective churches. It was not until 1832 that the first State grant was made, and not before 1846 that the pupil teacher system was commenced. The first Education Act was passed in 1870, when School Boards were established to supplement, but not to supplant, existing church schools with schools in which religious education was to be undenominational. The Act also provided for the compulsory attendance of children.

Altrincham did not form a School Board, and the provisions of the Act, so far as they affected attendance, were administered by a School Attendance Committee, formed by the Local Board and, afterwards, by the District Council. In 1891, elementary education was made free, and in 1898 payment by result was abolished. During the

last twenty years of the century, higher-grade schools were developed, but the system, however, underwent a complete change in 1902, when School Boards and School Attendance Committees, as the local authorities, were superseded by the County Councils, who were made responsible under the Act for all public elementary schools in their area. Changes followed under the Act of 1918, which codified and extended the schools' activities, and in particular raised the leaving age to 14, and the introduction of the Burnham scale of salaries in 1920.

So far as regards Altrincham and the immediately surrounding district, the Cheshire County Council placed the responsibility for the management of all elementary schools within the area in the hands of a completely new authority named the Altrincham, Bowdon, Hale and District Administrative Subcommittee for Education. The committee began to operate in 1903, under the chairmanship of Judge Bradbury. Its first step of any importance was the erection of the Navigation Road Council Schools, at the junction of Gladstone and Hawarden roads, two newly-formed thoroughfares—the former giving direct access from Manchester Road and the latter from Navigation Road. The schools were built to accommodate 800 children, with special provision for instruction in Science and Art, Cookery and Manual Work. Built from the designs of Mr. William Owen, the cost of the schools and their equipment was £13,214 4s. 6d. They were opened on April 24th, 1906. Three months later (July 7th, 1906), the committee completed and opened the Stamford Park Council Schools, Hale, with accommodation for 900 children. The New Street Wesleyan Schools were closed and the scholars were transferred to the new

and pleasanter departments at Stamford Park. On July 11th, 1910, the Committee opened the Bradbury Central School, in Queen's Road, Hale, for 250 children. The school is of the selective type and the scholars from the British Schools, which were then closed, were transferred to it. In 1932, the committee built a Primary School for 350 juniors and infants at Oldfield Brow, to meet the requirements of a new population, which by that time had settled on the Housing Estate of the District Council. The growth of the district is constantly making fresh demands, and the committee have in view the erection of a school in Wellington Road, off Stockport Road, at a cost of £31,782, for 480 senior boys and girls, over eleven years of age, and a site of ten acres has already been purchased. It is also the intention of the Committee, to build a Primary School for 480 juniors and infants in Leys Road, off Park Road, Timperley, in which district a large population has sprung up during recent years. The schools in the Committee's area, which embraces Altrincham, Ashley, Bowdon, Bollington, Dunham Massey, Hale and Timperley, now number 22 and the total number of children in attendance is 4,826.

The schools administered in Altrincham and district by the Sub-Committee for Education, are the following :—

<i>School and Situation.</i>	<i>Head Teacher.</i>
Oakfield Road C.E. (Mixed) Oakfield Street.	Miss M. Royle.
St. George's C.E. (Senior), Church Street	Mr. J. W. Stapleton.
St. George's C.E. (Junior) Church Street.	Mr. J. W. Stapleton.

<i>School and Situation.</i>	<i>Head Teacher.</i>
St. John's C.E. (Mixed), St. John's Road.	Mr. J. Southern.
St. John's C.E. (Infants'), Islington Street.	Miss M. J. Jones.
St. Margaret's C.E. (Mixed), Albert Street.	Mr. T. Barnett
St. Margaret's C.E. (Infants'), Albert Street.	Mr. T. Barnett.
St. Vincent's R.C. (Mixed), Hamon Road.	Mr. J. McLaughlin.
St. Vincent's R.C. (Infants'), Thomas Street.	Miss C. M. Moore.
Ashley C.E. (Mixed and Infants'), Ashley.	Mr. O. B. Furber.
Bollington (Bucklow) (Mixed and Infants'), Bollington.	Miss E. A. Smith.
Bowdon Parish Church (Mixed and Infants'), Richmond Hill.	Mr. A. J. Blakeman.
Broadheath C.E. (Mixed and Infants'), Sinderland Road.	Miss A. C. Fletcher.
Little Heath C.E. (Mixed and Infants'), Dunham Massey.	Miss G. A. Warburton.
Seamon's Moss C.E. (Boys'), (Endowed), Dunham Massey.	Mr. A. Sheppard.
Hale Barns C.E., Hale Barns.	Miss C. Stevens.
Timperley C.E. (Mixed), Thorley Lane.	Mr. H. Litherland.
Timperley C.E. (Infants'), Stockport Road.	Miss O. Longworth.
Timperley St. Andrew's Mission (Infants'), Deansgate Lane.	Miss F. M. Ryder.
Navigation Road Council (Modern), Navigation Road.	Mr. J. A. Hartington.
Navigation Road Council (Primary), Navigation Road.	Miss G. I. Ryder.
Stamford Park Council (Senior Mixed), Cedar Road, Hale,	Mr. E. Mealar.
Stamford Park Council (Junior Mixed), Cedar Road, Hale.	Miss N. M. Willcox.
Stamford Park Council (Infants'), Cedar Road, Hale.	Miss D. E. Betts.

<i>School and Situation.</i>	<i>Head Teacher.</i>
Bradbury Central Council (Mixed), Queen's Road, Hale.	Mr. R. W. Shuard.
Bowdon C.E. (Infants'), Vicarage Lane, Bowdon.	Miss J. Clarke.
Oldfield Brow Council, Taylor Road, Oldfield Brow.	Miss H. McCabe.

The first clerk appointed by the Sub-Committee was Mr. Joseph Howarth, during whose period of service both the Elementary and the Technical Schools were improved and developed. He was followed in the office in 1915, by Mr. A. G. Kelly, the present Clerk, to whose unfailing energy much of the progress of recent years is largely due. Actively interested in the concentration of the Evening Classes at the Navigation Road Council Schools, on their transfer from the Technical School in George Street in 1923, their success owes a good deal to his judgment and careful oversight.

While the Local Education Authority has dealt so efficiently with the elementary side, the County Council has concerned itself no less actively with Secondary Education, and in 1907, the Bowdon Lodge Estate was purchased at a cost of £3,500, as a site for the County High School for Girls. The school was started in the following year, and the opening ceremony took place on July 3rd, 1910. The curriculum is planned for girls from 7 to 18 years of age, and pupils are prepared for the University and for professional work. The County High School for Boys, in Marlborough Road, whose name in 1934, was changed to that of "The Altrincham Grammar School," was opened on April 20th, 1912. Both centres are managed by an independent Board of Governors, appointed by the County

Council, the District Councils of Altrincham, Bowdon and Hale and the Manchester University, and within recent years, they have been enlarged to meet the increased pressure on their resources. The teaching staffs have always been chosen with great care, and the efficiency with which the schools have been conducted has won for Altrincham a high reputation as an educational centre.

SEAMON'S MOSS ENDOWED SCHOOL

Seamon's Moss Endowed School owes its origin to Mr. Thomas Walton, of Dunham Wood House, who, by his will dated 22nd August, 1754, gave to his executors the sum of £1000 for such charitable uses as he should, at any time thereafter, by deed or codicil, thereto appoint, and in default thereof, to such charitable uses, to be founded, created and subsist within the township of Dunham Massey, as his said executors should appoint. He appointed as his executors, George Earl of Warrington, Mary Countess of Stamford, Lord Grey and the Hon. Booth Grey, and, by a codicil dated 23rd August, 1755, he directed that his executors should lay out and dispose of the residue of his personal estate in the townships of Dunham Massey, Bowdon and Altrincham, for such charitable uses, and in such proportions, manner and form as they should think fit. Out of the proceeds of the estate, the executors founded a school in 1759 at Oldfield House, on whose erection about £2,000 was expended, while the sum of £5,241 13s. 2d., was invested in the Three per cent. Reduced Bank Annuities.

The school was endowed for the instruction of 40 boys from Altrincham, Dunham Massey

and Bowdon, and the sum of £20 was deducted from the £60, supposed to form the master's salary, as a rent for the use of the school, for the scholars he was allowed to take, in addition to the 40 boys who were taught free. Provision was also made in the same charity for sheets and blankets to be distributed among the poor of Dunham Massey every year, and to the poor of Bowdon and Altrincham in alternate years, while a sum of £20, expended in woollen and linen cloth, was to be given to the poor of Dunham Massey only. This charity is now of the value of £40 and is paid in equal proportions to the Altrincham Hospital, the Sick Nursing Association, the Altrincham and Bowdon Provident Society and the Altrincham Rescue Home. After being carried on for rather more than a century at Oldfield House, a new building was erected on the site of the present school in 1867, for 90 scholars. Oldfield House was converted into a private residence and the income derived from it has since formed part of the endowment. Several years later, there was a further extension of the school premises and in 1909, the governors increased the accommodation to 270 places by the addition of two classrooms, a central hall and a science laboratory.

The school has always maintained a high reputation and its character was greatly enhanced under the direction of Mr. Thomas Johnson, who, for more than twenty-five years was the headmaster. Mr. Johnson set up and carried on with great success, classes in handicrafts, bee-keeping and horticulture and his appointment as a Government Inspector of elementary schools in 1910 was a deserved recognition of his valuable service in these branches of education. Mr. Peter Burns, B.Sc., the instructor in handicrafts in

Mr. Johnson's time afterwards became an Inspector of the Board of Education.

Mr. Johnson was succeeded in 1910, by Mr. A. Sheppard by whom the traditions of the school have been loyally sustained. Some years ago, through his initiative, the staff, with the object of instilling a love of music as part of the curriculum, introduced the gramophone by means of which the boys are well grounded in musical knowledge and an appreciation of music. This step was followed by the introduction of the much more modern one of the Gaumont Cinematograph, through whose agency, films of educational subjects form a popular medium of instruction. The money for the purposes was raised by the voluntary efforts, of the Headmaster, staff and boys. During the headmastership of Mr. Sheppard, Mr. F. G. Booth, M.A., one of the staff, was appointed one of his Majesty's Inspectors of Schools.

At the present time, there are 180 boys in regular attendance, and competitive examinations are held yearly for the endowed scholarships of the school, which are tenable at the Altrincham Grammar School. The school, which is managed by four Foundation Governors or Trustees, and three others who are appointed by the District Councils of Altrincham and Bowdon and the Cheshire County Council, comes within the administration of the Altrincham, Bowdon, Hale and District Administrative Sub-Committee for Education.

LITTLEHEATH SCHOOL, DUNHAM MASSEY

The estate of Mr. Walton also made possible the erection and endowment of Littleheath School in the village of Dunham Massey. Mr. Walton's death

took place on the 6th February, 1757, and as George Earl of Warrington, Harry Lord Grey and the Hon. Booth Grey, declined to act as executors, the will was proved by Mary Countess of Stamford in the Ecclesiastical Court of the diocese of Chester, who further undertook the execution of its provisions. During his lifetime, Mr. Walton had expressed his wish that some means might be found to raise a sum of money for founding a school and erecting a school-house for the benefit of poor children in Dunham Massey and "for the habitation of a school-mistress." The Countess, "to effectuate the pious intentions of the testator did, with the consent of the principal inhabitants set out and allot a piece of ground containing 2r. 29p., parcel of the waste of Littleheath, for the site of a school-house, and for a curtilage, garden and close to be occupied therewith; and had since inclosed the same, and erected, on part of the same ground, a messuage, consisting of a room proper for and to be used for a school, a kitchen, bedchamber, pantry and other convenient offices, and had laid out in such buildings and inclosure £207 2s."

Meanwhile, the interest on the legacy of £1000 amounted to £120, so that after the cost of the school-house had been defrayed, there was a balance of £912 18s., which was paid into the hands of George Harry Lord Grey, Mary Walton, George Massey, Edward Stelson and Nathan Pier-son "in trust for the charitable purpose thereafter mentioned—it was witnessed that, for the complete effectuating the pious intention of the said Thomas Walton, the said George Hunt and Thomas Hunt, did bargain, sell, and demise, unto George Harry Lord Grey, Mary Walton, George Massey, Edward

Stelson and Nathan Pierson, the parcel of waste ground so enclosed as aforesaid, and also the new erected messuage or edifice, with the appurtenances to hold from the day next before the day of the date thereof for 5000 years upon trust to permit the messuage and premises to remain and be used for a school-house, and a place of habitation for a schoolmistress, subject to such rules, orders and regulations, as were thereafter expressed : to wit, to pay a yearly rent of 5s. for the said enclosure to the lord or lady of the manor of Dunham Massey on Michaelmas-day, yearly; and upon further trust that the trustees should place out the sum of £912 18s. on real or government securities, and apply the interest to the payment of the yearly rent of 5s., and the salary to the schoolmistress, and to find firing and books, or other implements, for the use of the school, and for providing a fit person to be named by Mary Countess of Stamford, or the owner for the time being of the manor of Dunham Massey, to keep an account of the receipts and disbursements and the general state of the school; and it was thereby directed that the owner or owners for the time being of Dunham Massey should have the sole nomination of the schoolmistress, appoint her salary, and discharge her at their own will and pleasure; that no child should be taken into the school without an order in writing under the hands of the owner or owners of Dunham Massey, or two or more of the trustees; that no child under the age of three years should be admitted into the school without a special order under the hand of the owners, for the time being of Dunham Massey, nor should any boy be continued in the school after the age of seven years; if the number of poor children in

Dunham Massey should be inconsiderable and not sufficient employment for the schoolmistress, that then the schoolmistress might (with the consent of the owners of the manor of Dunham Massey or any three of the trustees) teach other children for hire, not prejudicing the poor children admitted upon the charitable foundation and provided that 5s. be paid for the entrance of every child so to be instructed for hire to the said trustees, and so as, upon the misbehaviour of any such child or children, the owners of Dunham Massey, or any three of the trustees, might discharge them; that all children admitted into the school should be examined at the general quarter days in every year, or oftener, by any one or more of the trustees, or any person appointed by them for that purpose; that no fire should be used in the school room between the 1st May and the 1st October; that the mistress should live in the school-house, the boys taught to read, and the girls to read and also to knit, spin, and to work plain work; that all the children should be taught the Church catechism by heart, and also a morning and evening prayer; that the school mistress, should in the morning and evening, read one or more prayers to the children; that children neglecting to come to school, or that have been sufficiently taught, might be dismissed by the Countess of Stamford, or the future owners of the manor of Dunham Massey, or by the major part of the trustees; that the trustees, or three of them at the least should, on the second Monday in January and the second Monday in July, in every year, or oftener, upon notice given them by any two of the trustees, or by the schoolmistress, meet at the school-house, examine into the behaviour of the school-mistress, the children under her care,

and the application of the trust-money, and should once at least in every year state and settle the account of the same money; that the Countess of Stamford and the owners for the time being of the Manor of Dunham Massey, should be the sole visitors of the school, and have full power to make such further rules and orders for the better government of the school, and again to revoke, annul, and make void the same, or any of them, or any of the rules, orders and regulations, thereby directed, and to establish such others instead thereof, as to her or them should from time to time seem meet and expedient for effecting the charitable purposes aforesaid."

A power was vested in surviving trustees, if required by the lord or owner of Dunham Massey, to choose new ones at the then next half-yearly meeting, or sooner, in the room of any such who should by death, release or otherwise, cease to be a trustee, such new trustee (whereof the lord of Dunham Massey to be one) to be resident within or near the township of Dunham Massey, and the survivors or survivor of the old trustees should assign the messuage, school and premises, and also the capital stock of £912 18s. to the new trustees to such and the same uses as were thereinbefore expressed, the charges for which transfer were to be paid out of the interest arising from the capital or bank stock.

On the 8th July, 1760, the trustees met at the school on Littleheath (excepting Lord Grey, then on his travels in Italy), when the trust deed was signed, and a receipt endorsed for the balance of the legacy of £912 18s., put out on bond to John Jackson, Esq, of Great Queen Street, London, at

four per cent. per annum. In an old record, it is added that the funds of the school, amounting to £1,120 were lent upon mortgage at five per cent., and the income was expended, after discharging the rent of 5s. to Lord Stamford, in payment of the salary of the schoolmistress, amounting to £18, and finding clothes for the scholars, and firing for the schoolroom. The little village school after fulfilling a useful mission for a century and three-quarters, is still carried on, and is now administered by the Altrincham, Bowdon, Hale and District Administrative Sub-committee for Education.



Photo by

GENERAL HOSPITAL

E. J. Horley, Altrincham

CHAPTER XXII

ALTRINCHAM PROVIDENT DISPENSARY AND HOSPITAL

THE Altrincham Provident Dispensary and Hospital has grown grey in the public service, and the work it has done in the past and is doing in the present, claims special attention. The earliest hospital possessed by Altrincham was a wooden erection on Hale Moss, near what is now the junction of Beech Road and Stamford Park Road, Hale. It was called the Altrincham Smallpox and Cholera Hospital and was maintained by the township. At this time (1840-1850), as will have been gathered by a description given elsewhere, the imperfect drainage and the insanitary conditions then prevailing were a prolific source of disease, and the little hospital became quite inadequate. It continued, however, in use until after the death of Mr. Edward Jeremiah Lloyd, of Oldfield Hall, in 1850, when his widow gave a sum of £300 towards the erection of a new hospital of a more substantial character in his memory. This was supplemented by public subscriptions, and Lloyd's Hospital was built on an acre of ground in Lloyd Street, given for the purpose by the Earl of Stamford and Warrington in 1853. The hospital cost £600. It was named "Lloyd's Hospital," in memory of Mr. E. J. Lloyd, and was "intended for the reception of patients resident in the townships of Altrincham and Bowdon, affected with fever of a contagious or infectious nature, and

also for cases of accident occurring to poor and destitute persons in the same townships." There was no medical staff and the patients were attended by their own doctors.

