



FRODSHAM AND DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY

JOURNAL



**Issue No.50
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Compiled by: Kath Gee, Sue Lorimer and Heather Powling

Journal of
FRODSHAM AND DISTRICT HISTORY SOCIETY
Issue No. 50 November 2020

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Front cover picture:

A socially distanced queue waiting to enter Nationwide during Coronavirus lockdown. This property, at 3 Church Street, was built for butcher John Lloyd at the end of the 19th century. Samuel Hancock moved his Main Street butcher's here c.1908. The wide arched entrance, now a window, allowed the horse and trap, which was used for deliveries, access to the stables behind. The Hancock family ran the butcher's here until 1959. Next it became a greengrocer's, then an antique and bric-a-brac shop before the Cheshire Building Society moved in c.1985. The Cheshire was taken over by Nationwide and the name over the door altered in 2014.

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

Officers:

Mr Frank Whitfield, Chairman; Dr Kath Gee, Hon.Secretary; Mr David Fletcher, Hon.Treasurer.

Committee:

Mrs Margaret Dodd, Membership Secretary; Mr Brian Dykes; Mr Andrew Faraday; Mr Brian Keeble; Mrs Pam Keeble; Mrs Heather Powling; Mrs Gill Baxter, Archivist; Mrs Fiona Barry; Mrs Sue Lorimer.

Welcome to our History Society Journal 2020 – this year we've had plenty of time to assemble it!

At the start of 2020 our Society enrolled 74 returning members, held 3 speaker meeting and the 2020 AGM before 'shut-down' – and now this Issue No.50 of the Journal. Sadly, the April & May speaker meetings and our June visit to Elizabeth Gaskell's house were all postponed.



Project manager, Fiona Barry, unpacking Archives in the Youth Association office (FYA)

At the end of May the Archive Modernisation Project (AMP) steering group were notified that their pre-Covid grant application to the Marshes Community Benefit Fund (MCBF) was successful. We were awarded £5K for one year with the start date postponed until September 2020.

Planning for the start of AMP was dependent on training from Cheshire Record Office (CRO) staff, access to our Archives in Castle Park House (CPH) and access to the office we were renting in FYA. That necessitated several virtual meetings specifically for AMP, but also for HS committee members, during which we discovered and learnt to use Zoom on our computers, laptops and i-pads.

In early September when we would normally have a speaker meeting we decided to hold an informal afternoon social meeting for members on Zoom. That attracted 18 participants. Positive feedback suggested it was worth dipping into our reserves and holding monthly speaker meetings on Zoom which would be free to members. The first of these was held on October 5th beginning 7.30pm. Our scheduled speaker was Claire Moores and her talk titled *My Ancestors were Gamekeepers*. You can see her 'taster' for the talk on the Society's developing website <http://frodshamhistory.org.uk>. 25 members attended virtually.

I would like to share with you that we celebrated the 100th Birthday of one of our original Society members, Dorothy Smith, in September. Dorothy was Honorary Secretary for nine years and is one of the 10 Honorary Members of the Society. Our History Society was developed by a group of local enthusiasts in 1981. We plan to celebrate our 40th Birthday next year – as the saying goes: watch this space!

Frank Whitfield

NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVIST 2020

Gill Baxter

This year has been busy and interesting. A steering group of five committee members was formed for the Archives Modernisation Project which made a successful bid for funding from the Marshes Community Benefit Fund. The group has been meeting online with staff from Cheshire Record Office and began working in pairs, partnered by five enthusiastic volunteers, on the Frodsham archive collection in September. The Society holds considerable archives which are listed in order of acquisition on the current website. Using the Cheshire Record Office system items will be added to their catalogue as a discrete collection making them more easily searchable online.

Meanwhile I have been kept busy with an average of 4 requests each month. Many answers are to be found in the excellent articles written by previous and current members of the Society. As the lockdown began in March there were very few emails coming in but in May there were 9 enquiries.

In replying, I have discovered that Frodsham had an innovative but short-lived Motorcycle manufacturer making the 'Swan' & the 'Cygnet', a haunted farmhouse in Townfield Lane and an intrepid resident who voyaged to Australia in 1883.

I received a donation of a small number of documents from a member of a local family now living in Devon. These relate to a Frodsham resident's WW2 service. The donation included Discharge Papers and a receipt for a wedding cake from Lawless's Bakery.

In May I was asked about the navvies' huts on Frodsham Marshes as part of a family history enquiry. I acquired census information to locate the huts then found some information on Manchester Ship Canal sites in an unlikely place – Frodsham Marsh Bird Blog, a fascinating site – it's not just about the birds!

I had a request from the great niece of Percy Griffiths regarding his War Diary which I retrieved from the Archives in July. Unfortunately, the diary was incomplete, ending mid-sentence at 4 pages long. Luckily there was a name handwritten on the first page and I managed to track down Percy's son, still living in Frodsham and in possession of the full document. I hope to meet him soon.

A lady in Exeter found an indenture in her local charity shop and wondered if the History Society would like it for the archives. She posted it to me and with a little research the following facts were revealed.

Thomas Acton, born c 1775, was a ships' carpenter / shipwright in Frodsham Bridge at the time when Frodsham still had a shipbuilding industry. His sons William and John both became sea Captains, probably on vessels trading along the NW coast. It appears that Thomas Acton had a successful career. When Thomas died in 1862, his will instructed that his assets be sold and distributed between his remaining children and the families of his late sons Thomas and Joseph. The executors of the will were his youngest son William of Llanfairfechan, N Wales, and his daughter Margaret, widow of John F Hughes, an engineer. The properties were advertised for auction in November 1863 and consisted of the house on The Quay where Thomas had lived with his daughter Margaret and two adjoining cottages, a further cottage on Bridge Lane, a house with land on Bridge Lane called Mount Pleasant, occupied by Ann, the widow of his son Thomas and Such Pit Farm near Kingsley Green. There was also a schooner called "Thomas of Liverpool" and a half share of a flat called the "Mary of Liverpool" up for auction. The purchaser mentioned in the document was John Greenway, a ship carpenter who lived at Bradley Locks. I presume that the document refers to one of the cottages on the Quay as the 1881 census (but not as expected the 1871

census where he is still living at the Locks) shows John Greenway living on The Quay. He died there in 1900. Margaret Hughes married Robert Gorst, a land surveyor in May 1864 and moved to Overton where, in 1871 she lived near her retired brother Captain William Acton.”

Finally a puzzle – where is the location of this painting? The owner inherited it from his Grandmother and says it is “near Frodsham or Helsby”

Answers on a postcard please!



THE WILL OF DANIEL EARL – Sue Lorimer

When Daniel Earl, painter, of Overton died in 1843, he left his executors, William Bethell and Thomas Walker, instructions that his freehold cottages should be sold and after paying any debts and expenses, the residue should be shared between his brothers and sisters. His house, cottage with workshop and gardens were put up for sale in 1844 and were bought by the Parish, for the sum of £410, so that St Laurence’s churchyard could be extended. However, Walker would not allow probate until an outstanding debt was settled. He alleged that Daniel Earl had borrowed £90 from him and that he had neither repaid the debt nor any interest. This was contested by Joseph Dalton, grandson of Joseph Earl, one of the original beneficiaries of the will. The note supposedly showing the transaction was proved to be a forgery. It was not dated, nor was it written “over a stamp”, even the witness, Walker’s own brother denied that it was his “X” on the document. Walker was found guilty of fraud and given 7 years transportation.

The Tithe Map c.1846, plot 375, shows cottages next to the church, now the graveyard, owned by the Parish Church Trustees. These were the two cottages owned by Daniel Earl.

Daniel’s brother Joseph Earl, shoemaker, who died in 1845, was shown as the owner of the Ring ‘o Bells in Land Tax Assessments from 1811 to 1826. He was not the owner, however, but probably leased it from the owners, William and John Hayes and then sublet to the landlords, James Frodsham and later Eleanor Frodsham.

Ref: Find My Past; British Newspaper Archives; Contents of Parish Chest in 1902;
cheshirearchives.org.uk Tithe Maps Online.

RECOLLECTIONS OF BOMBS DROPPED ON FRODSHAM AND WESTON 28th-29th NOVEMBER 1940

Kath Gee

The idea for this article was seeded in conversations with Frodsham resident, John Nield, before his untimely death in September 2018. This account draws on records in local archives including articles that have been published since the 30th Anniversary of VE Day, 8th May 1975. In particular, I use two articles written by Herbert Victor Davies. The first was published in the Runcorn Weekly News on 16th December 1976, and reprinted in the booklet ***Frodsham in the War Years: a Compilation of Memories*** published by Frodsham & District Local History Group (Frodsham History Archives D172). The second article by Herbert Victor Davies, titled ***A night that shook Frodsham***, was published in Cheshire Life, February 1977.

