



# The Bugle



## Royton Local History Society's Newsletter

Welcome to the new season of meetings of Royton Local History Society. I hope you've had a good summer break and although we have not met for 3 months the work of the Society has not stopped as all committee members have been involved with the planning of Heritage week. This event occurs nationally every year and various meetings with councillors and town hall staff, to decide on what is to happen, have taken place. RLHS will be heavily involved displaying old photographs in the town hall, taking guided walks around the historic town centre, doing tours of the town hall clock tower as well as showing a video of the town hall and clock. We are also organising special displays about the cotton industry and the history of Morris dancing. This will all happen on two Sundays - the 15th and 22nd September, and we will need as much support as possible from all members. If you are free on either or both of these dates please come and help. This is a very prestigious event and it will raise the profile of our society with both the council and the public.

On Thursday 8th August BBC Radio Manchester broadcast their 'Love where you Live' breakfast show from Royton market. Frances Stott, Michael Higgins, Jess Wild and I spoke on it, on some very differing topics! I hope you managed to hear it.

My thanks to those who have helped out during this busy period and I look forward to seeing you all during Heritage Week.

**Geoff Oliver, Chairman**



### The Welshampton Rail Disaster

On the 11th June 1897, members of Royton's seven local Sunday schools set out on their annual Wakes trip, this time to Barmouth in Cardigan Bay. 320 people left Royton that fateful morning at 2.30 am arriving at Barmouth at 8pm. After what should have been a glorious day out in Barmouth the day ended in tragedy when, at about 10 pm on the return journey home, their train was derailed just outside Welshampton station. All was well until at a point about 300 yards through Welshampton Station there was a bump and all the lights went out. Seconds later, the trippers train came to grief as coaches left the line, tearing up some 300 yards of rails and sleepers.

The daughter of the congregational minister, the Rev A J Bamford, told the Oldham Chronicle: "The train was smashed to atoms, parts of coaches being thrown over a low hedgerow and squandered about into an adjoining field. In a twinkling of an eye the carriages crashed into each other with terrific violence. The next thing I remember was the carriage tumbling over and we were all of a heap. The carriage was on its side but fortunately none in our compartment was seriously injured. The middle of the train was smashed to pieces though and people were shouting and groaning in all directions."

There were nine people killed outright and these were named as:-

Elizabeth Ledger, age 19 of Union St., Mrs. Owen Mills, age 41 of Queen St., John Fish, age 17 of Church Inn, Thomas Holt, age 18 of Market St., John Heywood, age 20 of Shaw Rd, George Wolstenhulme, age 19 of Church Rd., Frank Milnes, age 17 of Sandy Lane, Harry Green, age 18 of Spencer St. and Frank Harvey, age 19 of Rochdale Rd.

By 6am the following morning most of the unhurt were on their way back to Royton leaving 50 injured in Oswestry and Whitchurch hospitals. Later a further 2 people died from their injuries, John Biggs from Oswestry and Wallace Irvine from Royton. Back home Royton was shattered by the news. Hundreds of people milled around the Railway Hotel from late on Saturday evening to 6am on Sunday as telegrams were posted about the victims.

Inquests and a Board of Trade inquiry followed and there were allegations of excessive speed and poor condition of the track, but most of the blame fell on a 40 year old four wheeled Lancashire and Yorkshire brake van, the only L&Y coach in the Cambrian Railways train. In time large sums of compensation were paid to the survivors and at least one of them, Emma Broadbent never travelled by train again. The final cost to the Cambrian Rail Company was £8,338.4s. 2d.

On June 11th 1997 the 100th anniversary of the tragedy was remembered by the people of Royton who, with the vicar of St Paul's Church, Royton, Father David Booth, travelled down to Welshampton and visited the site of the dreadful accident. The following Sunday they travelled down again and held a shared Eucharist at the local church followed by a meal. This event was attended by 100 people from Royton.

In 2004 Father David Booth and I successfully campaigned to have a memorial erected in memory of the people who died in this accident. The people of Royton and Royton Area Committee combined to finance a black granite memorial with the names of the people who had died inscribed upon it. The unveiling ceremony, which attracted hundreds of local and Welshampton people, was preceded by a service in St.Paul's Church. The memorial was fixed on the front of Royton Town Hall where it still remains to remind everybody of this very sad day in Royton's history.

