

Mansions of Manor Park



a history of
Cross Town, Knutsford
John Coffey

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John M Coffey

Third Edition, 2026

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Further Enlarged Third Edition

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A nationwide trend played out in Knutsford

This booklet is a history of six grand Victorian houses which stood in the Cross Town district of Knutsford, Cheshire. Although the details are parochial, these glimpses of the people who lived in them build a picture of Victorian and Edwardian England and the growth of industrial Manchester.

Having made a fortune in business, any successful man would look towards enjoying a grand house in spacious grounds for himself and family, away from the *hoi polloi*. These chapters illustrate how this has been the case with several Victorian gentlemen of Knutsford. We will see what became of them and their estates over the decades.

There is a common theme: that fine places were built with great wealth by ‘new money’, that after the Great War of 1914-18 there were not enough servants to run them, and the owners could no longer afford the maintenance costs and the death duties. So between the wars these mansions became white elephants and eventually were sold, either for other use or demolished and the land used for post-war housing. This was the pattern all over England.

Readers may know that in centuries past Cross Town (along the Mobberley Road) and Over Knutsford (along the Chelford Road) together formed a village distinct from the main town of Knutsford ‘across the Moor’. It was only incorporated into Knutsford in 1894. For centuries it had been the Pennington-Legh’s Norbury Booths estate and most people here still laboured on the estate, were tenant farmers, or made a living in small trades – weaver, blacksmith, tanner, reed cutter, laundress, dairy maid.

The fields and woods behind Cross Town, extending south and eastwards to Norbury Booths Hall, were known as Manor Park. In Victorian times

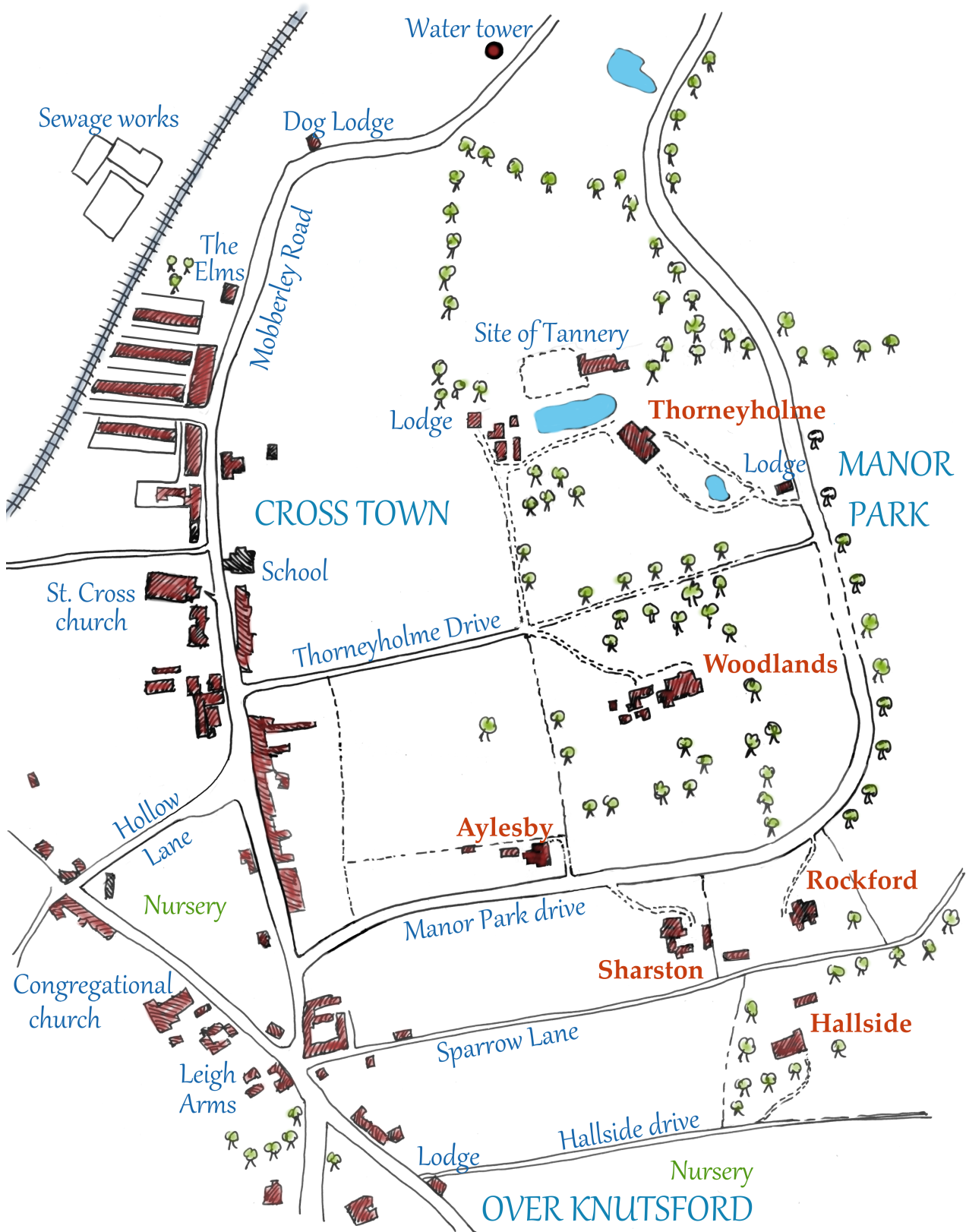


Figure 1: Map of Cross Town, Knutsford drawn from Ordnance Survey maps of the time.

there was a tannery in Manor Park on what is now Woodlands Drive. Two Knutsford brothers, John and Henry Long, owned this and other tanneries and had made themselves wealthy. Henry Long bought land near his Cross Town tannery from Pennington-Legh – just far enough away not to smell it – and built Woodlands there in 1850. This was the first new-money mansion.

The railway was brought to Knutsford in 1862, allowing wealthy Manchester businessmen to commute from the noise, smoke and industrial grime to their pleasant country seat. Charles Galloway made a fortune from his iron foundry and boiler works and in 1885 built Thorneyholme near the site of the disused tannery. Between 1880 and 1900 several other fine houses had been erected – Rockford, Sharston, Aylesby, Hallside. The map shows their locations.

Today only Hallside continues as a private residence. Thorneyholme, Rockford and Aylesby were demolished in the 1960s and modern houses built on their grounds. Woodlands became a private boarding school for boys before also being knocked down and replaced by houses and St Vincent's primary school. Sharston House survives as a nursing home.

To get into the mind-set of the Cross Town community of past times we have to understand: i) how small and closely knit it was, ii) just how strongly hierarchical society was, and iii) how central church-going was, whatever your denomination. The population of the town centre in 1857 was about 3,100, but only 208 people lived in Cross Town. Peter Pennington-Legh was the lord of the manor, magistrate and deputy lieutenant of Cheshire. The 1896 edition of Kelly's Directory lists the 'principal seats of Cheshire' where the upper classes resided, and Woodlands and Thorneyholme are in this list. Most Cross Town residents, however, lived near the bottom of the social ladder.

The history of Cross Town up to the 1950s is closely linked with the Norbury Booths estate and with St Helena's and St Cross churches. Before St John the Baptist's church was built in Knutsford town, most of the Cross Town working folk regularly worshipped at St Helena's chapel in the fields of Manor Park. When St John's opened in 1744, the authorities there declared that St Helena's was redundant and removed all its regalia and records to St John's. They even took the bells. The old chapel fell derelict. This so annoyed the Cross Town locals that they refused to attend St John's, and an antagonistic us-and-them



Figure 2: The original St Cross church, built by the local working people.
Courtesy St Cross church.

feeling took root. Eventually, in the 1850s, Peter Pennington-Legh (1794-1855) petitioned for Cross Town to become a new parish, St Cross. He provided some old farm buildings with surrounding land on which a new church would be built, so his people could have a church of their own. Legh personally drew up the building plans and generously provided the bricks and oak beams, cut from his estate, but the church was hand-built by the local craftsmen and labourers themselves. This first church, shown above, was consecrated in 1858, together with the adjacent burial ground. The farmhouse became the vicarage and its outbuildings became the parish community rooms. Sadly Peter Legh died just before his project was completed.

Regrettably this first church had not been well designed because soon alarming cracks appeared in its walls. After 20 years of patching the only solution was to demolish it and have a new one built by professionals. Much of the money for the present St Cross church came from the wealthy commuting business

people of the parish. Patrons included Hugh Birley, Charles Galloway, Hubert Winstanley, Francis Ashworth, Frank Merriman, H. T. Silvester, Richard Page (solicitor), Henry Murgatroyd (an architect), Gerald Agnew and Sir William Houldsworth, Bart, M.P., J.P., cotton mill owner and once owner of Norbury Booths. The foundation stone was laid by Lord Egerton in 1880. The new church was even larger than the old one, with pews to seat over 300 people. Services were well attended and supported by a large male voice choir.

The congregation of St Cross also raised money to build and later extend the first day school in Cross Town. In 1922 they erected the war memorial at the corner of Thorneyholme Drive. Cross Town had its own brass band to accompany parades and big events. The parish rooms were in constant use for the full variety of community get-togethers – May Day celebrations, Scouts and Guides, plays, pantomimes, parties and whist drives – with the local dignitaries opening the garden fêtes.

This Cross Town social closeness lasted into the 1950s, even 1960s. After that many more people moved into the parish from further afield, living in new houses in Thorneyholme Drive, Beech Drive, Sandiway, Mansion Drive, Woodside, Manor Park South, Rockford Lodge, Sharston Crescent and Aylesby Close where the gentlemen's mansions had once stood. Fortunately many of the smaller houses and cottages of the common people have survived and together with St Cross church are now part of the Cross Town and Over Knutsford conservation area.

Facts about times past are hard to come by. We know few details of what individuals did with their time, what they were like as people or how they lived. It is not always possible to be certain where a person of interest lived as many houses did not have names or street numbers. The postman, baker's boy and laundry woman all knew where Mr and Mrs Darbyshire lived – their address was simply 'A. Darbyshire Esq, Manor Park, Knutsford'. Only personages at the top of society had their biographies written. With others we might find where and when they were born, married and died, their occupation and a newspaper article covering some event, but beyond that almost nothing can be found. Further details may yet be unearthed by a trawl of deeds, though the costs of Land Registry searches may be prohibitive. Once a person's friends and acquaintances also passed away, almost no record remains.

Woodlands, later Woodside

Henry Long

Woodlands was the first grand merchant's house to be built in Manor Park on land sold by Peter Pennington-Legh. It was built for the wealthy tanner Henry Long in about 1850. Henry (1807-1883) and his elder brother John owned shops in King Street, Rostherne and Grappenhall and the tanneries in Cross Town and Drury Lane. John lived at Grove House and a Miss Jane Long at Vale Bank in today's Woodvale Road.



Figure 3: Woodlands, later Woodside, in 1927.



Figure 4: Detail of Woodlands showing the decorative brickwork.

Long probably bought 25 acres of fields and woods from Pennington-Leigh – a rectangle of land which included his tannery. A clearing was made in the wood and Woodlands built there. It was large, with steeply pitched roofs, tall chimneys, ornate brickwork and bay windows: breakfast, dining and drawing rooms, 13 bedrooms, butler's pantry, etc., stables and other outbuildings, approached by a drive running along today's Woodside off Thorneyholme Drive.

