



The Bugle



Royton Local History Society's Newsletter

In January I received an interesting little request from a gentleman in Cornwall. He introduced himself as "The Bard of Gorseth Kernow and a writer". He had been looking at our web site and decided to contact us regarding some research he was doing into James Dryden Hosken (1861 -1953) the Cornish poet, because he was writing his life story. According to the "Bard" he understood that J.D. Hosken was the sub-postmaster in Royton sometime between 1897 and 1900 and was asking if we had any information about him.

I requested help from Frances Stott and Michael Higgins who duly set about searching for a solution and, although the information was difficult to find, Michael eventually came up with the answer that Mr Hosken was indeed Royton's sub postmaster in 1901. I contacted the "Bard" with this information and he was delighted with the reply. Many thanks Michael for the time and effort expended in providing an answer.

The making of the DVD History of Royton is still progressing and you may be interested to know a few of the stumbling blocks which have cropped up. One of the difficulties in making such a presentation is gaining permission to film in certain locations and also to use historic photographs and film footage to better illustrate the topic. In most cases people and organisations have been very helpful, however Frances Stott and I came across one stumbling block we could not surmount.

I had discovered a 30 second filmed report on the Royton train crash made by British Movietone News on 'You Tube' and Frances requested permission from BMN to use it in our presentation. The reply was that yes we could use the film provided we paid them £500. Needless to say we declined. Other bodies such as the Oldham Evening Chronicle, North West Film Archive, the British Film Institute, and many local people and organisations have all been kind enough to allow use of their material at no charge. So if you would like to watch the film about the Royton train crash you can do so by logging in to 'You Tube' and searching through the items under the 'Royton' heading.

Geoff Oliver, Chairman.



Interesting Roytonians

George Holden, 'Father of Co-operation'

The Holden family hold a special place in Royton's history as one of its oldest and wealthiest families, stretching back at least to the 16th century. It is debatable whether they gave their name to Holden Fold or got their family name from it. They appear in documents as yeomen farmers, clothiers and the earliest waterwheel (later steam) cotton mill owners. By the mid-19th century the family ran mills at Holden Fold, Elly Clough and Lane End. Indeed a contemporary political rhyme claimed: "Royton has got Sandy Lanes and Holdens too, in flocks."

George Holden was born at Holden Fold, Royton in April 1824 and learnt about both the spinning and weaving sides of the business, but it was as an entrepreneur, co-operator and political activist that he gained fame. He fought the good fight for the Liberal party in the election of 1847, was elected to the old Board of Surveyors in 1850, served as Overseer of the Poor for Royton and helped to found the Royton Industrial Co-operative Society in 1857.

He was already known as the 'father of co-operation' in Royton in the 1860s and 70's when the new 'Limited Liability Act' was passed which enabled cotton mills to be built by shareholders rather than just by using private families capital. George was a promoter of the first of these new public or 'co-operative' mills and, after years of poor trade following the cotton famine, Royton Spinning Company's mill was built in Highbarn Street in 1871. He and J.A. Kershaw, clerk to Royton Local Board, had negotiated the lease of land from Sir Joseph Percival Radcliffe, Lord of the Manor and the scheme was soon over-subscribed, one of the the principal shareholders being Royton Industrial Co-operative Society itself.

George became Royton Spinning Company's first, and long-time chairman. Other 'co-operative' mills followed, all built by local shareholders and all spinning mills. The old family-run mills, which combined spinning and weaving, seemed to be doomed. George later became a director of the Star Spinning Company, Park & Sandy Mills Company and, just before his death, a founder of the Holly Mill Company. He also developed business interests outside Royton, being an early promoter of the Star Corn Mill Company in Oldham, founder and first chairman of the Federative Insurance Company and founder and first chairman of the Cotton Buying Board.

It is as the founder of the co-operative spirit in business, and for the growth and prosperity which followed in Royton, that he is remembered. On his death in February 1892 the Oldham Chronicle said of him: "...a genuine Roytonian from his birth, there being no man in Royton better respected, or in whom people had more confidence."

THE VILLAGE SCHOOL - THE TRUSTEES

The following extracts are taken from a book called the 'History of the Village School, Royton' written in 1922 by Jonathan Beswick. This small hard-backed book was printed by T. Varley & Co., Ltd. of 28/30 Sandy Lane, Royton and was "dedicated to the coming generations".