The F&DLHG booklet is presented in 3 Parts:

- 1 **The War Years in the North West** by William R (Bill) Hawkin (former Chairman of F&DLHG & Journal editor from 1990 until his death in 1997).
- 2 **Personal Memories** – including short articles by well-known Frodsham people including Dilys O'Neill (Committee Member F&DLHG & F&DHS) Jim Harvey (former Chairman of F&DLHG), and Herbert Victor Davies.
- 3 **Local organisations** – two reports from those already in existence, e.g. Frodsham Players formed in 1942 and described by Dorothy Smith (Honorary Secretary F&DLHG 1993-2001). Also, Frodsham Music & Arts Club founded in 1943 described by Eric Forbes (Pers.Com. Anthony Barker).

In Part 1 of the booklet Bill Hawkin records that:

In August 1940, Frodsham Parish Council launched their 'Spitfire Fund' Appeal 'to show their warm appreciation of the gallant exploits of our Air Force' – the money to be used for the construction of aircraft. This resulted in a cheque for £1,050 [equivalent to £59,168 in 2020!] being sent to Lord Beaverbrook, Minister for Aircraft Production some months later.*

* www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1940

Bill Hawkin goes on to say:

In the North West, Liverpool, the British end of the Atlantic lifeline, suffered... bombing for months on end. Consequently, the Frodsham area was always on the periphery and the gunsites round about were in action frequently. On 18th October, Hallwood farm at Halton was hit and four houses at Rocksavage were damaged. Then on the 27th the Stockton Heath, Appleton and Stretton areas... suffered damage – probably by raiders diverted from Liverpool.

Frodsham's worst night of the war came on the 28th November 1940, when no less than 42 bombs were dropped round about the area, and five houses in Frodsham and six in Norley were hit... In Frodsham bombs fell on... Bates Cottages, Overton... at Warrendale and... Beechlands... both on Howey Lane and in the Synagogue Well area of Castle Park; but perhaps the most surprising incident was when a bomb fell in the front garden of a pair of houses at the junction of Princeway and Queensway, exploded, but miraculously did no more than comparatively minor damage.

Herbert Victor Davies (1897-1978), second son of JG Davies, was the author of the two articles mentioned above. JG Davies ran his builders & constructors business from the yard

behind his residence, Brook House, at 38 Main Street. In Kelly's 1939 Directory Herbert was recorded as Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths, living at 20 Main Street with his wife Phyllis and their children. The Directory lists him as a builders and contractors assistant on Main Street which suggests he was working for the family business a very short distance away. Herbert had moved to 77 Main Street, next to the Old Hall, by the time he was writing his vivid accounts of the night the bombs fell on Frodsham. It should be noted that Herbert was writing these articles some 36 years after the event when he was 79 years old.

Herbert's article in Cheshire Life begins:

It was an experience not lightly to be forgotten. On November 28th, 1940, the night was dark with a few stars twinkling gently in the sky, while over Weston Point the defensive balloon barrage floated serenely at anchor. There was no rain; there was no wind – it was indeed a very peaceful eventide. Tea was over; mugs had been washed; a little coal had been placed on the fire and the radio switched on, for there was no television in those days.

Suddenly, at about 6.30pm, the quiet of the evening was broken by the high pitched screech of the air raid warning siren. The dreaded note echoed and re-echoed in the still air. Quiet! What was that? Listen. THUD-DUMP. The ground and the house quivered and trembled. Ornaments on the mantelpiece rocked and clattered. The puzzled dog squeezed under the sofa, obviously frightened though the cat, seemingly unruffled, just turned over and continued its placid siesta. Mother, distraught with anxiety, grabbed the children and pushed one under the stairs, the other under the table. (Later on there was the repeated request, 'Mother, I'm thirsty. Can I have a drink of milk?')

THUD - the sound reverberated across the room, but thankfully it seemed it was some distance away. Nonetheless, the initial reaction was one of fear and tensing emotions. The months of uneasy strain had come to an end. THUD! It was the vanguard of over 100 German bombers which were to rain death and destruction on Liverpool. Thank heaven we in Frodsham were not exactly in the danger zone. Overhead, the searchlights beamed their shafts of light into the vacant sky.

What can be done? Very little, except to nourish a faint hope that the Townfield Lane anti-aircraft batteries would score a hit, or at least drive them away. Shell after shell belched from the guns to explode with a bright flash, and to shower the village with fragments of shrapnel which clattered on the roofing slates like heavy hailstones.

But the early hopes that Frodsham was to be spared soon faded away when at about 8 o'clock the explosions were felt once more. And this time it was definitely on Frodsham. And though it is hard to believe in after years, it was the first of 42 bombs to crash on the village. One was stamped with the German eagle and was made in Bavaria. Where did the bombs fall? On Queensway, Castle Park, Fluin Lane, Overton Hill, Five Crosses and the open Marsh. The latter was the scene of an unwanted firework display when some 600 incendiaries sizzled on the fields between Stanlow and Weston Point.

Fortunately, the torrent of missiles did little damage, but sadly, there was a distressing exception. One bomb made a direct hit on... Bates Cottages, Bellemonte Road, Overton, completely demolishing the structure and fatally injuring the occupants, a Mr Harry Parker, his sister Mrs Annie Bate (the proprietress of Mersey View Pleasure Grounds) and her son, Francis.



FD02114 Bates' Cottages pre-1940 and first shown on the OS 1874 map



Property on the site today. The gate provides access to Bellemonte Road

Fortunately, only five properties were reported damaged in Frodsham and six in Norley on the night of 28th-29th November according to the 'Index of War Damage 1940-41, Runcorn Rural District Council' (Frodsham History Archives D567).

Frodsham property	Occupier	Owner
Bates Cottages, Bellemonte Road	Mrs A Bates	Mrs A Bates
Bates Cottages, Bellemonte Road	Mr H Parker	Mrs A Bates
Hillfield	Mr Yates	Mr Yates
1 Princeway	Mr Lightfoot	RRDC
29 Queensway	Mr Ainsworth	RRDC

Herbert's article continues:

It was about 3 o'clock in the morning when the siren sounded, the all clear bringing to a close a very unnerving night. Frodsham's ordeal was ended, not to be repeated.

Another source, 'Air Raid Charts from November 1940', was compiled by Derrick Hastings Rowley (Frodsham History Archives D623). Derrick was the 18 year-old son of Alfred and Mary Rowley, the proprietors of Rowley's Watchmakers and Jewellers at 33, Church Street, Frodsham. Derrick's neat, hand-written daily records in a 'Red Minute Book' were donated to the Archives by his daughter, Elizabeth. His entry for 28th November cites the Frodsham warning siren started at 7.24pm and the all-clear siren sounded at 4am on 29th November after a period of 8 hours and 36 minutes. Derrick labelled the event 'Blitz' which was clearly a reference to the Liverpool Blitz where the first major raid came on 28th-29th November. On this night Liverpool was hit by 350 tons of high explosive bombs, 30 land mines and 3,000 incendiaries. Nearly 300 people were killed (Imperial War Museum online).

What did Frodsham do to avoid the air raids? A number of the school children had been evacuated to Blackpool; some of our elders migrated nightly to North Wales. Others crushed into the small number of concrete shelters and the caves on Manley Road and even the open hillsides were thought to be safe havens. But the bulk of the population remained at home with stoical determination. Admittedly, Frodsham did not suffer as much as Liverpool but fear is not, to the individual, inversely proportional to the number of bombs, and everyone in Frodsham suffered the same traumatic experience as their counterparts in other areas. In the course of the war

Frodsham had three deaths from bombs, Halton had one and Aston had one. By good fortune, Runcorn escaped any real harm.

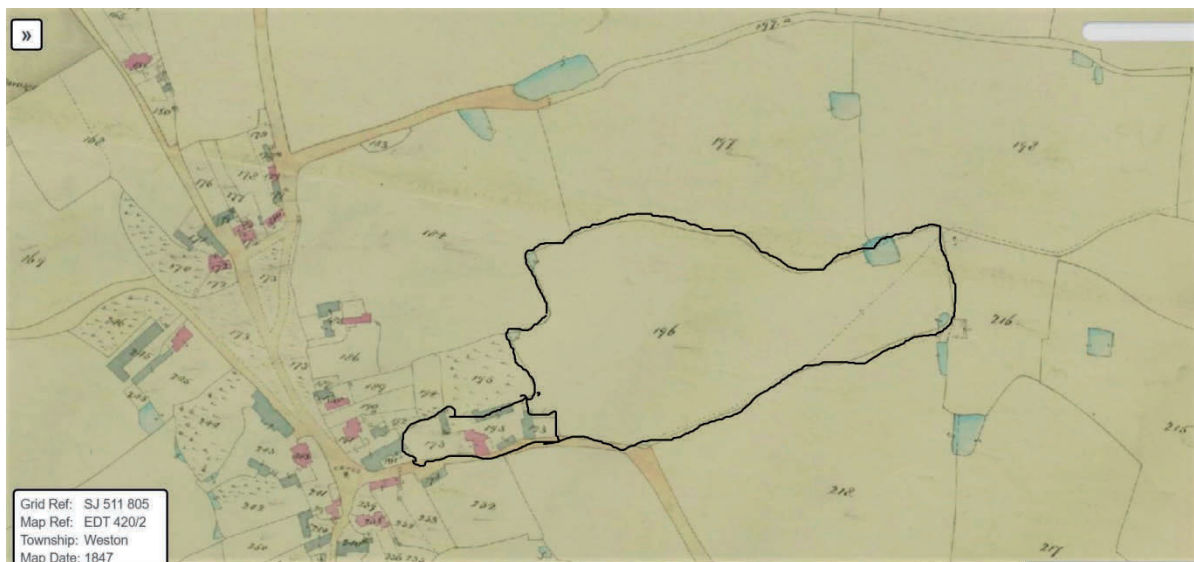
BUT ... there was a 'near miss' recorded in Runcorn by Keith Musgrave (1934-2017) in the Cheshire Times, October 1989, which I'll recount below. At this time Keith and his family were living in Hartford where he represented Vale Royal Borough Council between 1984 and 2007. Keith served as Mayor in 1998 and was Leader of the Council from 2003 to 2007 (Pers.Com. Alex Cowan). Keith's account in the Cheshire Times concerns the same evening, Thursday, 28th November 1940 when...

an event took place which will always remain in my memory... several residents in Weston observed an object attached to a parachute drifting over their village. There was much debate as to whether or not it was a parachutist and although efforts were made to track its path the object was lost in the darkness.