In 1858, Dr. Broadbent, a well-known practitioner, suggested the establishment of a Dispensary. After some discussion as to the advisability of establishing a General Dispensary, it was eventually decided to enlarge the scope of the Institution by establishing a "Dispensary for the treatment of the poor, under fourteen years of age, as out-patients during sickness." According to the rules, printed with the report of that year, children were admitted on the recommendation of subscribers or governors, and there were 109 dispensary patients in the first year. Dr. Senior, Dr. Arthur Ransome and Dr. T. T. Blease were the first medical men to form the staff. One of the wards was used as a consulting room and dispensary, divided by a wooden partition, and, either because of the shortness of funds or the small amount of the work performed, the first dispenser, Mr. W. H. Holt, was paid only £12 a year for his services. In 1860, a bequest of £1,000 was received from the executors of Mr. E. J. Lloyd, of Oldfield Hall, which was invested, together with a sum of £200 received from the sale of part of the land to the Cheshire Midland Railway Company, on behalf of the funds of the hospital. The investment is still held by the Trustees of Lloyd's Fever Hospital. The total endowment of the hospital was at this time £1,250, invested in North British 4 per cent. stock, but it was afterwards changed to £1,615 Manchester Corporation (1891) 3 per cent. stock. The yearly expenditure in 1860 was not more than £53 12s.

The following year the Dispensary was changed into a Provident Dispensary, and adults and their families were admitted as members, subject to regular weekly payments, with restrictions as to position. The work of the Dispensary grew, and in 1913, there were no fewer than 5,879 members on the books. In 1870, the management of Lloyd's Hospital and Provident Dispensary was handed over to a new body, consisting of the Workhouse Charity Trustees, and six members appointed by the Governors. An agitation was then set on foot for the provision of a more suitable and modern hospital, and the foundation stone of a new building was laid on a site with frontages to Regent Road and Market Street, which was then used by the Rifle Volunteers as a drill ground. The foundation stone was laid by Mr. Henry Hall, agent to the Earl of Stamford and Warrington, on September 28th, 1869. The hospital, which was completed in the following year, was built under the provisions of a scheme sanctioned by the Court of Chancery, at a cost of over £3,000, from accumulated funds in the hands of the Workhouse Charity Trustees, received from rents of land and cottages at Broadheath, and the sale of land. The land referred to comprised some eight acres, which had been granted by the Earl of Warrington as the site of the workhouse at Broadheath.

On the formation of the Poor Law Union in 1836, and the employment of other methods of maintaining the poor, the workhouse became unnecessary, and the premises were converted into cottage dwellings. Previously a portion of the land had been sold to the promoters of the Warrington and Stockport line of railway, so that the trustees had ample funds at their disposal

to provide for the erection of the hospital suited to the needs of the district. The Workhouse Charity Trustees also gave £250 towards the furnishing of the hospital, and year by year their income has been largely devoted to the maintenance of the institution. Lloyd's Fever Hospital was let to the Altrincham Local Board for 21 years, from March 25th, 1878, at a rent of £60. Under a scheme of the Charity Commissioners, dated May 7th, 1878, the Trustees of Lloyd's Fever Hospital were empowered to contribute one half of its clear income to the Local Board in aid of the hospital and "to apply the residue in aid of funds of any well-established Infirmary or Hospital (including the Altrincham Provident Dispensary) treating cases of accidents, or receiving convalescent patients, provided always, that any Infirmary, Hospital, or Institution shall, in consideration of the aid it shall receive from the said Charity, freely admit to all its benefits, a reasonable number of poor and destitute persons, being residents of Altrincham and Bowdon, to be from time to time nominated by the Trustees of the said Charity." The name, in the report of 1878, appears as that of the "Altrincham Provident Dispensary and Hospital," and in 1886, a special addition was made to the rules by which poor and destitute persons, not in receipt of parish relief, might be admitted to the benefits of the hospital on the recommendation of any medical man living within the limits of the Provident Dispensary.

The demands on the accommodation of the hospital continued to grow, and in 1890, the accommodation for in-patients was extended to 44 beds, and among other improvements a children's ward was provided. Two years afterwards, a staff of private nurses was

organised, and in 1899, as the accommodation for the larger Staff was inadequate, a house was rented in Regent Road, where more suitable quarters were available. The present Nurses' Home was added in 1901, and was opened by the Duchess of Buckingham and Chandos. The cost was over £2,000. A dental department was opened in 1902, and in 1905 a new operating theatre was built and a new heating system installed. In 1911, a special appeal was made for funds to rebuild or enlarge the hospital as a memorial to King Edward VII, and, including two legacies of £1,000 each, a sum of £6,500 was raised. Plans were prepared by Mr. F. B. Dunkerley for the complete remodelling of the building, the provision of large well-ventilated wards with proper sanitary towers, new private wards, House Surgeon's quarters and electric lift, together with an entirely new block containing the dispensary, accident rooms and out-patients' department, a new steam laundry, mortuary and disinfecting plant. These plans were carried out and at once the hospital accommodation was increased from 44 to 62 beds, at a cost, including the furnishing, of £11,500. A second appeal to the public to complete the amount resulted in raising over £4,000 which, together with a generous donation of £1,000 for the endowment of a bed, by Mr. William A. Arnold, practically covered the deficiency.

The first extension of any importance afterwards, was in 1924-5, when the X-ray department was built and re-equipped at a cost of about £2,500. In 1928, a new wing was added on the easterly side, containing kitchen and nurses' dining room and offices, on the half-basement level. A new ward for eight beds and two private wards on the ground

floor and on the first floor, a fine new children's ward, with the necessary bath rooms and offices, were made, and on the second floor several new nurses' bedrooms were provided. In 1929-30, the nurses' home was remodelled, and extended by adapting two old shops with their dwelling-houses attached, and a new boiler house was built, new boilers and heating plant installed, and steam provided, for the first time, in the operating theatre, kitchen, etc. Since then, only minor alterations have been made, but something has been done nearly every year. The Board of Management have now further arranged for the provision of an entirely new X-ray plant, at a cost of about £1,250, and the building of a new mortuary, costing about the same figure. The hospital now contains 100 beds, with two resident surgeons, a matron, and a large and competent staff of nurses. How widely the hospital ministers to the needs of the extensive and populous district it serves, may be judged from the fact that in 1934, no fewer than 1,514 patients were admitted to the wards. The average number of beds occupied was 75 and the average residence of each patient 18 days. The number of operations performed in the theatre was 1,044. A no less valuable work is conducted in the out-patient department, where during the year 5,962 new patients received advice and attention made up as follows:—3,386 casualties, 1,262 X-rays, 584 clinical, 482 massage, 218 dental, and 30 sunlight. These patients, together with the dispensary patients, made 42,891 attendances. The hospital relies entirely for its support on voluntary subscriptions, donations and the interest on its investments, and the fact that in 1934 a total sum of £11,369 was forthcoming from

these sources is a strong and convincing proof of public confidence in the management of an old and valued institution.

On the opening of the Isolation Hospital in Sinderland Lane, on the 18th January, 1911, the use of Lloyd's Fever Hospital was discontinued. The new hospital, with accommodation for 34 beds, a residence for the nursing staff, and a fine administrative block, was built by the District Council, at a cost of £14,654. The hospital is controlled by a Medical Superintendent, matron and a staff of nurses, and its efficient management has won high praise from those with an intimate knowledge of its operations. Patients are admitted from Bowdon, under an agreement entered into between the two authorities. Lloyd's Hospital was demolished shortly after the opening of the new hospital, and the acre of ground on which it stood was laid out as a children's playground, and is now maintained by the Council in that form to the great advantage of a populous district.

CHAPTER XXIII

SOME VOLUNTARY AGENCIES

THE many other voluntary agencies set on foot by private enterprise during last century, are in themselves a strong testimony to the aptitude shown by Altrincham to equip itself with the forces so essential to the well-being and the happiness of a growing and progressive community. As long ago as 1832, the Friendly Society movement, truly described as "that peculiar invention of the industrial classes of Great Britain," took root, when the Stamford Lodge of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity, was established. It was followed by a Court of the Ancient Order of Foresters, by the Irish National Foresters, by the Ancient Order of Buffaloes, by the Order of the Sons of Temperance and the Independent Order of Rechabites, and to all of them must be given praise for the zeal and earnestness with which the needs of the sick have been ministered to. Largely composed of working men, the different Orders have been managed with unquestioned ability of which the fact that they have substantial investments at their command, is only one of many proofs.

Philanthropic effort is also well represented by the Altrincham and Bowdon Provident Society, which, for more than sixty years, has taken a prominent part in relieving temporary distress and in checking mendicity.

The Altrincham and District Nursing Association was formed some thirty years ago, when it

took over the work hitherto maintained by the parishes of St. John and St. Margaret. On the consolidation of the two bodies, the administration was placed under the control of a general committee, appointed at the annual meeting of subscribers, which assumed the responsibility for the nursing of the sick poor throughout the entire district of Altrincham and Bowdon. The Association has now five fully-trained Queen's nurses and its work, entirely maintained by public subscriptions, is of the highest value.

For quite forty years, the St. John Ambulance Brigade has rendered willing and valuable service and, let it be said to its credit, that it was actively associated with the purchase of the first horse-drawn ambulance, presented to the District Council in 1904, by the joint efforts of the Altrincham Police and the Fire Brigade.

The Altrincham Agricultural Society has, since 1862, filled a large space in the life of the district. Its affairs are controlled by a strong and representative Committee, and, with the exception of five years during the Great War, the Society has held an annual exhibition of live stock, horticultural produce and modern farming implements. Its direct aim is the encouragement of agriculture and the breeding of stock, and vast sums of money, subscribed by the public with that object, have been distributed in prize money. The yearly exhibition of the Society has won a wide reputation as being "the largest one-day show in Great Britain." In its old age, it is still a lusty and vigorous institution, and its prestige betrays no sign of waning strength.

The Altrincham and Bowdon Amateur Dramatic Society was established in the seventies, and has

done much to raise the standard of public taste in dramatic art as well as to stimulate an interest in musical matters. The Society has generously supported various local charitable organisations from the income from its performances, and its ready and willing service in this direction commands general commendation.

The North Cheshire Amateur Operatic Society, although much younger in years, is another well-organised body which has won a singularly warm place in the affections of the public. Its productions have been of the highest form of excellence and have gained a reputation for the Society that reaches far beyond the borders of its own immediate district. It has also devoted the profits arising from its performances to charitable causes, and in 1929, was able to make a gift of £500 to the Altrincham Provident Dispensary and Hospital for the endowment of a cot in the children's ward. In 1934, the Society presented the Hospital with a further sum of £1,000, for the Endowment of a bed in the "Nightingale" ward, and also contributed £789 16s. 7d. towards a bed in one of the men's wards. These results in themselves are, perhaps, the best testimony that could be offered of the sterling value of the Society and its unremitting labours for the public good.

Reference has been made in other chapters to the debt we owe to the churches in bearing, for just more than a century, the entire burden of education. Before the Education Act of 1902 came into operation, the whole of the voluntary schools in the town, as well as in the neighbouring villages, were built and maintained at enormous cost by the different denominations, and the fact that they never failed

to reach the high standard of efficiency required by the Government Inspectors, is only one of many illustrations of the soundness of the administration, and the determination of the churches to provide the town with educational machinery of the finest quality.

The extension of the franchise, the growth of political power, the rise of the Co-operative movement, and the organisation of labour, have liberated new forces within the last quarter of a century, and the use made of them is to be seen in a deepened interest in both local and national affairs and a higher sense of civic responsibility. We have named but a few of the voluntary efforts put forward to mould a better Altrincham, but in themselves they are sufficient to disclose a disciplined and well-ordered form of society, the development of a spirit of self-reliance and a full conception of the duty and responsibility of citizenship.

Liberal provision has been made within the space of a quarter of a century for the public in the establishment of appropriate means of entertainment. In the middle part of the last century, the town mainly relied on such simple forms of pleasure as penny readings, ballad concerts and spelling bees to while away the tedium of the long winter evenings, varied occasionally by the periodical visits of travelling theatrical companies or, more thrilling still, the visit of Wombwell's menagerie and Lord George Sanger's circus. In the late part of the century, Mr. J. Snape set up a wooden theatre on Hale Moss, not far from the gates of Stamford Park, and in this little home of melodrama, plays of a highly-diversified form fed the public taste for several years. Then came the Central Theatre in Shaw's Lane, where a

number of Shakespearean plays were staged, with no little success. This was the first permanent playhouse possessed by Altrincham. The theatre ultimately was converted into a Picture House and had a long and successful run until the doors were closed about 1933, by a magisterial order, on the ground that the building did not conform to modern requirements. A long step forward was taken when the Altrincham Picture Theatre was opened in Stamford New Road, in 1913. This was followed by the Hippodrome, which, before its conversion into a Cinema, was of the variety type, with an elaborate pantomime at Christmas time. The Cinema House in Willow Tree Road, which was projected before the Great War, did not materialise until 1919, when the embargo which had been placed on all building plans, except such as were absolutely necessary for the prosecution of the war, was lifted. The Regal Super Cinema, on the Manchester Road, completed the circle of picture theatres in 1929, and its proud and stately facade, as well as the equipment generally, admirably befits its name.

THE GARRICK PLAYHOUSE

Meanwhile, other influences were in operation, and in the Garrick Playhouse, in Barrington Road, is to be seen an admirable example of the modern spirit of dramatic culture. The Altrincham Garrick Society was founded in November, 1913, by Mr. Walter S. Nixon, then living in Springfield Road. Prior to this he had been resident in Stockport, where he was actively associated with the well-known Stockport Garrick Society. He called a public meeting at the 'Traders' Room in Market Street,

on December 2nd, 1913, and this was addressed by Mr. Leigh Turner, who was Stockport's secretary. At this meeting the Altrincham Society was born and the organisation modelled on the same lines as the Stockport parent. Mr. W. S. Nixon was elected chairman, Mr. A. P. Hill, treasurer, and Mr. Frank Kenyon, secretary. The first move was to find a permanent headquarters, and this was obtained by the kindness of Mr. J. W. Byrom, who lent the the society the use of a large basement, under his drapery store in Kingsway, Altrincham. Access was obtained by a back entrance in Post Office Street, and here the Society established its well known little Cellar-Theatre, and committee rooms.

Many experimental plays were given here, and larger productions outside in hired premises. The first play was "The Silver Box," by John Galsworthy, which was played at the Public Hall, being staged by scenery hired from Miss Horniman's Gaiety Theatre, Manchester. The production was in the hands of Mr. Robert J. Smith, of Stockport, and achieved a great artistic success, but nearly broke this young struggling group of enthusiasts by the expense. But the society was firmly established, and thanks to the excellent work of Mr. R. J. Smith, as producer, soon grew to first rank amongst the societies in the Manchester area. Valuable help was given by Mr. G. Bernard Shaw, who imbued the members with the idea of steadily working to secure their own "Little Theatre."

For almost 20 years they worked steadily and enthusiastically at this object. Funds were built up—very slowly at first, until £1,000 was obtained, and a membership of a thousand. Performances were given at the Dunham Road Schools in the early

days, and when the society outgrew this accommodation, it transferred its plays to the Public Hall. Many well-known Altrincham men gave their encouragement, amongst whom we may mention Mr. Edward Acton (afterwards Sir Edward Acton, one of His Majesty's Judges of the High Court) who was the first president, Canon Wainwright, the Rev. Dendy Agate, Judge Longson, Mr. E. G. Parker, Dr. Golland, Dr. Melland, Mr. W. Champness, Mr. A. H. M. Gow and Mr. L. Saville Laver, and especially Mr. P. M. Oliver, who became president when Mr. Acton retired on leaving the district.

In twenty years, well over 200 plays were given, many of them for the first time on any stage. Outstanding amongst these were many of the Shaw plays, and "The Widowing of Mrs. Holroyd," by D. H. Lawrence, which was given its first production and brought many well-known literary and dramatic celebrities from London to witness the performance, and secured a good notice in the *Times*. The "Farmer's Wife," by Eden Philpotts, was played by the Garrick before it attained fame in London as one of the most successful commercial plays of modern times. "If Four Walls Told," by Edward Percy, was given its first production and then achieved a year's run in one of the West End theatres. Some of the plays of Ronald Gow here received their premiere performance, including "Gallows Glorious" and "My Lady Wears a White Cockade," both of which were presented later in London. Other outstanding plays were "Hassan," by James Elroy Flecker; Masfield's "Tragedy of Nan"; O'Neill's "Gold"; Ashley Duke's "Song of Drums"; Sherwood's "Road to Rome" and the Chinese play, "Lady Precious Stream."