Master Henry, ever an entrepreneur, enjoyed his social position and estate until old age. In 1843 he and his brother were appointed as inspectors to “effect the lighting of the town with gas”. In 1859 he became chairman of the Knutsford Waterworks Company, raising £4,000 capital by sale of shares “to supply the town of Knutsford with a constant supply of good and wholesome water at high pressure”. At that time railway fever was in the air so Henry became a director of the new Cheshire Midland Railway Company. He retired two years later, in 1862, along with Sir Harry Mainwaring of Over Peover, but not long afterwards both he and Sir Harry were promoting a bill to Parliament to allow the new Macclesfield, Knutsford and Warrington Railway Company to build several new railway lines. One would have run from Booths Hall, past Woodlands and across to the water tower!

Henry and his wife Mary were at the Unitarian chapel in Brook Street in 1863 for the wedding of their eldest daughter, Mary Esther, to William Gaskell Harvey Esq. of Ceylon. The couple had five daughters – Mary, Harriet, Ada, Frances and Bertha – and Bertha was the only one not married at the chapel.

What more can we learn of the character of this self-made man? In 1882 Long applied to the courts to eject tenants Joseph Burgess and his wife from a cottage they had lived in for 30 years. The cottage had been taken on a quarterly tenancy, but Long now wanted the rent paid weekly. Burgess argued his corner, but the magistrates sided with Long and ordered Burgess to be evicted.

Burgess outlived Henry who died in 1883. Henry's widow took herself off to the south of France, but died the same year at Cannes, aged 67. One daughter lived on at Woodlands for a couple of years until the family sold the estate in 1885 by auction to Charles John Galloway, a successful engineer and industrialist from Manchester. The list of furniture and fittings also auctioned shows the luxury the Longs had enjoyed; quality furniture and glassware, and even a new top-of-the-range Broadwood grand piano in rosewood.

Hugh Arthur Birley

Galloway divided Long's 25 acre estate into two plots. He kept the 11 acres to the north of what is now Thorneyholme Drive for himself and straightway built Thorneyholme there. He sold Woodlands with 14 acres to the south of the drive to Hugh Arthur Birley (1847-1924) from Didsbury for almost as much as he had paid the Longs for the whole 25 acres – what a brilliant deal!

The Birleys were a numerous, wealthy and influential family of Manchester factory owners. Confusingly, almost all the males were called Hugh. Hugh Arthur's father, Hugh Hornby Birley, had been Deputy Lieutenant for the County Palatine of Lancaster and Conservative MP for Manchester. He had died two years previously in 1883, leaving young Hugh Arthur a considerable endowment plus the India rubber manufacturing company in Cambridge Street, central Manchester, founded by his great uncle, another Hugh Hornby Birley. This older Hugh Hornby Birley (1778-1845) had been a cotton mill owner and, as Captain of the Manchester and Salford Yeomanry, had led the

murderous charge into the crowd at the Peterloo Massacre, 1819. In the 1860s Hugh Arthur's father sold the rubber mill to Charles Macintosh & Company, but continued as a director, and no doubt wore a 'mac' in wet weather. The director's position passed to Hugh Arthur and the family involvement with the factory continued until about 1920 when it was sold to the Dunlop Company.

Hugh Arthur moved in the Cheshire squirearchy, becoming a Justice of the Peace alongside Lord Egerton, and Colonel in the Cheshire Imperial Yeomanry Cavalry, following in his great-uncle's steps. The Birley family had long been benefactors of the Church of England, and Hugh Arthur even paid for the construction of St Mark's church, Hulme. Along with Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst he was a Vice-Chairman of the Manchester School Board.

Birley changed the name of his mansion from Woodlands to Woodside soon after he bought the place. Perhaps this was because most of the trees had been felled by then. Today only College Wood at the west corner of Thorneyholme Drive survives.

Amy Birley had five children. The elder son went into the family rubberised cloth business, while the second, Bevil Langton Birley, started as a lieutenant in the 4th Kings Own Royal Lancaster Regiment and rose to the rank of Major in the Great War. He fought at Gallipoli, but survived the war. The girls were Mabella, Mildred and Eva. Mabella was married in St Cross church in a full choral ceremony in 1906, her sisters as bridesmaids. As the couple left the church, local children scattered primroses in their path and older residents sanded celebratory designs on the pavements, an old Knutsford custom.

Mrs Amy Birley employed several servants, essential to running such a large house. In 1911 there were five serving women, all unmarried: Katherine Parry, Annie Pugh, Rose Devereux and her 15 year old sister Nellie, and Ethel Moulden, 17. There was a fair turnover of staff and newspapers always carried columns of adverts calling for cooks and maids.

Here's a story. In 1900 Birley was a witness in a legal case against a clergyman in Manchester. The Rev. John Kelty, a well respected rector in Old Trafford, was charged with larceny, falsification of accounts and forgery. Kelty had been secretary of a church charity to erect new churches in Manchester and support

poor ones. At the trial Birley gave evidence that in May 1889 he had sent a cheque for £400 to Kelty on trust to support St Philip's, Hulme, where a relation, Canon Birley, had been incumbent. The auditors had found that Kelty had paid the cheque into his own account then withdrawn it all in cash. The case was sent to the assize court where Kelty, then a broken man, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 9 months in prison.

Amy died in 1920 and Hugh in 1924, and sadly also their elder son, Hugh Ronald. By this time this great rambling cold place had become unmanageable, the remaining children did not want it and so it was put up for sale.

Edward Percy Hope

Woodside therefore became a boys boarding school. There were many small private schools at that time 'for the sons of gentlefolk'. Parents thought the militaristic, Spartan regime would prepare their boys for the army, the law or



Figure 5: Woodside when it was a school.



Figure 6: The hallway at Woodside probably about 1925.

diplomatic service. Pupils had to muck in together, and many boarders made life-long friends. Fictional schools became the backdrop to so many heroic or comic stories for boys and girls. Older readers will know Darrell Rivers of Malory Towers and Billy Bunter of Greyfriars School, and have watched the farcical film ‘The Happiest Days of Your Life’ (1950), or the 1950s TV comedy series ‘Whacko!’ in which Jimmy Edwards played the ignorant, swindling headmaster of Chiselbury School and Arthur Howard his dithering deputy, both outwitted by the boys. Of course Knutsford College was not like these caricatures. The old boys association at www.knutsford-college.com gives an eye-witness picture as does ‘The No Hoper’ (2021), a book of reminiscences by ex-pupil David Skentelbery. As a flavour, the Knutsford college web site features a short film of sports day in 1948. About 20 boys in white tops and shorts march in military formation onto the field and are led by an elder boy as drill sergeant in physical jerks. Later they race round the field watched by a sizeable crowd of proud mums and dads.



Figure 7: The interior of Woodside school, ready for class to start.

The school was started with only eight boys in 1927 by Edward Percy Hope (1881-1951) who had previously run a school in Beeston near Tarporley. His school motto was 'Hope, the anchor of life'. He employed a staff of about a dozen teachers and supporters who also lived in. Boys did get a decent education, and through his contacts with universities for higher education, and with lawyers, architects, *etc.* Headmaster Hope did point boys towards a career when they were not sure of their next step.

Hope had a distinguished career. He had been a Captain in the Royal Artillery in the Great War before his 50 year career in teaching. He was a keen horseman and a talented musician, having been an organ pupil of Dr. Pyne at Manchester Cathedral. He played at St. Mary's Rostherne for many years where his son James was in the choir. 'E.P.' was a founder member of the Knutsford Operatic Society and delighted in playing Pooh-Bah in Gilbert and Sullivan's 'Mikado'.

I'll mention two snippets. In 1939 he advertised for a dormitory maid, offering a comfortable home and good wages, but warning she "must not be afraid of work"! During the war, Percy wrote to the Manchester Evening News about how they were Growing for Victory with the 4 tons of potatoes and other vegetables they had grown to feed the 48 people who dined there every day, adding that they also made 400 pounds of chutney and pickles.

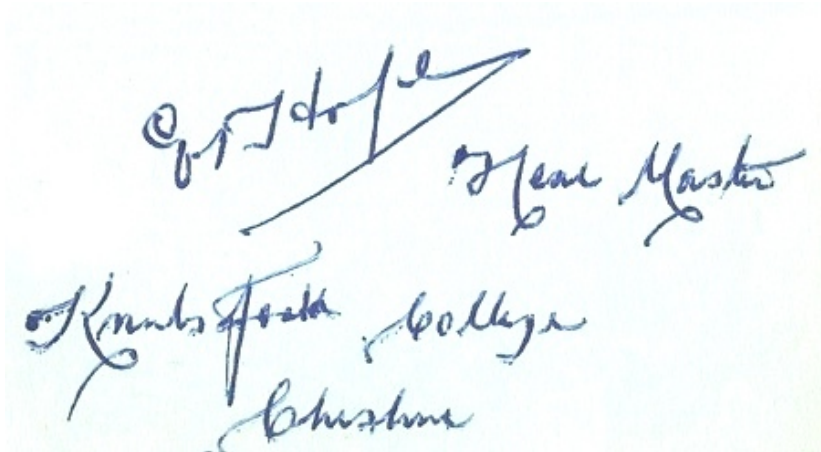
Percy's wife Maria Maud died in a nursing home in 1948, aged 79. Her funeral was at St Cross church. Percy himself died in 1951, aged 72. At his funeral he was described as 'a man of high principles'. Their son James ('Jimmy'), also a master at the college, tried to carry on, but he had become an alcoholic and was unable to keep the business together. The college closed down at the end of the 1954 summer term. Over its 27 years about 1350 boys were educated at Knutsford College. Jimmy sold off some of the land along the still unmade Manor Park drive and converted Woodside House into single-occupancy flats which he rented out until he himself died there in squalid and sad circumstances in 1960.

Manor Park South and St Vincent's School

So once more the Woodlands-Woodside estate was sold, this time to property builders. The detached houses along the west side of Manor Park South were built in 1954 on what had been the college's cricket and rugby pitches. When Woodside House was demolished in the early 1960s, the houses in Woodside *cul-de-sac* were built.

Meanwhile St Vincent de Paul's Roman Catholic school needed new and larger premises because the population of Knutsford increased greatly after the Second World War. For many years St Vincent church had had a small school at the corner of Queens St and George St with a playground next to the old church. In 1949 the church and presbytery were sold to the Knutsford Amateur Dramatic Society who renamed it The Little Theatre. Later the school was in temporary premises at Winstanley House on Northwich Road until the present primary school opened on Manor Park South in 1967, built at a cost of £50,000. The headmaster was Mr Ron McCormick – he was a keen amateur actor at the Little Theatre. The school has recently been extended and now has over 200 pupils.

The name Woodlands persists in 'Woodlands Drive' and in 'Woodside' off Thorneyholme Drive alongside the few trees of College Wood. Mounted on a wall in Woodside, just where the house once stood, is a plaque commemorating Edward Percy Hope and 'Knutsford College, Woodside'.

