

The Mourholme Magazine of Local History,  
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THE MOURHOLME MAGAZINE OF LOCAL  
HISTORY

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**THE MOURHOLME ARCHIVE:  
OPEN AFTERNOONS**  
**Simon Williams**

For some little while MLHS has been seeking a new home for its archives. Bleasdale House School in Silverdale had been its residence for some three years, but the understandably tight rules governing adult presence within a school had made ready access to those archives practically difficult. We were very grateful for Bleasdale House's facilities, but it was time to move.

We were delighted to be offered new space at St John's church, Yealand Conyers, and on 9<sup>th</sup> August the archive was moved by committee members with the generous help of Geoff Wood and his suitably large people carrier. Before moving in, the society took the opportunity to invest society funds in some office furniture cupboards to store the archive securely, along with a large table to make viewing of maps and documents practical.

The archive is now installed, but like all house moves, some extra rearrangements are needed to make everything orderly and get-at-able. Still, we are in our new home, and open for study. It contains much that will interest local historians – copies of historic maps, local history books, working papers used in the research stages of the various MLHS published books, past copies of magazines, and much, much more.

To make interested members aware of what we have, we decided to host two open afternoons, when members could drop in and browse. We have also instituted a simple borrowing system – members may take materials away for up to a month

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once they have signed the “Sign Out” book. The first open afternoon was on the 14th November of this year, and the second will be on the **16th January 2014**, from. **2pm to 4.30pm**

St. John’s is located on Church Lane in Yealand Conyers, and the archive is in the crypt (above ground, despite its name) which is located through its own external door on the south-east (far right hand corner) of the church. The room is “cosy” – so members only please!

If at any time a member wants access to the archive for their own researches, there are two keyholders who can be contacted:

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## **MORPHY'S MILL (Part Two)**

### **Sheila Jones**

In the previous magazine I wrote about the ladies' clothing manufactory known familiarly as Morphy's Mill which, from 1928, was situated in Oxford St., Carnforth, and was the major employer of girls and women there until it closed in the 1980s. It has been suggested that there was already a similar business in Oxford St. so that when William Murphy moved into the premises, even if he did not take over the business as a going concern, he would have a trained workforce ready<sup>1</sup>. I am enquiring into this and have so far found from the 1906 Directory that there was indeed a blouse manufacturer in Carnforth employing 140 "chiefly young girls", but it does not give an address and I have not yet found a further helpful directory. So there is more to be done. In the meantime we can look at the working conditions in Morphy's Mill.

The working day was long, changing over the years of course. And at the time when girls still started at 14 their day was legally required to be shorter than the adult one. 7.45 until 5.30 were the hours in 1969, but this came down to 8 until 5. In the morning they had a regulation break of 15 minutes. Ethel said, "He had a bell on his front, and he would ring his bell and it were time to stop." Someone would have taken your order and gone to the bakery on Lancaster Rd. (This faced Oxford St and had a cafe on one side and the baker/confectioner on the other), and they would get sticky iced finger buns. Except on Mondays,

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<sup>1</sup> William Murphy's two sons, Eddie and William Arnold went into the business. David, the last owner, was William Arnold's son, joining in about 1950, after his National Service.

you could get a fresh, warm, meat, or meat and potato pie. There weren't any on Mondays because there was no butcher delivery on a Sunday. In the afternoon you had your break at your desk dipping your milky tea from one of the two big galvanised buckets as it came round. Given the nature of the work and the crowded conditions, tea on the job seems risky, but that was the practice. The lunch break was an hour. There was a dining room with benches where you could eat, and warm up food in the oven. The women from surrounding villages brought a packed lunch; some bought chips; and local girls usually went home.

Margaret, as a girl, lived on the council estate in Carnforth. To go from Oxford St to the A6, the Kellett Rd., and thence to the estate was quite a circular trek, and she remembers twice deciding it would be quicker to swim the canal than walk all the way round.

“I went out through Rigg's Yard and over the field, swam over, got out at Hartley's Quarry, and I could get from Hartley's Quarry up to my house. I had to carry my clothes over my head in one hand.”

I didn't ask if she'd planned the escapade by wearing a swimming costume underneath, or what her arrangements were!

There was an annual holiday period in August when the factory closed down. Margaret went to a holiday camp on the Isle of Man with a friend. “Sheila's grandma had a house on a street off Lune Rd. and we stayed there the night before we got the bus to Knott End to the Isle of Man”. Janet, “can't remember the holidays, but there must have been because I went with Bessie to the Isle of Man”. When she was engaged, Margaret and her fiancé took a holiday runabout ticket on the railway for just short of £2. Christmas celebrations developed over the years from being just a Jacob's Join where everyone contributed a dish, on

the premises, with the abundance of decorations and streamers that were regarded as essential to festivity, to David Morphy hosting them all at the Carnforth Inn. Country girls missed out because they couldn't have got home. Later still, David had them all to his home in Borwick which Winnie remembers because he had a swimming pool. I asked if a coach had been put on to get them all there, but it wasn't recalled.

The factor that 'made' Christmas, as well as a great deal of their life at Morphy's, over the whole period for which I interviewed, was the singing. The secretary said, "At Christmas time you would be getting all the Christmas carols and Jingle Bells, and David would be sitting there, 'Hope they're working'". Margaret, who had worked there at an earlier period to that, also remembered, "We used to sing our hearts out. We just went from one song to another. We had a set. One of the factories on Dallas Rd. had a radio going and you could sing along to that..."; but at Morphy's they just sang. Ethel thought the Morphys tolerated singing more than talking. "Their offices were underneath and if they could hear you talking, they'd come upstairs. 'Here, what's this talking going on ...' Me sister was a right good singer and she'd say, 'Here, what about a sing-song?' So we used to sing". There was camaraderie. Rose had recently seen an old colleague when I interviewed her. The friend had said, "Oh, don't you, I wish we were back at Morphy's. Anything to get a laugh out there." Margaret, when I asked her what she thought of working at Morphy's, replied, "Enjoyed it, because you learned a lot, but I think it was the company of the girls." They socialized out of work, for example going to the pictures on a Friday in Lancaster and afterwards for tea, bread and butter, fish and chips.