The scheme for building the Garrick Playhouse was finally launched, and plans were prepared by Mr. T. Harold Hill. This was the first Little Theatre to be specially built for its purpose by any amateur society in Great Britain. A very large stage was planned, actually slightly wider than the Manchester Opera House and the auditorium contains 500 well-spaced comfortable seats on a raked floor. There are large workshops for scenery making, and a spacious rehearsal room and offices. A scenery dock and a car park for 300 cars are contained on the site, and the elaborate electrical equipment of the stage was designed by Mr. Appleby, of the Strand Electric Company, who have equipped almost every theatre of importance in the country.

Mr. Charles Pennington, of Hale, secured the contract for the building which was opened on October 1st, 1932, by the President, Mr. P. M. Oliver. The total cost was about £9,000. It is in constant use throughout the season; the Garrick Society itself presents about ten large plays, and arranges for visits from about a dozen to twenty of the other leading amateur societies in the Manchester districts. The society has now a membership of 1,800.

That the success of a purely indigenous movement should have been so swift and sure, is a remarkable example of enterprising and persistent effort which the public have not failed to recognise. The Little Theatre has already done much to encourage an interest both in art and literature, and the influence it is exercising as an educational force cannot by any means be over-estimated.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE RELIEF OF THE POOR AND THE BROADHEATH WORKHOUSE

WHEN the Poor Relief Act was passed in 1601, the relief of the poor was recognised in principle as a public concern. Administered by individual parishes through overseers, who were appointed by the Justices, power was given to levy and collect a rate, and the nearest of kin were made responsible for the maintenance of their relations. The persons to be relieved were children, and the infirm, whilst the able-bodied were to be provided with work. This general principle remained in force until 1834, although in 1723, the provision of workhouses had been authorised by an Act of Parliament, which ordered that parishes should be entitled, singly or in combination, to build, buy or hire workhouses, and that any poor person refusing to enter one of such houses should not be entitled to receive relief. Under the provisions of this Act, a workhouse for the reception of the poor of the township was built in 1756, at Broadheath, near to the present works of Messrs. Luke and Spencer, Limited, on a plot of ground $8\frac{1}{2}$ acres in extent described as being "part of the waste in Altrincham." The land was given by the Earl of Warrington, as lord of the manor, at a yearly rental of 5s. and was vested in trustees in perpetuity.

The workhouse continued in use until the formation of the Altrincham Poor Law Union, in 1835. Some deterioration in the administration of the Act of 1723, had been discovered and, as a result, the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1834, was passed, providing for the combination of parishes for the purpose of economically and efficiently administering poor relief, and Boards of Guardians were formed, to which were transferred the duties of overseers in connection with poor relief. In 1831, a portion of the workhouse land was sold to the Warrington and Stockport Railway Company for £2,243 10s. 10d., and the money was invested under an order in Chancery in the purchase of three per cent. Consols; and on the formation of the Poor Law Union and the erection of a central institution at Knutsford, the workhouse itself was converted into cottages and let for the occupation of the workmen of the Trustees of the Duke of Bridgewater on the canal and coal wharf. These cottages are still standing and are yet known by the name of "The Duke's Cottages." For several years the funds of the Charity were allowed to accumulate, and it was not until July, 1860, that a scheme was prepared for the application of the income to some useful public purpose. The scheme proposed the establishment and maintenance of baths and washhouses, the remainder of the annual income not required for these purposes, to be given for the benefit of the deserving resident poor of the parish. Although the Vice-Chancellor approved of the proposals, the plan was never brought to fruition, owing to certain legal difficulties standing in the way. As most of the trustees of the Charity had, by that time, either retired or died, an entirely new body was appointed,

who, attacking the question in a newer spirit, decided to expend their funds upon the erection and the maintenance of the Altrincham Provident Dispensary and Hospital, as told in the chapter dealing with the history of that institution.

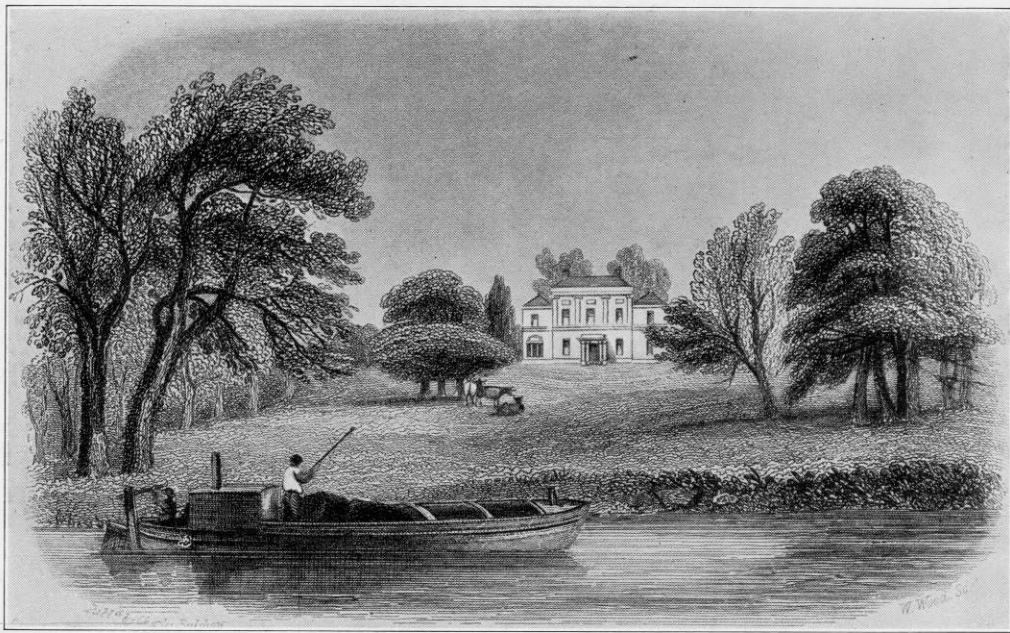
From the year 1835, onward, therefore, the Altrincham Board of Guardians (afterwards the Bucklow Board of Guardians) became responsible for the administration of relief and the control of a new workhouse, built at Knutsford. Under the Act of 1834, each parish in the Union was separately charged with the cost of relieving its own poor, but by the Union Chargeability Act of 1865, all the costs of relief were chargeable to the Common Fund of the Union. The Poor Law Commissioners, constituted as the Central Authority, were superseded by the Poor Law Board in 1847. In 1871, the Poor Law Board was abolished, and its powers were transferred to the Local Government Board which body was superseded in 1919 by the Ministry of Health, created to unify all departments of the Central Government concerned with health services and Poor Law Administration. In 1862, the Union Assessment Committee Act was passed which provided that the Board of Guardians should appoint an Assessment Committee for the purpose of giving Overseers instructions with a view to obtaining a fair and correct valuation of properties for rating purposes.

A Royal Commission was appointed in 1905, to inquire into the working of the laws relating to the relief of the poor, and in 1909, the report of the Commission was issued, recommending the abolition of the existing Boards of Guardians and the establishment of a Public

Assistance Authority, such authority to be a separate committee of the County or County Borough Council, appointed by the Council partly from its own members and in part from outside its number. The proposed duties of these Public Assistance Authorities were to take over the control of the Poor Law administration in Counties and County Boroughs. In 1925, the Rating and Valuation Act was passed, which provided for the abolition of the Union Assessment Committees and the setting up of separate Statutory Assessment Committees throughout the country, in accordance with schemes prepared by the County and County Borough Councils. Under this Act, the Urban District Council became the Rating and Valuation Authority for the township of Altrincham, and the appointment of Overseers was discontinued. At the same time, the Bucklow Area Assessment Committee, formed of the representatives of the County Council and the various Urban and Rural District Councils within the area, was set up for the purpose of adjudicating on appeals and in dealing with cases of special difficulty. The County Council appoint a County Valuation Committee to promote uniformity in rating and otherwise assist Rating Authorities in the County.

In 1927, all Poor Law legislation from the year 1601, was consolidated, and in 1930, the Poor Law Act, 1927, was consolidated with certain sections of the Local Government Act, 1929. In 1929, the Local Government Act was passed under which provision was made for the transfer of the work of Boards of Guardians to County and County Borough Councils, as from April 1st, 1930, and the appointment by such

Councils of Public Assistance Committees. The Bucklow Board of Guardians terminated its work on March 31st, 1930, and the County Council took over the administration of relief on the following day. The Public Assistance Committee appointed by the County Council, comprised the members of the defunct Board of Guardians and representatives of the various District Councils. There is a central Office of the Committee at Station Buildings, Altrincham, and the meetings are held monthly at Knutsford when all matters relating to relief are dealt with by it. The old institution at Knutsford, which had been in occupation for 95 years, is retained for the accommodation of able-bodied persons, infirm cases, and mental patients.



OLDFIELD HALL

CHAPTER XXV

OLDFIELD HALL, THE JOHN LEIGH PARK, AND A BIG HOUSING SCHEME

IF twenty years ago, you had left Sandiway and walked a few hundred yards along Oldfield Lane, you would have seen, on the left, some hundred yards or more from the road, a somewhat dignified mansion, of what was apparently red sandstone in a classic style of architecture. It was probably built by the second Earl of Warrington, as a dower house, early in the eighteenth century, and its life has ever been free from disturbing influences. It played no part in the historical drama of the past and the hand of time dealt gently with its solid walls. Oldfield Hall, by which name it went, lay in the middle of a park of fourteen acres, with spacious lawns, flower gardens and conservatories, all of which presented a pleasing picture to the eye. The park was belted with forest trees, many of them more than two centuries old, and in the topmost branches of those nearest the road, a colony of rooks built their nests and filled the air with their incessant cries. Near the entrance gates was a long range of stabling, the dairy and several cottages, used by the workmen on the estate, and near-by was a pleasant paddock set within a park railing. The ground sloped gently upwards on the other side of the house, and the summit was crowned with an ornamental summer house called "The Temple," a name no doubt given to it because of its resemblance in miniature to an ancient Greek temple.

The life of the old mansion always coursed in peaceful channels, and it has written no page in any historical record. It may, of course, once have been occupied by the fair daughters of the House of Dunham Massey Hall, but we know that in 1727, it was the home of Mr. George Meredith, a younger brother of Sir William Meredith, Baronet, then of Henbury, near Macclesfield. Sir William formerly resided at Ashley and was a member of the family of Merediths who were famous in the struggle between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians. Later it was the home of Lady Murray, who was followed by Mr. Edward Jeremiah Lloyd, through whose generosity Lloyd's Fever Hospital in Newtown (a wide district over which the town was then spreading its tentacles in the form of rows of cottage dwellings), was built and endowed on a site given by the Earl of Stamford and Warrington, on Hale Moss. Mr. Lloyd took an active part in the public life of Altrincham, and his early death in 1850, was a distinct loss to the community.

In Bowdon Church, there is a fitting tribute to his memory in the form of a marble tablet bearing the following inscription :—

To the memory of
Edward Jeremiah Lloyd,
of Oldfield Hall,
a magistrate for the counties of
Chester and Lancaster
and a Captain in the Earl of Chester's Yeomanry Cavalry,
who closed an exemplary and useful life
on the 3rd day of July, 1850
in the 61st year of his age.
Distinguished by the urbanity of his manners
and the kindness of his disposition
no less than by his undeviating honour
and exact sense of justice,

accessible and benevolent to the poor,
considerate and attentive to all
he engaged in a remarkable degree, the affections
while he commanded the respect
of every class of society.

To testify their appreciation of his worth
and to record so eminent an example of excellence,
the inhabitants of this neighbourhood
and the members of the corps to which he belonged,
have caused this tablet
to be erected.

On Mr. Lloyd's death, Oldfield Hall was tenanted by Mr. John Allen and he resided there until his death in 1892. He acted as a magistrate for the Altrincham Petty Sessional Division, was a liberal supporter of various philanthropic and educational causes, and held the position of Chairman of the Board of Management of the Altrincham Provident Dispensary and Hospital from 1870 to 1888. He was followed in the tenancy by Mr. James Grimble Groves, Member of Parliament for one of the Salford Divisions and Mayor of Altrincham in 1897 and 1898.

During Mr. Groves' occupation of the hall, the sylvan character of the estate was sacrificed to the commercial expansion of Broadheath. One portion of the estate lay between the grounds of the Hall, and the Bridgewater Canal. It covered an area of some thirty or forty acres, and was contiguous to a number of machine works which had already made Broadheath into a manufacturing centre. In 1894, the whole of this area was purchased by Mr. Andrew Curtis Sparkes, a local farmer, whose principal object was to develop the land for building purposes. He built a large number of houses himself on the fringe of the estate, and later on sold the remainder of the

land to Linotype and Machinery, Limited, who took possession in 1896, and erected a huge manufactory, and, for their workpeople, numerous houses, of a very attractive design. Oldfield Hall, however, lost its character as a rural retreat, and soon afterwards Mr. Groves, quitted it for "fresh woods and pastures new." For several years the Hall remained empty and forsaken, and in 1916, was pulled down. The District Council, at that time, seriously considered the desirability of purchasing the park and utilising it for housing, but they were deterred by the cost and hesitated to come to a final decision.

The future of the estate was at length determined by the generosity of Mr. John Leigh, of Beech Lawn, Altrincham (now Sir John Leigh, Bart., M.P.) who, in July, 1917, offered to purchase and present it to the District Council as a public park. At the same time, the Council received a letter from the Countess of Stamford, dated July 12th, in which her ladyship said it was the wish of the late Lord Stamford, which he had often expressed to her, that after he had put the settled estates in order, he should devote either some portion of them or of his own property for a park for the benefit of his neighbours. Lord Stamford had been unable to carry into effect all that he wished or intended, but his wishes, Lady Stamford stated, had always been present to her son and herself. It has always been their intention when her son came of age, that they should unite in giving to their friends and neighbours land suitable for a park, not only as a memorial to the late Lord Stamford, but as a token of their own goodwill and the sincere interest they took in the welfare of the neighbourhood. They accordingly decided at the end of June, that the Oldfield Hall Estate should be offered by



Photo by

ENTRANCE TO THE JOHN LEIGH PARK

J. Ingham & Sons. Bowdon

them as a gift, and be dedicated permanently for the benefit of the public. Her Ladyship now understood that Mr. John Leigh had offered to purchase and give Oldfield Hall Estate to the Council, and she was very glad that the Council should have the benefit of his gift. In these circumstances, they proposed to present to the Council land equal in value to the Oldfield Hall Estate, such land to be used as a site for workmen's cottages.

The Council gratefully accepted both gifts, and on taking possession laid out the park with great taste as a public pleasure ground, and provided tennis courts, bowling greens and a bandstand—a work carried out, from plans prepared by the Council's Surveyor, by Mr. T. M. Jones, the Parks Superintendent. The gift of the Countess and the Earl of Stamford took the form of $27\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land not far from the park, and on this site and an additional 25 acres bought by the Council no fewer than 407 houses of a very pleasing type have since been erected by the District Council, from plans prepared in the Surveyor's Department. In laying out the park, the Council has been extremely successful in preserving most of its natural features, and it is now a pleasing and popular public resort. The adjacent Housing Estate, which already has a Post Office, a day school and a number of shops is delightfully situated, and the tasteful way the gardens are laid out testifies to the pride of the tenantry in their new surroundings.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE GREAT WAR

IT is not our purpose to write a history of the ghastly war which cost the British Empire more than a million lives, besides maiming 2,400,988 others, but merely to describe some of its phases and the deep shadow it cast on the life of Altrincham. The seeds of the great conflict were sown when the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, and his wife were murdered by Pan-Servian conspirators at Sarajevo, on June 28th, 1914. Then followed, on July 23rd, Austria's ultimatum to Servia, in terms almost impossible of acceptance. Servia was given 48 hours in which to reply. Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, who exerted all the influence in his power to prevent an outbreak of war, pointed out the unreasonable nature of the Austrian Note, and while asking for an extension of the time-limit, suggested mediation by the four Powers. Russia, on behalf of Servia, also asked for an extension of the time-limit, but Austria was obdurate and declined to listen to what was considered a reasonable request. On July 26th, Servia made a reply which Austria, backed up by Germany, considered evasive and her ambassador left Belgrade. Thus began the conflict in which practically the whole of Europe, with a population estimated roughly at 400,000,000 became involved.

The negotiations and "conversations" between Great Britain and Germany which followed, produced no practical result, and it was manifested as the hours passed by, that Germany had made up her mind to launch the war for which the War Party had been secretly preparing. Sir Edward Grey, with a patience and skill beyond praise, used all the art of diplomacy to avert the calamity of war between Great Britain and Germany, but to no purpose. The solemn treaty obligations regarding the neutrality of Belgium, entered into by Great Britain, France and Germany, among other countries, were recklessly disregarded. In the language of the German Chancellor, the treaty which that country had signed was but "a scrap of paper," and he announced that it was necessary for German strategy in striking at France to "hack their way through" peaceful and independent Belgium. Germany's proposals to secure the neutrality of Great Britain were described by Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister, as "infamous proposals" and in a subsequent speech, on September 4th, at the London Guildhall, he uttered these solemn words:—"For my part, I say that sooner than be a silent witness, which means in effect a willing accomplice, of this tragic triumph of force over law, and of brutality over freedom, I would see this country of ours blotted out of the page of history."