You may recall that some extracts from this book were printed in 'The Bugle' last year. The article ended in 1885 when the school's Trustees were trying to raise money to alter and enlarge the school. The total amount needed was £1050, made up of land £350 and building £700. The Trustees distributed a 'begging' letter to every house in Royton which was followed up by a personal visit to collect subscriptions. Also, this being the school's centenary year, extra money was raised by holding a Bazaar in the Liberal Club, Market Street on December 31st and the 1st and 2nd of January:-

"The room was decorated to represent an 'Old English Fair' and Mr J.W. Radcliffe, Mayor of Oldham, performed the opening ceremony. The Bazaar was well patronised, and met with a fair amount of success. The house-to-house collection and the Bazaar did not clear the cost of the alterations. There was a considerable sum outstanding, but this was cleared off in the course of a few years by holding Sales of Work, Concerts, Entertainments etc."

When the school was first built in 1785 the Trustees were expected to play an important role in it's development. The very first Trustees, twenty in total (six with the surname 'Taylor') did not all live in the area. Two were from Middleton, one from Chadderton and one from Castleton. It appears, from the wording of the Title Deeds, that the office of Trustee of the School was hereditary and thus passed down from father to son. As we shall see later, this was not a very good idea.

The Trustees duties were set out as follows:-

"To see that the School was kept in proper repair.

To appoint a Teacher or, in the case of neglect or incapability, to discharge the same.

To remodel, enlarge, or make any other improvement.

To call Public meetings from time to time, as circumstances required."

The original Trustees took their duties very seriously placing the following advertisement in 1786:-

"Schoolmaster - Wanted at the new erected school in Royton, near Rochdale, in the County of Lancaster. The Trustees will proceed to the election of a Master on Thursday, April 20th, between the hours of eleven and one o'clock, at the house of John Ogden, the Unicorn Inn, in Royton. The candidates in the meantime to send testimonials of their abilities and moral character to Messrs. James Taylor, Crofters, near Royton, or to William Taylor, Croft Head, Royton. He must be perfectly acquainted with teaching the English tongue grammatically, writing, and all branches of arithmetic; and on the forenoon of the same day they - the candidates - are desired to attend, in order to be examined if thought proper. N.B. - There will be a certain salary of £30 a year."

However, compare this to another advertisement which appeared in the Oldham Chronicle, 78 years later, on Saturday October 15th, 1864. (I think it is safe to assume that all the original Trustees were no longer in office and hereditary Trustees had taken their place) :-

"Wanted for the Village School, Royton, a competent teacher. The salary will consist of the Day School Pence, but the teacher will be required to pay a nominal rent, bear one half of the expenses of keeping the premises in repair, and to act as Superintendent of the Sunday School. Applications, stating qualifications, and enclosing testimonials, to be made on or before Saturday, the 22nd inst., to Mr Jacob Taylor, Cotton Spinner, Lyon Dam, Oldham of whom any further information may be obtained."

The 'Day School Pence' mentioned in the second advertisement would rise and fall according to the number of scholars attending so his salary would not be constant. Records of 1840 show the nominal rent a teacher was expected to pay was 6s. per week - it may have been more by 1864. He would also be expected to clean the school and light the fires in winter. Paying half of the expenses of keeping the school premises in repair would mean any plastering, brickwork and joiner's work which needed doing plus the limewashing of the walls inside and outside. Paying for half of this, would be a substantial drain on his salary.

The final act expected of the teacher was to be Superintendent of the Sunday School. This appears to be yet another chore 'heaped' upon him until we realise that the holder of this position was paid 30s. per annum, so this office was probably given to him to help increase his salary.

As time went on, the hereditary Trustees made less and less effort on behalf of the school until their power faded away and they became mere figureheads. It was said that the Trustees, right from the commencement, were "too scattered abroad and that there were too many of them" so, in 1885, it was resolved that "a Trustee should live in or near Royton" and that they were "not more than seven or less than three in number." Invariably this rule meant that Trustees who took an active interest in the work of the School were elected.

This brings us back to the beginning of this article when it appears that by the end of 1885 the new Trustees were working 'flat out' to alter and enlarge the school for the benefit of the children of Royton.

Jess Wild



Visit the R.L.H.S. websites at www.roytonlocalhistorysociety.co.uk or www.rlhs.co.uk

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