The following morning... Percy Ford, a farmer in his eighties, was crossing one of his fields in an area of the village known then as 'Ford's backside' when he came across a strange 'post' sticking up out of the ground. He proceeded to shake the offending object before realising that it was an unexploded bomb or land mine. He eventually notified the police and a bomb disposal squad identified it as a 1000lb land mine... thought to be destined for the ICI works at Weston Point.*

* Percy Ford was 43 according to the 1911 census record, so would have been 72 or 73 in November 1940.

The Tithe Map 1847 indicates the site of the Ford family farm buildings and names his fields. It tells us the farm was occupied by James Ford senior (Plot 193). The house, shown in red, in this plot can be identified as Cavendish Farm House on the north side of Cavendish Road.



*Tithe map of Weston 1847 from cheshirearchives.org.uk Tithe Maps Online
Plot 193 – farmhouse and outbuildings (small) Plot 196 – Ford's backside field (large)
Note: St John's Mission Church/Weston CE School, was built 1863, just north of Plot 193*



Part of Cavendish Farm House today

The building is said to date from 1622 but has undergone external alteration and fabric renewal. Its original L-shaped plan with red sandstone walls, slate roof and three brick chimneys has been altered by a modern extension allowing conversion to two properties. The projecting wing, shown here, has 10-light mullion and transom windows. It was listed grade II in 1982.

In 1847 James was the occupier of several plots of land in Weston, all owned by the wealthy spinster, Ann Orred, and totalling more than 50 acres. James was an ancestor of Percy Ford, the occupier in 1940. Plot 196, Ford's backside, is recorded as 9 acres of pasture on the Tithe Map. The area is now predominantly mid-20th century housing.

The subsequent 'explosion' of the landmine by the bomb disposal squad caused...

*considerable damage... to houses and shops and the school log for December 3rd 1940 reports... nine broken panes of glass (held in place by net), part of the ceiling in one classroom... fallen, tiles blown off boys toilet and tiles dislodged from the girls toilet roof**.*

** I discovered the school log was kept at the Cheshire Record Office (SL120) and requested a copy. The log states the following:

...an unexploded enemy land mine was in the field behind the school – approx. 290 yards away. The Head Teacher informed the Police & the Clerk to the Administrative Sub-Committee, and also the Head Teacher of the [nearby] Council School. Our instructions from the Police: the children were to be sent home, the school closed... Slight damage (sic) has been caused by the explosion. It appears to be; 6 +3 broken panes of glass held in position by the net, part of the ceiling in one classroom fallen – about 1 sq yd.) etc.



Church of St John the Evangelist, by John Douglas, listed grade II and the former Weston CE School on the right (R&DHS)*

The school was Weston Church of England Primary School, formerly St John's Mission Church, built in 1863 on land donated by Major John Orred. The building was ecclesiastical in character but designed to serve the dual purpose of School and Church. It was opened on 23rd April, 1864. It remained as a school in its 'Victorian

premises' after St John the Evangelist Church was built on adjacent land and consecrated in 1898. Records in local archives tell us land for the new church was donated by Major John Cavendish Orred, son of Major John Orred and cousin twice removed to Ann Orred. The school closed in 1962 and was superseded by the modern Weston Primary School on

Lambstickle Lane. The former Mission Church / School retains its overall external appearance but has been converted into two residential properties.

Keith's account continues thus:

Visitors to the bomb site were presented with a most bizarre spectacle. The bomb had landed in a field used many years previously as a burial ground for cattle which had died from foot and mouth disease and the whole area for several hundred yards was covered in bones of every shape and size.

The story may well have ended there had I not, some 45 years later, taken an interest in family history research. One day whilst examining some miscellaneous papers concerning Weston, my attention was drawn to a bundle entitled 'Luftwaffe papers re Weston Point, 1940'. A soldier from Cheshire had recovered some interesting papers...

These papers were from the Commandant's office, retrieved when capturing an airfield in Northern France. The documents were the actual plans for a Luftwaffe attack on the docks and lock gates at Weston Point, and not the ICI works! Explicit details were given as to the location of the target... Aerial photographs clearly showed the whole area and detailed maps in English bore... the imprint 'Runcorn Urban District Council'! One wonders how and when this information came to be in German hands...

Keith concludes:

I will be eternally grateful for a southerly wind on November 28th 1940, which caused the land mine to land where it did!

These personal accounts of long-remembered events by Herbert and Keith have been with them for much of their lives - a testament to the indelible imprint that this single night of WW2 made on two individuals. Checking their facts in contemporary archival records and online sources has added interest and substance to Herbert's and Keith's recollections.

Acknowledgements

Alex Cowan, fellow member of CLHA executive committee, for the location of 'Ford's backside' and biographical information on Keith Musgrave.

Sue Lorimer, fellow editor and friend, for accessing the family histories of the Ford's and the Orred's of Weston on Find my Past.

Gill Baxter, Archivist, F&DHS, for accessing the three archived items referenced in the text.

Runcorn & District Historical Society for website images of listed buildings and online archives on Weston.

Cheshire Archives & Local Studies for image FD02114, the Tithe Map of Weston, the two accounts by Herbert Victor Davies and one by Keith Musgrave.



We are delighted that our new website <https://frodshamhistory.org.uk> has been developed over the last few months and is now up and running. The website includes access to our programme, journals, research projects and information on how to join or contact us.

THE FORTY-FIVE DEGREE DOOR PHENOMENON

Harry Leather

When I was 10 my mother thought it was safe enough to send me from Runcorn to Frodsham by Crosville double-decker bus.



The purpose was to have some country air and assist my Uncle Harold Tannant in Mill Lane. Early one morning I travelled out of Runcorn via Greenway Road and Moughland Lane (so called because the posh people who lived there did not want to be disturbed by noisy horse hooves so the beasts had to wear slippers and be "muffled" - so I was told) into Clifton Road passing the brine reservoir for ICI production of Chlorine and Carbide. I thought at the time that it was a private open-air swimming pool for the ICI managers. Then a freewheeling, out of gear run, down Clifton Road wondering if we would get under the low railway bridge unscathed, that at one time led to Joseph Parkes and Sons Steel Works. Just before this bridge, now demolished but leaving quite a depression in the road, was a higher bridge that led to Halton Station. This was known as Marble Arch and you had to ask the conductor if you wanted to get off there. My sisters and I did this often and walked up Station Road into Beechwood to collect bluebells. Sometimes we went to the next high bridge alongside the Weaver Canal, over the swing bridge and turned right along the canal to go under the next bridge to harvest primroses from Primrose Hill - also known as a railway embankment.

Leaving these stops the next opportunity for the conductor to ring the bell was a stop opposite to The Bridge Inn (now replaced by apartments) just over Frodsham Bridge and my destination. I got off the bus and walked back over the white bridge to Mill Lane. Down the hill which was the original road to Runcorn and Warrington alongside North Western Farmers Mill.



North Western Farmers Mill on the River Weaver

Since no one was about I seized the opportunity to lob a large stone into the brook where it made a most satisfactory splodge into the mud. The brook, or more exactly the Mill Cut, has since been filled in and is occupied by numerous sheds and workshops of Robert S Gleave and Sons. The cut goes under the A56 and a sandstone wall can still be seen along with the reed-filled canal to the weir. At the other end where the cut discharges into the river a large curved structure invokes notions of a secret tunnel. This is best seen some twenty yards further downstream.

I was looking forward to a quiet relaxing visit with my uncle who had a log delivery business, maybe an exciting trip to Pennyfordd in North Wales to collect three tons of logs. I did have a

brief rest and drink of tea, horrible stuff you could stand a spoon in, then I was led to the bottom of the garden where a horse waited – a saw horse. Eight foot split tree trunks were beside it and a glistening bow saw shone lazily on its top. *"Just get that lot sawn up into small pieces will you,"* I was told, *"I'm just off to get some petrol."*

I set to with a will as any 10 year old boy can and after a further piece of advice to *"let the horse hold it tight, not you!"* he departed. I think it was about half an hour later when the log saw attacked me and blood sprayed everywhere. I went into the house and on the front room table were piles of cotton wool, bowls of Dettol, scissors, tweezers, bandages of every shape and size even splints! I looked at the small wound on my finger which by now had dried up on its own and used a large bandage or two, the end result being a dressing of which I was most proud.