The Morphys facilitated this relaxed mood in their role which swung between workmate and paternalistic boss. Janet surprised me by saying that Mr. Arnold “would always try to help with the cutting”, seeing it as a favour that he pitched in even though he was a boss, not at all that he might have a profit motive in doing so. He looked out for her and so did his brother. When she was going to be married, Mr. Eddie said, “Got your going away frock yet, Janet?” ”Er, no I haven’t, Mr.Eddie.” “Well, go to Madge, get a design, and get a frock.” It had a sweetheart collar, button-up sleeves, and it was blue. The girls seemed to respect their bosses but without awe. Margaret successfully approached Mr. Arnold to be president of Carnforth Cycling club. He agreed saying it was wonderful for “ you young people to be going about”, and he always gave a dress to raffle or auction at their jumble sale. Peggy, a folder and packager whom I have not formally interviewed, and whom I only know as a very retiring old lady, “not a good mixer” in her own words, astonished me by saying she went to visit Mr. Arnold at his home in Over Kellett. Even after he had retired he would go and visit girls who were off ill.

By the time Rose started, space within the factory was an issue, and there was no room for expansion. We have seen that there were some out-workers in Carnforth, ex-factory employees who needed part time work. They used their own sewing machines, by and large, although in the beginning some were given out. Even this did not suffice, and work was given to outworkers in Blackburn and Bradford, with the secretary and Mr David travelling down every two weeks to check that all was going well.

In the latter years business was increasingly competitive. “The London boys would choke you for a penny or a ha’penny. We

had a design room and they did their best to price the garments and everything, but you could lose it for a penny a garment,” Rose, the secretary, said. And of course it was the competition from bigger firms and then from abroad that ultimately caused Morphy’s closure. When there was a rush to get out an order Rose would leave the office, “and I folded and packed and I had quite a lot of experience up the stairs”. She valued this time because she got to know the girls better, useful in that very close-knit environment where three generations and their aunties were all working and “if you fell out with one, you fell out with the whole family”.

A problem in the ‘70s was the effect of the power cuts. Some work could be done in daylight, but not the machining, for instance. The power was switched off during the day and so the factory was open at night. It must have been difficult to travel. Even without that problem, Winnie moved house to Carnforth when a changed bus timetable made commuting an issue.

All the ladies, from all the working years I interviewed, fondly remembered the shop. This developed gradually. When Dorothy started she doesn’t remember there being one. “All you could buy in my day was seconds, and you had to put your name down to buy one and then all the names were put into a box and Mr. Arnold used to pull them out.” Other early workers, however, such as Janet, who were perhaps employed longer at Morphy’s, bought seconds and remnants as a normal transaction. You could borrow dress patterns, the firm’s own designs, to make the fabric up.

These ladies emphasised the cheapness of the shop, but as always, price is relative, and Peggy, a war widow with a child, said that she found it hard to afford even these seconds. Janet



from the early 50s, and Dorothy, who worked from the early 70s onwards, were each great fans although the shop was still not properly set up when they began.

“No, because we used to go down on Fridays and buy remnants, what they used to call bundles, and you just went down and picked what you wanted and I can’t remember if we used to go to the office and pay.” Dorothy used to buy bundles and make a panelled skirt which was the fashion of the day “for 50p”. She was a presser, not a machinist, and yet she had access to a machine, and presumably thread and fasteners. She felt this was perfectly fair because “he got his money back. What we earned we’d spend in shop!” The ladies and girls would make clothes for family members from remnants and there were free scraps too. Janet showed me her clippie mats made from these.

Gradually the shop became more formalised with a shop assistant. Rose and Mr. David even went down to Manchester to buy in stuff to give it a bit of variety, and she claims it brought people into Carnforth from all over because the price was attractive and it was good stuff. Shirley fondly recalled a tight, white dress she bought when she was 15 or 16, and I wondered if that had been brought in or made on the premises.

Because, essentially, sewing was the business everyone, whatever their actual role there, seems to have been drawn in to it and they regarded their skill in sewing to be a great legacy that stood them in good stead to the day I met them. It is both a practical skill and a hobby. I think Margaret had been right when she said that her enjoyment in working there came from both the social atmosphere and from the fact that she was learning. As we saw in the case of the presser who was allowed to use the machine in her lunch hour, or of the lady who borrowed

patterns, there was great generosity in both skill-sharing and in lending equipment. Among the phone calls I received from relatives of workers who had seen the photographs of Morphy's in the newspapers, were many that said the old employee still sewed. They would go on to tell me with pride what was currently being sewn. When I had considered my research on Morphy's over, and was already writing it up, a lady I have referred to, one who used to be a passer or examiner there, showed me a cardboard box of peg dolls that she had made."I used to make them on step," she said, "and all the children used to come round to watch". They were beautifully done, every one different and with different pretty fabrics. "All scraps from Morphy's, of course," she said.

**SILVERDALE, ‘OUR DEAR SUMMER HAUNT’:  
EXCERPTS FROM SOME OF THE LETTERS OF THE  
DAUGHTERS OF ELIZABETH GASKELL**

**Pauline Kiggins**

In the introduction to her recently published *Letters of Mrs Gaskell’s Daughters*, editor Irene Wiltshire writes that the surviving letters ‘provide today’s reader with access to the spontaneous thoughts and feelings of Mrs. Gaskell’s daughters as they sat down to communicate with friends, family, or scholars associated with the publication of their mother’s writing.’<sup>1</sup>

Mrs. Gaskell had four daughters:

Marianne (1834-1920)

Margaret Emily (always known as Meta) 1837-1913

Florence Elizabeth 1842-1881

Julia Bradford 1846-1908

Of particular interest to readers of *The Mourholme Magazine of Local History* may be that, firstly, a number of the letters were written from, or describe, Silverdale (and Lindeth), and secondly, that these letters cover the eventful years from the mid-nineteenth century through to the second decade of the twentieth century. In this article I have chosen some excerpts from those letters to illustrate the Gaskell family’s connection with, and love for, Silverdale and the Morecambe Bay area. I will conclude by noting and commenting on some of the changes in society mentioned by the sisters in the years during which they wrote.