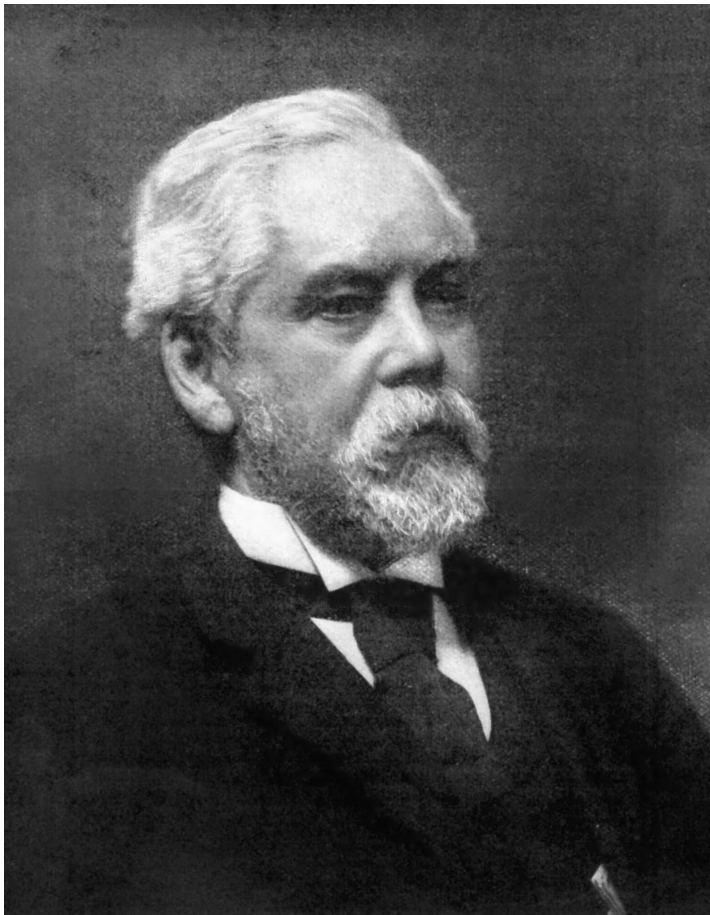


Thorneyholme

Thorneyholme Drive is a leafy residential road between Mobberley Road and the two primary schools where today's Manor Park South meets Manor Park North. It was originally the rough, unmade drive up to two fine Victorian houses, Woodlands and Thorneyholme. Here is the story of Thorneyholme.

Charles John Galloway

In 1885 Charles John Galloway (1833-1904), a wealthy industrialist then living



at Seymour Grove, Manchester, acquired 11 acres of fields from the executors of Henry Long Esq of Woodlands. There he built for his family a large Arts and Crafts mansion which he named 'Thorneyholme' after their previous house in Old Trafford. Their Cross Town house stood near the site of Henry Long's disused tannery on ground which today is in the middle of Beech Drive. The house had 19 rooms in all, plus six cellars! There were east and west lodges, which are still homes, and a modest lake along the northern edge of the grounds.

Figure 8: Charles John Galloway. In an earlier photo he is wearing a monocle. Courtesy Institution of Civil Engineers

The Galloway family were engineers of Scottish descent. W & J Galloway and Sons had been founded in Manchester in 1835 and grown through designing and manufacturing steam boilers and engines to power the rapidly expanding railway network, cotton mills, steam ships and a vast variety of industrial plant. Charles was a second generation Galloway, and by the time he took up a managerial position the company employed 500 people at its foundry at Knott Mill Ironworks and another 800 in Gorton near the railway company's locomotive works. Charles supervised the construction of the long railway viaduct over the River Leven at Ulverston Sands, and partnered with Henry Bessemer in his famous innovative steelmaking process. In 1889 the company restructured as a limited company and appointed Charles as chairman and managing director. He had fingers in several industrial pies, including as director of the Manchester Ship Canal Company and of the Steam Boiler Assurance Co. Ltd. W & J Galloway continued in business until 1932 when the Depression forced it to cease trading.

Taking a snapshot of Thorneyholme in 1901 we find Charles, aged 67, living with his eldest son Arthur and six unmarried female servants. Charles's wife Annie (né Walton) had died two years previously. The couple had had to endure the tragedy of losing their younger son Lieutenant Percy Walton Galloway in 1893 when he was killed in India. Galloway seems to have been a devout man and was a warden of St Cross church. In memory of Percy his parents commissioned the famous artist Edward Burne-Jones to design the magnificent stained glass west window of the church. When Annie died, Charles had a second commemorative window installed to a design by Burne-Jones. He also paid £300 for the oak chancel screen.

Away from the grime and noise of work Charles seems to have lived in Knutsford as a country gentleman. He was a Justice of the Peace, an art lover with a fine collection of modern paintings, and bred spaniel puppies for sale. He died suddenly in the grounds of Thorneyholme in the spring of 1904. He left generous bequests to his sons and daughters, and Thorneyholme itself to his son, Captain Harold Bessemer Galloway. The estate in total was valued at the staggering sum of £235,000, about £30M today. Harold auctioned Thorneyholme the next year. I quote the prospectus because it tells us its extent:

“This large house containing spacious oak wainscoted hall, drawing, dining, morning and billiard rooms, together with extensive kitchens,



Figure 9: Thorneyholme in 1886.

servants' hall, &c: eight bedrooms and servants' rooms, two bath-rooms, &c: electric light installation and every modern convenience: stabling for six horses: good coachhouse and saddle-rooms, shippens, &c: coachman's cottage and two lodges: glass consisting of vinery &c: gardens, paddock: total area about 11 acres.”

Charles made provisions for his long standing servants: Janet McCullum was his housekeeper, Margaret Carradus the housemaid, Robert Meade his coachman and Isaac Light his gardener.

Harold maintained links with the family's Scottish roots, being a Captain, later Major, in the Seaforth Highlanders. He built a fine mansion at Forres on the Moray coast with the money from Thorneyholme, and was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Elgin in 1913. But like so many others the Great War took his life; he was killed in action at the Battle of Loos, France in 1915. The whole Galloway family – Charles, Ann, Arthur, Harold and Percy – are buried in a shared grave in St Wilfrid's churchyard, Mobberley, possibly because there was not enough space for a large plot in St Cross's small graveyard.

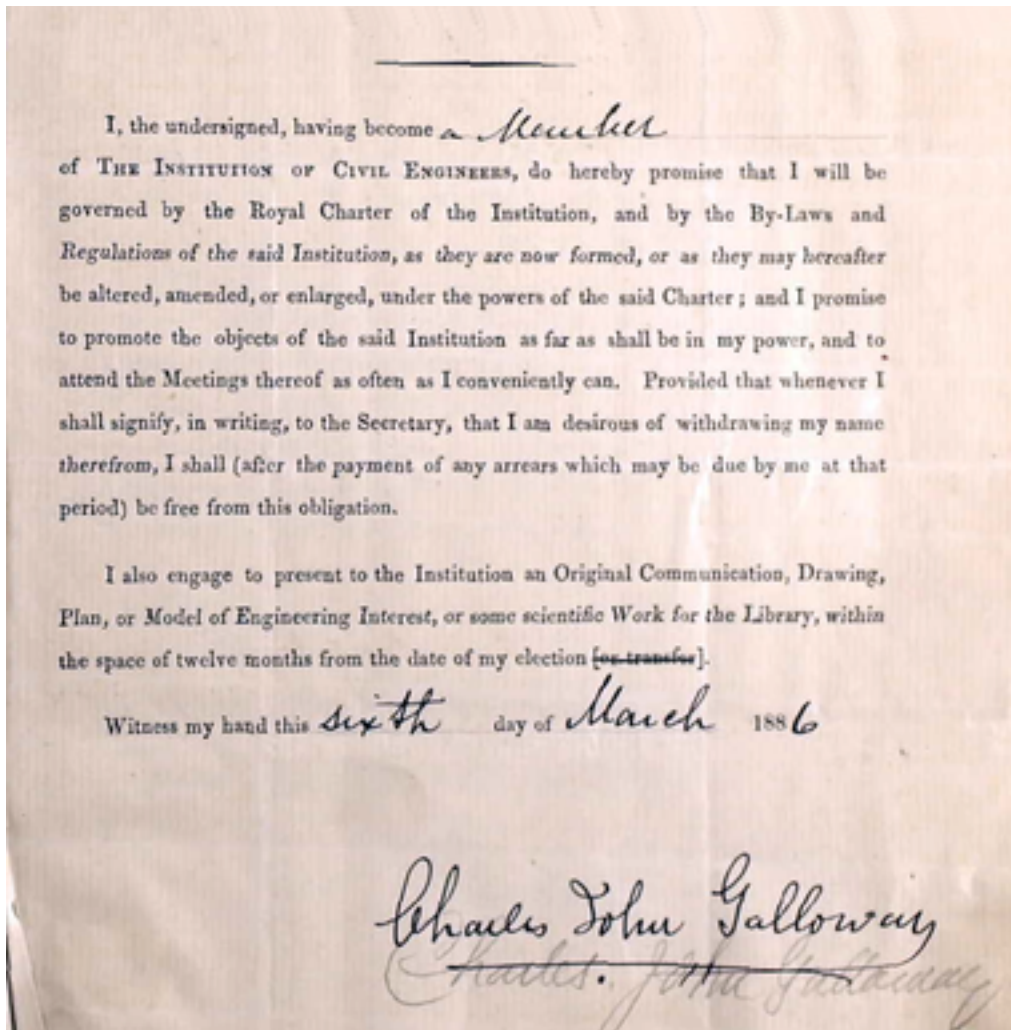


Figure 10: Charles Galloway signed undertaking on becoming a Member of the Institution of Civil Engineers. Courtesy of the Institution.

Clement Ward Lowe

The whole Thorneyholme estate was bought by Clement Ward Lowe (1865-1929) for his wife Dora and their two sons, Charles and John, and daughter Helen. He came from Stockport and married Miss Dora Bailey from Walsall. Their society wedding in April 1902 was attentively described in the newspapers for their admiring readership:

“The charming little bride was attired in a gown of white cr pe de chine, beautifully embroidered with silver and trimmed with Irish crochet lace. She wore a lovely picture-hat and carried a shower bouquet of white heather and orchids. Her ornaments were a diamond bracelet and pearl necklace, gifts of the bridegroom. A breakfast

was held at the residence of her father, whence the happy pair left for Devonshire where the honeymoon will be spent, the bride going away in a pale blue cloth costume of a lovely pastel shade, with Maltese lace vest and pretty collar. A picture-hat trimmed with pink roses completed the costume.” (*Walsall Advertiser, Walsall Observer, Barmouth & County Advertiser*)

Clement’s father was a very wealthy manufacturing chemist. He owned the firms of Charles Lowe & Co of Reddish and F.C. Calvert & Co of Manchester and Bradford, plus four grand houses: Summerfield House in Reddish and others in Hyde, Eccleshall and Barmouth. The gross value of his estate was £173,300, £23 M today. The Calvert company manufactured phenol (carbolic acid), a powerful disinfectant, and made it into soap, toothpaste and ointments. These were widely advertised as the treatment for chafed skin, throat colds, rheumatic pains, piles, insect bites and ringworm! Charles Lowe & Co operated from the Phoenix chemical works, Reddish.

To run Thorneyholme the Lowes employed seven unmarried women servants plus lodge keepers, a gardener and James the gamekeeper. Dora’s lady’s maid, Mary, was from Edinburgh. Soon after moving in, Lowe commissioned the architect Edward Salomons to design yet another staff house. This was Summerfield on Thorneyholme Drive, named after Lowe’s childhood home in Reddish. Edward Salomons (1828 - 1906) is most known for designing the Moorish-style synagogue in Cheetham Hill, now the Manchester Jewish Museum. Summerfield became the home of Mrs Millie (Amelia) Green who tended to the Lowes ‘personal laundry’. People who knew the Lowe household have shared their recollections of life ‘downstairs’. For instance, the teenage cook was Florence Garner from Northwich and the butler Ceddy (Cedric) Yarwood. Ceddy introduced Florence to the young Tom Walker who worked on Lord Egerton’s Tatton estate. After ‘courting’ they married in 1934. When Judith was born to them, her godmother was Mrs Winifred Railton who was a seamstress and clothing repair lady for the Lowes. Florence said she found service hard physical work and was always at the Lowes’ beck and call, but nevertheless enjoyed life and felt reasonably secure and comfortable compared with many.