My uncle soon returned and was surprised to see the large bandage but made no comment on the lack of blood. However my log-cutting was postponed and we prepared dinner. Back to the garden with a fork to lift some new potatoes, twenty or so pea pods and a couple of carrots. I was given some money and sent over Frodsham Bridge to Bebbington's Grocery shop to buy a can of stew.

Here was a wonder. The door to this shop was unlike any door I had ever seen before; it was on two walls, set at 45 degrees to each wall with a set of steps leading inside. The well-stocked shelves behind the polished counters had all manner of supplies. As well as my tin of meat, there were jams, pickles, biscuits, jars and bottles with various colours and hues of contents. Sacks, drums and buckets lay neatly on the floor and at least a couple of dozen brushes. Sadly, that grocery store is no more.



shown in this image – FDN2657 taken in the 1940s – Mrs Foukes' shop on the right.

I returned to Mill Lane on the same side of the road and came to the last house. No set of steps like the Grocers but still a 45 degree front door that I had not noticed on my way to the shop. This can be seen to this day. For many years Frodsham Water Sports, now a dog grooming parlour, it was formerly a Corner Shop and Sub-Post Office at one time run by Mrs Olive Foukes. In the past there had been a neighbouring property also with a 45 degree front door. Both properties are

The path between the properties led down to the tow path and upstream to two cottages, one of them the old lock-keeper's cottage by Frodsham sluice and lock. The cottages were condemned in 1958 and eventually demolished. The homes and shop on the left of the image were also demolished leaving a wider access to the River Weaver.

I got back to Mill Lane where the vegetables had been washed and were boiling merrily on the stove. The can of meat was opened and now sixty or so years later I can still taste the incredible combination of fresh flavours that only comes from food that has been growing just minutes before.

The phenomenon of the off-set door was not confined to the small area around Frodsham Bridge. In Frodsham you can see a relatively modern example - in Church Street.



Rawlinson's, Church Street

Rawlinson's solicitors which was previously the rubber factory.



The Bellemonte

The Bellemonte is still a pub and a welcome site after climbing the steps, from lower down the road.

The Bellemonte Pub obtained a full license in 1872 after the Bellemonte Picnic and Pleasure Grounds opened c.1871.



Image FD00663 The Avenue, Helsby, early 1900s

The shop with the 45 degree door was the Helsby Co-op and is now Land of Beds. It retains its 45 degree shape but this is no longer the shop entrance.

Other premises that illustrated this phenomenon included Lawless the Grocers at the corner of Main Street and Fountain Lane in Frodsham. This became Hussey's Store and the door was changed to a conventional flat front. The Butchers, Lloyd's, then Gregory's at the junction of Hillside Road and Bellmonte Road (now a house). The butcher's shop front door had an oval glass insert which still can be seen nearby. Mellor's Corner shop on the corner of Volunteer Street and Bridge Lane, now demolished (along with the whole of the original Volunteer Street houses). Someone who lived in this area, which was called Newtown, told me he was a frequent visitor to Mellor's making purchases from the penny tray. He remembers Mrs Mellor - vividly!

At the lower end of Bellemonte Road, opposite St Laurence Church, was Walker's General Shop. The building still has its 45 degree shape but no longer a door. This shop did Bed and Breakfast and also served teas in a corrugated building in the garden. This was an ideal spot to serve customers having walked from Frodsham Railway Station and heading for Mersey View Pleasure Grounds.

It seems that the 45 degree door was a commercial choice in that it made a property stand out from the rest. Where a corner shop was literally on the corner of two streets an owner could have twice the window display and external tables of a mid terrace unit. To attract

customers an owner of a shop or premises would try to make their property unique and some still do to this day. What about the round tower of Morrisons? The attractive fruit and vegetable displays outside Hales encouraging purchases. The tables and chairs that appear on both Church Street and Main Street for cafe and pub visitors.



Edwardian corner shop in Nottingham in the 1940s

45 degree doors were not only a feature of this area. One of our members was brought up in this Edwardian corner shop with a doorway serving both streets - I do not think that one of the children sitting on the pavement is our member though!

Distinctive local features still add interest to some modern buildings, e.g. contrasting brickwork, wall, window and roof designs. Features of a more unconventional nature tend to be internal and out of sight. So, I will continue to observe and admire features of building exteriors that trigger my interest. Maybe a study of the variety of Frodsham's chimney pots would make an interesting study in the future...

Acknowledgements Dorothy Smith, Nick Smith and the editors for their suggestions. Images FDN2657 & FD00663 courtesy of the Cheshire Image Bank.

OUT AND ABOUT IN LOCKDOWN – Kath Gee

In early summer the editors were able to meet around garden tables to plan, progress and edit articles for this journal. On one particularly quiet afternoon the AMP steering group met outside to look through six boxes of photographs recently returned to the Society; they are now in the archive room waiting to be catalogued...

Kath & Sue took on the challenge of rediscovering the route of a Victorian walk around the northern end of the Sandstone Ridge. The walk was first done by two un-named gentlemen who had travelled to Frodsham by train and later published their account in the *Ashton Weekly Reporter and Stalybridge and Dukinfield Chronicle*, 6 April 1867. It was written in rather fanciful language!

We used our historical knowledge of the area, consulted the OS 1874 6" maps to understand the landscape and footpaths at that time and checked their survival on the current Frodsham Parish Paths map before we set about discovering and photographing the likely route.

Sadly, their route no longer offers a continuous walk, though discrete sections could become a part of circular walks in the area. The results of our explorations can be viewed on the Sandstone Ridge website <https://www.sandstoneridge.org.uk/news/then-and-now-a-day-in-cheshire.html>.

THOMAS MADDOCK OF FRODSHAM AND THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF NEW ZEALAND

Heather Powling

The story which follows has emerged from correspondence with the descendants of one Wriggan or Riggan Maddock, mariner, who lived at Frodsham Bridge in the eighteenth century and who is buried in the graveyard of St Laurence Church. The family wrote from New Zealand to ask if there were earlier graves than that of Riggan Maddock, (1698 – 1755). Unfortunately many of the earliest graves at St Laurence have long since vanished, but we were able to trace something of the family from the parish records. The family in New Zealand has a very detailed family tree, but it was the story of Thomas Maddock, great, great grandson of Wriggan Maddock, which provided us with a most fascinating tale of the early settlement of New Zealand. We are very, very grateful to the family for sharing with us this story and the letters which Thomas wrote to his family in the Frodsham/Newton area.



Thomas Maddock 1812 - 1887

In 1842, a young man from an old established Frodsham family landed in Nelson, South Island, New Zealand. Thomas Maddock was the eldest son of Richard Maddock and Mary (nee Gresty) who lived in Newton. He was baptised at St Laurence Church on 8 November 1812. Thomas grew up in a rural area where, in the years following the Napoleonic Wars, times would have been hard for those engaged in agriculture. The Corn Laws, of 1816 meant that corn (and therefore bread) was expensive. The beginnings of the Agrarian Revolution brought new farming methods at the cost of many traditional agricultural jobs. Young people left the countryside to find work in the newly industrialised towns, though in rural Cheshire, these opportunities were at some distance.

Thomas appears to have left Frodsham in search of work in the 1830s. Disappointed in his personal life by being rejected in marriage by Elizabeth (Tet) Clark when he was 20, he records in a letter of 1851 that he went 'tramping about England'. The story is reminiscent of Thomas Hardy's Wessex, written much later, but in which Hardy recalls through novels such as 'Tess of the Durbervilles' how harsh rural conditions could be. By 1840 Thomas had met and was living with Ann Smith in Southampton. The 1841 census shows that Thomas Maddock, Ann and their baby son, Thomas Smith Maddock (born 8 January 1841), lived in Cossack Street, Kingsland Place, Southampton. Thomas was an 'excavator'.

In 1839, the New Zealand Company issued a prospectus which gave details of a new system of colonisation: 1100 sections of land, each made up of one "town acre" and 100 "country acres" were to be sold in London at £1 per acre, with the funds raised being used to transport emigrants to New Zealand. Emigrants would be selected either as capitalists or labourers, with labourers being required to work for the capitalists for several years before obtaining land of their own. One in 10 surveyed sections—scattered throughout the settlement—would be reserved for Māori who had been displaced, and the rest would be sold to raise £99,999, of which the company would retain 25 percent to cover its expenses.