The first excerpt concerning Silverdale comes from a letter written on Monday, July 5<sup>th</sup> 1858 by Marianne Gaskell to her mother's American friend Charles Eliot Norton. The writer would have been twenty-four years old, and 'the children', Florence and Julia, sixteen and twelve. They were staying at the Tower House, so the walk to which Marianne refers would indeed have been rather long and time-consuming, from Lindeth to Silverdale and back, twice! (Mrs. Gaskell had herself in the May written a letter from Manchester to Mr. Norton in which she gave enthusiastic descriptions of previous Silverdale holidays, and stopped herself from writing more by concluding:

But I dare say you are tired of all this – *only write to us there*, for it will seem like introducing Silverdale and Newport together. We shall be there from June 17 for 6 weeks; and our address will be

Lindeth Tower  
Silverdale, near  
Lancaster.

It is a long hot walk to the post office and it is so disappointing to find no letters there when we get there.<sup>ii</sup>

Her daughter's letter reads:

My dear Mr. Norton,  
... We are staying at Silverdale near Lancaster. Knowing the Gaskell family as you do, you must I think have heard of Silverdale as our dear summer haunt. We were calculating the other day and it is actually 15 years since we first came here. It seems making us very old to be reckoning back so far. We are all here but Papa who is going to make a walking tour somewhere in the South of England we believe, but Papa never tells us his plans

beforehand...Mama...is *much* better than when I last wrote. Silverdale air and quiet has worked wonders. The children, only really they are hardly children any more, play out of doors and lately I am sorry to say indoors, as the weather has been very bad; and very much regret that half their holidays are over. We have three weeks longer here. Then we go home to Manchester.

...Our employments here are very few. We get up rather late and after that we go and fetch out letters as we are too primitive to have a post man of our own, then comes answering them and taking them down to the post again before dinner. After dinner we take a siesta though we have done nothing to merit the luxury of a siesta. Then we all go out a long walk till late tea which meal we consider the chef d'oeuvre of the day. After that we are almost ready for bed. <sup>iii</sup>

It seems that on this particular holiday in 1858 the walks along Lindeth Road and back again were not the hot ones that her mother had remembered. Marianne goes on to say:

Unfortunately the last week has been almost constant rain so that our employments have had to be indoors. One day this week we made an excursion some miles off we went partly by train partly by walking. When we arrived at Grange the place we were going a tremendous shower came on and instead of walking about the place we had to sit still in the little tea parlour looking out at a cloud of rain straight in front of us. <sup>iv</sup>

The Gaskells did not visit Silverdale in 1859 or 1860, but returned in 1861. To Charles Eliot Norton from Manchester Meta Gaskell (who in fact knew Mr. Norton much better than

Marianne - Meta and her mother had got to know him when they had met in Rome in 1857) wrote

We had such a happy visit at Silverdale this year... We had some pleasant afternoons sitting on the edge of the [?] looking onto the sands below, stretching for 20 miles till they ended in the glittering sea-line, with the wing-like shadows of the clouds coming swiftly towards us over them, & then passing onto the purple crescent of hills behind us. We used to wish so much to live at Silverdale, but I think it would be too peaceful a life, and we should forget all the struggles & pain of many people's lives, that strike one so sharply on returning to a town.<sup>v</sup>

As she wrote those words Meta was probably thinking of what they already knew about the growing problems in Manchester. In her biography of Mrs. Gaskell Jenny Uglow outlined what was happening at that time, writing:

And in Manchester generally, and all over south Lancashire, the effects of the American Civil War were beginning to show. The blockade on the southern ports had stopped the flow of cotton and as stocks ran low, the old spectres of the 1840s appeared – short time, lay-offs, bread queues and soup kitchens, fever and starvation.<sup>vi</sup>

On their return to Manchester, Mrs. Gaskell, Marianne and Meta became involved in relief work aiming to help to alleviate the suffering there. They all, and especially Meta, worked over weeks and months to the point of collapse.

As we know, Elizabeth Gaskell, mother of the four girls, died suddenly in 1865 at the age of fifty-five. One daughter, Florence (Flossie) had married in 1863 and Marianne married her cousin Edward Thurstan Holland in the year after her mother's death. The girls' father, the Rev. William Gaskell, continued to live and work in Manchester, and the two unmarried daughters, Meta and Julia, remained with him in there, at Plymouth Grove. He died in 1884. After his death, Meta and Julia continued to live at Plymouth Grove, but they also went on to have a house built in Silverdale, so fulfilling that earlier wish of living in the area. Their choice of location - away from other dwellings, set back in woodland but not far from places they had known and loved - along with their choice of name (they called the country house 'The Sheiling'<sup>1</sup>) - clearly suggest that they were looking on this second home as a retreat.

Julia, the younger of the two Miss Gaskells, died in 1908. Meta dealt with the increasing number of inquiries that were made in consequence of the celebration of her mother's centenary (Elizabeth Stevenson - as she then was - had been born in 1810). When the scholar Dr. William Axon wrote to ask about 'a Bronte room in the Cove at Silverdale'<sup>vii</sup>, Meta referred him to the then owner of the Cove (the house *we* now know as Cove House) explaining that, 'I believe that Major Saunders, who lives there, is very nice and kind, but I don't know him... We did not call on any of the newcomers, as we wanted quiet at the Sheiling, so did not call on Mrs. Saunders.'

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<sup>1111</sup> The Oxford Dictionary defines the word 'shieling' as a sheep-shelter. Chambers Dictionary cites both 'shieling' and 'shealing' and calls it a shepherd's summer hut, or a summer grazing. Other spellings include 'sheeling' as well as 'sheiling'. It appears to depend how the Old English (lost) derivation from the Old Norse 'skali' - hut, is transcribed.