After the Great War Lowe gave the Vicar and Wardens of St Cross the small plot of land at the junction of Mobberley Road and Thorneyholme Drive on

which to erect a stone memorial. It was dedicated with solemn ceremony in 1921 by Rev. William Armour.

Clement died at Knutsford in 1929 aged 64. Dora lived on at Thorneyholme until the war, moved to Glebelands Roads in Knutsford and survived her husband by 44 years, dying in 1973 at 91 years of age. The family name survives in Lowe Drive off Manor Park North.

World War II and afterwards

During the Second World War there were many troops from the U.S. army in and around Knutsford. Peover Hall was the HQ of General George Patton and the U.S. Third Army while they prepared for D-Day. The Ruskin Rooms on Drury Lane were an officers' club. The old St Cross vicarage was a billet for troops learning to parachute in Tatton Park, and Thorneyholme was requisitioned as housing for U.S. Army officers. Mrs Lowe and her remaining few staff moved out.

The Knutsford College web site records recollections of school pupils during and after the war. While the officers billeted in the house, there was a tented camp in the grounds for the enlisted men. When the Americans left, they vandalised the place for souvenirs. When Mrs Lowe returned to inspect it prior to again taking ownership, she walked into the house, turned around and walked straight out in dismay and disgust. It was never lived in again. She sold it to Knutsford UDC who seem to have wondered what to do with it. The place only fell into greater dilapidation. In 1949 five local men were in court for stealing two tons of lead sheet and piping worth £70 from the roof, bathrooms and kitchen: 'considerable damage was done' said the Borough surveyor.

The council eventually demolished the house, dug up the garden, filled in the pools, and built Beech Drive, Mansion Drive, and sections of Thorneyholme Drive and Manor Park North. Summerfield, being outside the grounds of the estate, was left and still stands as a private house. Of Thorneyholme itself nothing other than the East and West lodges and a garden wall remain.

Rockford Lodge

The early years of Rockford Lodge and Sharston House are difficult to unravel because neither house had a name at that time; both were simply listed as being next to each other 'in Manor Park'. One house was built in about 1880 and the other about 1893. I have had to judge who lived in which before 1907. No photograph of Rockford Lodge has come to light; it is said to have looked rather like Sharston House. It was built in a rectangle of land covering $2\frac{1}{4}$ acres between Manor Park South and the ancient Sparrow Lane. Though not on the lavish scale of Woodlands and Thorneyholme, it had 14 rooms if kitchen and pantry are included.

Richard Page

I think it was Rockford Lodge rather than Sharston House which was built in 1880 for the wealthy solicitor and notary Richard Page (1843-1909). He was the son of a prosperous land-owning Oxfordshire farmer. After being articled in London, he became a partner in Rowley, Page and Rowley, solicitors of Manchester in 1865 and became 'one of the best known solicitors in Lancashire for many years', probably earning good fees for commercial work in conveyancing, contracts, litigation and other legal services in support of Manchester's commerce and enterprise. He settled in Knutsford in the 1870s and in 1872 married Mary Samuels of Manchester. Possibly he had Rockford designed to his particular requirements as a home for their six children. There is evidence in a deed that Rockford Lodge was named after the city of Rockford, Illinois. Another deed indicates that the land bought in 1879 by Page probably extended from Rockford Lodge to the Mobberley Road. Page was on the building committee for the new St Cross church and his children were baptised there by Rev. Bradbury. Sons Richard and William later followed their father into the law.

Mrs Page employed five unmarried women servants and Arthur, the live-in

gardener. Richard owned farmland from his father and never lost touch with his farming roots; he retained membership of the Banbury Agricultural Society, and perhaps enjoyed helping Arthur with the gardening at the weekends. He died at home of heart failure, aged 66. His estate was valued at £23,700, almost £3M today. The house passed to his sons who rented it out and Richard junior emigrated to Singapore.

There was high drama one dark November evening in 1890 when the curtains in the nursery caught fire. The servants rushed to extinguish the flames, but not before several wooden panels and the door had been damaged and the children's canaries had suffocated. The house was probably lit only by oil lamps and candles. The first house to be lit by electricity was Craggside in Northumberland in 1878, just before Rockford was built. It was not until the 1920s that electric lighting became common in homes.

Charles Scheu

For the three years from 1910 to 1912 the Scheu family were in residence. Carl Scheu, a German by birth, was a prosperous chemical merchant. His family had moved here from Bowden where he and Nora Lydia, 9 years his junior, had been married in the parish church in 1888. Two years earlier Carl had become a naturalised British Citizen and changed his name to Charles. By 1911 Charles was 52 years old and owned a profitable chemical trading company with offices off Deansgate, Manchester. Nora and he had had three daughters in quick succession: Violet, then aged 21, Gladys, 20, and Mona, 19, were all still living at home. They retained three unmarried women servants, Mary, Lizzie and Edith, who lived in and did the work. The Scheu family were probably renting Rockford only while looking for a more modern home, as in 1911 they moved into White Lodge, a new property in Leycester Road.

The chemical industry was a major part of Manchester's economy from mid-Victorian times. It grew largely from the desire for new synthetic dyes for cotton. Mauve, the first synthetic, had been discovered by William Perkin senior in 1856 and his son, also William Perkin, moved to Manchester in 1892 as professor of chemistry at Owens College which by then had a renowned chemistry department. Ludwig Mond, a German Jew and naturalised British citizen, was a leading figure and employer at his chemical factory in Northwich.

Clayton Aniline (founded 1876, later part of CIBA) and Levinstein Ltd (later part of ICI) were major Manchester dye manufacturers. However in Germany an even larger chemical industry had grown up so that by 1913 80% of the dyes used in Britain were imported from Germany. It just so happens that the chemistry of dyes is closely related to the chemistry of TNT and other high explosives.

What might have happened to a German-born man, still with an accent, who worked with chemical import-exports when the Great War broke out? Public opinion flared hotly hostile to Germans and other 'suspect' persons, 'the internal enemy'. Many were arrested and sent to internment camps – there was one at Handforth. Perhaps it was an act of self preservation, therefore, when in June 1915 Charles changed his surname by deed poll from Scheu to Wallace. The Royal Family too changed their name at the same time.

The Stewart and Bolden families

From 1912 to 1919 the owners of Rockford Lodge were Hinton Arthur Stewart (1874-1956), a Londoner of Scottish descent, and wife Dorothy. They had married in 1906 in grand style at Rougham parish church near Bury St Edmunds where her father, Sir George W. Agnew, Bart., was variously Liberal MP for Salford West (1905), High Sheriff of Suffolk (1922) and owner of Rougham Hall. Hinton had worked in central London before marrying and coming to Cheshire. The couple took Legh Cottage in Legh Road then moved to Rockford Lodge as his business prospered – he shipped piece goods (bespoke lengths of cloth) to the East. They must have known the Scheu family.

In 1919 a wealthy couple, George and Helen Bolden, left Tabley Road and seem to have moved in with the Stewarts for a while, then taken over living at Rockford Lodge. The families must have been on friendly terms. George Lennard (sic) Bolden Esq., gentleman, had been born at Tabley but grew up in Manchester where his father had a cotton business. In 1914 he succeeded his father as a director of the Calico Printers Association Ltd, an amalgamated company of printers and merchants formed to restructure the industry and fight off fierce competition from overseas. At the outbreak of the Great War exports fell drastically and the situation was dire. As a director George aimed to keep business going as far as possible to limit unemployment, both because

if skilled workers dispersed, they might never return when trade picked up again, and because of the hardship it would bring to working families. The Association built the St James Buildings in Oxford Street, Manchester, and George had his office there. He was a shareholder in the Great Western Railway Company and in 1931 became a director of the newly merged textile bleachers-dyers-printers association.

George's wife, Helen, grew up in Caputh, Perthshire where her father, William Gloag, the Hon. Lord Kincairney, was a laird and senior Scottish judge. Her uncle Paton was Moderator of General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. Both the Stewart and Bolden marriages are examples of how families with money and title married other money and title to maintain their stratum of society. The Boldens stayed at Rockford Lodge until about 1938. There is evidence that during the war they took refuge in the USA and, when war was over, moved to Stroud in Gloucestershire.

Sir Richard Martin-Bird

The Boldens sold Rockford Lodge to Richard and Katherine Martin-Bird. The couple had married in 1935. When war broke in 1939, they moved out and leased the house for use as a small hospital and clothing depot managed by the Women's Voluntary Services.

The Martin-Bird family were wine merchants and owner-managers of the Yates Wine Lodge chain of wine bars. As well as being an energetic businessman, Richard Dawnay Martin-Bird (1910-1992) had an outstanding career in the British Territorial Army (part time volunteer force). There is an extensive account of Richard's career on the Museum of the Manchester Regiment's web site (www.themenbehindthemedals.org.uk), so I will just outline his distinguished life. He was born in Weybridge, Surrey. The maiden name of his mother, Mildred Bird, was Yates and her father, Peter, had co-founded Yates Wine Lodges. Richard was educated at the prestigious Charterhouse School, Godalming, where he got into soldiering through the school's army cadets. During World War II he served with the 8th (Ardwick) Battalion of the Manchester Regiment, a Territorial unit, first as a signals officer and later in command of the battalion in the defence of Malta. He rose to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, having led his men through Egypt and the Middle East

before fighting northwards into Italy against strong German opposition. His men thought highly of him.



Figure 11: Col. Sir Richard Martin-Bird.
Photo courtesy of the Manchester Regiment

He was promoted to Colonel in command of the Ardwick Battalion in 1953, but retired from the Territorial Army in 1956. He stayed in contact with his old battalion, who were pleased that he used his resources as a wine merchant to make sure that the Mess never ran short of port. He and Sir Douglas Crawford (of Crawford's biscuits) started a campaign in 1965 to sway public opinion behind support for the Territorial Army, 'a national asset', in the face of proposed Government cuts. They maintained that 'at the rate we are going there will hardly be a drill hall left in the country'.

In 1964 Richard was appointed Deputy Lieutenant of Lancashire, honoured with a CBE in 1971 and knighted in 1975. In 1976 he became High Sheriff of Greater Manchester. He also became Vice-Chairman of the Territorial, Auxiliary and Volunteer Reserve Association. On the business side he was President of the Wine and Spirit Trade Association 1978-79. A breathtaking career.

In the late 1960s the family moved to Pepper Street, Chelford/Snelson where Sir Richard enjoyed gardening and bird watching until he died aged 82 in 1992. Those who knew him remember 'a true gentleman ... the kindest, most courteous, considerate and compassionate of men'.

Christopher Martin-Bird

Christopher Jelf Martin-Bird (1946-1991) grew up in Rockford Lodge and succeeded his father as chairman of Yates. The first Yates's Wine Lodge was opened in Oldham in 1884 by Peter (1854-1944) and Simon Yates. Their motto was 'moderation is true temperance', probably written in the face of the strong Victorian temperance movement which insisted on total abstinence from alcohol¹. The company's offices were in central Manchester and Richard and later Christopher would have worked from there.

Yates are still popular; readers may have enjoyed a glass at one of their lodges. They sought to be a homely, no-frills wine bar-cum-pub. As one landlady in Liverpool explained to Christopher in 1989, their appeal was that they had not been 'Yuppified'; she said they were both where working people could feel at home and where professional people did not feel out of place. In 1989 Christopher reported to happy shareholders that they had had a very good year, with pre-tax profits increasing by 25% to almost £1M. Yates has since been through several restructurings and ownerships.