Austria, with assurances of German support, broke off relations with Serbia and formally declared war on July 28th. Russia at once mobilised in support of Serbia, and Germany retaliated by declaring war on Russia, whose ally, France, was next brought into the conflict. German troops on August 1st, crossed the frontiers of Luxemburg and Belgium, and on Tuesday, August 4th, 1914, Great Britain asked

Germany for a definite assurance by midnight that she would not violate Belgian neutrality. Germany's attitude was unmistakable in the following report of an interview by our ambassador in Berlin with the German Secretary of State :—"Herr von Jagow at once replied that he was sorry to say that his answer must be 'No,' as, in consequence of the German troops having crossed the frontier that morning, Belgium neutrality had already been violated. Herr von Jagow again went into the reasons why the Imperial Government had been obliged to take this step, namely, that they had to advance into France by the quickest and easiest way, so as to be able to get well ahead with their operations and endeavour to strike some decisive blow as early as possible." At midnight we were at war. On the following day, Earl Kitchener was appointed Secretary of State for War and his call for men filled the recruiting offices. A wave of patriotism swept over the country, and in a month's time, half a million men, irrespective of the thousands who joined the Territorial forces, had responded to the call to arms. Offers, too, came from the Overseas Dominions and from India. Meanwhile, Germany had thrown her armies into Belgium and the battle was raging furiously round Liege, where the Belgian army fought stubbornly against overwhelming forces. Step by step, the theatre of war broadened ; France then Russia, Japan, Italy, Bulgaria, Roumania, and, eventually America, entered upon the struggle against Germany whose only allies were Austria and Turkey. An effective work was undertaken by the Navy in clearing the seas of enemy ships and maintaining the trade routes. All this was accomplished while effectively sealing up the German Navy and securing

the safe landing in France of the British Expeditionary Force. The landing was completed on August 17th, less than a fortnight after the declaration of war, and, six days later, the British army was heavily engaged at Mons.

THE EFFECT ON ALTRINCHAM

The entrance of Great Britain into the war had a stunning effect upon Altrincham. Horses, vans, lorries and carts were requisitioned in the streets for war service early on Wednesday, August 5th, and butchers and bakers, grocers and milk sellers were suddenly bereft of the means of transport.

By daybreak, the Altrincham military and naval reservists answered the telegram for immediate mobilisation. The naval men joined the North Sea Fleet and the soldiers went with the Expeditionary Force to France where, in less than a month, they were in the battle line at Mons. The turn of the Territorial Force came on Sunday, August 9th, when the local companies left for Chester to join the 5th Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment, which had volunteered for active service. The Altrincham detachment numbered 120 men and the Sale and Cheadle companies were 150 strong. The men went into camp for training and a few weeks later were sent abroad. These grim incidents were in themselves significant, and the public began to prepare themselves for affairs of even greater moment. The Bank Holiday was extended from Monday, August 3rd, to Thursday, August 6th. At the end of July, the gold question had become acute and on the 30th, the bank rate was raised from three to four

per cent. Late on the following day, it was decided to raise it to eight per cent. and on August 1st, to ten per cent. Dealing with the subject of the increased bank rate at the time, the *Manchester Guardian* observed :—"The Bank of England in times of emergency has always risen to its responsibilities. Unlike some of the joint stock institutions, it has never deluded itself with the idea that it can protect its own interests at the expense of the country. The ten per cent. rate, therefore, had to come down. The day before the Bank Holidays ended, it was in fact, reduced to six per cent—a by no means prohibitive rate—and on Saturday, August 8th, to five per cent. But this could not have been done unless good use had been made of the breathing space between August 1st and August 7th. The protection afforded to the joint stock banks and discount houses by the moratorium, and the provision of an emergency paper currency, both indirectly took much pressure off the Bank of England. But the indirect psychological effect was even greater. The steps taken were unprecedented, but they were not panic measures; they created no such alarm as the suspension of specie payments would have done. The mere fact that the Bank of England was willing to continue its business on perfectly normal lines was in itself the surest guarantee of financial security. Even so, it is doubtful if the Bank of England would have been able to reduce its rate so rapidly had not its gold in the meantime been safeguarded from all danger of a foreign drain." When the banks reopened, on August 7th, the issue of gold coins ceased and Treasury Notes for £1 and 10s. made their appearance. Postal orders also were authorised as legal tender.

Lord Kitchener had on August 11th, circularised the Lord Lieutenants and the Chairmen of the Territorial Force County Associations, asking for 100,000 men between the ages of 19 and 30, for a new army. The appeal met with a ready response. A recruiting station was opened at the Hale Drill Hall and the doors were besieged with young men who offered themselves for enrolment. By the end of September, more than 600 had enlisted in the new army. These came from Altrincham, Bowdon, Hale, Sale, Dunham Massey, Timperley and Knutsford. Quite as many from these places joined the eight special battalions provided and equipped by the City of Manchester, while others enrolled themselves with the Earl of Chester's Imperial Cavalry and the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment of Cavalry. Many men of the National Reserve also volunteered for active service, and all of military age who were successful in passing the strict medical examination were drafted away. Recruiting still went on vigorously, and by the end of November, it was estimated that Altrincham, Sale and the adjoining townships furnished no fewer than 2,000 men for the Army and the Territorial Force. Mr. G. C. Hamilton, M.P. for the Altrincham Parliamentary Division, was among those who enlisted. He joined the 5th Battalion of the Cheshire Regiment, in October, and after receiving a lieutenant's commission, proceeded to the training camp at Northampton, and subsequently went abroad with the regiment. On Monday, August 3rd, twenty members of the St. John Ambulance Brigade, attached to the Royal Naval Auxiliary Sick-berth Reserve, were called up for service by order of the Admiralty, and they departed from Altrincham amid enthusiastic scenes for Haslar

Hospital. During the first few weeks, the flow of recruits was so great that accommodation could not be found for the men at the Chester Dépôt, and it was necessary to send large numbers back to their homes to await the preparation of suitable training camps. They were not idle in the meantime, however, and with the object of keeping in condition, organised themselves into companies and spent the days in long route marches and military exercises. This preliminary form of training was a feature of Altrincham life, until the men, with the cheers of an excited populace ringing in their ears, took their departure to undergo a course of serious military training.

By the end of October, the strength of the Altrincham Police Force was reduced by more than one half, owing to the enlistment of members of military age, and an urgent call was made for the enrolment of special constables. It was promptly answered, and a force of at least two hundred men above the military age limit was enrolled for police duties. Drilling themselves on the parade ground of the Fire Brigade, they undertook night patrol work, and point duty at street crossings and generally aided the police in maintaining public order for the four years the war was still to last. Other men over military age, showed a no less eager spirit, and in Sale, a Volunteer Defence Corps of 300 men was formed. The use of the ground of the Sale Rugby Football Club, whose fixtures had been cancelled, was granted for drilling purposes, and the corps, formed almost entirely of professional men, tradesmen, clerks and warehousemen, trained themselves to bear arms for the defence of the country. Similar corps were formed in Timperley, Bowdon, Hale and Altrincham, where the grounds of the cricket and football clubs were

freely made use of. The "rush to arms" was not the action of a panic-stricken crowd so much as a manifestation of the sacrifices the people were prepared to make for the defence of their homes in face of a common peril. The corps were thoroughly in earnest. They placed themselves under the command of competent instructors, and gradually gained efficiency both in drill and marksmanship.

Early in 1915, the various home defence organisations which had sprung into existence on the outbreak of the war, were organised into the National Volunteer Association and those of Altrincham became the 1st Battalion (Altrincham) of the Cheshire Volunteer Regiment, under the command of Major Sir Arthur A. Haworth, of Normanby, Altrincham. Ten other battalions of the regiment were also formed in the county at the same time. The four companies of the 1st Battalion were: A, Altrincham (including Bowdon, Hale and Timperley); B, Sale (including Ashton-on-Mersey); C, Cheadle (including Northenden and Gatley); D, Lymm (including Oughtrington and Heatley). The members of the battalions were drawn from all ranks of society, and of almost every variety of occupation, united in the common desire to fit themselves for the defence of their country in case of invasion. Some 1,300 men enrolled themselves in the Altrincham Battalion, of whom 230 joined the army after having attained a considerable degree of efficiency as soldiers, without any cost to the Government. Full recognition by the War Office came with the passing of the Volunteer Act, 1916, and adjutants and sergeant-majors from the Regulars were appointed to each battalion, and rifles, equipment, grants for uniform for efficient volunteers were issued. The

battalions were composed of men between 40 and 55 years of age, recruits were required to put in 42 drills and sign an agreement to serve for the duration of the war and were only liable to be called up under the Volunteer Act (1863) in the event of invasion.

WAR RELIEF COMMITTEE

Interests of an altogether different kind were meanwhile pursued with the utmost vigour. The week after the outbreak of the war, Relief Committees were formed for the purpose of raising funds for the help of the dependents of soldiers and sailors, and for those suffering by reason of unemployment. Altrincham had barely recovered from the strain of raising £10,500 for the enlargement of the General Hospital, but the importance of relief measures was promptly realised, and by the end of November, a representative committee, under the chairmanship of the Mayor (Mr. George Faulkner Armitage), had in their hands, subscriptions amounting to £4,500. The committee also interested themselves in finding work for the unemployed, and by the means they adopted, much hardship was averted. Sale also organised a relief fund which amounted to £2,380 in the closing days of November. The relief work did not end with the aid given to the families of soldiers and sailors. Every day, dinners were found for poor school children in Altrincham, Broadheath and Timperley, and something was also done to provide clothing for them. In this work the co-operation of many kindly-disposed folk was enlisted, and it is certain the help they gave saved the community from a great amount of suffering. As a further indication of the depth to which public

feeling had been stirred, it may be mentioned that an appeal which was made in the columns of the "Guardian" on November 6th, for £250 for the endowment of an "Altrincham Bed" in the Base Hospital of the Allied Forces at the Hotel Chrystol, Boulogne, brought in a sum of £297. The money was remitted to London by Mrs. Duggan and Mrs. Bradbury, by whom it was collected, and the necessary arrangements were made by November 19th, for a bed in the hospital which bore the name of "The Altrincham Bed."

FIRST WOUNDED SOLDIERS IN ALTRINCHAM

The toll exacted by the war was heavy. One of the first victims it claimed was Captain E. K. Bradbury, of the Royal Horse Artillery, son of Judge Bradbury, of Parkfield, Altrincham, who was killed at Nery, in France, on September 1st, while serving his gun after every other officer and man had been shot down. His bravery was commemorated by the award of the Victoria Cross, which, at a later date, was pinned on the breast of his mother by the King at Buckingham Palace. Another to fall early in the campaign, was Captain W. Lynn Allen, of the 2nd Border Regiment, son of Mr. Bulkeley Allen, of West Lynn, Dunham Road, and grandson of Mr. John Allen, of Oldfield Hall. In October, 1914, the first company of wounded soldiers to reach Altrincham from Belgium and France, made a sad procession as they were conveyed in ambulances to the Altrincham General Hospital, where two wards had been reserved for their accommodation, and they remained there until nursed back to health by kindly and sympathetic hands. The wards remained in constant

use until the end of the war, in addition to a new ward which was fully equipped and furnished by Mr. F. B. Dunkerley, Vice-Chairman of the Board of Management of the Hospital, on August 11th, 1916. Altogether the hospital, up to the end of 1917, provided 16 beds for military cases entirely free of cost to the country, representing a gift of not less than £2,000 out of the funds of the hospital. The view then taken by the Board of Management was that in consequence of the very heavy increase in the cost of maintenance, drugs, dressings and practically all other requirements, they could not continue the strain on the resources of the hospital, and gave notice to the military authorities and applied for the current government grant for beds permanently occupied by military cases from January 1st, 1918. The grant was forthcoming and its receipt relieved the Board of Management of much financial responsibility.

THE WORK OF THE BRITISH RED CROSS SOCIETY

The British Red Cross Society in the Altrincham Division was quickly organised for hospital service, and the Townships (Timperley and Dunham Massey) which possessed detachments of some years' standing were able at an early date after the outbreak of the war, to equip and staff hospitals for the wounded, and for this purpose several private houses were generously placed by the owners at their disposal. In those townships where Voluntary Aid Detachments had not already been established, steps were immediately taken for their formation, and with this object numerous courses of lectures were held during August and the following months. By December 31st,

1914, new detachments were formed at Ashton-on-Mersey (Brooklands and Sale), one at Dunham Massey, one at Hale and one at Lymm. A new men's detachment was also formed at Timperley and one at Sale and in August, 1915, a new Township and Women's V.A.D. was formed in Altrincham. Before the close of 1914, five Auxiliary Home Hospitals, with accommodation for 288 beds, had been opened in the Division. They were the following :—October 31st, Heyesleigh, Timperley (the residence of Dr. Savatard); October 31st, Brackendene, Dunham Massey (the residence of Mr. Assheton Clegg); November 9th, Brookfield House, Lymm; November 16th, Hale Hospital, Cecil Road; November 24th, Linden Lea, Ashton-on-Mersey. In the next year, the following Auxiliary Home Hospitals were opened :—January 7th, Ingestre, Ashton-on-Mersey; February 14th, Haigh Lawn, Dunham Massey; May 13th, a second hospital was opened at Timperley—Pickering Lodge; September 29th, Cheshire 50 moved their Hospital from Brackendene to Raynor Croft, Bowdon; October 27th, Cheshire 82 opened an annexe at the Bowdon Assembly Rooms. These houses in all cases were kindly lent by the owners, and, in some cases, free of charge for the electric light and heating. The North Cheshire Water Company also agreed to make no charge for the water supplied. Almost the entire equipment was given or lent, including gifts of beds, dressing trolleys, lockers, sterilisers and large quantities of blankets, sheets and clothing for the men, while, in addition, many of the Hospitals had regular gifts of coal, meat, fowls, sacks of flour and other groceries. Through the courtesy of the Board of Management of the Altrincham General Hospital, eighteen members of the

Timperley and Dunham Massey detachments were admitted to the Hospital for short terms of training. The Medical Officers in all parts of the division generously gave their services as lecturers, examiners and in attendance on the wounded, and from all parts of the division large gifts of clothing were forwarded to the Cheshire depôts and to various hospitals. As showing the value of different hospitals, it may be noted that from November, 1914, to the end of February, 1918, the number of patients admitted to the British Red Cross hospital in Cecil Road, Hale, was 1,774. On January 10th, 1915, the Hale hospital was extended, the schools of St. Peter's Church, Hale, and the Hale Congregational Church Schools were converted into Military Hospitals for 50 beds, and, in the following year, the Lecture Hall of the Bowdon Downs Congregational Church was also utilised for the nursing of the wounded.

On May 8th, 1916, a new open-air ward was opened at the Haigh Lawn Red Cross hospital. On October 21st, 1916, a presentation of six motor-ambulances was made to the British Red Cross Society by the St. Margaret's (Dunham Massey) Motor Ambulance Association, and in the same month, Hilston House, Bowdon, was lent by Mr. Ellis Briggs, for use as a Red Cross hospital. On November 24th, 1916, Townfield House, Altrincham, was bought by Mr. John Leigh, Beech Lawn, Altrincham (afterwards Sir John Leigh, Bart.), and after being fully equipped and furnished by him at his sole cost, was lent to the Red Cross Society for the accommodation of 100 wounded officers. Dunham Massey Hall was also converted into a Red Cross Hospital by the Countess of

Stamford, who, for more than two years was the Commandant, while her daughter, Lady Jane Grey, acted as Sister-in-charge.

THE WAR SUPPLY DEPÔT

The Altrincham War Hospital Supply Depôt, for the purpose of making and supplying surgical requisites and hospital clothing for military hospitals at home and abroad, was opened at West Hill, Green Walk, Bowdon, on October 18th, 1915. The house was lent by Lieutenant-Colonel and Mrs. Behrens, and it was opened by the Countess of Stamford. Many voluntary helpers at once offered their services and no department for the four years the Depôt was in operation ever lacked willing workers. Its management was in the hands of the following:—President, Mr. G. F. Armitage, Mayor of Altrincham; Chairman, Mr. C. F. Worrall, Longcroft, Altrincham; Hon. Secretary, Miss Rigby, The Depôt, West Hill; Assistant Hon. Secretary, Miss Behrens, The Cedars, Bowdon; Hon. Organiser, Lady Haworth, Normanby, Altrincham; Assistant Hon. Organiser, Mrs. Haslam, Dunham Knoll, Altrincham; Hon. Treasurer, Mr. Herbert Kendal, Newstead, Altrincham. The workers attended daily throughout the war, and besides giving untiring service in making articles for the alleviation of the sufferings of the wounded, they made substantial gifts of goods and money in support of the organisation. In November, 1915, a Guild was formed at Alderley, and in January, 1916, Knutsford followed. Subsequently, Guilds were opened at Northwich, Lytham, Sale, Llandudno and Tunbridge Wells, all of which were affiliated to West Hill. The articles

made at the branch Guilds were regularly sent to the Altrincham Depôt and thence despatched to the various hospitals—a system of distribution adopted to prevent overlapping. During the first week of the West Hill Depôt, 819 articles were made, but a year later, the number had increased to between 3,000 and 4,000 weekly, in addition to the articles sent in by the other Guilds. At first each hospital supplied by the Depôt received, at most, two to four bales, containing from 500 to 700 articles, but in a year's time, an average consignment consisted of fourteen to twenty bales, containing from 5,000 to 8,000 articles. During the first twelve months, the number of articles despatched was little short of 200,000. Hospitals were supplied in England, France, Italy, Russia, Salonika, Egypt and Mesopotamia. In times of stress, the voluntary workers toiled early and late, week-days and Sundays alike, in order to be able to send extra consignments to the Manchester Military hospitals and to the local Red Cross hospitals. So large did the work ultimately become, that it was found necessary to enlarge the Depôt's housing capacity, and Kirklee, another large house, was generously lent by the family of the late Mrs. O'Hanlon for the purpose, and it was joined up to West Hill by a covered way in October, 1916.