**Douglas Ashmore, Vice Chairman**

## INTERESTING ROYTONIANS

### J.B Tattersall 1845-1925

John Brown Tattersall is one of the greatest figures in Royton's cotton mill story, successively rising to become a high flying cotton workers' trade union representative, a mill secretary, employers' union executive, and a director of several of Royton's mills. He was so well known in the cotton trade that he was usually referred to as 'J B'.

J.B. was born in Sandy Lane Royton in 1845, into a tailoring family of five brothers and three sisters. Not all the children could be accommodated in his father's business so young John started work at the age of 10 as a little piecer at John Buckley's Park and Sandy Lane Mill, which stood behind the present day Dr Pal's (Mr Buckley's house), at the junction of Sandy Lane and old Park Lane. Despite having little schooling, save through evening classes, he was soon recognised as having a head for figures and a sense of his own purpose. He worked there for 18 years, eventually becoming minder of a pair of spinning mules while also progressing to the executive council of the Amalgamated Association of Operative Cotton Spinners. He also found time to marry and rear four children.

He was elected to the Oldham operatives' Wages and Disputes Sub-committees and, in the 1870s, fought a long battle against employers for higher wages and shorter Saturday working hours when the first limited liability mills were being built in Royton. His slogan was 'Twelve o'clock and no Surrender'. In 1872 he was elected to the executive committee of the Factory Acts Reform Association and he became well known as a local speaker and, as a delegate sent to London to lobby MPs, he had an influence on the Factory Act of 1874. This act did reduce hours, although not by as much as he had hoped it would. He became a spinners' delegate to the Oldham Trades Council and to its Amalgamation meetings. He became its auditor and an executive member.

During this time JB began to buy shares in the new limited liability mills and in 1872 he was elected to the board of directors of Royton Spinning Company. The following year he was appointed its secretary and the year after, he was promoted to yarn salesman. In the 1880s he progressed to under-manager and salesman, rising to general manager and salesman by 1891. In 1903 he became managing director and from 1906 to 1923 was chairman of the board of directors. He was a large shareholder in many new mills and was also elected to several other boards, including Fir, King, Bee, Vine, Grape and Thornham. In time he became the great rival to that other great Royton 'cotton king', TE Gartside.

JB threw his organisational skills into his work and surpassed his earlier trades' union work by organising the cotton spinning employers during downturns in trade and consequent trades union opposition. He became a prominent member of the Limited Liability Association and by the 1890s he had become an executive of the Oldham Master Cotton Spinners' executive and vice president of the Federation of Master Cotton Spinners' Associations. He became involved in many trade negotiations including the two weeks' Brooklands lockout and subsequent agreement bearing the name which formed a framework for settling disputes in the cotton trade. His former trade union colleagues noted that he was justifiably fighting his new corner but doing it shamelessly. His new slogan, he admitted, had become 'sit and listen, and say nowt'. But he never forgot that he had begun his working life as a barefoot little piecer scrambling under the mules along the mill floor.

There is no doubt that JB had the touch of a competent negotiator and manager and all the mills he was associated with did well. They always paid good dividends despite the downturn in the cotton trade after the Great War. JB opposed the reckless re-capitalising of mills in 1920s and the subsequent fall in share prices and the ruin of many small shareholders. After a lifetime of work, and in politics as leader of Royton's Liberal Party, he retired in 1923 at the age of 78 and passed away at his new home in Didsbury in 1925.

Sources: Varley's Royton Annual 1926; Dictionary of Business Biography

**Michael Higgins**



During the summer 'break' I have been busy booking speakers for our meetings for the next few months. The varied programme should provide 'something for every taste' so I hope you will come along and enjoying listening to what they have to say. We welcome 'home-grown' speakers and have two such speakers during the coming season:-

1) At our first meeting in September Michael Higgins, committee member and regular contributor to The Bugle (see above), will commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Battle of Flodden Field recalling the story of this famous battle fought against the Scottish invaders on 9th September 1513.

2) Our vice chairman, Doug Ashmore's account of the Welshampton Rail Disaster in this edition of The Bugle will form part of his talk to the society on 10th February 2014 entitled 'Royton's Trio of Train Tragedies'. His illustrated talk will recall three train accidents, all of which had devastating effects on Royton.

Please come along to support these two members and if you would like to speak to the society please let me know and we can arrange a date for your talk - you won't regret it - honestly! Many have gone on to greater things after first speaking at RLHS!

**Jess Wild, Secretary**



Visit the R.L.H.S. websites at [www.roytonlocalhistorysociety.co.uk](http://www.roytonlocalhistorysociety.co.uk) or [www.rlhs.co.uk](http://www.rlhs.co.uk)  
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