Christopher was keen on polo. He kept his polo ponies in Ollerton and in the 1960s played at the Cheshire Club in a team with Randle Brooks of Peover Hall and Sebastian de Ferranti of Henbury Hall. Sadly he died in his 40s.

In about 1968 the bulldozers moved in, the fine avenue of lime trees was felled and Rockford Lodge demolished. 22 open-plan detached houses were built on its grounds.

¹ St Cross church had two strongly supported Temperance Guilds in the 1870s and 80s, one for adults, one for 'juveniles'. Their anniversary parades from the church and school to Norbury Booths grounds were led by the Cross Town band. The company played sports in the afternoon, and were served with tea before processing back to the vicarage where a good supper was provided by the ladies of the parish. A great day out!

Sharston House

Today Sharston House is well known as a nursing home in Manor Park South, run since 2015 by Kingsley Healthcare. It was built in about 1893 in grounds which covered some 6 acres between Manor Park drive (now Manor Park South) and Sparrow Lane, west to the Mobberley Road. At much the same time other grand houses were being built on Legh and Leycester Road for rich merchants and industrialists such as Sir Henry Royce, and Richard Hard- ing Watt was indulging his architectural fancies. The two Dutch-style semi-detached houses on the corner of Manor Park South were added in 1914 as tied houses for Sharston's chauffeur and gardener.



Figure 12: The Sharston House nursing home today.

Alfred Darbyshire

Confusingly, some grand houses were not given names – the residents just said they lived at ‘Manor Park’. My judgement is that what later became called Sharston House was first the home of Alfred Darbyshire J.P.

Alfred Darbyshire (1839-1908) was a well respected architect and President of the Manchester Society of Architects from 1901 to 1903. Among his buildings are Pendleton town hall and Knutsford’s 1904 Carnegie Library, now a nursery school. He may well have designed his own house in Manor Park. His passion, however, was theatres and the stage. Concerned about the number of deadly theatre fires, he worked with the famous actor Henry Irving to design theatres so that they had separate areas, each with its own exit, which could be isolated by fire curtain and other means in the event of a blaze. Despite being a Quaker he enjoyed amateur acting. He was also art critic for the Manchester Guardian and author of several books on his favourite subjects. In 1901 Alfred was 61 years old and living at Manor Park with his wife, Sarah, and single daughters Hannah, 28, Ethel, 27, Esther, 21, and son Percy, 25. They managed with two servants, Eleanor the cook and Sarah the housemaid, both single.



Figure 13: Alfred Darbyshire, architect.

The family moved to Flixton in 1906. I cannot determine who lived at the house immediately after them.

Harry and Edith Simon

Harry Simon (1880-1917) was one of the five sons of Manchester’s famous Henry Simon – Jewish immigrant, engineer, entrepreneur, millionaire, philanthropist – an amazing larger-than-life personage. Books have been written about (Heinrich) Henry Simon (1835-1899), so I will just remind the reader

that he left Germany for Manchester in 1860 and developed a prodigiously successful career in manufacturing engineering. He revolutionised the flour milling industry by introducing pairs of rollers to crush the grain instead of the old fashioned rotating mill stones. The Henry Simon Ltd company grew to lead the world in milling machinery. Once on a fact-finding visit to France he met François Carves who had developed an improved process for making coke from coal, so important to gas lighting, industrial heating and chemical manufacture. Simon therefore started a second company, Simon-Carves Ltd, making coke ovens. Outside business he sponsored the Hallé orchestra and was a founder of Withington Girls' School.



Figure 14: Major Harry Simon.
Courtesy The Cheshire Roll of Honour.

Harry's birth name was Heinrich Helmuth Simon, but he was known by the anglicised Henry Herman. Along with his brothers he was educated at Rugby School and Cambridge University, then went into the family business as an engineer. When father Henry died in 1899, aged only 64, the 19 year old Harry and his brothers inherited the many companies and took roles in their management, though not as chairman. During a court case in 1906 over alleged infringement of a patent for flour milling equipment, Harry Simon described himself as having been "a consulting milling engineer for nearly 16 years, and fitted up most of the mills in Great Britain and Ireland". He married Edith May (maiden name unknown) in

about 1905 and they had three sons and one daughter, Monica. The first record of them living at Sharston House is dated 1914. In 1908 the family were living at Sharston Manor, Northenden, south Manchester, so it seems they named their new home 'Sharston' upon moving to Cross Town.

Harry and his two brothers, Eric and Victor, were killed in the Great War. Harry had risen from Captain in the East Lancashire Regiment to Major in the Royal Field Artillery, fighting at the Suez Canal and at Passchendaele. He was badly wounded in the Battle of Ypres in 1917 and died of his wounds. He was 36. His is a war grave at Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery – a corner of a foreign field. Though he left over £88,000 in his will, his name is inscribed simply as ‘Harry Simon’ on the Cross Town war memorial.

Edith never remarried. She lived on at Sharston House for many years with the company of only three women servants. In about 1930 her son Anthony and daughter Monica moved in too, which must have been welcome company for her. In 1940 her son Michael also joined them; he was a surveyor and town planner. As late as 1958 they were advertising for a cook and a parlourmaid. Edith died at Sharston House in September 1959, leaving £46,000 in her will. By that time head of the house was a Mr. H. Simon, one of Harry’s grandsons.



Figure 15: Harry Simon remembered with many others on the Cross Town war memorial.

Church of England Pensions Board

Sharston House was presented by Edith Simon's executors to the Church of England Pensions Board and equipped at considerable expense as a care home for sick and aged clergy, their wives and widows. The nursing home was officially opened by the Princess Royal in November 1962 with the Lady Mayor, Mr H. Simon and the Bishop of Chester, Dr Gerald Ellison, in attendance. There was accommodation for 24 patients who would pay what they could afford, the balance being met by the charity. The building had been extended via a corridor to a new wing at the back of the house which had four double rooms for married couples and quarters for live-in nursing staff. A private chapel was also created at which the Vicar of St Cross, Mr Richard Leigh, later regularly took services.



Figure 16: The Princess Royal formally opening Sharston House as a home for ailing clergy, supported by the Lady Mayor, the Bishop of Chester and Mr H. Simon.



Figure 17: Elderly clergy residents and nursing staff at Sharston House in about 1970, with Rev. Richard Leigh of St. Cross after a chapel service. Photo courtesy of St Cross church.

Several retired ladies still living in Cross Town were nurses there. Though some residents were in good health, many needed nursing care and eventually passed away so Mr John Whiston the undertaker would be called upon. The Simon's original garage had been converted to a chapel of rest. Many of the clergy who ended their days at Sharston House had had distinguished careers of long service. As only one example, in 1968 the Rev. Arthur Webster M.A., B.D. died aged 83. He had been a schoolmaster for many years before training for the church, then Rector of Baginton in Warwickshire until he was 76.

More recent years: Roger Vaughan

The nursing home did not need all of the Simon's land so the $4\frac{1}{2}$ acres down to Mobberley Road which they did not want were bought by Mr Roger Vaughan.

By the mid-1970s the Church of England had built more modern accommodation for retired clergy in the south of England, so they sold Sharston House

and its $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres of grounds to Mr Norman Anderton in about 1978. He built Manor House for himself on the garden (his drive was the old Sharston House drive) and sold the house itself to a private nursing home company. It has since been acquired by Kingsley Healthcare.

Mr Roger Vaughan O.B.E. has had a distinguished career in the nuclear power industry, once a major employer around Knutsford. An Australian by birth, he studied engineering and worked around the world, and had the distinction of entertaining Sir Edmund Hillary in India while Hillary was on his way to Mount Everest. Vaughan's later career was in the design of the Magnox gas-cooled power stations which provided a significant fraction of Britain's electricity from the mid 1960s. He was chief engineer of NPPC (Nuclear Power Plant Company), a consortium of British engineering firms chaired by Sir Claude Gibb, another Australian. In 1955 the newly formed NPPC chose Booths Hall, Knutsford for the company's headquarters because of its proximity to the airport and to the Atomic Energy Authority at Risley. Roger Vaughan was awarded the O.B.E. for inventing the pre-stressed concrete pressure vessel introduced at Oldbury power station and used for all subsequent gas-cooled reactors.

Vaughan had bought the land off the Simon executors because of its squash court, and he enthusiastically ran a popular squash club there for many years. Satisfied with having the squash court and enough land to build Otterburn House for his family, he sold the rest to Gibson builders of Wilmslow who built ten detached houses at Aylesby Close and the Parkhill Court flats in about 1968. Roger Vaughan's neighbour for many years was Jean Taylor whose books on flower arranging are still selling well. Her house, Cherrywood, was built on Sharston House's croquet lawn.

When Caldwell's Nurseries closed in 1992, their land was sold and the newer part of Aylesby Close built.

Cardrona, later Aylesby

Aylesby House was quite large, with 12 rooms, outbuildings and over 3 acres of grounds extending west towards the Mobberley Road. Probably built in 1888, it was derelict by 1970 and demolished a year or so afterwards and the present Manor Court apartments built on its site. The grounds had already been sold to Redrow, builders, who built Sharston Crescent there in 1966. It was a black and white mock-Tudor property with sunken garden and a large pond with goldfish.

Charles Sawyer

The house was first owned by Charles Montague Sawyer (1856-1921) who named it 'Cardrona'. There is a hamlet called Cardrona on the River Tweed near Peebles in the Scottish borders, on the old railway line to Galashiels, and there was also a race horse Cardrona in 1893/94, but we can only guess why Sawyer called the house Cardrona. His family came from Birkdale, Southport though Charles was born in Rusholme when it was just a growing village south of Manchester. Charles followed his father William into the cotton cloth 'coloured goods' manufacturing business. After being in partnership with Alfred Howe of Manchester he ran his own C. M. Sawyer & Co. from offices in central Manchester. In 1886 he married Margaret Mason while they were both living at Brooklands, Sale and moved to Knutsford a couple of years later when Cardrona had been built. Constance Margaret was born to them in 1890 and a son, Aleck Mayson, a few years later – they would have been births at home.

Charles made considerable money from the cotton business, but his real passion was sport: rugby and cricket in his youth and later golf. He was an outstanding all round player. Known as 'Charley' Sawyer, he played for Broughton Wasps and was regularly mentioned in the sporting columns of newspapers for captaining the team. In 1877 he played for Lancashire and



Figure 18: Aylesby House from Manor Park South

then for England against Scotland and Ireland. Commentators declared him to be a great rugby personality, one of the best all-round athletes in the county, ‘a household word’ and ‘one of the most powerful three-quarter backs that Lancashire has produced’. He also played cricket for teams in Broughton, Brooklands and Knutsford, and was a member of the 1884 Lancashire County cricket eleven. Later he became a golfer of repute at Royal Birkdale. Perhaps it was golf as much as connection with his roots that led him to move back to Birkdale in 1894. They named their new house ‘Cardrona’ too. Margaret bore a son soon after the move. He continued enthusiastically with golf and by 1913 was Captain, presenting the prizes. His friends knew a ‘man of genial disposition’. Tragically Margaret and he lost both their sons in the Great War, with Aleck killed in action just before Christmas 1917, and he himself reached the 19th hole in spring 1921, aged 65.