The expansion of the work may be judged from the fact that in the last week in October, 1916, the number of articles sent from the Depôt was 9,370. The following week, the Depôt despatched no fewer than 28 bales, containing 7,361 articles, to a large hospital at Lyons, and four bales to a hospital at Foix in France, of which Mrs. Lovell, of Bowdon, had the control. On the occasion of the Depôt's first birthday, the sum of £946 was obtained from a

concert and an appeal for special donations. The operations of the Dépôt were continued for two years more with unabated zeal, and, although we have no figures to guide us, it is certain that the work accomplished increased four-fold.

DEFENCE OF THE REALM ACT

Early measures of precaution were taken by the Government for the safety of the country. Wireless telegraphy was then in its earliest stages, and mostly in the hands of amateurs, and the first step of the authorities was to order the dismantling of all instruments of which, even at that early period, Altrincham possessed not a few. The Government also took the widest possible powers under the Defence of the Realm Act. This Act was in two parts. The first part was designed to give the naval and military authorities power to do everything that might be useful to protect the country against the risk of invasion or raid. They might take possession of any lands or buildings for that purpose, stop and divert roads, commandeer vehicles and vessels, make requisition of animals and stores, order the inhabitants to leave any area proclaimed, require licensed premises to be closed as directed, order streets to be darkened, enter and search without warrant, and arrest, without warrant, any person "whose behaviour is of such a nature as to give reasonable grounds for suspecting that he has acted, or is acting, or is about to act, in a manner prejudicial to the public safety, or who is suspected of having committed an offence against these regulations." The second part of the Act was professedly drawn up to prevent persons from communicating information likely to be useful to the

enemy, but some of its provisions went far beyond that object. Section 27, for example, ran as follows :—

“No person shall by word of mouth or in writing, or in any newspaper, periodical, book or circular, or other printed publication, spread false reports, or make false statements, likely to cause disaffection to His Majesty or to interfere with the success of His Majesty’s forces by land or sea, or to prejudice His Majesty’s relations with foreign powers, or spread reports or make statements likely to prejudice the recruiting, training, discipline, or administration of any of His Majesty’s forces.”

Further, the Act deprived Englishmen charged with offences under the Act, of the right of trial by jury. Section 56 of the Act, provided that any one alleged to be guilty of an offence under the Act should be tried either by a court-martial or before a court of summary jurisdiction, and, except where the Act declared an offence against it to be summary, left it to the “competent military authority” to determine whether the trial shall be by court-martial or in a civil court of summary jurisdiction. “In neither case,” pointed out the *Manchester Guardian*, at the time, “is there a jury, so that it would be strictly accurate to say that the Act abolished trial by jury for all offences under it, and set up a modified martial law—an institution hitherto unknown in the country. It was reserved to the House of Lords to make a protest, to which the Government so far yielded, as to bring in an amending Bill, restoring to Englishmen the right to be tried by a jury of their peers, which had been theirs since Magna Charta.” So finely indeed, were the meshes of the Act woven, that it was made an offence for a clerk in a newspaper office to accept a small prepaid advertisement, unless the name and the address of the advertiser were

endorsed on the back of the copy. Under its provisions, also the streets were darkened at night by painting the lanterns black, and it was an offence to have a light in a room which could be visible from the street. Shops were closed at an earlier hour, and if business was done after nightfall it must take place behind closed doors and darkened windows, to prevent even the least glimmer of light from falling into the roadway. On April 8th, 1915, the Drink Restriction Order came into operation and the hours of opening of all licensed premises were drastically shortened. Early in 1915, there were many attacks on East Coast towns by German airships and there were numerous casualties. It was generally feared that these raids were merely a prelude to an invasion of the country by the enemy, for which the military authorities had already made provision by garrisoning all the sea coast towns; but in the inland towns, such as Altrincham, it was felt that the hands of the Government should be strengthened by voluntary action, and besides the National Defence Force, the farmers over military age, on the Tatton and Dunham Massey Estates formed a mounted detachment, under the command of Mr. C. R. Longe, agent to Lord Egerton, for the defence of their homes. It was styled "The Bucklow Mounted Corps." Many of the members had been troopers in the Earl of Chester's Yeomanry Cavalry, and although some were grey and grizzled with years, they formed a formidable body when on parade, with sword and carbine as their weapons. Fortunately, their services were never required.

A few days after the declaration of war, the police authorities had all residents of German nationality conveyed to the police station, where, before a special

sitting of the magistrates, they were ordered to be interned. Even head waiters and your favourite hair-dresser were not spared the ignominy, but they evidently agreed that internment in an English camp was preferable to service with the German Army. Altrincham saw nothing more of the Germans until some time in 1916, when five hundred Austrian and German prisoners were conducted through the town from their quarters at Handforth, to a new internment camp at Sinderland, where, behind the high barbed wire fencing, they were confined to the end of the war. There was only one death in the camp—that of a young German soldier, who was buried in the Altrincham Cemetery. Over his remains the last prayers of the Church were offered by the Rev. Hewlett Johnson, Vicar of St. Margaret's. The camp, however, cost the life of one of Altrincham's most popular medical practitioners in Dr. E. L. Luckman, who, while on a visit to a sick man in the camp, contracted a chill and died a few days afterwards from pneumonia. His memory was honoured by the endowment of a bed in the Altrincham General Hospital which he had served over a long period as honorary surgeon. At the end of the war, and the repatriation of the German prisoners, the internment camp was taken over by the military authorities and used as an ammunition dépôt of the Royal Air Force.

THE RECRUITING CAMPAIGN

All this time a vigorous recruiting campaign was kept up, and a further inducement to join the Army was the raising of the separation allowance, made to wives of soldiers of both the Regular and Territorial Army, but no change was made in the amount

contributed by the soldier out of his pay. So far as height was concerned, it had again been reduced to the lowest minimum, so that every available man might join, and the second million of men were asked for on November 14th, bringing the total of the army to 2,186,000. Still more men were appealed for, and Altrincham did not fail to contribute its quota, although there was evidence that the strength of the tide was slackening. There had also been a big demand for munitions, and many hundreds of extra hands had been taken on at Broadheath, where the workshops of all the engineering firms had been converted into munition factories, and were ringing with the hammers of busy workers. Lord Kitchener emphasised that the men engaged on munition work were just as useful in the factories as in the front lines, and the machinery was kept going day and night. In order that the total man power of the nation might be concentrated on the prosecution of the war, work of every other kind such as the erection of houses, places of entertainment and public buildings was suspended, except such as was absolutely essential, and as most of the petrol in the country was required in the factories, motoring was rigorously curtailed.

THE BELGIAN REFUGEES

When the war broke out, the Altrincham Agricultural Society was busily preparing for the September Show and large sums of money had already been expended in laying out the ground. It was decided, however, at once to suspend operations and abandon the Show, and five years passed before the next annual exhibition drew its crowds to the Devisdale. The committee resolved to show their practical sympathy with the Belgian farmers who

had been despoiled by the Germans of their implements of husbandry and their roots and cereals, and on the day the show was to have been held, they organised a sale of large dimensions and were successful in raising a sum of two thousand pounds which was remitted to purchase new machinery and implements for the stricken farmers in Belgium. In the following month, many thousands of Belgians—men, women and children, whose homes had been destroyed by the German tide of conquest—arrived in England, at the invitation of the Government, and threw themselves on the hospitality of the country, which the public were only too glad to afford as part of the debt owing to a gallant and heroic nation, whose spirit in the face of untold agony had won the admiration of the world. Mr. George Faulkner Armitage, who had been re-elected to the position of Mayor, at once decided to make an appeal for the setting up of homes for as many of the refugees as could be accommodated in Altrincham, and in a few days, enough money was subscribed to furnish seven unoccupied houses to which a large number of Belgian refugees were admitted in October. Others found homes in Hale, while many more were received as the guests of private families. A committee was formed with the Mayor at its head, and adequate means were forthcoming to maintain the homes until the day of repatriation arrived. Both the Mayor and Mayoress were unwearied in personally supervising the arrangements and in ministering to the comfort of the Belgian families, many of whom obtained employment and found means for their own maintenance. A home was also provided and maintained in New Street, by the congregation of St. Vincent's Church, of which

Canon Welsh, the rector, was the able and energetic chairman.

On December 29th, the Mayor and Mayoress entertained over a hundred of the refugees at the Dunham Road Schools, by which time, many were familiar with the English tongue, and the re-union was of the happiest possible kind. A little later, January 20th, 1915, to be exact, the Mayor and Mayoress entertained about 1,000 dependents of soldiers and sailors to tea and a concert at the British Schools. In this and many other directions, the Mayor spared neither money nor time in a spirited endeavour to cheer the hearts of the people in a time of distress and deep depression, and it was, therefore, by no means surprising that he should be invited to continue in the seat of the Mayoralty for the duration of the war. This he did, and for two years afterwards he held the official position with an unflinching interest in all philanthropic objects that won for him a high place in the public estimation.

CONSCRIPTION

The war continued with increased intensity and the gloom and despondency deepened daily as the great drama on the Continent unfolded its terrible scenes of carnage. Hardly a day passed that did not throw a tragic shadow over some Altrincham home, and eyes were reddened with anguish as news was received from the War Office of the loss of the men who had fallen on the battle-field. The death roll in 1915, reached appalling figures; the call for more men to fill the yawning gaps became loud and insistent, and conscription was freely mentioned, and even urged, as the only possible reply. The British Force in France by the end of 1915, owing to

entry into the field of Kitchener's Army, comprised 36 divisions besides the Territorial divisions. The principle of voluntary enlistment was still in force, but the method was systematised and based on a national register. This scheme, which was brought into operation in October, 1915, under the direction of Lord Derby, aimed to reconcile the demands of the Army with the needs of industry, calling up men by groups as they were wanted, and taking single men first. But the response among the latter was not adequate to preserve this graduated principle, and it was becoming clearer that conscription would furnish the only remedy. It was not long delayed, and the year, 1916, will be memorable in history if for no other reason than that it saw the adoption of compulsory military service, one of the greatest revolutions so far effected by the war. The first step was taken on January 5th, when the Military Service Bill, imposing compulsory service on single men was introduced in Parliament. The measure quickly passed through all its stages and received the sanction of the House on January 24th, only 36 members voting against it. Later, a demand, headed by married men who had attested under the Derby scheme, was made for universal military service, to be applied to men between the ages of 18 and 41, whether married or single. On May 3rd, the Prime Minister introduced a Bill on these lines, and it became law on May 25th. The immediate effect was to put large numbers of men who had been holding back into khaki and their places in shops, warehouses, offices, banks, railway stations, tramcars and elsewhere were taken up by women who shouldered their new responsibilities with a willingness and an ability that evoked no little surprise. Women filled vacancies

in the banks, served behind shop counters, trundled trolleys on station platforms, guided the plough, reaped the crops and much other work of the kind hitherto done by men. Some even took up road sweeping, while others took the places of tramcar conductors, ticket collectors at the stations, and booking clerks. Large numbers made their way into the munition factories and many found occupation as scullery maids in the Hospitals. It is impossible to tell in how many different other ways women were engaged, but their service was acknowledged on every hand to have had a full share in the final triumph of the armies in the field, and many a glass has been raised in their honour since.

The Local Tribunals set up to hear the appeals of men for exemption from military service, had an onerous duty thrust upon them. It was their duty calmly and dispassionately to sift the evidence given in every appeal, and it was only after being convinced that a man was more useful in the army or in a munition factory that he was ordered for enlistment. There were some men with strong conscientious convictions against war who refused to serve either as soldiers or sailors or to work in the manufacture of war material. These had a short shrift. They were sent to a term of imprisonment. Of this rigid type there were not many, and when the Local Tribunals had completed their duties, there was no man of military age outside a training camp or a munition factory, and before the close of the war, Great Britain had raised a vast army of 5,704,000 officers and men, besides the hundreds of thousands who came from Overseas to the aid of the Mother Country. Before the end of the war the number of men raised by the British Empire for service on

land was 8,654,467, of whom nearly five millions and a half had been under arms in France.

SHORTAGE OF FOOD

While all this was going on, the food supplies of the country were running short. The German submarines waged a constant war on food-bearing ships from the United States and the Colonies, and besides sinking, on May 7th, 1915, the "Lusitania," of which, Captain Turner, of Dovenby, Bowdon, was in command, they destroyed hundreds of thousands of tons of British shipping, and practically brought the country face to face with famine. It was necessary to eke out the food supply by every means possible, and tennis lawns, cricket fields and flower gardens were put under the plough and made to bring forth crops of vegetables, a step which helped considerably to make good the shortage. But it was not enough, and in 1917, when matters were at their worst, and it was impossible to procure even potatoes, and we were reduced to the necessity of eating war bread of a deep brown colour, and to be grateful for a modicum of margarine, that the Government established the Food Control Department to take over the complete control of the production of food and to secure an equitable distribution among all classes. The rationing of individuals began on January 1st, 1918, and as, in the meantime, other food supplies such as tea, margarine, bacon and cheese were running short, and there was no hope of a national rationing scheme being made effective for some months, local food committees had to arrange for the customers under their charge as best they could. Some of them began to use the powers of requisition granted to them by the

Ministry of Food, and to distribute supplies to retailers with whom customers had to be registered. General provision for such schemes was made by an Order of the Food Controller, dated December 22nd, 1917. Since local authorities could not wholly ensure or control supply, they could not effectively ration meat. A national scheme for meat rationing was, therefore, introduced on April 7th, and on July 14th, 1918, each member of the public received a single book with coupons for meat, fats, sugar and lard. Although the rationing of bread was contemplated, it was not put into practice. Before the rationing scheme was put into operation, long queues of women, some with babies in their arms or in perambulators, waited outside the shops to obtain a scrap of butter or a quarter of a pound of butcher's meat. Food prices not unnaturally rose to a great height. Sugar, for instance, cost 1s. 2d. per lb., and bacon, 3s. Much of the latter was of a very inferior quality, and to people who had hitherto been accustomed to the finest cuts of the Wiltshire variety, it was almost uneatable. Even then it was frequently unobtainable. The price of butter rose to 3s. and 4s. per lb., eggs were as much as 7d. and 8d. each, and the popular 4lb. loaf advanced in price to 1s. Even rabbits realised as much as 3s. 6d., and sometimes 5s. each, while if one was fortunate enough to get apples he must pay from 1s. 8d., to 4s. 6d. per lb.

The appointment of a local Food Control Committee brought about a great reduction in food prices by the prompt issue of an Order making tradesmen liable to heavy penalties if the maximum prices fixed by the scale prepared by the Food Controller were exceeded. With the establishment of the Food Control Department, the queues came to an end. An Order

was promulgated that butter, lard, tea, margarine and sugar, were only to be sold to registered customers, and for this purpose the local Food Controller, from his office in Market Street, issued books of detachable coupons entitling the housewife to obtain supplies of sugar and butter from her own grocer, with whom she must be registered. The ration of butter was 2 ounces per head, per week, and very often margarine only was available. Invalids and sick people were able, on obtaining a doctor's certificate, to purchase an additional amount of butter. The grocer was allowed to procure sufficient stock to go round, and before he could replenish his store it was necessary for him to produce the coupons presented to him by his customers as a proof that his previous stock had been equitably distributed. Hoarding food was an offence against the law and persons found guilty of it suffered imprisonment. Shopkeepers sometimes found it impossible to meet the wants of their customers. Delivery of goods might be promised for a certain date, but instead of the goods the grocer would receive an intimation either that the Government had commandeered the supplies for the Army or that the particular steamer containing the food had been sunk by a German U-boat.

The shortage of flesh meat was most seriously felt at the end of 1917, and on the first Sunday in the New Year, 1918, there were many ovens without their customary joint. Housewives resorted to all kinds of devices to make up for the loss. On the Saturday it was evident that there was trouble in store. Some butchers had not more than a fourth of their usual supplies of meat, and wherever there happened to be a more than usually large display, a queue of buyers

quickly formed, only to be told that registered customers and no others could be served. Even the regular customer could not get all he wanted. The butcher put into force his own rationing order and eked out his stock in as fair a way as possible until it was exhausted. He then quietly drew down his blinds, closed his doors and put up a notice that his shop would not be re-opened until the following Thursday. This was the first experience of the bareness of the cupboard, and a good many Mother Hubbards, with anxiety plainly written in their faces, flew from shop to shop to discover for themselves the cause of the shortage. Many reasons were given. Some butchers stated that even in normal times there were fewer beasts killed during the first three months of the year. That was the usual practice, so they said, in order that the beasts might reach a more mature stage and the temporary shortage during this period had, as a rule been made up by the release of meat from cold storage, which had ordinarily been adequate for all needs. In 1917, however, the Government having taken the whole of the overseas supply under its own control had had to think first of the demands of the Army and Navy, and, as a consequence, it had only been possible to put very small quantities of meat on the market. In other places, the anxious customers were told that although there were plenty of beasts on the farms, the farmers refused to send them to the auction ring, because, while not disputing the fairness of the prices fixed by the Food Controller, were not quite satisfied with the grading scheme set up as an essential part of the machinery under which cattle for slaughter would, in future, be disposed of. This dissatisfaction, it was said, caused farmers to hold

back the greater part of their stock until they had had an opportunity of finding out how their interests would be affected by the grading scheme. Immediately they discovered that it could not operate to their disadvantage, the auction centres became more active, although there was no expectation that the supply would amount to more than 70 per cent. of the quantity which was available in 1917. The butchers' supplies were cut down and they were licensed not to buy more than half the amount of meat they sold in October, 1917, and any surplus in the market was to be sent either to London or to places where the shortage was more acute. It was hoped that this method of cutting down and distributing the supplies would have the effect of providing a remedy for the temporary dislocation, but much more was hoped for from the operations of the grading scheme which, when it was properly understood, would doubtless give farmers the confidence they needed. A new system of grading was at once put into operation. The sales of cattle were centred at Altrincham instead of Knutsford as being the most convenient place for distribution purposes. All cattle were first weighed at the Railway Company's weighing office at the Stockport Road level crossings, and afterwards graded at the Unicorn Yard, and disposed of at prices fixed by the auctioneer, Mr. S. D. Walton, the deputy chairman of the Directors of Supplies in the Bucklow Union, who had power to commandeer cattle for slaughter.