Meta seems to have been pretty constant in her wish for peace and tranquillity in and around Silverdale. As far back as 1861 she had noted in that letter quoted earlier <sup>viii</sup>

There was only one drawback - & that was to find what inroads the touring world had made during the three years which have passed since our last visit there. Is it very selfish to dislike such invasion? ...for surely each visitor feels less when the country is less still & quiet & peaceful. All the little paths that we knew so well, and that formerly we tracked by the broken fern & crushed grass, were now distinct, bald, [?] walks; and sometimes we met a perambulator in them! But there is one good thing – the people are not spoilt, and are just as simple and kind as ever.



That mention of ‘a perambulator!’ is interesting as an example of the development of transport technologies in the mid-eighteenth century. If today the word ‘perambulator’ is typed into a search engine on the computer, the phrase ‘the perambulator nuisance’ comes up. We are then directed to letter pages of newspapers of the time, where enraged pedestrians are complaining about having met one or more perambulators (prams) which have obstructed their passage along the pavement! Clearly the number of such baby carriages must have been on the increase to be the cause of such a furore. Meta’s surprise at seeing one on a country footpath suggests that, as well as the fact that Silverdale was now busier, perambulators were becoming so popular that they were getting everywhere!

Other modes of transport are mentioned in the letters. After describing the rained-upon excursion to Grange in 1858, Meta wrote, ‘We could not get home till the train chose to start.’ Railway usage was still in its infancy and the Furness Line had only opened in 1857. I have wondered about the meaning or implication of Meta’s phrase, ‘till the train chose to start’. Was it that she - along with the rest of the (fairly) ‘early adopters’ of rail travel – had not yet developed a vocabulary which could less awkwardly convey meaning? After all, present-day passengers (or should that be ‘customers’!) would speak of ‘having to wait for the train’ or of having ‘caught a train’. Does her phrase imply that the train actually set out from Grange, or did it make a long stop there before setting off again? Did the phrase express an irritation at having to comply with the train’s own timetable when they, probably still wet from being out in the rain, were eager to get back to Silverdale? Perhaps there is a railway historian in the Mourholme Society who could explain?

Writing again (almost fifty years later) about being dependent on another developing form of transport, Meta began her letter of 25<sup>th</sup> October 1910 to Mr. Thomas Seccombe by saying, ‘As I was coming back yesterday from Silverdale, the motor – for the first time in my experience of it – suddenly *stuck*, and refused to work’. Again I have found it interesting to note the vocabulary used here. To describe such an incident today we would probably have said, ‘The car broke down and it wouldn’t go again’ or ‘wouldn’t re-start.’ Was it inexperience on her part that caused the awkwardness of the phrases? Or was it that the vocabulary of motoring was only beginning, and has evolved since then? How interesting it would be to know more about that motor and its journey!

Reading Mrs. Wiltshire’s collection of these letters has been informative, and also in places intriguing and thought provoking. Most of the letters containing references to Silverdale (or that originated from there) were written by Meta Gaskell. Although there are letters in this publication that were written by Julia, these are far fewer in number, and do not refer outright to Silverdale. However, there are a good number of references to Julia’s love of country air, as she contrasts the country with the city. Conditions in Manchester were often very difficult, and she describes these in a letter to her friend Isabella Green on January 5<sup>th</sup> 1867.

...Florence went up this morning, when we got down to the station yesterday (Friday) morning it was so dark, with a thick fog that the men advised her not go, so we came back again.<sup>ix</sup>

Later that year, as she enjoyed a holiday in the mountains of North Wales, Julia wrote,

We are so happy here – the only drawback is that one can't *quite* forget that one has to go back to Manchester and people'<sup>x</sup> and adding, I am quite dreading leaving this place.<sup>xi</sup>

After Julia had been staying in Oxford in the early summer of 1868, she wrote,

I am straight home from Oxford, and Manchester did look so dirty and colourless after it'.

Of the four sisters it was indeed, (as their mother said) Meta and Julia, who were '*the* enthusiasts for Silverdale.'<sup>xii</sup>, because it was not Manchester!

In acknowledging a letter of condolence on the death (in 1908) of Julia, Meta wrote:

My darling Sister was curiously like my Mother in many ways – She was a "creature of delight", so beautiful and sweet and outwardly, and within extraordinarily good and noble – She is spared some things that she much dreaded- and she was taken before any power or quality had been dimmed by age – For me the loss is quite beyond word.<sup>xiii</sup>

The country home they had enjoyed together continued to give pleasure to Meta in the years she lived alone. On September 21<sup>st</sup> 1911 from The Sheiling she wrote, 'I have just come here to find the country more delightful than ever – and such splendid skies.'<sup>xiv</sup> When she wrote in May 1912, again from The Sheiling, sympathising with a friend who had been ill, she added that she too had been, 'rather 'bad', as poor people say, - but this

delicious air is curing me.’<sup>xv</sup>

I wonder whether there are still, tucked away in boxes and drawers in this area, any notes or letters from any of the family. I *did* know a Silverdale resident (now deceased) who was able to recall having seen the two Miss Gaskells in the village!

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<sup>i</sup> *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell's Daughters*, ed. by Irene Wiltshire, (Penrith, Humanities-Ebooks, 2012), p. 9.

<sup>ii</sup> *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, ed. by J.A.V. Chapple and Arthur Pollard, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1966), p.505

<sup>iii</sup> *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell's Daughters*, pp.35-36.

<sup>iv</sup> *ibid.* p. 36.

<sup>v</sup> *ibid.* p. 65.

<sup>vi</sup> Jenny Uglow, *Elizabeth Gaskell A Habit of Stories*, (London Boston: Faber and Faber, 1993), p.498.

<sup>vii</sup> *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell's Daughters*, p. 271.

<sup>viii</sup> *ibid.* pp. 64-65.

<sup>ix</sup> *ibid.* p. 314.

<sup>x</sup> *ibid.* p. 315.

<sup>xi</sup> *ibid.* p. 317.

<sup>xii</sup> *The Letters of Mrs. Gaskell*, p. 657.

<sup>xiii</sup> *Letters of Mrs. Gaskell's Daughters*, p.245.

<sup>xiv</sup> *ibid.* p.264.

<sup>xv</sup> *ibid.* p. 270.