Labourers would travel to New Zealand for free, while those who bought land and migrated could claim a 75 percent rebate on their fare.¹

For young men like Thomas the advertising of the New Zealand Company offered guaranteed employment for agricultural labourers and a better life in far off lands full of promise. Thomas and Ann were married in December 1841, thus entitling them to the free passage to New Zealand available for families prepared to go and work out there. They set sail for New Zealand aboard the former convict ship 'Sir Charles Forbes' bound for Nelson on South Island. Thomas was here described as an 'agricultural labourer'. He was 29 and Ann, aged 21 was expecting their second child, Abraham Maddock, who was born on 20 May 1842 during the 96 day journey. The family is entered on the ship's passenger list as:

Maddox

- Thomas 29 Agricultural Labourer
- Ann 22
- Thomas Infant

There was, apparently, a note on the original passenger list which read:

With respect to the embarkation return of emigrants on board the "Sir Charles Forbes" in May 1842, it appears that Dan L the son of George Moulder aged 6 years and Thomas the infant child of Mrs Maddox under 1 year old who to my knowledge were on board, are omitted in the Surgeons return'.

The ship arrived in Nelson on 22 August 1842 and on 8 September, baby Abraham was baptised by Bishop George Selwyn, who had recently arrived in New Zealand and was, at that point, on a six-month tour of his diocese. Selwyn's Chaplain who had accompanied him to New Zealand was none other than Revd William Charles Cotton, later to become Vicar of Frodsham. Sadly for Thomas and Ann Maddock, their baby son died not long after, on 6 October.

Thomas and Ann moved from Nelson to Spring Grove, where Thomas became the Overseer of Works in the Waimea, under Captain Arthur Wakefield.



Captain Arthur Wakefield (1799-1843) was a well-regarded former naval officer, who became resident agent of the new Nelson settlement. He was the brother of Edward Gibbon Wakefield who, in 1840, had devised the plan by which the New Zealand Company brought European settlers to New Zealand. Captain Wakefield was killed in June 1843 during a confrontation between European settlers and the Maori².

In the next few years, Thomas and Ann went on to have five more children: Enoch (1843), Richard (1846), Lucy (1847), James (1849) and Charles Matthew (1851). Successive New Zealand censuses provide information of the land held by Thomas. In 1845 he held 5 acres. 3 of which were cultivated for wheat, barley, potatoes and 'other crops'. He had 12 pigs, 12 fowls and 1 wooden house. Three years later, the land had increased to 7 acres with 3 cows and 6 goats. After the death of Captain Wakefield, Thomas moved on to become Head Shepherd for Sir David Monro (later Speaker of the House for New Zealand's first Parliament). He was manager of the Bank House Run. The station was evidently named after property owned by Sir David Monro in Scotland, though interestingly enough, the Maddock family home in Kingsley – from which these letters were rescued – was also Bank House. Life was not easy for Thomas and his family, who survived both flood and earthquake in 1848.

¹ Information on the New Zealand Company from Wikipedia

² Information on Captain Wakefield from Wikipedia.

Thomas had received excellent schooling and was able to write regular letters home to his family. This is a letter sent from Thomas to his father in Kingsley on 15 July 1850.

My Dear Father,

I have not received any letter from you since June 1848, which I answered by return of post. I was sorry to hear of the death of my brother [Abraham]³. I hope this letter will find you all in good health. I am still employed as a shepherd for the same master and doing very well. Myself and wife and family are all in good health. My wife has been very lame this last twelve months but is getting better⁴. She has been in very good health all the time. I have got my family with me at the place where I am employed. We have been here twelve months last January. My wife has had a youngster since we have been here. I have been down to Nelson and received a letter from my wife's sister, the second one we have received from her. She tells us she writes to you often. I am going to write her an answer by the same post as this will go by. She wishes to know if we have any thoughts of returning to England but I have not, as I am doing a great deal better here than I should be doing in England. She wished to know if we have any doctors here or any places of worship. We have a doctor within eight miles of us, besides I am in the employ of one. As for a place of worship my own house is the only place at present. She has some thoughts of coming out but she is afraid she will not be able to reach here. But if she comes she need not fear when she arrives here if she has not a shilling, or any of my brothers if any of them think anything about coming out.

Wages are pretty good for men or women or children and plenty of employment. As for myself, I am getting 40 pounds a year, 20lb flour, 20lb meat, 3lb sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb tea per week. Single men can get about 28-30 pounds per year and 10lb flour and 10lb meat, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ tea. Labourers in town 3 shillings a day.⁵ They would not want constant labour as most everyone has got either land to cultivate of his own or cattle of his own to look after and some of these and I have no doubt if any of them want to come out he would get on well.

I hope you will let me know how my brothers and sisters are getting on and give my kind love to them. Let me know how Jack and Sam Worrall are getting on and Jack Atherton.

Give my best regards to them and all inquiring friends.

I should like to hear about William Eaton and his father.

Give my kind love and my wife and childrens to my mother and accept the same yourself from your affectionate son, Thos. Maddock

*Please direct your letter to Thomas Maddock,
Bank House, Wairau, Nelson, New Zealand.*

So who were the friends or relatives to whom Thomas refers in his letter? These are most probably the members of the close-knit community Thomas had left behind in Newton. Thomas's grandmother was Elizabeth Worrall, who had married Joseph Maddock in St Laurence church in 1775. Samuel Worrall (1810 - 1869) and John (Jack) Worrall (born 1816) were his cousins, sons of John Worrall and Sarah Percival of Shepherds Houses. Samuel married Esther Maddock (1815 - 1884), Thomas's cousin on his father's side. They lived at Newton and then on the 1851 and 1861 censuses are shown as living at Shepherds Houses. Jack Atherton (1813 - 1877) was the son of William and Jane of Kingsley. William Eaton (baptised 1811) was the son of John Eaton and Mary Percival of Newton. Thomas wrote from Bank House, Wairau again on 28 September 1851.

³ Abraham Maddock was the second youngest child of Richard and Mary Maddock. Born in 1826, he died in 1848 and is buried in the graveyard of St Laurence, Frodsham.

⁴ Ann broke her hip in a fall from her horse and walked with the aid of a stick for the rest of her life.

⁵ Average weekly wages for agricultural labourers in England in 1850 were 9s 3d per week - so about half what they could earn in New Zealand, and without the addition of land and provisions.

Dear Father and Mother,

I received your letter dated March 28th yesterday. I was glad to hear you are all well. We are all well too, thank God. My wife was confined the day before I received your letter. She is doing well but she is still lame. She has been walking with a crutch for two years. She has got her sixth son, five alive and one daughter. Thank God I have a prospect for maintenance for them. I am in good employment and good tolerable wages. I congratulate John Worrall and wish him luck with his flock. But I do not expect he has got such a large flock as I have charge of. I have upwards of five thousand now and the flock is increasing just now. The run that I am on will carry about 14 thousand.

Note:

If John Worrall was here, not, but he would get twice the wages he is getting now. My wage is 40 pounds a year with rations for the family, with a promise of a rise every year for some years. The regular wages are 30 pounds with 15lb flour, 15lb mutton, 3lbs sugar, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb tea with 30 pounds a year. The labouring men are doing equally as well in the farming line. Single men get 10lb flour, 10lb mutton, 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ sugar and $\frac{1}{2}$ tea with 30 pounds a year. Indeed the settlement is getting on very well and tell him that tailors are doing first rate.

Tailors, blacksmiths, shoemakers, wheelwright is the best trade here, and tell Richard Walker I should like to see him as soon as possible and any of my old acquaintances. They will not regret coming out but I am afraid the expense of getting so large a farm as Richard Walkers out is too much. But at the same time if he can possibly come and get out I would advise him to come. There is an old friend John Grice I have often thought of. Please to give my best respects to him. Tell him I am doing well.

William Eaton, John Atherton, Samuel Worrall & John Worrall and their fathers & mothers and all other enquiring friends, please to remember me to them.

I suppose that my brother Luke has no thoughts of leaving home. He would do well out here if his wife understands dairy work. There is lots of cows running with their calves for want of someone that would undertake the management of a dairy. Cows and horses fetch a good price. But I will send you a newspaper then you will see the prices currant of everything.

I will write to Joseph (Nield?) in a few weeks.

We are going to commence shearing in about a week. I expect my master round in few days. He does not come often - not more than twice a year. I do not know if the sheep are subject to scab with you but we have it in the flocks here and there is great loss of wool, sometimes there are some flocks without.

I have received a letter from Rachel and husband which I answered about two months ago. They told me of the death of my brothers and sister which I was sorry to hear but sooner or later we must obey the summons. I would like to see someone over here from Cheshire. There is one John Hoden here from somewhere about Winsford, the only one out of the country that I know. He is a man that was tramping about England like myself. Now he follows (Saving) and gets a good living.

*You will please (sic) to give my best respects to brothers and sisters, Uncle Joseph and Aunt Hannah and all my cousins and all my old acquaintances and old friends.
My wifes kind respects to you all.*

*I give my best and kindest to you both, my mother and father.
I remain your affectionate son,
Thos. Maddock*

Thomas's affection for his family is evident in all of his letters. Living so far away, there are signs of nostalgia for Frodsham and its surrounding area – although he does make it clear that he has no wish to return home. Here he asks again about Samuel and John Worrall, about William Eaton and John Atherton. There is also reference to his sister Rachel (born 1809), who married Robert Higham in 1844 and, according to the 1851 census, lived at Marthall, near Knutsford.