By the adoption of these measures, some relief was afforded, but the difficulty was not altogether overcome and on the third Saturday, in 1918, the butchers' shops were only entered with considerable trouble. The doors were closed and the blinds were

drawn down at most of them, and customers who waited patiently for the bolts to be drawn felt a little anxious about the Sunday's joint. They rattled the latches, tapped on the windows, and even shouted through the keyholes to catch the ear of the butcher, but for all the heed they got, they might just as well have cried for the moon. The few who ultimately managed to get inside by way of the back door, found the butcher making up his orders for his regular customers and a little upset because he was forced to cut them down by at least 50 per cent. Even then he had not enough to go round, and casual buyers were pretty bluntly told that there was nothing to spare. These drifted away to form queues at other places where, it was hoped, later in the day they might be successful. Others of a less sanguine nature bought up the entire stock of rabbits, which were to be got at 3s. 6d. each, but most of the people carried home empty baskets. Dissatisfaction was, however, openly expressed that while they were unable to procure meat, the butchers' boys were taking out of the shops and delivering legs of mutton and rounds of beef to customers whose orders had come over the telephone or by post. A good deal of resentment was shown and there were many complaints heard of what was described, as unfair treatment. The people in the queues seemed to think that owners of telephones had an advantage over them, and one freely heard it forcibly argued in the queues that they should be forced to stand in the line outside the shops as did those less fortunately situated. At quite an early hour in the day, the supplies ran out and the shops were again closed until the following Thursday. An effort was then made to put into operation a scheme by which a more

equitable distribution of the available meat supplies might be ensured and with this object, a conference of the local Food Control Committee and the Butchers' Association was held, when the position was seriously considered. There was a unanimous feeling that the queues must come to an end, and the Butchers' Association expressed their willingness to acquiesce in any arrangement that promised to achieve this result. Accordingly, they decided on a scheme under which they bound themselves not to accept any order by telephone or post and to give up the delivery of all orders of less than 10lb. Owing to the shortage of paper, customers were informed that they must provide their own bags and baskets, and that no order would receive attention unless given over the counter in the shop. No butcher was allowed to sell more than one half of the quantity of meat he disposed of in October, 1917, and it, therefore, became necessary for customers to reduce their purchases, so that the limit might not be exceeded. Still the public tightened their belts, and made up their minds to "see the thing through," whatever privations they might have to suffer.

THE COAL SHORTAGE

The supply of coal also ran short and consumers were informed by the Controller in September, that they would only be permitted to buy from one merchant, that they must consume less coal in the coming winter than in the last, that not more than two coal fires should be alight at the same time in any house, except in the case of illness, that locally-produced coke should be substituted for coal in domestic grates as much as possible, and that they should install gas cooking. All this was urged to

lessen the inconvenience in the winter in case the distribution of coal became irregular or insufficient. As winter came on the Controller, in order that the shortage might not interfere with the output of munitions, strictly rationed the domestic supplies, and under his ruling a householder was only entitled to one ton per year for each room in his house with a fireplace, the bathroom and scullery excepted. Each ton could be had in four ways : As a ton of coal, as one and a half tons of coke, which could only be got at the Gas Works in quarter cwts, as 15,000 cubic feet of gas or as 800 Board of Trade units of electricity—or partly in one form and partly in another. Hoarding of large stocks of coal was prohibited, and many a householder who had in better times laid in a supply against a rainy day, was forced to empty his cellars and distribute his store among his less fortunate neighbours who sometimes found it difficult to obtain even the permitted allowance from the coal merchant.

The restrictions were, however, cheerfully borne, and when, one Saturday afternoon, two thousand munition workers, with the grime of toil still on their faces, emerged from the factories and marched through the town in a solid body as an evidence of their union and solidarity, the air rang with the song of "Keep the Home Fires Burning." To this the crowds in the streets replied with the shout : "Are We Downhearted ?" and the thunderous answer of "No," expressed the full resolve of the people to continue the struggle to the bitter end, and bear their misfortunes with a good heart.

A minor trouble was also experienced about the same time. Shopkeepers were short-handed, as

their assistants had been called up, and were unable to deliver goods at their customers' houses as had hitherto been the practice. Therefore, people had to bring their own market baskets and bags, and as there was also a shortage of paper, their own paper and string, and carry home their rations—a trouble people learned to bear in time with an air of indifference.

A National Food Kitchen was opened on Thursday, May 30th, 1918, by the Food Control Committee at the Newtown Night School, for the supply of dinners between 11.30 and 2.30 every week-day. It represented a practical attempt to meet the difficulties confronting most householders, owing to the scarcity and the high price of foodstuffs. The kitchen started with a menu that comprised soup, roast beef, steamed puddings, chocolate puddings and jam tart. The committee did not work for profit, but were satisfied if the expenses were met, and to suit the convenience of purchasers they might have a meat meal at the rate of half a coupon, or buy portions at prices ranging from 1d. to 5d. A large number of meals were served daily for several months, and it proved to be of great convenience to many harassed heads of families.

Among the numerous other war activities, we cannot forget to mention the Prisoners' of War Supply Depot, which was carried on for a long time at the British Schools. In the course of its operations, many thousands of parcels of food, cigarettes, chocolates and articles of clothing were sent to British prisoners of war in Germany and other countries, and kindly hands wrote them innumerable letters of cheer and sympathy.

In June, 1918, the Young Women's Christian Association, Ashley Road, made an appeal for funds to provide a hut in France for the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, to be called "The Altrincham Hut," and a thousand pounds was promptly subscribed in recognition of the valuable aid rendered to the soldiers abroad by this gallant branch of the service.

VISIT OF H.R.H. THE DUKE OF CONNAUGHT

On Saturday, June 15th, 1918, His Royal Highness the Duke of Connaught, visited Altrincham for the purpose of formally opening the hospital equipped by Sir John Leigh, at Woodbourne, Brooklands. Staying overnight at the Midland Hotel, Manchester, the Duke, accompanied by his equerry, Sir Malcolm Murray, was met the next morning by Sir John Leigh and taken to the Pear Mill, at Stockport, which he inspected with interest. From Stockport, he drove to Altrincham, and visited the Red Cross Hospital at Dunham Massey Hall, of which the Countess of Stamford was the Commandant. His Royal Highness then had an opportunity of seeing the officers' hospital at Townfield House. His first duty on arriving was to present Military Medals to Sergeant Johnston (Cheshire Regiment), of Moss Lane, Altrincham, and Corporal Humphrey Davies (Royal Fusiliers), of Ashley Road, Altrincham. After making a close inspection of the hospital, the Duke lunched with Sir John and Lady Leigh at Beech Lawn. The other guests present were Katharine Duchess of Westminster, the Countess of Stamford, General Sir William Pitcairn Campbell, Sir Malcolm Murray, Mr. J. E. Dennis, High Sheriff of Cheshire; the Rt. Hon. John Hodge, Minister of Pensions; Major Hamilton, M.P., and Mrs. Hamilton.

In the afternoon, the Duke drove through Altrincham and proceeded to Brooklands. At the Baguley end of the Avenue, he was met by the Bucklow Mounted Corps, under the command of Mr. C. R. Longe, and escorted to the gates of Woodbourne, where large crowds welcomed him. The Mounted Corps then took up a position opposite the Brooklands Hotel to form a guard of honour.

The Duke of Connaught made a thorough inspection of the wards of the new hospital, and expressed himself highly pleased with the arrangements made possible by Sir John Leigh's generosity.

It may appropriately be mentioned here that besides presenting Altrincham with a public park, Sir John Leigh, in 1917, made a munificent contribution of £50,000 to the King's Fund for the Disabled, and also equipped and maintained at his sole cost, the Canadian Officers' Club, at Islington House, Chesterfield Gardens, W.1., which was opened by the Prince of Wales.

After the Armistice, the public gradually were able to obtain better supplies of food. Some weeks before Christmas, however, apples were being sold at 1s. 8d., to 4s. 6d., per lb. This did not last very long, and at Christmas the maximum price was fixed by the Food Controller at 9d. At the same time, bakers were allowed to sell new bread, now slowly becoming lighter in colour, from December 23rd to the 28th. The ration of meat was doubled until December 25th, and poultry and game were coupon free until January 4th. It was also a great privilege to be able to get an extra four ounces of sugar per head during Christmas week. Tea and lard were permanently unrationed; there was also an extra ration of butter and margarine, but a double ration of

nut butter for vegetarians was permitted for the week. The prohibition on fancy cakes was permanently removed. Besides conceding an extra 4oz. of sugar to each member of a family, the Food Controller made a more liberal allowance to Hospitals, Convalescent Homes and institutions of a like character; they were able to obtain equal to half a pound per head for the number of persons resident on the premises, in addition to the ordinary quantities authorised. Food Controllers were also empowered to issue to organisers of entertainments for children, wounded soldiers and sailors or other charitable purposes, between December 15th and February 28th, authority to purchase supplies of sugar up to a maximum total quantity of one ounce per head. After May 3rd, 1919, coupons were abolished, and when sugar was decontrolled, in November, 1920, the period of rationing was over.

THE ARMISTICE

On April 6th, 1917, the United States, with illimitable man power and material, entered the war against Germany, and under the protection of the British Navy many thousands of her trained troops were conveyed across the Atlantic and safely landed in France, where they were soon engaged in the thick of the fighting. By that time, the submarine menace had been mastered, and during May, June, and July, 1918, over 600,000 more American troops were landed. Their assistance was of incalculable value in turning the tide, and in October it was the beginning of the end. In August, the German Western Front bent under the hammering blows of the French and British armies. Austria was crippled; September saw the crash of the Bulgarian

Front, and in October, Germany, racked by internal troubles and the loss of her military prestige, was forced to her knees. Suing for peace, she had no option but to accept the drastic terms of the Armistice, which was signed in Marshal Foch's railway carriage in the Forest of Compiègne, at 5 a.m. on Monday, November 11th, and at 11 o'clock that morning, the thunder of the cannons ceased.

The news that the Armistice had been signed reached the *Guardian* Office at 10.30, at which hour Altrincham wore its customary air of calmness. A message was instantly telephoned to the Mayor who quickly caused it to be communicated to the churches, in order that arrangements might be made for afternoon services throughout the district. A message was also sent from the *Guardian* Office to the Town Hall where the hoisting of the flag was the first visible public proclamation of the cessation of hostilities. An intimation was also given to the Rev. Hewlett Johnson, Vicar of St. Margaret's, who, standing on the tiptoe of expectation, sped hatless and breathless to the tower of the church and, with his own strong right arm, sounded a sonorous note on the tenor bell. Its sound was caught by the bell ringers of Bowdon Church, and they rang a joyous peal until their arms ached. Their music was heard at Rostherne, Knutsford and Lymm, and soon all the belfries in the wide countryside were spreading the glad tidings. People made their way into the streets anxiously enquiring for confirmation of the news and at a quarter to eleven, the *Guardian* Office was besieged with inquiries, which it was fortunately possible to answer in the most emphatic way. The public accepted the assurance of the signing of the Armistice without more ado, and it was not long before the

streets were gay with flags which everybody seemed to be unfurling. The news was telephoned to the munition factories at Broadheath, and thousands of workers left their benches to make holiday. By common consent, they threw down their tools and were soon on their way to swell the crowds in the town. The munition girls formed perhaps the most demonstrative portion of the crowds, and their hurriedly organised processions added no little to the growing tide of excitement. Meanwhile, streamers were hung across the streets and hundreds of children flocked from their homes bearing in their hands tiny flags which had evidently been lying by for the great day of rejoicing. They had little processions of their own, and their patriotic songs were sung with fervour as they trudged untiringly into every quarter of the town.

THANKSGIVING SERVICES

At two o'clock the churches were filled; the mother church at Bowdon could hardly have held more people and the entire congregation, which included representatives of the District Council, walked in procession, with the banners of the church, to the Altrincham Market Place. Short thanksgiving services were held at all the other churches, and when they were over, the congregations made their way to the Market Place, where a united meeting was held. The Mayor, in scarlet robes and cocked hat, with his constables, came from the Bowdon Downs Congregational Church, and at the foot of the Downs was joined by other processions from Bowdon, St. George's, Broadheath and Hale. In the Market

Place, several thousands of people had already gathered to await the arrival of the Mayor and clergy and every overlooking window was filled. The Mayor took up his position on a broad platform, built up on three lorries. With him were the surpliced clergy, and in front were the massed choirs of the churches. In the crowd were the Boy Scouts, Boys' Brigades, special constables, hospital nurses and a good band, mostly composed of munition workers, and at least a score of other organised bodies, who had come at short notice to share in the celebration of victory. The sight was one not to be forgotten easily. There was a bright sun in the sky and its rays glinted on the banners and the golden crosses carried in the processions from the churches. The massed choirs looked like an island of foam in the centre of the vast throng, and as they raised their song of gladness and thankfulness, it carried its own note of solemnity to hearts burned with sorrow and anguish. It seemed to touch the crowd like a fire, and the opening hymn, which everybody seemed to know, gave it just the means of expressing a feeling that for too long had been held in restraint. The service was not a long one. A November day, however bright, is not one to be trifled with by a hatless crowd, and led by a cornet, the great assembly sang the hymn: "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," after which, three prayers were said. The Mayor then gave the briefest of all possible addresses. He said there could be no more appropriate way of celebrating the day of peace than by such a solemn thanksgiving as they were engaged in. It was a day for solemn prayer that the long tragedy was over, and he expressed a hope that it was in such a spirit that Altrincham would view the end of the war.

After his short address, the Doxology was sung, and the Rev. Canon Wainwright pronounced the Benediction. The proceedings, however, did not end without the National Anthem and rousing cheers for Mr. George Faulkner Armitage, who, at the beginning of his sixth year of office as Mayor of Altrincham, had the proud privilege of proclaiming the end of the war. November 11th was a great and memorable day for Altrincham, and the Mayor evidently gauged public feeling when, with thrilling emphasis, he described it as the most wonderful day in the history of the world.

Not only was the Market Place filled with a surging crowd, but every road leading into it was packed, and hundreds of people, bareheaded and silent, could not even obtain a sight of the platform. There were rejoicings of another kind in other parts of the town, and in Chapel Street, from whose 66 houses, in 1914, some ninety men volunteered for active service, the celebrations were peculiar to that historic quarter. The street was beflagged and among the streamers was a fine Bulgarian banner, brought home as a trophy, and all the afternoon the residents were out in the bright sunshine, enjoying themselves in their own way. This took the shape of an alfresco dance, to the propriety of which no exception could be taken. The people were evidently happy and a score of merry children sang a song to which the refrain was something about "When the Boys Come Marching Back." Later in the day, there were fireworks at Hale and Bowdon, and, after nightfall, the still air was broken by the sound of cannon. The Borough Band in the evening gave two concerts in the Market Place, and collections were made for the King's Fund for the Disabled. In the evening

the Mayor, accompanied by the constables, Mr. C. F. Redford and Mr. James Brown, visited the Hippodrome, the Central Theatre and the Picture House, where he had a vociferous welcome. At each place he delivered a short and inspiring speech, and expressed the devout thankfulness of all hearts "for the stilling of the strife of war, for the dawning days of peace and the prospect of a new and happier world."

The public, in the following year, did not forget to pay honour to the men of Chapel Street, who, on the outbreak of war, volunteered for active service. In all, this little street, of about sixty-six houses, gave up no fewer than 161 men to the colours, and a memorial, erected by public subscription, as a tribute to the spirit of the inhabitants, was unveiled by the Earl of Stamford, on April 5th, 1919, in the presence of a vast concourse. Lord Stamford said that no tribute they could pay, and no appreciation they could express, could adequately reflect their feelings of pride and enthusiasm at the honour and distinction which the men whose names were inscribed on the memorial had conferred on their town. It was a proud and triumphant moment for Altrincham, but, at the same time, a sad and solemn one when they remembered that fifty of these men had given up their lives in their country's service. The memorial, bearing the names of all the men who served in the army was erected in the street itself, and it is kept in preservation by the District Council.