## **STREET LIGHTING FOR CARNFORTH (Part One)**

**Clive Holden**

Nowadays we take street lighting for granted. Even the smallest hamlets usually have some sort of lighting, and only those old enough to remember the 1939 – 45 war or who have endured power cuts will know what it is like to wander through a town in utter darkness.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century gas came to be recognised as a means of lighting. Lancaster and Kendal both had gas companies by the 1820s, but such undertakings were beyond the means of such a small community as Carnforth was at that time. In 1833 the Lighting and Watching Act was passed. This Act allowed parish councils to become lighting authorities in their own right, (although later the Public Health Act of 1875 could be enforced instead). The Carnforth Gas Company was formed in 1872, by which time the population had grown to over a thousand, and by the 1880s Carnforth had blossomed from the insignificant hamlet of the 1820s to a thriving township of nearly two thousand inhabitants. Nevertheless the streets of the ever-growing township remained in darkness, and it was obvious that in this respect Carnforth was lagging behind.

Thanks to the very detailed Lancaster Guardian reports of ratepayers' meetings, it is possible to follow the struggle to introduce street lighting in Carnforth, an aim which was not achieved without considerable difficulty, and which shed light not only on Carnforth, but on some of the characters involved (see Figure 1 below) showing some of the differences between tradesmen and farmers, and the animosity of certain individuals towards one another.

**John Askew**, aged 46; Chemist, Market Street.

**John Atkinson**, aged 42; Farmer, Hagg farm.

**George M. Bleasdale**, aged 33; Crotchet Terrace. (Now Hope Terrace?)

**James Caley**, aged 48, Farmer; Galley Hall Farm.

**Tom Clark**, aged 35, School Teacher; 5 Old Road, (now North Rd).

**Robert Clarkson**, aged 45; Builder and quarry owner; Laund House, Lancaster Road..

**Robert Delhi Dugdale**, Printer and publisher of 'The Carnforth Weekly News', Market St

**John Gaffney**, aged 37; Plumber, 2, Lancaster Road.

**William Ibison**, aged 37; Builder & Railway Inspector, 'Fairview', Lancaster Road.

**Dr. Edward Siddall Jackson**, aged 24, Robbin Hill, Market Street.

**Thomas Jackson**, aged 30; Farmer, Hall Croft. (?)

**Nicholas Parkinson Johnson**, aged 30; Coal Merchant and Temperance Hotel, Market Street.

**Thomas Lancaster**, aged 37; CIW book keeper, of 7 Old Road (now North Road)

**Henry Lee**, aged 37; Grocer, 1, Lancaster Road

**[Joseph?] Miller**, aged 59; Farmer & Sand & Gravel merchant, Plane Tree House, North Rd

**Henry Inglis Orr**, aged 53; Secretary to The Carnforth Gas Co.; The Carnforth Water Co.; Carnforth & Dist. Permanent Building Soc.; Road Surveyor; Assistant Overseer etc. etc., Boswell Cottage, 17, Lancaster Rd.

**Thomas Pool**, aged 52; Stonemason & Builder, Crag Bank Cottages.

**Sir James Ramsden**; Managing Director, Furness Railway.

**Wm. Roskell**, aged 64; Farmer Marsh Gate Farm.

**Edward Rowbotham**, aged 38; Gravel Contractor, 6, Kellet Road.

**John Ruddick**, aged 35 ; Farmer, Thwaite House.

**Christopher Stephenson**, aged 59 ;Auctioneer & valuer, Market Street.  
**Thomas Stephenson, jun.**, aged 36 ;of Stephenson Bros. drapers etc .,Market Street.  
**Robert Stirzaker**, aged 32; Goods Agent, Carnforth House, North Road.  
**John Wearing**, aged 27; Tailor and draper, Market Street.  
**E. Whinnerah (Edward Whinray?)** aged 30 ;Ironmonger, Market Street.  
**John Williams**, ged 30; Butcher, Market Street.  
**Jonathan Wood**, ged 69 ; Thwaite Gate Farm.  
**Stephen Wrightson**, aged 36 ; sub-Manager of Ironworks, ‘Ash Trees’, 17 Lancaster Road

**Figure 1: A list of people involved in the debate about Street lighting in Carnforth.**

It was not until October 1881 that a meeting of ratepayers was held in the National School room for the purpose of taking into account the desirability of adopting the Lighting Act. Mr. Robert Dugdale was in the chair, and more than twenty of those attending the meeting were named in the Lancaster Guardian report. In reply to a question from the floor the chairman explained that adoption of the Act would be good for property owners as it would increase the value of their property; it would be a benefit to the villagers, and also to the farmers who came to sell their produce in the village. When Mr. Lee asked where the lamps would be fixed the chairman replied that there would be one at his (Mr. Lee’s) street corner, but gave no further details. It was expected that a sum of £50 given to the township by Sir James Ramsden could be used towards provision of lighting, and Mr.Orr (the surveyor) explained the way in which the rates would be levied for carrying out the Act. He said the cost of providing twenty lamps would be £50 and the cost of lighting per year would come to £20, but before any further steps

could be taken a requisition would have to be signed by three ratepayers.

After some discussion the motion was put that the Act be adopted, and it was passed with twenty in favour and eleven against question of public lighting at that particular time. Firstly it was their wish and, they thought, the wish of the general body of ratepayers, that Carnforth should adopt the Lighting Act; secondly they wished to give the ratepayers the opportunity of deciding whether or not to adopt the Act; and, thirdly, as the rates for the coming year were expected to be exceptionally light, the provision of lighting could be effected without an increase in rates on the previous year. He then went into details as to the costs of erecting and lighting various numbers of lamps, ranging from £76.5s for twenty lamps to £114.7s.6d for thirty lamps in the first year. Further estimates of probable cost followed, concluding that a twopenny rate would more than cover the cost for twenty lamps. They had to remember, however, that if the meeting decided to adopt the Act, then a number of inspectors or a committee would have to be appointed to carry out the work, and the meeting would also have to decide upon a fixed amount of money to be raised in the first year. He commented that places such as Garstang, Kirkby Lonsdale, Ingleton, Bentham and Skerton had already adopted the Act, and he considered Carnforth to be of much more importance than some of them.