Thomas's wife, Ann, died on 22 June 1852. She was just 32 years old, having married Thomas in 1841 when she was 20 and he 29.

By 1854, Thomas was no longer the manager at Bank House Run. He had been engaged to cut a road through the Wairau gorge to Tarndale and then became manager of the Starborough Estate. On 2 April 1854, he wrote to his brother Luke to say that he had obtained a bond for him to go to New Zealand, though we know that Luke never did emigrate to join his brother. He lived firstly near to his parents in Commonsides, Kingsley and then later at Kingwood.



Arrowsmith's Map of New Zealand, 1841 <https://blogs.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/maps/>

In 1857, Thomas was sent to find the best route from the Wairau to the Awatere Valleys. He chose the Dashwood Pass route (see arrow in NE South Island). Although this was not accepted by the authorities of the day, by 1933 it had become the main road between the two valleys.

The death of Ann left Thomas a widower with a young family. In 1858 he married a widow called Charlotte Courtney who was 7 years his senior. He was, by then, manager of the Starborough Station, which in 1864 consisted of 13,800 acres of freehold and 109 acres of leasehold land. It was a world away from the concept of farming to which his family in Cheshire were accustomed.

During those years when Thomas and Charlotte were at Starborough, Thomas's son, Thomas Smith Maddock married Hannah Smith on 20 March 1862 at Foxhill, Waimea South. This Foxhill, however, has no connection with Foxhill House, Frodsham, which was not completed until 1870 and on the 1871 census was called 'Woodlands'. Thomas's parents, Richard and Mary, both died in 1863 and his brother James in 1864. In February 1865, his daughter, Lucy, gave birth to a son. She had married Joseph Rennell in 1864, but he was tragically drowned shortly after their baby was born, leaving her a young widow with a new baby. Three years later, Lucy married again – to Alexander Knight, who had been a gold prospector in California before travelling to Australia and then to New Zealand.

The last letter from Thomas to his brother Luke is dated January 1882. Luke now lived at Wanlow's Well, Kingwood. He refers, as always, to his friends, naming also James and Joseph Percival, Samuel Frodsham and Hugh Smith. He also enquires after the lady who had jilted him more than 50 years before and asks his brother to pass on his thanks to Richard Miller who had loaned money to his father, Richard Maddock, to press claims for the cottage given to him and to his uncle.

Thomas died on 21 September 1887 and is buried at Omaka Cemetery, Blenheim. Though in recent years, he had moved from Starborough to Omaka (Blenheim), the burial records still describe him as 'Station Overseer'.

To find such detailed descriptions of the life of the early settlers in New Zealand is remarkable. Thomas Maddock had left home as a young labourer in search of a more prosperous way of life. His ability to create a whole new life for himself and his family and to write such clear details of the conditions he encountered on the other side of the world may be a credit to the education available to children in this area in the 1820s and 30s. For the letters he wrote to find their way back from Kingsley to New Zealand is also extraordinary. Such chance encounters are rare, and we are extremely grateful for the opportunity to retell the story. The meeting between Thomas and Bishop Selwyn is also pure serendipity. No-one could have guessed that the missionary Bishop's Chaplain, Revd William Charles Cotton, would return to the UK and later in his life become Vicar of the parish in which Thomas was born. We could not have made it up!

Acknowledgements: Mr Alan Gooch and Mrs Robyn Taylor for sharing their family history with us, following an initial enquiry about family graves in Frodsham.
[ancestry.co.uk](https://www.ancestry.co.uk) for information on the extended Maddock family in this area.
Wikipedia: for general information on the history of Nelson/Wairau area in which Thomas Maddock settled.

PS During the research for this article more was discovered about the Wriggan family. Their fascinating history will be told in next year's journal.

HOUSE ARREST – Maureen Sutton (Lincolnshire dialect poet and folklore historian)

Well maate, I've gotten a craw to pick wi Boris, he's putten me under
'ouse arrest, an' I doessent like it, I ain't gone an' done owt wrong!
An' now I've got to stay at 'ome for weeks on end.
It ain't no good werriting so I'll just have to find summats
To keep me sen busy or I'll go crazed. Already I'm mazzeled
About what I'm going to do.

NB Craw = argument / disagreement
 Werriting = worrying
 Mazzeled = puzzled

Source

From an article titled *Local historians: Coronavirus Britain needs you!* by Dr Andrew Jackson, Head of Research and Knowledge Exchange, Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln, published in Local History News, Number 136 Summer 2020, Magazine of the British Association for Local History.

ASHWORTH'S MILL, FRODSHAM BRIDGE

Dave Wynne + Editors

In the 19th and the early to mid-20th centuries, Frodsham Bridge was Frodsham's industrial centre. Ashworth's Bone and Size Manufacturers moved c.1862 from Darwen to the Frodsham side of the River Weaver. This site was originally the Salt Works, later the Chancellorsville Freehold Gold Mining Company and then briefly Henry Lowe and Co, Manufacturers of Raw Ground Bones and Boiled Bones.



Advert from Western Gazette 02 December 1898

By the mid-1890s the company, now Joseph Ashworth and Sons, Ltd. had diversified into cattle feed. In 1898 they opened a new mill on the opposite bank of the Weaver for the production of their famous "Ashworth Cakes".

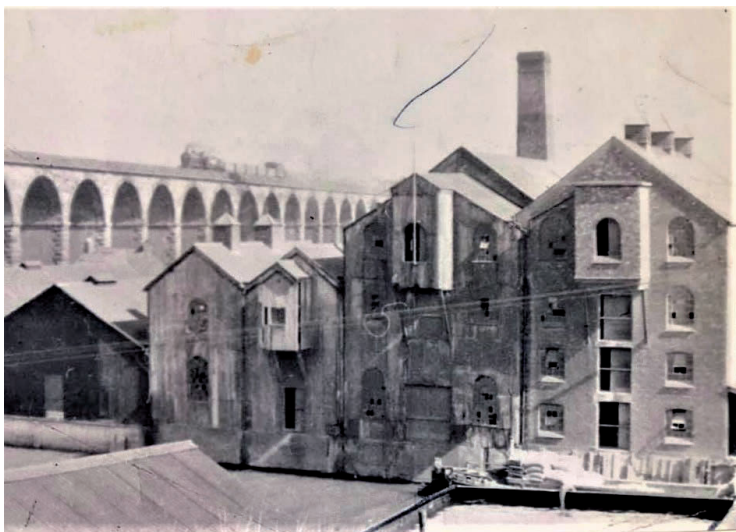
The following account by Dave Wynne taken, with his permission, from Frodsham Memories, is a vivid description of working life in the mill.

Just in case I'm accused of viewing the past through rose-tinted spectacles (guilty as charged), working at Ashworth's, Frodsham Bridge was downright dangerous and it was accepted, literally as an "occupational hazard"; you "just had to get on with it and be careful!" Although people were happy, many lives were blighted by injury or an early death, my own father included, as recently as 2011, the result of a lifetime breathing in grain dust without a mask. There must have been dozens (100s?) more down the years, bad chests blamed on smoking or weak chests; never the dusty mills. Some will remember "Jimper" Walker gasping for breath at his doorway on Bridge Lane, in younger life a phenomenally strong man. My Dad didn't want me or my brother working there. I am a factory inspector now and I cringe when people slag off 'elf & safety'; today's world is so much safer than yesteryear and we take it for granted. People are still being killed in work though not in their 1000s as it was in the 1940s. When news arrived that the factory inspector was on his way, Grandad Wynne went round hurriedly putting all the machinery guards back on! The result of the inspection usually being: "just whitewash the toilets". I often think this inspector wasn't doing his job properly and so whenever possible I do unannounced visits today!

Typical of Victorian mills, Ashworth's was very paternalistic with a board of directors, enjoying the benefits of great wealth earned by the grind of ordinary folk, many of which lived in poverty in very poor housing, often Ashworth's, were their landlord. It's difficult to complain when your employer provides your roof. A Director lived in a huge house up Fluin Lane, "Lisroan" [demolished 2013]. It was where workers went for their works medical to see if they were up to the rigours of mill working. Directors

had the best early luxury cars, when their workforce struggled to put food on the table. Here are some of the injuries/deaths I recall: Tom Clarke (young chap with learning difficulties): crushed hand in rollers, when extracted his hand was "as flat as a pancake, like in a cartoon", Ashworth's driver in an early steam lorry beheaded by telegraph pole. Grandfather trapped foot in screw auger on one of his nightly inspections on his own. When my Dad as a little boy went over to the mill to wish him good night he said, "don't come any closer Ken, go and get your uncle Art with a box of tools. Tell him your Dad is trapped." The mill has burnt down numerous times. People trapped in grain hoppers (risk of drowning in the free-flowing grain) but fortunately survived when the planks on the side of the hopper were prised off and they came tumbling out with tons of grain, great grandfather: a double blinding on separate occasions: once by a bag needle (stitches the top of meal bags) and another time hot pitch, elsewhere though), men being crushed by runaway lorries, falling into acid tanks (this may be a myth, with the banging of the tanks as they expanded being blamed on the ghost of the poor victim!) falling off roofs, falling into the holds of boats, backs damaged for life by hand balling 100 cwt bags and shovelling 10 tons of coal of a morning. Lots of nipped or missing fingers... Good honest labour? Yes, but at a cost.