One immediate effect of the Armistice was the brighter glow of the street lamps and the illuminations of the fronts of the Picture houses, and the Hippodrome, where the big arc lamps shed a broad

flood of light. They had not been lit for more than two years and people welcomed their radiance with an enthusiasm about whose heartiness there could be no mistake. There were big crowds about, and occasionally from the mouths of the side streets there issued little processions of children with clattering cans and battered tea trays, on which they beat an accompaniment to patriotic airs—"Rule Britannia," of course, having the place of honour. They were the heartiest and noisiest part of the moving crowds, and smiling special constables shepherded them into safe and shallow places, and no harm was done. The Armistice was welcomed if only for the fact that it heralded the removal of many of the restrictions laid on the community for so long. The Home Office lost no time in telegraphing instructions to the police authorities to relax the Order in regard to the darkening of the streets. The black paint was at once to be stripped off the lamps, but in consequence of the coal shortage, not more than half of the normal number were to be lighted. Previously, only a third of the lamps were lit and these burned very dimly under their coatings of black paint. The Order for the shading of lamps in houses and shops was also withdrawn, although shop window illuminations and advertisement lights were prohibited for some time afterwards. Even bells were allowed to be rung in the evening and the chimes of church clocks, so long silent, again enlivened the night hours. People even began to hope that shortly they might be able to buy matches again.

It is worth placing on record that the final bulletin from the seat of war, announced the capture of Mons, which was entered by Canadian troops shortly before dawn, on Monday, November 11th—a

dramatic and fitting climax to more than four years of conflict.

THE WAR MEMORIAL

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead !
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
But, dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away ; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth ; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhop'd serene,
That men call age ; and those who would have been,
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.

Blow, bugles, blow ! They brought us, for our dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love and Pain.
Honour has come back, as a King to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage ;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again ;
And we have come into our heritage.

—*Rupert Brooke.*

In the dignified memorial, erected opposite to St. Margaret's Church, on the main highway to Chester, Altrincham has paid a proud tribute to her gallant sons whose sacrifices will ever be remembered by a grateful people with honour. The memorial is in the form of a Celtic cross, carved out of Portland stone, from the designs of Mr. George Faulkner Armitage. All the carved decorations are of the flat interlacing order. The height of the cross from the ground level is 25 feet, and the main shaft, rising from a bold base, which forms a seat, is fixed on a dais having an octagon plan 22 feet in diameter. The dais is surrounded by a low wall on six sides, on the bold coping of which are the names, engraved in bronze plates, of the 396 men who gave up their lives in the war.



Photo by *J. Ingham & Sons, Bowdon*
THE ALTRINCHAM AND DUNHAM MASSEY WAR MEMORIAL

On two sides, the dais is mounted by three stone steps from the ground level; the steps are confined by a ramped balustrade, which acts as a support to and an arm for the stone seat running round six sides of the octagon at the base of the wall. At the foot of the shaft on the north side is the inscription :—

“Their glory shall not be blotted out,
Their name liveth for evermore.”

and on the south side :—

“Erected to the memory of the men of Altrincham and Dunham Massey, who gave their lives in the Great War, 1914–1918.”

On the outside of the sustaining wall in a decorated band is the inscription :—

“To the enduring memory of those who gave their lives for God and Country in the Great War, 1914–1918.”

The memorial is Altrincham's symbol of affection for the gallant youths who, but a few years before, set out on the great adventure to meet death on the fields of Flanders and France; and although their graves lie in a foreign field “that is for ever England,” their memory is cherished “In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.”

Here where life's billows surge and toss
Fair flowers are laid beneath the Cross

That crowns the shrine.

And love and hope and faith and prayer
Makes where all else is bleak and bare

A spot divine.

CHAPTER XXVII

A PROGRESSIVE POLICY

A SOUND and progressive policy has been steadily pursued by the District Council, with the object of meeting the complex requirements of the increased population and the ever-widening sphere of local government; and many notable achievements are the result of the discernment and judgment displayed in the effort to minister both for the present and in anticipation of future needs. Reference is made elsewhere in these pages, to some of the contributions made by the Council to the comfort and the general welfare of the public, and others will be described in their turn. One effect of the quickened speed of the Council was to remove some of the old and familiar features of the town, but that need cause no regret. Their place has been taken by wider and cleaner roads, buildings of a modern standard, and those means of recreation that are so essential to a self-contained town whose feet are planted firmly on the path of advancement.

In this connection, one may be described now. Early in the century, Ashley Road, from St. John's Church to Stamford Road, Bowdon, was a narrow lane hardly more than twenty feet in width, heavily overhung with trees and by no means safe for swiftly-moving traffic. It was a subject of concern for the Council, but owing to the cost of the land the projected widening of the road was delayed.



THE STAMFORD ESTATE OFFICES AND MARKET STREET

While still deliberating, the whole of the land lying between Willow Tree Road and Ashley Road was acquired by Mr. J. H. Brown, of Ashley, with the object of developing it for the erection of villa property. Mr. Brown recognised the difficulty of the Council and generously made a gift of a strip of land covering the entire length of the road, which at once enabled the Council to carry out its wish and double the width from end to end. Since that time the road has been greatly improved and may be described as a safe and attractive promenade.

One of its prettiest features is the Rest Garden, at the corner of Hale Road, given to the town in June, 1933, by Mr. Albert Edward Wilson and Mr. John Hilton Wilson, in memory of their father, Mr. John Beech Wilson, who, during a lifelong connection with Altrincham, was intimately associated with its trading interests and actively identified with a variety of philanthropic and educational movements. The Rest Garden harmonises with the rusticated and elegant church of the First Christian Church Scientist adjoining, and also with the villa residences close by. In the centre of the garden stands a stone sundial and at each end is an ornamental lamp of substantial design. On a stone near the entrance is the following inscription :—

“Wilson Memorial Rest Garden,
Given in memory of
John Beech Wilson,
1847-1925,
To the town of Altrincham
By his two sons.

Nearly the whole of the land in the vicinity has now been covered with houses and has become firmly established in popular favour. A further improvement

was effected by the Council, when the Spring Bank estate, lying on the opposite side the road, belonging to the late Major Cardwell, came into the market. The Council seriously considered the acquisition of the whole estate in 1930, with the object of maintaining it as an open space for all time. Just then, however, the famous circular of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging upon authorities the necessity of stringent measures of economy in all local affairs, was issued, with the result that the Council abandoned the idea. A little later, the residence of Major Cardwell and a portion of the estate were disposed of privately and, very soon afterwards, notice boards appeared announcing that land abutting in Ashley Road was to be sold as a site for dwelling houses and shops. The notice alarmed the Council and swiftly stirred it to action, and the importance of securing possession of the unsold part of the estate, containing some four acres, was seriously discussed, and the District Council of Bowdon was invited to share in a joint purchase. The Bowdon Council immediately assented, and the purchase was completed in April, 1932. The land is now laid out as a paddock for children to ramble in while in the shade of the sheltering trees seats have been provided for their elders. The miniature park, which thus became a permanent open space, is administered by a joint committee of the two Councils.

Perhaps the boldest stroke of all was made by the District Council in April, 1934, when serious consideration was given to a proposal to acquire land in Stockport Road, Timperley, extending to over 145 acres—including the links of the Timperley Golf Club (18 holes) the grounds of the Timperley Cricket,

Hockey and Tennis Club, and certain farm lands. Sanction to the borrowing of £38,650 for the purchase of the land "for the purposes of public walks and pleasure grounds, and for cricket, football or other games and recreations," was sought from the Ministry of Health, and on May 17th, an inquiry into the application was made at the Town Hall, by Mr. J. Gardner, an Inspector of the Ministry. Support from the Court Leet, the Timperley Electors' and Property Owners' Association, the Trades and Labour Council, the Altrincham Property Owners' Association, the Chamber of Trade and the Ratepayers' Association, was given to the scheme. It was stated that the Council had the opportunity of obtaining the land at something like £262 per acre, while other land in the immediate vicinity was being bought up to £650 an acre. The Timperley Parish Council expressed complete agreement with the proposal and agreed, even if the proposed amalgamation of the two townships was not consummated, to pay its full quota.

The official sanction of the Ministry of Health was received in June, and it was then arranged that the repayment of the loan and interest should extend over 60 years. The members of the Council expressed their deep debt of gratitude to the late Mr. F. A. Tomlinson, the owner of the land, for the generous manner in which he had met them in regard to the purchase price.

The Timperley Cricket, Hockey and Tennis Club have remained undisturbed in the possession of their grounds and have the option of a lease, extending over 30 years, while on January 1st, 1935, the golf links were formally opened as a municipal course, by Mr. R. H. Lee, Chairman of the Council.

The wisdom of the Council's purchase may be gathered from the fact that during the first quarter of the year the receipts from the municipal links amounted to £779 5s. 9d., and from April to July, they were £886 3s. 11d.

The Council has other open spaces that make a solid contribution to the health and comfort of the inhabitants. Reference to Stamford Park, and the John Leigh Park at Oldfield, is made in other chapters, and it is now only necessary to mention the foresight of the Council in acquiring $6\frac{1}{2}$ acres of land in Navigation Road as a recreation ground, so long ago as the year 1905, when Broadheath was daily growing in stature and in need of a breathing space for its large army of artisans. Twenty years later, the demand for further facilities for open-air recreation, led, in 1926, to the rental at £25 per annum, of 16 acres of land, from the Earl of Stamford, on a long lease, in Salisbury Road. The land, which is used for the purpose of playing fields, has been found to yield a full measure of enjoyment to the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, not only as a place of recreation, but as a fresh air lung, whose value will be appreciated in future years perhaps even more than it is to-day.

Nor has the provision of allotments, and all that it means as a contribution to the food supply, been overlooked by the Council. Advantage was taken of the Act of Parliament quite soon after its passing, empowering local authorities to acquire and lease land for the purpose and, at the present time, the Council has under cultivation, upwards of 13 acres, on which no fewer than 206 allotment holders find pleasant and profitable occupation. The Council also lease 2 acres to an Allotment Society, and there



Thornton]

POST OFFICE, STAMFORD NEW ROAD

[Altrincham

is also approximately 13 acres of land in the district let by private owners for allotments.

The subject of Housing, as we have already seen, was early taken up by the Council and upwards of 85 houses were built under the Housing Act of 1890. After the Great War, the Council adopted a forward policy and by the end of 1934, had erected 686 additional dwellings, making a total of 771. Further houses were then in course of erection. The Council has also advanced loans for the building of houses by private enterprise, under the provisions of the Small Dwellings Acquisition Acts. The advances thus made number 113 and the total amount of money advanced is £45,672.

Elsewhere, reference has been made to the vigorous action of the Council in the effort to preserve the public health, and it is only necessary now to allude briefly to the success its endeavours have met with in respect of its maternity and child welfare work. In 1915, the Council appointed a whole-time Health Visitor, to work under the direction of the Medical Officer of Health, and a scheme, under the Maternity and Child Welfare Act, of 1918, was later put into operation. A Child Welfare Centre was established and sessions are held twice weekly and an ante-natal clinic is held twice monthly. The scheme provides for pre-natal care, including hospital facilities, free medical examination and advice to all expectant and nursing mothers, general advice on the management and care of children up to five years of age, visiting of children up to five years of age, treatment of minor ailments, orthopædic treatment, treatment of defective vision, squint and tonsils and adenoids, by ultra violet light. Rate-aided milk is granted free, or at half cost in necessitous cases, and milk

foods are sold at cost price at the Centre. The services are carried out at the Centre, and under arrangements made by the Council at St. Mary's Hospital, Manchester, and the Altrincham General Hospital. The beneficial results of the Council's work is shown by the following infantile mortality rate since 1915 :—

1915—74	per 1,000 live births.			
1921—78	"	"	"	"
1931—46	"	"	"	"
1933—23	"	"	"	"

THE AMALGAMATION OF TIMPERLEY

That the township of Timperley should become a part of Altrincham was foreseen many years ago, although no practical step was ever taken to bring the union about. The interests of the two townships are, in many respects, identical, and uniformity of administration was long held to be desirable. It was not, however, until the County Council of Chester issued its second report on the 23rd November, 1933, as to the review of county districts under Section 46 of the Local Government Act of 1929, that the amalgamation of Timperley with Altrincham became an accomplished fact. The report specifically provided for the additions of part of the parish of Dunham Massey and the whole of the parish of Timperley to Altrincham. So far as Timperley is concerned an agreement has been arrived at between the two Councils, as to differential rating terms which are to operate from the time that amalgamation is actually completed.



ALTRINCHAM BRIDGE, 1930
(before widening)

The area of Timperley is 1,638 acres, with an estimated population of 14,000 and a ratable value of £85,000. Altrincham has an area of 1,425 acres, a population of 21,461 and a ratable value of £164,157. The amalgamation will, therefore, enlarge the area of Altrincham to a total of 3,063 acres with a population of 35,461 and a ratable value of close upon £250,000.

ROAD AND BRIDGE IMPROVEMENTS

Road and bridge widening has formed a by no means unimportant part of the Council's work, and it has been executed in no niggardly spirit. The first bridge to be widened was one spanning the Bridgewater canal at Broadheath. Originally built in 1765, by the Duke of Bridgewater, it was, like all Brindley's structures, narrow and hump-backed, and only intended for light carriage and pedestrian traffic. It was not more than 24 feet wide overall—many of Brindley's bridges were even much narrower—and as time went on the necessity for increasing it became apparent. Accordingly in 1830, strips were added on both sides which increased the overall width to 38 feet. This served until 1907, when, owing to the greatly increased volume of traffic, the District Council took what was then considered to be a bold step and widened the bridge to 45 feet, by the addition of a reinforced concrete strip on the west side. Less than twenty five years afterwards, it was perfectly evident that the bridge was quite inadequate for the heavy burden of traffic which, according to a census taken in 1931, was recorded at 21,130 tons daily. The Council, thereupon decided that nothing less than an entire re-construction

was necessary, and urgently pressed for grants in aid from the Ministry of Transport and the Cheshire County Council. These were eventually forthcoming and an entirely new bridge, henceforward to lose its old name and to be known as "Altrincham Bridge," was constructed by the three authorities, at a cost of £17,017 15s. 1d. The crown of the bridge was lowered somewhat, and to that extent a material improvement has been effected. The new bridge is a reinforced portal frame structure, with a clear span of 43 feet, carrying a 40 foot carriageway and two footpaths, each of a width of 12 feet; the total width between the parapets is 64 feet. It was officially opened for traffic on the 10th July, 1935, by Major T. C. Toler, Chairman of the Cheshire County Council.

The bridge in Hale Road was built by the Cheshire Lines Railway Company, when the railway lines were laid down from Altrincham to Chester. It was a modest affair of 30 feet in width and as the weight of traffic passing over it increased, it became a decided source of danger. The Council, therefore, took the matter in hand, and in 1924, by an arrangement with the Cheshire County Council, the Hale Urban District Council and the Railway Company, extended the width of the bridge by 25 feet. Like the Altrincham bridge, it is now maintained as a county bridge. Other bridges and, perhaps, two or three level crossings remain to be dealt with in future years.

An important scheme of improvement was resolved upon by the District Council in 1932, when the ancient cottage property, in Church Street, lying between the Old Town Hall and Manchester Road,



ALTRINCHAM BRIDGE, 1935
(after widening)

was acquired for widening purposes. The property is to be demolished on the expiration of some of the leases and a highly-congested part of the main highway to Manchester will be doubled in width, obviously to the public advantage. The widening of Well Lane or Victoria Street, has already been accomplished by the demolition of the old cottages, shown in the photograph. These dated back for at least two hundred years, and were in the last stages of decay when taken in hand by the Council. The widening of the street also involved the removal of the sixteenth century cottage in the Old Market Place, at the corner of Victoria Street. The disappearance of the ancient landmark need cause no regret. Stained with the hand of time, and unrelieved by a single feature of interest, the old house made no claim on the public regard, and no sigh was heard when its crumbling walls, little more than wattle and daub, fell under the blows of the house-breaker.