In answer to a question, the chairman said that if the meeting decided to adopt the Act, Section 9 stipulated that any five ratepayers could demand a poll of ratepayers on the question. There then followed some debate as to whether the meeting was well enough attended to justify a decision being taken, and it was suggested by Mr. C Stephenson that a poll would establish



the real feelings of the ratepayers. Nevertheless Mr. T. Stephenson jun. proposed that the Act be adopted, commenting that if the figures given by the Chairman were correct, it would cost no more than Stephenson Bros. paid for the lighting of their shops. Mr. T Stephenson jun's proposal was seconded by Mr. J. Williams, and Mr. Bleasdale seconded a counter-proposal by Mr.C Stephenson that a poll be taken.

At this point several ratepayers made their feelings known. Mr. Jackson of Hall Garth was one who thought the meeting was too small, and that all ratepayers should have a say in the matter, whereas Mr. Williams contended that the meeting had been adequately advertised and that those who failed to attend did so through their own fault. Mr. T. Stephenson jun. remarked that he did not know of any township where the people took so little interest in public affairs as Carnforth; they grumbled, but would not attend meetings to decide on how money was to be spent. He also warned that if the meeting did not agree to the adoption of the Act by a majority of two thirds, the question could not be raised again for another twelve months. After more arguments and counter-arguments a vote was taken, with fifteen voting in favour and nine against, so that the motion, failing to reach its two thirds majority, was lost.

At that point the Chairman attempted to close the meeting, but Mr. Williams was determined to carry on and said it was not right that 'twopenny-halfpenny ratepayers' could go against the wishes of large ratepayers and property owners on such questions. This brought a retort from Mr. Bleasdale to the effect that he and many others already had a sewerage rate to pay, from which they got no benefit, and that moreover, although they weren't all butchers, they all had to pay their proportion as well as Mr. Williams. He contended that only the propertied people

would benefit from lighting, not such people as Jonathan Wood and himself, and asked if they would bring a lamp down as far as Traveller's Rest.

Mr. Lancaster then suggested that the meeting be adjourned for a short time, but that brought into the fray Mr. Clarkson, who said that the meeting had already been closed and that there had been technical irregularities. It hardly mattered, as by this time most of the ratepayers had left the room, and the adjournment was carried by a very few votes. It was only left for an obviously disappointed Mr. Lancaster to lament that the meeting was a failure, and that the adjournment for a fortnight was useless and indeed legally impossible.

### **First Moves**

It might then have been expected that events would move quickly, but it was nearly eighteen months later, in March 1883, that the next report appeared, of a meeting held in the old Reading Room to again consider the desirability of adopting the Lighting Act in Carnforth (it seems likely that on a technicality the 1881 meeting had been declared illegal). On this occasion Thomas Lancaster (one of the Overseers), who was in the chair, stated that there were several reasons why the seven requisitioning ratepayers and the overseers had brought up the

### **Renewed efforts**

As Mr. T. Stephenson jun. had warned, it was another twelve months before the next move towards adopting the Act could be made, and it was in late March of 1884 that, on the requisition of thirteen ratepayers, another meeting was held for the purpose of "considering the possibility of putting in force the 'Lighting and Watching Act 3 and 4, William IV, Cap. 19' in the parish of Carnforth, and to determine whether the provisions contained

in the Act shall be adopted and carried into execution in the said parish”. On this occasion Mr. Ibison was voted to the chair, and he lost no time in urging the meeting to come to a decision.

Mr. Miller thought Carnforth was becoming a large and populous place, and it was time they had some ‘light upon the subject’, not only for the comfort of the inhabitants, but also for the convenience of the large number of strangers who visited the town. He went on to say that once darkness had fallen strangers would ask: “Now, my lad, where’s Carnforth?”, and some might almost get to Bolton-le-Sands before they discovered where they were. He added that as the roads in the township cost very little they could have them kept lighted for the same money as roads alone cost in other townships. Mr. Williams supported Mr. Miller by saying that it had for long been a let-down to Carnforth that its streets were not lighted, and that as he and a friend came up to the meeting they met a man who asked if there was not a public house in the street. If a man could not find a public house, then Carnforth must be a dark place indeed!

Mr. Stephenson jun. pointed out that cost was important. There were other means of lighting than gas, but by negotiation with the Gas Company they might get gas supplied for the public at a lower rate than for private persons. If it could be bought at 3s.6d per 1,000 feet there should be no further obstacle to lighting the streets. Mr. Lancaster reminded the meeting of the probable cost as stated at the previous year’s meeting: lamps at £2.2s.6d each; annual maintenance £1.3s.9d each on the basis of 4s per 1,000 feet of gas as quoted by the Carnforth Gas Company, bringing the total to £76.5s for the twelve months for twenty lamps, at a rate of 2d in the £1. After the first year a rate of only 1d in the £1 would be necessary. More discussion followed until, upon a motion by Mr. T. Stephenson jun.,

seconded by Mr. Woodruff, it was resolved that a committee be appointed to draw up a scheme, and the meeting be adjourned until 16<sup>th</sup> April when the committee would present its report.

At this stage the 'Lancaster Guardian thought fit to comment on the situation at Carnforth in the following editorial of the 12<sup>th</sup> April 1884, April, possibly in the hope of persuading the ratepayers of Carnforth to take a positive step on the 16<sup>th</sup>:

*The people of Carnforth are to have another opportunity of deciding for themselves whether they will adopt in their town the provisions of the Lighting Act. Carnforth people have been considering this question more or less for several years past, but they are slow in coming to a decision upon it. It is a matter of wonder and amazement to strangers who happen to drop in upon Carnforth at night time, to find that in so large a place there is no provision for lighting the streets. Carnforth has grown in size quickly in recent years, but the growth of public spirit does not seem to keep pace at all points with material extension. The objection to the adoption of the Lighting Act is its possible costliness. But the ratepayers of Carnforth may be assured that they can have their streets lighted at a cost so small as to be hardly appreciable, and it will be in their own hands at any time to regulate the matter as they please - to say whether they would reduce or increase the number of public lamps, or whether to have no public lamps at all, and to sink back into original darkness. Once they get their streets lighted, the inhabitants of Carnforth will value that convenience too much to throw it away, and to incur the reproach which Mr. Williams the other week said lay upon the town at the present, viz., that at nights the streets were so dark that a man could not even find a public house.*

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The adjourned meeting of March 26<sup>th</sup> was reconvened in the National School on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1884, with Mr. Ibison in the chair and a much larger attendance, of whom eighty were named in the 'Lancaster Guardian' report. The committee had met on three occasions, and there seemed to be general unanimity as to the desirability of lighting in the township, However the way forward was far from clear as we will find in the next part of this history of the struggle to light the streets of Carnforth.