A fire did gut the 4-story building in 1945 causing damage of several thousand pounds and the company suffered other "setbacks". They were fined for selling cake containing 4% sand in 1906 and in 1941 for selling rationed foodstuffs. The company went into liquidation in 1973 following an outbreak of Foot and Mouth.



Ashworth's Mill, Sutton side of the River Weaver, early 1900s

Image taken from The Brow (now Quayside). Note large water tank at bottom of pic (full of huge fish apparently), square chimney which lasted 'til early 1980s? On armistice day, the steeplejack was seen to stand to attention and salute at the top of the chimney at the stroke of 11, probably some old soldier remembering his buddies. I remember the boiler

room with ancient riveted "Lancaster" boilers in there. My Dad would take me with him when he checked the boilers of a Sunday, and when I inspect feed mills today, I've got to keep it together to some extent when I smell the cereals, rolled oats, ground meal and molasses. Smell is a very powerful memory. The Mill burnt down in 1942? Also note the louvred vents on the roof, for ventilation but possibly explosion relief as mills can and still do, explode.

Dave Wynne's memories really bring to life what were probably typical working practises in that industry before the advent of Health and Safety. For more information on Ashworth's Mill see Arthur Smith's article in HS Journal 1992 no.14.

HERALDRY AT ST LAURENCE CHURCH, FRODSHAM

Editors

In our last journal, we included a photograph of the Royal Coats of Arms which are situated in the tower at St Laurence Church.



The panel hangs high in the tower and is difficult to see, but thanks to a photoshoot by Frodsham and District Photographic Society, we have been able to get a clear view of the image and to establish that the arms are those of King George II (1727-60). They are likely to have been placed in the church during restoration work in 1740-1742, when the galleries were installed in the church. The galleries were later removed in the subsequent restoration of 1880.

Since last year, we have been delighted to receive a detailed account of other armorial bearings in the church from Cheshire local historian, Tony Bostock. This is an edited version of his findings.

AN INTERPRETATION OF THE HERALDRY IN FRODSHAM PARISH CHURCH

Tony Bostock. (*Edited; the full text is lodged in the F&DHS Archives*)

The north and south windows of St Laurence's church, Frodsham, are adorned with numerous coats of arms. The heraldic stained glass was installed as commemorative windows during the 20th century; to the south to William Edward Burton of Frodsham and his daughter Barbara Marguerite, and to the north to members of the Ashton family. A plaque within the north window says that the shields of arms displayed were copied from the church's "Seat Roll" dated May 1487.

The "Seat Roll" is among the administrative documents of St Laurence's church, held at the Cheshire Record Office. It consists of two parchment folios stitched together and headed:

"Ye Kirche Role of Frodesch: of alle ye seates yn the Kyrke of S. Ilour' ther
& ye Chappelles thereof in Vigil' Asseno' dom. Anno ri' Henrici Septimi X."

Note: the date given on the windows is probably a mis-reading of the 15th century text of the original Seat Roll. It should more correctly be dated 'in the 10th year of the reign of Henry the Seventh', i.e. 1495.



Seat roll of St Laurence Church from the reign of Henry VII, dated 1495, now preserved in the Archives at the Cheshire Record Office

At the time the document was created, the following gentry were represented in the parish and had pews allocated: Arderne, Ashton, Dutton, Gerrard, Hatton, Helsby, Kingsley, Manley and Rutter.

In addition to the names of the occupants of over 100 pews there are illustrations of 27 shields of arms, seemingly to represent armigerous families of the parish or church benefactors.

None of the arms are identified in the document. The shields are in three blocks: at the top and bottom of the first folio, and the bottom of the next.

It seems that the document is a record of the stained glass then in "Ye Este Wy'dore", in which case, so far as I am aware, it is the earliest record of armorial bearings in windows in the country, and in many cases the earliest record of the heraldry of the families mentioned.

In the 20th century windows the glaziers have added labels to identify the families represented by the shields, which are not in the original work. In copying the arms obvious mistakes made in the original have been repeated. It is likely that the illustrations in the medieval manuscript were simple line drawing and that the colours have been added later by an individual not versed in heraldic matters.

Editors' notes:

The 20th century South Window:

Dr William Edward Burton JP was a physician and surgeon in Frodsham with a practice at East Bank, High Street in the 1890s and later at Brockton, Red Lane. He became a magistrate in 1916 and held the rank of Captain in the Cheshire Regiment. William's daughter Barbara Marguerite died in April 1926 and William in August 1948.

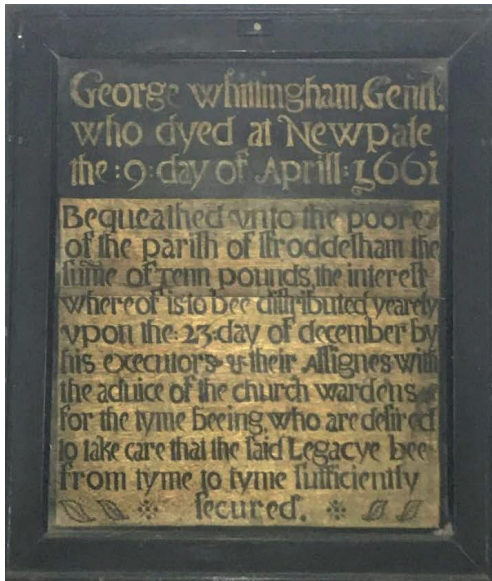
The 20th century North Window:

Members of the Ashton family commemorated are Col John Ashton, 2nd Volunteer Batt., solicitor of Ty Gwyn, Main Street (now The Old Hall), who died in 1899 and his wife Alice, and their son Major George Frederick Ashton, 5th Batt. Cheshire Regiment, solicitor of Windygates, Red Lane, who died in 1945 and his wife Mary Alice, president of the Women's Unionist Association, who died suddenly in 1937.

The windows were dedicated on Easter Sunday, 25 March 1951, as reported in the Parish Magazine for April 1951.

THE BEQUEST OF GEORGE WHITTINGHAM OF NEW PALE IN 1661

Sue Lorimer



This commemorative plaque hangs in the tower of St Laurence Church. George Whittingham was the keeper of the Lodge at New Pale, Manley, a position in the gift of the Master Forester of Delamere Forest, who at that time was Mary Crewe, nee Done, wife of John Crewe.

In his will dated 17th December 1660, having no children, George left the majority of his estate to his wife Mary and the children of his sister Elizabeth Pugh. He also made many bequests to friends, family and the great and good of Cheshire including members of the Done, Crewe and Arderne families, thus securing the stewardship of the New Pale for his nephew George Pugh, whose descendants lived at the Lodge for more than 200 years. George Whittingham was a man of wealth and influence. He had estates in Broomhall and Aston, SW of Nantwich, and a number of local properties. The

inventory of his belongings was lodged in Chester on 14th September 1661, totalled an impressive £1,830.9s.3d.

George Whittingham was buried in Tarvin on 15th April 1661. To secure his place in heaven he left the poor of the parish of Tarvin £20 to be disposed of at the discretion of Mr Jonathan Bruine, £20 for the poor of the parish of Wrenbury, interest on the sum to be paid out on the 23rd of December each year and £10 to the parish of Frodsham to be used for the poor at the discretion of the church wardens. Even a search in Heather's records stored under her bed, (now relocated at St Laurence Church), could not throw any light on what happened to the Frodsham bequest.

In 1818, Henry Brougham MP, (later Lord Brougham, Lord Chancellor 1830-1834, anti-slavery supporter, holder of the record for the longest speech in the House of Commons and designer of the four-wheeled horse drawn carriage that bears his name) instituted a Parliamentary Commission to report on the country's charities. This Commission was the forerunner of the Charities Commission established in 1853. Brougham's report was refined over the years and the volume relating to Cheshire was published in 1836. Although it detailed the charities in existence in Frodsham at the time, some of which are still managed by the church feoffees, there was no mention of the Whittingham bequest.

When the Parish Chest of St Laurence Church was opened in 1902, it held a bond of Elizabeth Pugh of New Pale dated 31st January 1674, securing the £10 plus interest given to the poor by her brother George Whittingham. But, there was no clue as to what happened to the money. The following year the vicar's warden, Mr Riley, endeavoured to establish the whereabouts of a number of missing charities.

He found that the Moore's charity for the second master of the Free Grammar School had been in the Frodsham Savings Bank since 1845 but Jane Gastrill's Charity for the Sunday School had completely disappeared, the last payment made from the charity being in 1889. It was suggested that that money had been appropriated by the Grammar School. Perhaps that was the fate of Whittingham's bequest or maybe that capital sum of £10 just fell foul of a bad investment. What happened to the £10 remains a mystery.