James Troughton-Dean

The name ‘Troughton Dean’ written on the OS map of 1897 clearly identifies Cardrona with the house later called Aylesby. The next family to live there,

from 1894 until 1904, were James Edward Troughton-Dean, his wife Ethel, their four sons and four servants. He was a solicitor and wife beater. A local lad, son of the vicar of Over Tabley, he had married Ethel Gilling-Lax, a vicar's daughter from Taunton, in 1893. Despite their church upbringings and a romantic honeymoon in Switzerland and Italy, they were not at all happy together. Her life was such a misery that she filed for divorce in 1905, a rare undertaking in those days.

The truth all came out at the trial. More than once James had blacked her eyes and threatened to kill her. In 1899 he inflicted such injuries that Ethel had to recover in a nursing home. When she came home from hospital, she found a servant named Elsie Kirby installed, and James kissing and fondling her. He accused Ethel of some trumped-up fault and hired live-in detectives to watch her! At breakfast one morning in 1904 he said to the children "Would you like Elsie Kirby for your mother? I wish I had married her. She is far more attractive." Later that day he told Mrs Dean to 'clear out' with the children. When Mrs Dean refused to sign a separation deed and accept £300 to go at Elsie's insistence, Troughton-Dean said "You will not live with me, and whenever I bring a woman into the house you make a fuss". The judge granted her a *decree nisi* on grounds of cruelty and misconduct and awarded her costs – there was a limit even in those days. They both had left Knutsford for Hawkshead in 1904 and Ethel lived on near Kendal with the children. He died in 1935 and is buried at Great Budworth while Ethel lived until 1957.

Henry Harrison and later owners

In 1911 a more compatible couple, Henry and Jane Harrison, moved into the property from Bowdon and soon changed its name to Aylesby. We can only speculate why they chose to rename their home after a small village in Lincolnshire, though possibly there was a long family connection. Henry may have been a distant descendant of the Lincolnshire carpenter James Harrison who carved the pews at St Lawrence church, Aylesby. James' brother was the famous clockmaker John Harrison (1693-1776) who invented the marine chronometer or 'sea clock', crucial for determining a ship's longitude and hence for safe navigation.

Born in Salford in 1861, Henry had become director of a sewing cotton thread

manufacturing company. The English Sewing Cotton Company was founded in 1897 by amalgamating 14 thread spinners. Later it became Tootal Ltd, so possibly this was Henry Harrison's company. The Harrisons stayed until at least 1923. Jane and he initially had two live-in unmarried women servants and a gardener.

From the late 1920s to 1933 the residents of Aylesby were Thomas and Amy Beswick and their servant Jane Pickering. Tommy Beswick (1882-1970) was brought up in Knutsford and in his youth had been Crown Bearer to the May Queen. He married Amy Houlder in 1918 by which time he had already become a successful coal merchant having inherited a coal and coke business from his father. Coal was the making of his wealth. He became a mine owner, chairman of the Chamber Colliery Co. Ltd, which owned several mines in north and east Manchester including Ashton Moss at Audenshaw, Ferney Field and Hunt Clough at Chadderton and Wood Park at Barsley. Company records of 1933 list Amy as a director of the same company with her address as The Hill, Legh Road. The Beswicks, therefore, seem to have occupied both Aylesby and The Hill for a couple of years before settling at The Hill in 1934.

Tommy was an exuberant character, a shrewd businessman good at managing the miners. He owned expensive cars and travelled all round Britain on business. His chauffeur, Fred Buckley, said that Tommy would joke that he 'knew every gas works this side of hell'. He had an interest too in a brick making business down Bexton Lane. In the 1950s he paid for an extensive roof repair at St Cross church. Beswick was a keen cricketer, school governor, Knutsford councillor and later Alderman of Cheshire. In 1960 co-authored a book on the novelist Elizabeth Gaskell.

From 1934 Aylesby was owned by Edward Watson Smyth, C.B.E. (1884-1951), director of Taylor Brothers & Company Ltd, Manchester, a steelworks on Trafford Park which forged wheels and axles for railway wagons. In 1940 he was appointed to the Ministry of Labour as a principal assistant Secretary in charge of the government's training department, training people for war time armaments production in North West England, and later for the post-war rebuilding of a skilled labour force.

The Dohertys and Toft Hall

Soon before he died in late 1951, Edward Watson-Smyth CBE left Aylesby House and the place was taken by Bernard St John and Beatrice Doherty. The statement in the booklet is correct: that ‘he was a physiotherapist, chiropractor or medical man who used the premises as his consulting rooms’. Since the late 1920s the Dohertys had been practitioners of ‘natural medicine’. St John stated his qualifications as Doctor of Osteopathic, Chiropractic and Naturopathic Medicines, and Beatrice similarly. Probably since 1927 they had resided at Toft Hall which they ran as a private health spa. It was their ‘nature cure establishment for scientific healing’ where they claimed ‘patients not only get well, but are taught to stay well’ through ‘rational living’. It boasted a swimming pool for hydrotherapy and an x-ray room.

Their photographs are taken from the smart promotional brochure they issued to attract clients. In addition to Toft Hall they each had consulting rooms on St John’s Street in Manchester. Doherty regularly gave talks around the country on the benefits of Nature’s cures, and published a booklet entitled ‘The New Science of Healing’. The Dohertys, who were vegetarians, also ran a



Figure 19: Beatrice and St John Doherty as proprietors of Toft Hall health spa, c 1930

health food shop in Manchester. From the 1920s enthusiasm for natural health was a major trend in Britain, in Nazi Germany ('Lebensreform') and in the USA. Perhaps it was a reaction to the smog, pollution, poor diets and sheer hard labour in industrial towns.

Toft Hall had been the country seat of the Leycester family for centuries. By the late 1920s the owner was Cyril Roxby. He lived in London and rented out Toft Hall. We can only imagine how the Dohertys managed to run a clinic charging 10 guineas a week (£600 today) when the only water supply was from a well and pump in the courtyard. By 1935 the well had almost run dry. The Dohertys' lease was due to end in 1936, and Roxby knew that without mains water he would not find another tenant. Eventually Roxby and Doherty agreed to share the £128 cost of having the Knutsford Light and Water Company lay a pipe from Goughs Lane.

With Toft Hall thus brought into the 20th century, the Dohertys renewed their lease and continued their programmes of drug-free cures – for almost every condition except contagious and mental diseases – probably into the war years. They employed many locals including Tullio De Giorgis (*aka* Fred Haywood) as chauffeur and several Macdonald sisters. The spa picked up somewhat after the war, but by 1951, after the National Health Service had been formed and penicillin had become available, natural medicine was no longer in vogue. The couple saw the newly vacant Aylesby House as an opportunity to downsize. Brenda Macdonald went with them to Aylesby as cook and housekeeper; she stayed with them for over 25 years.

The photograph of Aylesby House shows it to have been a pleasant place. The Dohertys had consulting rooms on the first floor. Visitors remarked on the sunken garden and stone statues, and inside the plush pink carpets, grand piano and Art Deco figurines.

St John died in 1969, aged 81. Beatrice moved out and the contents were auctioned a year later. By that time Aylesby was known locally as The Manor House. The Dohertys had been wealthy, discerning collectors, for the prospectus listed many fine items including antique cabinets, carpets and furnishings, silverware, paintings and prints, clocks, porcelain, bronzes and object d'art.

Beatrice died in 1974 aged 82. Like St John, her natural and vegetarian lifestyle had sustained her into old age. Soon after she left Aylesby in 1970, the house was demolished and replaced by Manor Court apartments.



Figure 20: : Brenda Macdonald, house keeper (left), and her sister Florence De Giorgis at Aylesby in the 1950s.



Figure 21: St John Doherty and Brenda Macdonald in the 1960s

Hallside

Hallside was the last of the fine houses to be built in St Cross parish, and to modern tastes it is the most charming. From maps and a newspaper advert for a ‘good cook’ in 1898 we can infer that Hallside was then newly built. It was designed in the Arts and Craft ‘bungalow’ style – a white, airy, spreading building with the upper floors penetrating the roof and a first floor verandah around two sides, following the colonial residences of the British Raj. The property was extended in the 1950s by the addition of an abutting staff cottage. Both Hallside House and Hallside Cottage are still private residences, situated at the east end of Sparrow Lane but approached by a long wooded drive from the lodge on Chelford Road. There used also to be access to the paddock and cottage from a gate in Sparrow Lane. In 2026 it is again up for sale.



Figure 22: Hallside.

Hallside is thought to have been built as a dower house for Norbury Booths Hall – hence the name ‘Hallside’. From about 1890 until 1906 the Booths estate was owned by George Lord J.P. (died 1910), another wealthy Manchester merchant, chairman of the Manchester and County Bank and chairman of a marine insurance company. Perhaps because Hallside was built for a single elderly lady, the east-facing front is distinct from the rear and one of the bedrooms is particularly large. The servants lived at the rear, where the house rises by another storey to accommodate them. In the large drawing room is an ornate oak door carved with the date 1646 which came from the original 14th century Norbury Booths Hall. Demolished some time prior to 1860, this had been a black and white mediaeval building similar to Little Moreton Hall.

Charles Henry Bazley

Charles Henry (1838-1923) and his brothers owned Bazley Brothers Ltd. of Wellington Mill, Ancoats, cotton spinners and doublers. (Doubling is the process of combining two strands of thread to even its thickness).



Figure 23: Charles Bazley, c 1900

He and his wife Alice Elizabeth (né Dorn- ing) moved to Hallside in 1904 from Higher Broughton, north Manchester. It must have been their retirement dream home, but sadness fell upon the house when Alice became ill and died in a nursing home the same year. She was only 55. Charles moved out of Hallside soon afterwards and lived until he was 85 in a modest cottage on Toft Road with two servants to support him. In his younger days he had been a successful businessman and innovative engineer, having in 1875 patented improved equipment for preparing cotton for spinning. Bazley Brothers continued in the cotton and rayon spinning business until the 1950s.

Basil Le Neve Foster

Basil Le Neve Foster (1880-1966) was a respected industrial chemist. He and his wife Esther, a Glaswegian, together with their cook Beatrice and maid Emily lived there around 1910, renting it from George Lord.

Basil was born in Clayton, then a separate town near Manchester. (By coincidence Clayton also has a Grade II* Victorian St Cross church.) He came from a long line of distinguished scientists. His grandfather, Peter, a barrister, mathematician and pioneer photographer, had been Secretary of The Royal Society of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce (RSA) from 1853 to 1879. Another Victorian relation was Sir Clement Le Neve Foster, Fellow of the Royal Society, geologist, mines inspector and author of the definitive textbook on mining and quarrying.



Figure 24: Calvert's soap advert, 1903.

to cleanliness as today. F. C. Calvert & Co and Charles Lowe & Co of Reddish were taken over by Unilever in 1965. Unilever still makes Lifebuoy soap though now without the phenol. Basil would have known Clement Lowe of Thorneyholme well since Lowe owned the company. He probably also knew Charles Scheu of Rockford Lodge, both as a neighbour and through the Manchester chemical fraternity.

Basil was a gifted athlete and even played soccer for several years for the club which became Manchester United. He and Esther had left Hallside by the Great War and in the 1930s were living at Obelisk Cottage on Chelford Rd, Knutsford. His brother Reginald lived at Fulshaw Park, Wilmslow.