**ARNSIDE AND SILVERDALE AREA OF  
OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY:  
WARTON WEEKEND**

**Sheila Jones**

On the weekend of September 21<sup>st</sup> the Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, together with the Landscape Trust held a very successful weekend of walks, talks and displays in Warton Village Hall with the village as its subject.

The Mourholme Local History Society made a very worthwhile contribution to the weekend. On Sunday our chair, Jenny Ager, gave a talk, supported by slides, on the history of Warton. It was wide-ranging, sweeping from Neolithic times and the evidence of human activity on Warton Crag, right through to the Sparrow Park initiative to commemorate the 2012 Jubilee. On the way she examined periods, like the Roman, and the Medieval with the borough charter; and personalities such as Matthew Hutton and George Washington. Jenny also looked at the industrial developments of the previous two centuries and their influence on the community. The talk was very enjoyable and well received by all.

We also had a large display, which would not have been possible without the hard work of committee members who gave up much of their weekend to make this valuable contribution to the event. Part of this display supported Jenny's talk, part looked at Mourholme Castle. Then there was an interactive section: here we had the 1846 tithe map of Warton displayed along with census returns for 1851 and photographs taken by a member in the early days of the Society of all the properties appearing on the tithe map. These had not been labelled so we had a book in

which people could jot anything they knew about any part of the display (e.g. boundary changes on the map) and, particularly the addresses and maybe changes in usage of properties in the photographs. People were very interested in talking about what they knew, but needed some encouragement to write. Nevertheless, we have got information to work on, and the display will appear at Mourholme's Christmas meeting for members to look at and we hope they will also add to the known information. The display component parts are stored in the archive in Yealand Church.

## **MOURHOLME LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY'S SPRING AND SUMMER OUTINGS 2013**

**Jenny Ager**

The Society organised two trips for members and friends during the spring and summer this year.

On **10<sup>th</sup> May** we visited St Oswald's churchyard in Warton and were guided by John Glaister, a local historian, who told us about some of the people who are buried in the churchyard, those who led interesting lives and who had an impact on their local community.

The trip on **7<sup>th</sup> June** was to Preston. In the morning one of the curators, Vicci McCann, took us around some of the exhibits in the Harris museum. She was most informative and interesting. In the afternoon we went to the Lancashire Archives, where one of the staff, Caroline Alexander, explained about the material that was stored there and how to access it. She had arranged a fascinating exhibition of original local material for us to look at. Both visits were much enjoyed.

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## **FORTHCOMING MEETINGS:**

**December 12th 2013 (note different day)**

Members' Evening and Social

**January 22nd 2014**

What is that?

Geoff Wood

**February 26th 2014**

The Workhouses of Lancaster and Lunesdale

Dr Andy Gritt

**March 26th 2014**

The Secrets of Wills and Inventories

Dr Brenda Fox

**April 23rd 2014**

AGM followed by short talks by members on their  
work in progress.



## **REPORTS OF EVENING MEETINGS**

**Clive Holden and Richard Carter**

### **27<sup>th</sup> February 2013: A History of Holme.**

Geoff Pegg, deeply involved with the Holme History Project, took us on an imaginary tour of Holme, generously illustrated with old photographs. We worked our way from the North end of North Road to the village centre, then along Milnthorpe Road before back-tracking to turn along Duke Street and made our way towards Holme Mills. We then turned up Sheernest Lane to return to the village centre via Burton Road. For non-Holme residents this might seem complicated, but maps were judiciously placed as insets, so that we could establish where we were.

It became apparent that before and for some time after the coming of Holme Mills (the subject of another talk), Holme was little more than a collection of farms outside the village centre, but it was not short of characters. One amusing story was that of children who would buy sweets at Granny Hall's shop on their way to the nearby school, only to have them confiscated by her daughter, Sally, who was a teacher, so they may well have bought the same sweets again the following day.

Greystones, one of the finest houses in the village, was built for Edward Shepherd, an ex-governor of Wakefield Gaol, and it seemed from the family tree that the Shepherds specialised in being governors of various prisons about the country.

Other snippets of information were plentiful, such as that while the Rev. Ernest Mahon of Holme had no special claim to fame, his brother Patrick made the headlines by being executed for the murder of Emily Kaye in 1924, a case which Sir Bernard

Spilsbury described as the most gruesome he had known.

Most of the older buildings and families in Holme were referred to, and if the abundance of information was too much to be remembered 'in toto', the opportunity is available to join a guided walk round Holme, usually taking a couple of hours, with the added attraction of lunch or afternoon tea at The Smithy Inn (formerly Brown's Commercial Inn/Miller's Commercial Inn).

### **March 27<sup>th</sup> 2013: Misericords of North West England.**

If we had forgotten, or perhaps never knew, what a misericord is, we were quickly enlightened by John Dickinson, Canadian by birth and accent, whose rapid-fire delivery and ready wit kept us not only well informed but highly amused.

Misericords, which are brackets on the undersides of tip-up seats in choir stalls, originated in Germany, and the name derives from the Latin for 'mercy', as they served to ease the discomfort of monks who had to stand for lengthy periods of time. The oldest in the north west date from the 14<sup>th</sup> Century, and are to be found in many of the larger churches and cathedrals as well as some smaller ones, though many have been destroyed by iconoclasts.