Of course, the execution of the various undertakings of the District Council has involved the raising of large loans, but considering the value of the town's assets, the burden of debt cannot be said to sit too heavily on the public shoulders. It is generally agreed that the financial affairs of the Council are ably and efficiently administered, and one thing that is sometimes pointed to with satisfaction is that the General District rate does not exceed 9s. 10d., in the £. The loans raised by the Council to March 31st, 1934, amounted to £600,933 13s. 7d., and the amount outstanding at the same date was £448,930 10s. 6d. These amounts were made up as follows :—

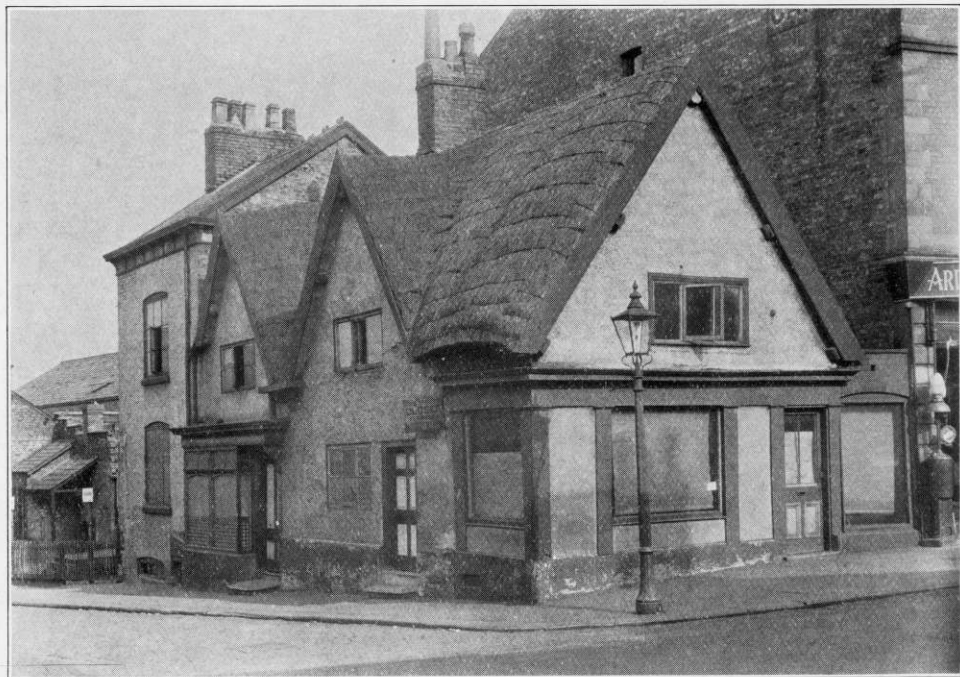


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SIXTEENTH CENTURY COTTAGES IN THE OLD MARKET PLACE, DEMOLISHED IN 1932, TO WIDEN
VICTORIA STREET

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	Loans raised			Loans outstanding		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Public Library	7,300	0	0	1,760	0	0
Sewers & Sewage Disposal....	68,675	4	1	30,730	12	8
Refuse Collection & Disposal	5,591	0	0	4,559	17	1
Privy Conversions	8,200	0	0	6,674	6	8
Baths	9,373	19	9	1,309	12	0
Isolation Hospital	14,465	0	0	3,062	15	7
Parks & Recreation Grounds	10,977	17	0	3,225	14	0
Public Conveniences	2,777	6	0	2,143	8	0
Street Improvements & Estate	14,814	12	4	12,790	11	5
Fire Brigade & Ambulances....	4,890	9	0	637	2	4
Public Offices & Town's Yard	15,898	15	10	5,939	3	4
Cemetery	9,180	0	0	1,170	3	1
Market	10,644	0	0	3,500	17	0
Slaughter Houses	3,400	0	0	—		
Housing 1890, 1919, 1923 & 1924 Acts	371,488	9	7	347,397	18	11
Small Dwellings Acquisition....	43,257	0	0	24,028	8	5

A PETITION FOR INCORPORATION

With a record behind it such as we have attempted to describe, it is not surprising to know that Altrincham is ambitious to acquire the status and dignity of a Municipal Borough. Indeed, steps have already been taken with that object, as on March 12th, 1935, the District Council decided to present a petition to his Majesty praying for the grant of a Charter of Incorporation, "creating the Urban District of Altrincham a Municipal Borough, under the provisions of the Local Government Act, 1933." One clause in the petition clearly and concisely represents the case of the Council. It is in these terms :—"Your petitioners believe that the granting of a Charter of Incorporation would be to the great advantage of the district and would lead to the promotion of its



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The Altrincham Urban District Council

VICTORIA STREET, 1932

best interests by giving it a higher local government
tus, ensuring the stability of all its institutions by
fostering a higher dignity and civic spirit and en-
couraging the more willing and efficient performance
of public duties, both by the inhabitants at large and
by their elected representatives, and that the cir-
cumstances of the District and its record of progress
and service afford full justification for such a grant."

The petition has the approval of the Cheshire
County Council, subject to the usual agreement being
arrived at between the two authorities in connection
with matters consequential to the granting of a
Charter. Support has also been received from the
Council of Christian Ministers, the Chamber of
Trade, the Property Owners' Association, the Rate-
payers' Association, the Conservative Association, the
Broadheath Manufacturers' Association, the Trades
and Labour Council, the Court Leet and the Tim-
perley Electors' and Property Owners' Association.
Additional weight was given to the appeal by the
expressed desire that in the event of a Charter being
granted, the Court Leet, by whose burgesses Mayors
of Altrincham have been elected since the year 1290,
might be merged with the Mayoralty of the borough.
A more fitting shrine for this historic and time-
honoured relic could not be better chosen. Its
traditions are deeply rooted in six centuries of English
life, and one may well believe that the hoped for
fusion of the Court Leet will strengthen the new
Mayoralty and make no small contribution to its
dignity and influence, if only because of its long and
unbroken record and its example of the earliest
form of self-government possessed by Altrincham.

A public inquiry into the petition presented by the
District Council to the Privy Council for a Charter of

Incorporation, was held at the Town Hall, on Wednesday, October 23rd, 1935, by Mr. J. W. Mason, an Inspector of the Ministry of Health. The case for the Council was conducted by Mr. A. Glossop, the Clerk, who, after fully describing the development of Altrincham, assured the Inspector of the unanimity with which the application was supported. Mr. G. C. Scrimgeour, Clerk to the Cheshire County Council, and Mr. F. J. Poole, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee, both stated that the petition had the full support of the County Council and laid special emphasis on the progressive spirit shown by the local authority. Evidence was also offered by Mr. James S. Pearson, Chairman of the District Council, Mr. T. Clayton, Chairman of the Incorporation Committee; Dr. R. Reid Duncan, Medical Officer of Health; Mr. H. E. Brown, Surveyor; Mr. Herbert Rodgers, Chief Financial Officer and Rating Valuation Officer to the Council; Mr. W. G. Biddle, Chairman of the Finance Committee; and Mr. William Waterhouse, Mayor of Altrincham.

Mr. Waterhouse produced a resolution unanimously passed by the Court Leet on March 1st, 1934, agreeing "to co-operate with the Council in its proposed application for a Charter of Incorporation," and added that in view of the fact that the Council recognised the long and honourable history of the Court Leet, it was suggested that if the higher dignity and status of a Municipal Borough was conferred on "the ancient borough of Altrincham," the Mayoralty of the Court should be merged with that of the Mayoralty of the new borough.

Other evidence came from Mr. George Faulkner Armitage, on behalf of the individual members



C. Rutter

KINGSWAY IN 1908

[Altrincham]

of the Council of Christian Ministers, of which he is the president; Mr. A. E. Willett, for the Chamber of Trade; Mr. C. H. Syers, for the Property Owners' Association; Mr. W. W. Ashley (Ratepayers' Association), Mr. K. Ord Mackenzie (Broadheath Manufacturers' Association); Mr. Edgar Webb (Chairman of the Timperley Parish Council); Mr. Frank Whiteley (Chairman of the Timperley Electors' and Property Owners' Association); Mr. T. Noel Evans (Altrincham and District Liberal Association); Mr. Arthur Vesey (Trades and Labour Council); and Mr. George Sisam (Altrincham Conservative Association). Two members of the Council (Messrs. Peter Hewitt and Mr. Henry Bailey) opposed the application on the ground that incorporation would mean a substantial increase in rates and give no corresponding return. Among other letters handed to the Inspector in favour of the application, was one from the Earl of Stamford, who expressed the opinion that the granting of a Charter of Incorporation would be of benefit to the district, "providing for a larger extent of local government administration in the best interests of all concerned."

At the time of writing, the decision of the Privy Council has not been announced, but Altrincham is certainly full of hope that a favourable ear may be turned to its prayer for the completion of this further stage in its onward march.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX I

POPULATION TABLE OF ALTRINCHAM AND DISTRICT

	1831	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
Altrincham.....	2708	3372	4488	6628	8478	11249	12424	16831	17813	20450	21356
Bowdon	458	549	1164	1827	2262	2559	2792	2788	3044	2965	3285
Hale	942	974	995	1160	1711	2221	2803	4562	8351	9300	10669
Dunham Massey	1105	1253	1255	1535	1790	1977	2079	2644	2928	*1668	1694
Timperley	752	943	1008	1571	2112	2241	2461	3215	4090	4263	7080
Ashley	379	377	379	375	380	385	412	424	418	391	359
Agden	99	113	76	98	109	104	106	115	102	89	85
Baguley	468	500	570	611	634	736	814	834	970	1325	Now in Manchester
Bollington	268	297	300	277	253	272	223	215	193	170	
Carrington	552	559	536	521	469	438	568	514	522	531	504
Partington	466	457	485	445	511	438	576	587	758	605	816
Rostherne	376	386	388	393	391	382	407	413	382	319	284
Sale	1104	1307	1720	3013	5573	7916	9644	12088	15044	16339	† 18367
Ashton-on-Mersey	974	1105	1174	1476	2359	3325	4234	5563	7234	7773	

*Part of Dunham Massey merged in Altrincham in 1920.

†Now combined.



UNICORN HOTEL AND THE TOWN HALL, OLD MARKET PLACE

APPENDIX II

OFFICERS OF THE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Clerk to the Council, Clerk to the Rating Authority and Registrar
 of Local Land Charges—A. Glossop.
 Assistant Clerk—H. B. Chynoweth.
 Chief Financial Officer and Rating and Valuation Officer—
 H. Rodgers.
 Senior Collector and Rating Assistant—H. C. Jeffs.
 Surveyor—H. E. Brown.
 Assistant Surveyor—E. M. Slater.
 Sanitary Inspector and Inspector under the Shops' Act—
 J. E. Crickmore.
 Assistant Sanitary Inspector—K. Ashley.
 Medical Officer of Health and Medical Superintendent of
 Isolation Hospital—R. Reid Duncan.
 Health Visitor—Miss H. W. Bardsley.
 Chief Officer of the Fire Brigade and Petroleum Inspector—
 F. J. Myers.
 Market Inspector—E. Prosser.
 Chief Librarian, Curator and Secretary of the Public Hall—
 W. G. Bosworth.
 Isolation Hospital Matron—Miss E. M. Duckers.
 Cemetery Registrar and Parks Superintendent—T. M. Jones.
 Sewage Works Manager—J. Burne.
 Baths Superintendent—W. Hewitt.
 Treasurer—C. S. Gibb, Williams Deacons Bank.

APPENDIX III

COUNTY MAGISTRATES

George Faulkner Armitage, Stamford House, Altrincham.
 Mrs. Brogden Carter, Ashness, Carver Road, Hale.
 F. B. Dunkerley, The Green Bend, Bowdon.
 H. E. Gaddum, The Priory, Bowdon (Chairman).
 Sir Arthur A. Haworth, Bart., Normanby, Altrincham.
 T. W. Killick, Southfield, Bowdon.
 W. G. Taylor, 61, Lock Road, Altrincham.
 A. B. Ireland, Beech Lawn, Dunham Road, Altrincham.
 Lucy H. Gaddum, Belmont, Park Road, Bowdon.
 Fred Higson, 66, St. Mary's Road, Sale.

A. Golland, Holly Mount, Stanley Hill, Ledbury, Hereford.
 The Earl of Stamford, Dunham Massey Hall.
 Sir Edwin F. Stockton, Jodrell Hall, Holmes Chapel.
 C. F. Worrall, Longcroft, Altrincham.
 Lieut.-Colonel C. E. Newton, Watling Gate, Timperley.
 R. H. Tootill, The Ivies, Hale Barns.
 A. H. M. Gow, Portland Road, Bowdon.
 J. S. Pearson, 5 Ashfield Road, Hale, Chairman of District
 Council (*ex-officio*).

APPENDIX IV

CHESHIRE COUNTY CONSTABULARY

Headquarters—Dunham Road.
 Superintendent—John Lees, Police Station, Dunham Road.
 Inspector—O. C. Jones.
 Staff—Six Sergeants, three Acting-Sergeants, and 39 Constables.

COUNTY COURT

The Court is held once a month and on such other days as the
 business of the Court may require.
 Judge—His Honour Judge Whitmore Richards.
 Registrar—J. Bowen Rowlands.
 Office—1, Market Street. Open every day from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
 Saturdays, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
 Chief Clerk—A. Cowsill.

APPENDIX V

AREA, POPULATION AND RATABLE VALUE OF WARDS

WARD	Acreage	No. of houses occupied 1931	Popu- lation 1921	Popu- lation 1931	Present Ratable Value £	Voters on Register	
						Parl.	L.G.
North	273	1521	5991	6054	34493	4255	3100
South	53	813	3913	3504	15327	2280	1612
East	145	973	4433	4026	16337	2690	2026
West	142	556	2634	2545	25801	1798	1178
Central	49	419	2093	1782	32638	1240	1028
Dunham	763	874	1386	3445	22278	2288	2224
Railway, Gas, and Water Works, &c.					16533		
Government Property					750		
Totals	1425	5160	20450	21356	164157	14551	11168

APPENDIX VI

GROWTH OF RATABLE VALUE OF ALTRINCHAM

Year		Ratable Value	Year		Ratable Value
1841	....	4932	1914-15	....	105796
1871	....	31308	1916	....	106426
1895	....	66808	1917	....	106635
1896	....	69604	1918	....	106652
1897	....	74615	1919	....	106801
1898	....	79806	1920	....	107560
1899	....	82736	1921	....	126277
1900	....	86404	1922	....	129612
1901	....	88311	1923	....	128164
1902	....	89463	1924	....	129814
1903	....	91435	1925	....	143118
1904	....	92525	1926	....	142991
1905	....	94866	1927	....	145387
1906	....	94958	1928	....	147859
1907	....	96709	1929	....	159474
1908	....	98087	1930	....	149004
1909	....	99086	1931	....	149436
1910	100998	1932	151984
1911	101301	1933	153182
1912	101998	1934	164157
1913	104638			

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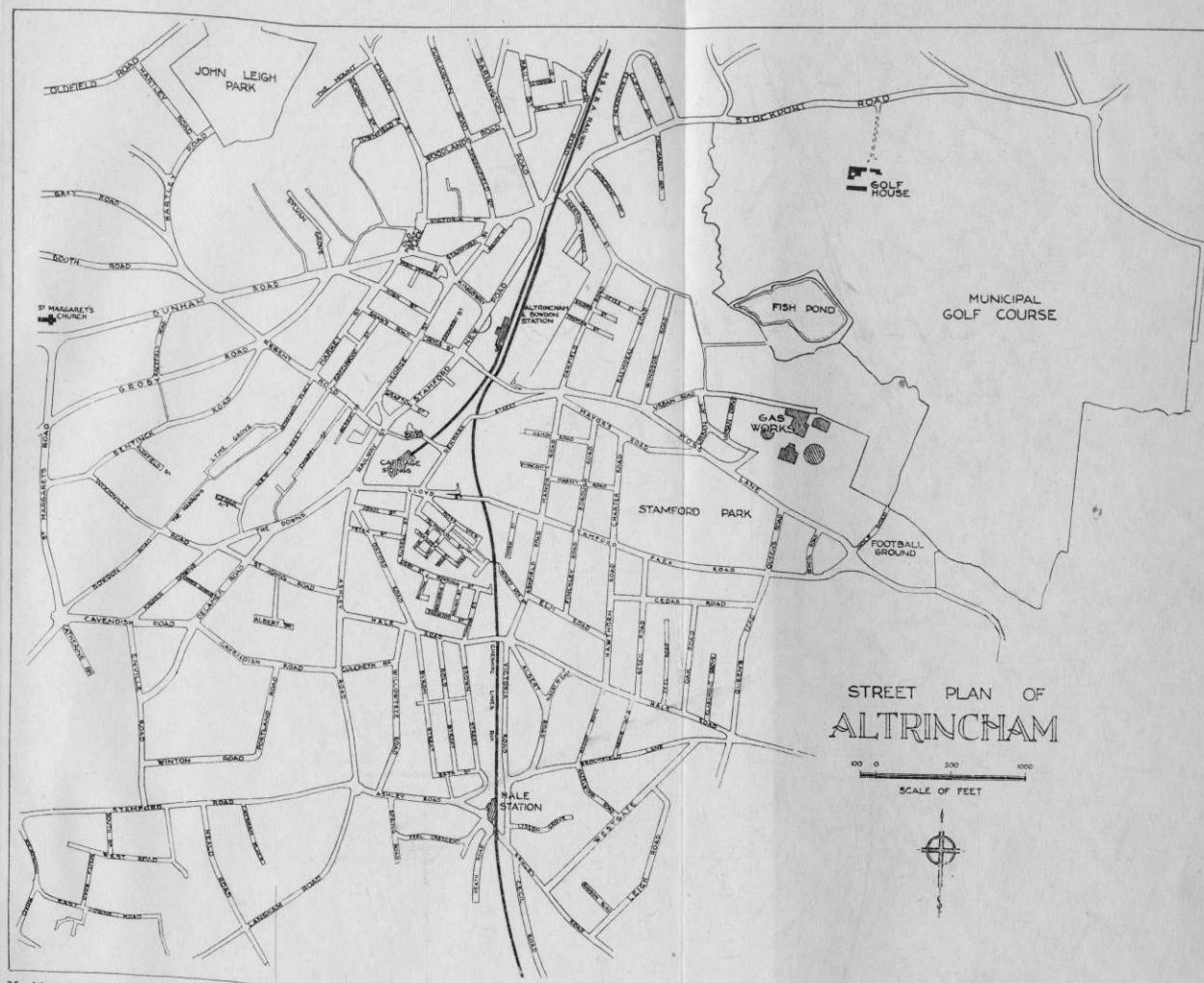
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