Basil was a pupil at Shrewsbury School then read Natural Sciences at Cambridge in 1912. On graduating he joined his father, Reginald, as a junior chemist for F. C. Calvert and Company, Manchester manufacturing chemists. He worked there until he retired, presumably commuting from Knutsford each day by train. He rose to be Chief Chemist and works manager, and followed the family tradition as a member of the RSA. The Calvert Co. manufactured phenol, a starting material for dyes, but better known to the public as 'carbolic acid'. The company promoted disinfectants, medicated soap and Calvert's Carbolic Tooth Powder, which for a time had the largest worldwide sales of any toothpaste. These products were important for personal hygiene in past times when people did not enjoy the same access

The Big Sale

During the Great War the Norbury Booths estate was owned by C. O. Gallimore and a family called Lamb rented Hallside. In September 1917 the whole estate was sold by auction at the Royal George Hotel. The prospectus describes the Hall as standing in 100 acres of well-timbered parkland, with 15 acres of lake, stabling and lodge. Also sold were Hallside, 'an attractive bungalow residence with six acres, let at £120 pa', plus Tithe House, Obelisk Cottage, Park Lodge, eight farms and 115 acres of surrounding woodlands. Quite a sale! Of the 80 lots, many were plots for new houses on Leycester Road and Goughs Lane.

C H E S H I R E
KNUTSFORD.
(Less than one mile from the Railway Station)
Near Manchester, Stockport, Warrington, Macclesfield, and other large manufacturing centres.

Particulars, Plans and Conditions of Sale
OF THE VERY VALUABLE
Residential & Agricultural Estate
KNOWN AS
"NORBURY BOOTHS,"
COMPRISING
THE MANSION, PLEASURE GROUNDS, STABLING, PARK AND LAKE OF 16 ACRES.
"HALLSIDE," a Bungalow Residence with 6 Acres, Let at £120 per ann.
"TITHE HOUSE," Gentleman's Residence, Let at £130 per ann.
"OBELISK COTTAGE," standing in grounds of about 1 Acre, Let at £85 per ann.
"PARK COTTAGE," Rental Value £50 per ann.

EIGHT Well-known DAIRY, CORN and POTATO
F A R M S
RANGING FROM ABOUT
30 to 160 Acres,
Small Holdings, Accommodation Lands, Nursery Gardens, Smaller
Residences, Numerous Cottages, and
70 Acres Woodlands of Well-grown OAK, ASH, BEECH and PIT WOOD.
Chief Rents of £80 per ann.
SECURED ON
"The Homestead," "Woodgarth," and Land adjoining and "Oldfield,"
The whole embracing an Area of
1,032 $\frac{1}{2}$ ACRES
Producing an actual and Estimated Rent of
Per £2,661 Ann.

Messrs. MILLAR, SON and Co.

Will Sell the above by Auction,
At the "Royal George" Hotel, Knutsford, Cheshire,
On **MONDAY, 17th SEPTEMBER, 1917,**
At **2 p.m.** sharp.

Particulars, Plans, etc., can be obtained of Messrs. SWANN, HARDMAN & Co., Solicitors, 103, Cannon Street, London, E.C. 4; Messrs. FIELD & SONS, Solicitors, 5, Fenwick Street, Liverpool; Messrs. MELLER, SPEAKMAN & HALL, 22, Cooper Street, Manchester; at the place of Sale, and of the Auctioneers,
46, PALL MALL, LONDON, S.W.1.
Telegraphic Address: "Millaresta, London." Telephone 672 Regent.

Figure 25: Notice of the grand auction.

Joseph Sunlight

Hallside was bought by Mr Joseph Sunlight (1889-1978), a wealthy architect and another self-made man. Sunlight is remarkable for three things: his property developments, becoming an MP, and his obsession with race horses and gambling.

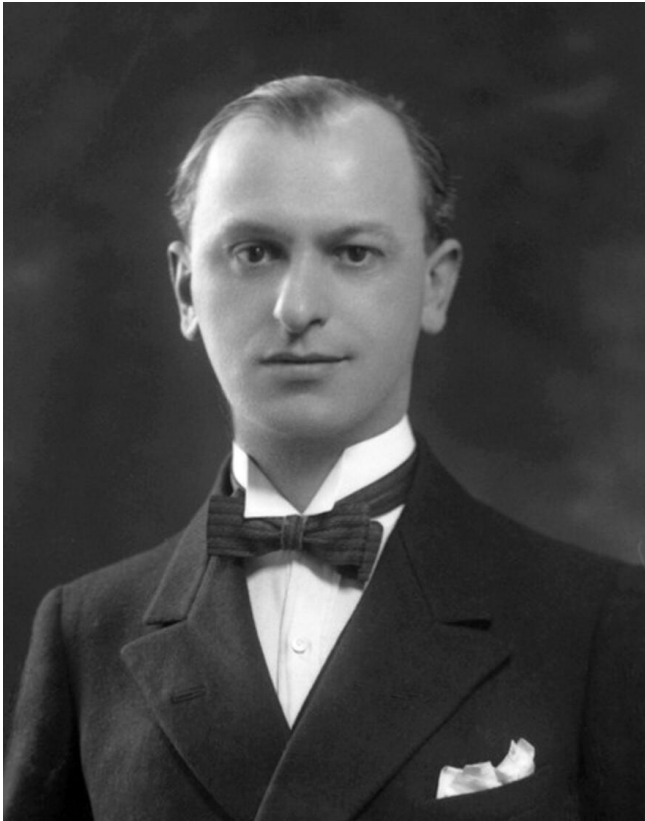


Figure 26: Joseph Sunlight.
Courtesy National Portrait Gallery

Joseph was Jewish, born in the city of Novogrudok in Belarus where there was a leading Jewish educational institution. His birth name was Josef Schimschlavitch. His father was a cotton merchant. Was it the cotton trade, the fear of conscription or one of the Tsarist pogroms which led the family to emigrate to Southampton in 1890 then seek careers in Manchester? Here they adopted the name Sunlight, perhaps after Port Sunlight and Sunlight soap, both images of a clean start and a kinder life.

Joseph was apprenticed to William Purdey, a Manchester architect, and by 1904 had found his flare for designing buildings. He clearly had a natural sense of modern design and could promote himself because only three years later he had set up his own practice in St Ann's Square. He branched from architecture into house building and could boast that by 1910 he had designed and built more than 1000 houses in Prestwich where he was living within a growing Jewish community. Just as now, property development can make a person wealthy. He expanded into designing and building factories and warehouses, especially for immigrant Jewish clients. His most acclaimed building is the 10 storey art deco Sunlight House in Quay Street, Manchester. Built in 1932 of Portland stone and with a swimming pool in the basement, it is one of the city's iconic buildings. With



Figure 27: Sunlight House, Quay Street, Manchester.

his characteristic panache in 1949 he proposed a skyscraper tower extension, but it was turned down by the planning authorities on the grounds that it would dominate other buildings around. The only religious building Sunlight designed is the South Manchester Synagogue in Fallowfield (1913). It has a Turkish look, with dome and minaret. It was later refurbished as a centre for Jewish students, but now appears unused.

Joseph stood for Parliament in the 1923 general election and won as Liberal Member for Shrewsbury, overturning a long held Conservative seat. In fact the Conservatives lost their Parliamentary majority and soon afterwards the first Labour government was formed under Ramsay Macdonald. Still with concern for the design of buildings, Sunlight's single notable contribution was a private member's bill to standardise the size of bricks. He lost his seat the next year.

On a sobering note, I quote in full a report in several newspapers in February 1926 because of the light it sheds on anti-Semitism at the time. At other times Lloyd George had declared himself to be an ardent defender of Jewish people against all their critics, but had made a gibe at Sir Alfred Mond, a wealthy industrialist, active Zionist and Liberal MP for Swansea who had some land campaign in hand. Under the headline ‘Mr Lloyd George and the Jews’ we read

“Mr. Lloyd George referred to his recent criticism of Sir Alfred Mond. . . . Replying to a vote of thanks which had been moved by a Jew, Mr Joseph Sunlight, ex-M.P. for Shrewsbury, and present Liberal candidate for the constituency, Mr. Lloyd George said “I respect Mr. Sunlight’s ability and no one respects his race more that I do, whatever comments I may have made upon certain specimens of it. There are specimens in every race. I have criticised all in turn, even Welshmen” (Laughter). But as far as Mr. Sunlight’s race is concerned I have always been a great protagonist of it, and no one has resented more strongly the attacks upon it that I have.” (Cheers). “Nothing fills me with greater contempt than to see newspapers that are drenched with anti-Semitism trying to make political capital out of a criticism I passed on a certain member of that race.” (*Lancashire Evening Post, Leeds Mercury, Western Daily Press, London Daily News, Western Gazette, etc*)

The Leeds Mercury added some crass, hostile comments about Sir Alfred Mond which I refuse to reproduce. There was much sickening anti-Semitism printed in the newspapers in those days.

In 1940 Joseph married, and he and Edith had one son, Benjamin.

Joseph’s other passion was horse racing. He was well known at the tracks. He kept his own horses on the paddock next to Hallside and in the 1950s had Hallside Cottage built for his trainer. His wife said that he “had some crashing wins as well as some crashing losses”. He is said to have lost £20,000 one day and won back £25,000 the next, but Benjamin doubted whether on balance he made much out of racing. Knutsford people who remember Joe Sunlight recall that he walked with a limp and used a walking stick. He would say that as a boy of two in Belarus he had fallen from a *troika* and his leg had not

healed properly, adding “I have been trying to get even with the horses ever since”. Some fellow race-going regulars nicknamed him The Mug Punter, but the horses clearly brought him excitement and much pleasure.

Locals have told me that Joseph Sunlight was direct, even blunt in his speech.

What is perhaps surprising is that, despite being a major property developer himself, he was a NIMBY as far as developments near Hallside were concerned. Starting in 1963 house building was proposed on two fields at the bottom of Sparrow Lane, part of Higher Town Farm where Delmar Road and Lynton Close came to be built. Sunlight campaigned obsessively to prevent this.

First he pressed the council to place tree preservation orders on a long avenue which ran from Sparrow Lane to opposite the obelisk on Chelford Road and included his own Lime Walk. He claimed this avenue was a beautiful amenity threatened by the ‘bug of building developers and speculators’. However locals told reporters that Sunlight himself had turned them off Lime Walk when they attempted to stroll there, thinking it was a public footpath.

Later he was caustically critical of the Knutsford planning committee for their ‘blundering’ when a 10 to 2 majority favoured the development of low density housing. He called the prospective building company (possibly Crosby or Sunley Homes of Hemel Hempstead) ‘speculators’ and ‘financial wizard developers’, and described their proposals as senseless and half-baked. Instead he wanted the two fields to be declared Green Belt and set aside as a recreational space. He even offered £5,000 to Knutsford Council for them to make a compulsory purchase of the 12 acres. Later he increased his offer to £25,000 provided the parkland around Booths Hall was included. He took the matter up with the Sir Keith Joseph, Minister of Housing, in a face to face meeting and thereby obtained a temporary ban on the granting of planning permission while his financial offer was considered. Sunlight also wrote to newspapers arguing that beautiful countryside should not be destroyed by building, and that the land was unsuitable in any case because of poor drainage, adding

“I speak with over 50 years experience and knowledge as an architect and planner”.

Joseph lived at Hallside until his death, aged 89, in 1978. He left nearly £6M in his will plus the Joseph Sunlight Cup, raced for in July. Mrs Sunlight moved to their other house in London and Hallside was sold in 1979. Divided into plots, the staff cottage and main house with $1\frac{1}{2}$ acres of garden have remained as private residences while the paddock was bought by a property company to build the detached houses of Hallside Park.



Figure 28: Joseph Sunlight's monogram on the gates of the drive to Hallside.