At first misericords were plain, but then took the form of images, such as a wyvern or dragon and elephant, both to be found at Carlisle. Subjects for carving would probably be chosen by the monks rather than by the carvers, who were skilled workers, not apprentices, and whose work can be found in several locations. Only a small percentage of misericords depict biblical subjects, though they may contain examples of divine judgment. Some of them show 'topsy turvy' situations,

such as a farrier shoeing a goose (at Whalley); a wife beating her husband (at Chester); or men engaged in women's work, such as spinning. Other misericords depict scenes from mythology, such as Tristan and Iseult (at Chester), or the story of Chanticleer and Reynard from the Canterbury Tales (at Manchester) which, like many other misericords, points to a human failing, in this case vanity. Though a spirit of mockery is often to be detected, it tends to be light hearted, and the church and God are exempt from criticism. The next time you visit a church which has tip-up seats in the choir, have a good look to see what interesting carvings may be there.

#### **24<sup>th</sup> April 2013: The Outlaw John Taylor**

When we think of outlaws we tend to think of Robin Hood or Jesse James. But the talk by Dr David Small in April introduced us to an outlaw of a rather different kind. John Taylor was born in Milnthorpe in 1808 where his father served as a customs officer. The family moved to Hale and John was schooled in Beetham until the age of 14. After leaving school he was apprenticed first as a cooper and then as a woodturner. During this period he joined the Methodist Church and was accredited as a lay preacher. In 1830 the whole family emigrated to Canada where he met and married his first wife Leonora. The couple first encountered the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) in 1836 through Parley P. Pratt a Mormon Apostle and soon became members. John, himself, was ordained as an apostle and made several visits to parts of Britain, including Preston, seeking recruits for Church.

The Mormons were unpopular in the American Mid-West and the community frequently moved to avoid persecution. For some years they were settled in Carthage (renamed Nauvoo) on the banks of the Mississippi where John built a house, ran a

woodwork shop and the local newspaper and became one of the top twelve Apostles. When Joseph Smith, the Mormon leader, introduced the practice of polygamy John Taylor reluctantly agreed. He eventually had at least seven wives and many children. In 1844 Joseph Smith and several other leaders were imprisoned by the State Governor and were killed when a mob stormed the prison. John Taylor was severely wounded but saved by his watch which stopped a bullet.

When the Mormons moved to Utah under the leadership of Brigham Young, Taylor was sent to Britain to gather more recruits. On his return he led a train of 600 wagons making the epic journey to their new home. He was later sent to France to spread the message there. In all, he crossed the Atlantic seven times and the Great Plains five times. He became the President of the Church after the death of Brigham Young in 1877 and remained its leader until his own death ten years later. There is a monument to him in Hale.

### **25<sup>th</sup> September 2013; Morecambe past and present.**

Starting with the statue of a mother holding her child at arms' length (how does she manage to hold on for so long?) Michael Scott took us on a journey along Morecambe promenade as far as the Battery, with, as the title suggests, post card views of the past compared, and in some cases contrasted, with more modern photographs.

For the senior members of the audience this was a real trip down memory lane, with views of places now long vanished, such as the Tower and Winter Gardens ballrooms, the Central and West End piers, the Super Swimming Stadium and other attractions which were to be found on the way. Other views were of features which had vanished before our time, such as the Tower

itself, an ill-fated attempt to rival Blackpool's Tower, but at a lower level. Warwick's Revolving Tower was an even shorter-lived venture, and T.W.Ward's ship-breaking yard, though hardly a thing of beauty, provided interest of a different kind.

Then there were those buildings which have survived such as the Midland Hotel, now restored to its former glory; the Winter Gardens which is struggling to regain its former importance, and the Alhambra for which no plans seem to be in place

Michael pointed out the changes in lesser structures along the way, such as the 'loos' near the clock tower, and the design of the promenade itself. With the aid of the old post cards, collected by his mother, we were shown what a thriving holiday resort Morecambe used to be, with crowded beaches and plenty to keep visitors happy. Much has been lost, but not all is gloom and doom, though Morecambe will probably never regain its former popularity.

### **October 23rd 2013: Modern Archaeological Techniques.**

After a long delay caused by gremlins in the projection equipment, Rachel Newman succeeded in grabbing our interest, though with illustrations considerably reduced in size. She set out to show that there is more to archaeology than 'pretty, shiny things', and that finds can be made in unexpected places not far below surface level, occasionally hidden by later additions. The idea that digging only goes on in sunny conditions is false, as winter is now the favoured season.

Unfortunately digs, which at one time were done with altruistic motives, are now often done at the behest of large businesses that have only selfish interests, and who often insist upon confidentiality

The importance of crop marks was first realised in the Seventeenth Century, and aerial photography, pioneered in the Great War, was a great step forward, but such advances are only useful if the information gained is mapped and correctly interpreted. Metal detecting, if properly recorded, has also brought about good results, such as the discovery of the Silverdale Hoard. In very recent years there have been major advances in technology, with innovations such as laser scanning, so that it is possible to date artefacts accurately and even in some cases to affirm whether an ancient craftsman was right-handed or left-handed.

## **NOTES AND QUERIES**

**Awena Carter**

### **E-mail Distribution List**

A complete e-mail distribution list would enable members to be informed easily about future events such as outings and visits. All communications would be blind copied so that members need not fear that their e-mail addresses would appear at the head of an e-mail sent to everyone. For some time I have been trying form such a list but it is as yet incomplete, so I am asking members who have not yet given me their e-mail addresses, to e-mail them to me at [dr.a.carter@btinternet.com](mailto:dr.a.carter@btinternet.com) if they would like to be included in this e-mail distribution list.

### **The New Website**

Jenny and Simon have been involved in having a new, dedicated Mourholme Local History Society website built. It should be up and running in the New Year. This exciting venture will make the Society's activities better known but it needs to travel up the list of web sites on search engines to make it more likely that other people will access it. Members will be able to help this progress, once the website is running, by accessing the site to increase the number of hits it receives.

Of course the web site address, once it is known, could be sent to members through the e-mail distribution list....