Closing Remarks

For convenience the history of Cross Town and Over Knutsford can be divided into four periods:

- from the middle ages up to the about 1850: poor people labour on the Norbury Booths estate or ply simple trades,
- from about 1850 to the First World War: several mansions are built by wealthy industrialists and entrepreneurs, most of whom commute to Manchester on the railway, opened in 1862. All these grand houses have several live-in servants,
- until the 1950s: most of the houses become out-dated, expensive white elephants and servants cannot be retained to run them. One by one the houses change use.
- 1960 to the present. All but Hallside and Sharston are demolished and estates of smaller houses built on their land. Even Hallside and Sharston sell off most of their land.

Though not such a grand house, mention should be made of Annandale in Shaw Heath, along the Mobberley Road, now a doctors' surgery. In Edwardian times it was the home of Frederick and Helena Swanwick (né Sickert). Cambridge educated, Helena was a feminist, journalist, an energetic campaigner for the right of women to vote, and president of the Knutsford Women's Suffrage Society. Their story is told in 'The Knutsford Suffragists' by Colin Evans.

For completeness let us note the fine old residences of the gentry on the other side of Knutsford: Brook House, Grove House, Valebank, Cliff House, Oakfield, Woodleigh, Clifton House, Heath Houses, Heath Grange. Most are shown on the map of 1899 and some are described in the history book by Joan Leach. From about 1890 new generous gentlemen's residences were being built along Legh and Parkfield Roads on the old Highertown Farm. As with the Cross

Town mansions, these were bought by wealthy industrialists and entrepreneurs whose businesses were in Manchester. Sir Frederick Henry Royce, co-founder of the Rolls-Royce motor and engineering company, built a handsome house in Legh Road. While most of these houses to the south of Chelford Road have survived as private dwellings, in St Cross parish only Hallside is still a private house (and in 2026 is up for sale). Why is there this disparity between the two sides of the Chelford road?

I think the answer is the land area each house occupied. While the houses in Legh, Parkfield and Leicester Roads do have generous gardens, the properties are lined along the road and fairly close together. They do not compare with the country setting of Woodlands in its 14 acres and Thorneyholme in 11. Sharston had about 6 acres, Aylesby about $3\frac{1}{2}$ and even Rockford had $2\frac{1}{4}$. Even if a new use could be found for the house itself, the land around would not have been returned to farming. By the 1960s the pressure and temptation to sell to housing estate developers must have been too much for the owners of these old properties to bear. Cross Town had no houses of intermediate size other than Annandale, Oaklegh, Summerfield and the semi-detached pair called The Elms on Mobberley Road (now numbers 132, 134) which have survived unscathed. I suspect that if Cross Town had had more houses on a less grand scale, they too might still be lived in.

Did the post-war demolition of so many country mansions all over Britain go too far? For instance, the Old Boys Association of Knutsford College conjectures that nowadays Woodside would be listed as a Grade II building and subject to a conservation order. Possibly, but the money to run them has to come from somewhere. Wikipedia states that since 1900 1,200 country houses have been demolished in England – about 1 in every 6 stately homes. Public opinion did not swing to oppose such wholesale demolition until the 1980s. The National Trust has done much to preserve a significant sample of palaces of the aristocracy and mansions of the gentry, but cannot save all.

Henry Long was active in bringing the railway to Knutsford and most of the later businessmen from the mansions of Manor Park were commuters to Manchester. Did they talk to each other on their train journeys? We have had glimpses into how they lived and their roles in the thriving industrial and commercial life of Manchester:

- engineers: Charles Galloway, Harry Simon, E. Watson Smyth, Roger Vaughan,
- chemists: Clement Ward Lowe, Charles Scheu, Basil Le Neve Foster,
- textile manufacturers: Hugh Arthur Birley, George Bolden, Charles Sawyer, Henry Harrison, Charles Bazley,
- architects: Alfred Darbyshire and Joseph Sunlight,
- solicitors: Richard Page, James Troughton-Dean,
- other businessmen and entrepreneurs: Henry Long, Edward Percy Hope, Sir Richard and Christopher Martin-Bird, Thomas Beswick, St John Doherty.

We have also seen over these chapters how the sons and daughters of gentlemen property owners married into their own class to maintain their place in society. Women could not vote in Parliamentary elections until 1918 and women were generally subservient, though Mrs Troughton-Dean was bold enough to seek a divorce and succeed. Almost all the servants were unmarried women. Class and gender maintained their near-rigid demarcations until the 1950s, but by the Swinging Sixties so many of the old ways had passed into history.

Today the Heritage Question still has to be answered:

“What steps should we take, individually and collectively, to maintain characterful old buildings which have outlived their original purpose and now need extensive renovation which the current owners can no longer afford?”

Knutsford has several old buildings, including the assembly rooms, post office and several banks, for which new uses have fortunately been found, mostly in hospitality. At the time of writing the old Egerton school on Church Hill, for many years Marshall’s auction rooms, is unoccupied, as is the Gaskell Memorial Tower in King Street, once part coffee house and offices of Knutsford Urban District Council and later the Belle Epoque restaurant. For a few years the court house was turned into a hotel, but that has since closed. Across our country congregations in almost all churches are much smaller than in Victorian times, making the costs of supporting these ageing buildings increasingly difficult. St Cross church, built by the benefactors and local people described

in this booklet, continues as the parish's regular meeting place for Christian services, open to all, but similarly finds building maintenance increasingly unaffordable.

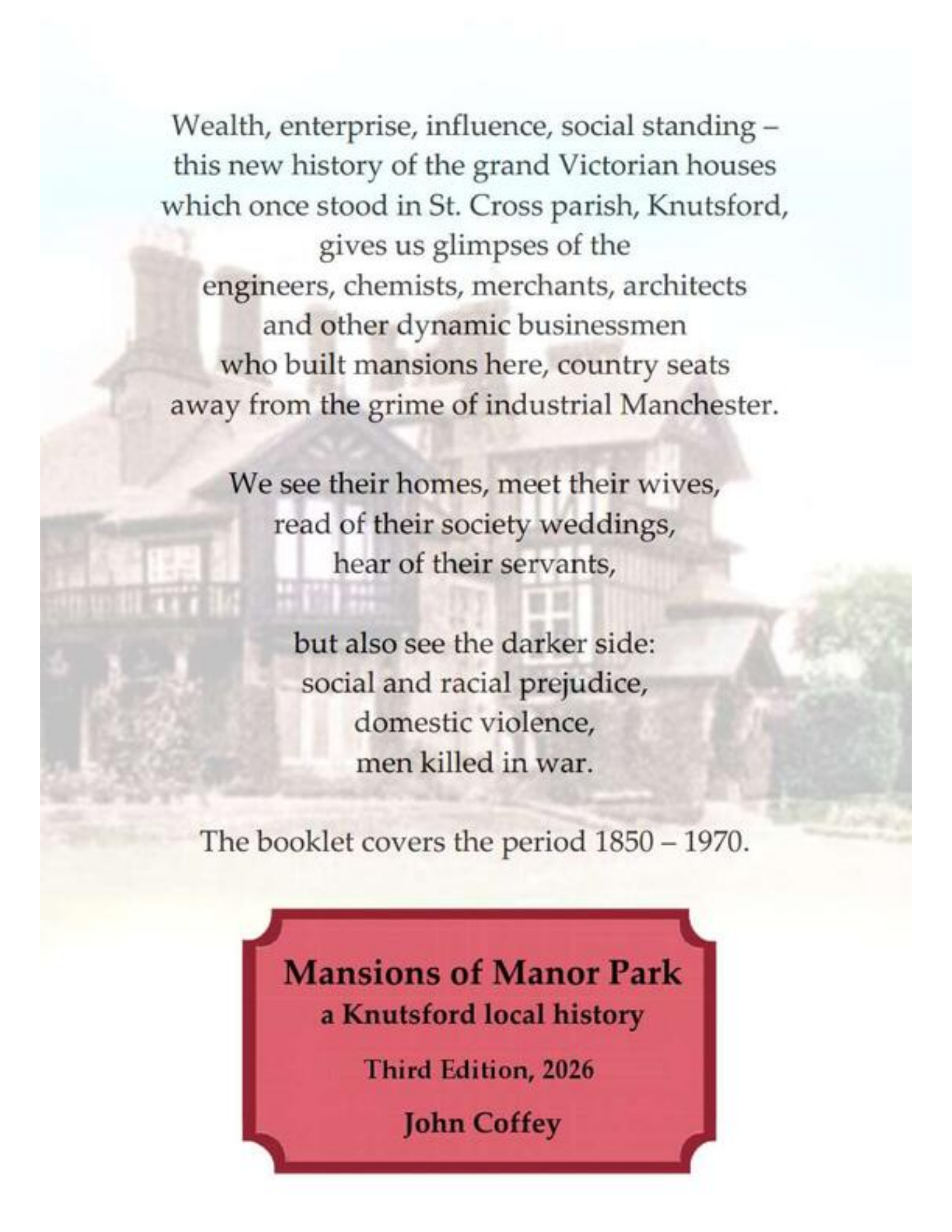
Communities must decide how much they value these buildings as part of the essential look and feel of their town, for once they are gone, they are gone for ever. Older readers may recall with some regret the massive changes to towns and cities in the 1960s as old familiar brick and stone buildings were demolished and replaced by widened roads or utilitarian shops and concrete blocks of offices. Today we have the additional pressures on our town centres brought by the 2020 covid epidemic, the ever rising cost of living, on-line shopping and staff working from home. Yet towns, particularly characterful towns, continue as popular meeting places for friends, as the number of coffee shops in Knutsford attests. We might reflect that heritage is acknowledged best when it can be incorporated into a viable future, and town planning is best when it shows due care for fine buildings from previous times.

Acknowledgements

As far as reasonably possible I have verified statements with original sources. These come from directories, census returns, birth and electoral registers, etc. on-line at *Findmypast.co.uk* and *Ancestry.co.uk*. The newspaper articles consulted are too many to reference individually, but all were found using the on-line British Newspaper Archive at *www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk*. Calvert's soap advertisement appeared in the Burnley Gazette in April 1903; it is copyright of the British Library Board and reproduced by permission of the British Newspaper Archive. The map in Figure 2 is drawn from Ordnance Survey maps in the National Library of Scotland's on-line collection at *maps.nls.uk/os*. The photographs of Charles Galloway are by permission of the Institution of Civil Engineers, and the photo of Charles Bazley is courtesy of Nigel Casswell. Wikipedia has been used for some information and the photograph of Alfred Darbyshire is from there. I have made reference to Joseph Sunlight's obituary in the Manchester Evening News, 18 April 1978. The photograph of Joseph Sunlight is by permission of the National Portrait Gallery. Sources of other photographs are acknowledged in their captions.

I am particularly grateful to those people who have shared their recollections of these houses and the people in them: Judith Broughton, Carole Burns, John and Elizabeth Ishmael, Fran Long, Kate Martin-Bird, Roger Vaughan, Ann and Colin Wright. I also thank Douglas Griffiths of the Knutsford College Old Boys Association for sharing information on Woodside as a school and for permission to use photographs of Woodside. I am further grateful to Mary Gracie and Jenny Collis of the Knutsford Heritage Centre for encouraging the research which led to this booklet.

In 2026 Mrs Debbie Grove né Jones, having read the second edition of this booklet, provided detailed information about the last owners of Aylesby House. I am grateful to her and her sisters, who grew up in Cross Town, for their recollections and photographs. Also to Veryan Leycester-Roxby for the Dohertys' Toft Hall brochure and letters about the water supply.



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