NB Family history from Simon Gregory; other information – Cheshire Sheaf; Wikipedia

THE STORY OF TRINITY CHURCH TO TRINITY HOUSE APARTMENTS, FRODSHAM

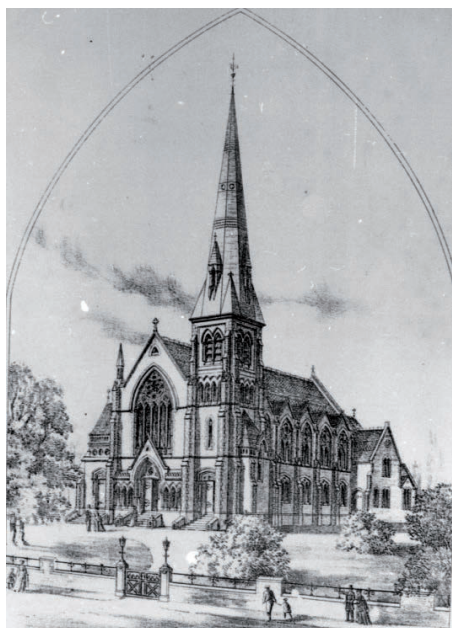
Keith Bott

Historical context – As far as is known, Methodism commenced in Frodsham in the 1770's and the early preachers having no chapel to preach in held their services either in fields or on the highway. In 1790 a local farmer gave them the use of a barn in Church Street for worship. Some 12/14 years later they were able to build their own chapel in Chapel Lane, now called Fluin Lane (which became known as Victoria Hall and is currently occupied by Kingsley Carpets).

As the congregation grew it became apparent that this chapel was not large enough for their needs. Thomas Hazlehurst, who with his brother Charles, owned the soap and alkali manufacturing business of Hazlehurst and Sons in Runcorn, was a major benefactor to Methodist causes in Runcorn and the surrounding areas. The brothers became aware that Frodsham needed a larger chapel, and in 1870 Charles - who often supported his brother in his religious undertakings - offered to provide land and in September 1871 Thomas offered to provide funding for the chapel itself.

Their offer was readily accepted and a site was purchased and donated to the Trustees at the top of the hill in Main Street (now High Street), comprising spacious grounds and one of the old fashioned houses Frodsham had been famous for at a cost of £2,000. Following demolition of the house and preparation of the ground the Foundation Stone of the new chapel was laid by Thomas Hazlehurst on 18th January 1872. Dedicated to the Trinity, the two storey chapel was built in the Gothic style with a gallery and a 123 feet high spire at a cost of about £7,400, with a further £400 for an organ. It was opened for worship on 6th November 1873 and the chapel in Chapel Lane was closed.

The building to the right of the new chapel was Church House in which the Caretaker and family lived (now flats). The building to the left of the chapel was the Manse, known as Trinity House, where the Minister and family lived (now a private house). Over the years Trinity Chapel became not simply a place of worship, but a social centre for the Frodsham Community with activities every day of the week. Tennis courts and a bowling green were created and indoor activities, including a Sunday School, were held in a school room behind Trinity Chapel / Church.



FDN0785 An etching of Trinity Church and school room

Background – In the 1970's dry rot was identified in the church. This resulted from the choice of soft sandstone as the building material. The porosity of the sandstone allowed dampness to penetrate the woodwork of the church interior. In April 1976, a Surveyor's Report on Trinity Church indicated that some £30,000 would be required over the next five years to preserve it in its present form. Unfortunately, even if this amount were available the issue of its future would not be resolved, as the day to day running costs, particularly of heating, were falling outside its average income.

Consideration was given to the unification of the then three Methodist places of Worship in Frodsham as a means of preserving Trinity Church (in 1932 the various branches of Methodism had combined to form

the single Methodist Church of Great Britain). However, using Trinity would not be an ideal solution because the inadequacy of the schoolroom accommodation behind the church would make it difficult. Equally, unification based on either of the other two locations was not considered to be a practical proposition; Bourne Chapel in Main Street would simply be too small and whilst Five Crosses Church with capital expenditure could be considered, it would face problems including the separation of part of its schoolroom accommodation by the Kingsley Road. As a result, it was felt that the solution may rest with building a single new church to meet the future needs of the Methodist Community. Realisation of the three site values would be necessary to finance such a project on a site acceptable to all three congregations and so the problem was referred to the District Re-Development Commission of the Methodist Church at Stoke-on-Trent.

During 1976, an alternative proposal was developed relating to Trinity Church which was designed to preserve the individuality of all three locations for some years to come though possibly not indefinitely. As the financial and structural weakness of Trinity Church suggested the need for a smaller church, the proposal was to dismantle the roof and upper walls, leaving the spire, lower walls and window arches which would give access to an inner, courtyard garden. At the same time conversion of the schoolroom at the rear of the church to make it suitable as a chapel and modification of the ancillary accommodation would enable all aspects of the work of the church to continue. First estimates of cost suggested some £10,000 for the conversion of the schoolroom and a further £7,000 for the work on the church.

This proposal "Project New Trinity" was received with great interest, whilst accepting that a great deal of effort would be required to bring it to fruition. In early 1977 the Methodist Community committed to the task of converting the school room into a chapel seating about 100. Meanwhile the Executive Committee of the Frodsham Society (previously known as the Civic Society) considered that the latter part of the project was an exciting opportunity for wider community participation and agreed to support it.

On 21st March 1977 a 60-strong Public Meeting was held at the Frodsham Community Centre. At the meeting the Reverend Joseph Tong outlined the background to the whole project and Mr Gordon Ball, the Architect, described its details. Mr John Grenside explained the thinking of the Frodsham Society: that the part of the project relating to the church itself would provide a fine opportunity for the wider Community to support the project. This would allow the village to save the spire as a landmark whilst at the same time creating the garden as an amenity for the enjoyment of the general public. The meeting unanimously endorsed the community side of the project and the "Save Our Spire" (S.O.S.) Appeal was formally launched. The overall cost of the project had now been established as £21,000 with the Methodist Community portion being £14,000, and the target for the S.O.S. Appeal being £7,000.

The S.O.S. appeal – In April 1977, an informal Working Party, open to everyone, was established representing a wide cross-section of village interests. Its remit was to organise a fund-raising programme to raise sufficient funds by the Autumn to permit work on the controlled demolition of the church, retention of the spire and creation of a cloistered garden using the walls of the old church to begin.

During the period 1977 to 1979 a vigorous campaign of fundraising events was undertaken, supported by hundreds of local volunteers, local companies and local Councils (see F&DHS Archives for details). The result, reported at the meeting of the Working Party on 17th July 1977, was that the total of the Appeal stood at £7,750. This was made up of £7,460 monies raised plus £390 bank interest, less £100 expenses. As a result the Appeal was formally closed. Final analysis of the Appeal monies showed that £7,350 was spent on the Project, leaving £400. This sum was given to the Church to assist them in meeting the total cost for

the New Trinity Project on the understanding that any balance remaining would be set aside for future work associated with the garden and spire.

Project New Trinity – Following approval of the project, a local builder, Geoff Latham, was appointed to operate under the supervision of the appointed Architect. The last service in Trinity Church was held on 2nd October 1977 and whilst the pace of work was slower than originally planned, the 'controlled ruin' as it was termed was completed and the 'New' Church opened for worship on 13th May 1979. An 'official' opening ceremony took place on 7th July that year. Work on the walled garden, to be known as the Garth, continued during 1979 and from 1980 it was opened to the general public and available for open air events.

1990-2005 – In 1990 the Church Councils of Trinity and Five Crosses merged to form a single Frodsham Methodist Church, but still with worship in both buildings (the Bourne Chapel having closed in 1987, later to become apartments). Morning services were held in both churches, but there was only an Evening service at Trinity. In 1996 the morning congregations combined, based at Five Crosses.

Also, in 1996 the Bible Society carried out a socio/economic survey of Frodsham and its findings were reported to the members of the two Methodist Churches at a meeting held in early summer. It had found that members were not grouped around their specific place of worship but were drawn from all over the town, indicating that the location of the church building was not an important factor. A search for a neutral site where the two church communities could come together in a new building in Frodsham was carried out during the summer but was unsuccessful.

In September 1996 three meetings took place for the congregations of the two churches to examine alternative proposals for the future, with a ballot being held at the final meeting to determine which of the options considered had majority support. The result was that the majority of members believed the churches' resources should be concentrated on one site, and that should be Five Crosses. Following this conclusion, whilst both churches continued to function, it was agreed that there was no point in retaining a site that was not going to be used in the future and so the procedure was started to dispose of the Trinity site. This required approval first from the Delamere Forest Circuit, of which Frodsham was part, and then from the Methodist Church Property Division.

The Trinity Church site is in a Conservation Area, and so enquiries were made to Vale Royal Borough Council Planning Office as to what would be acceptable. A response was received in August 1999 indicating that housing development should be acceptable. Consequently, in September, the site was put in the hands of an estate agent who proposed two options:

1. To offer the site immediately in its current form by sealed tender.
2. To first obtain planning permission for housing on the site.

The decision was made to adopt option 2 in order to obtain the best value for the site. Consequently an architect was appointed in October 1999, plans were prepared and a Planning Application submitted. That application was subsequently turned down, on the grounds of both the number of proposed properties (11) and the narrowness of the site entrance off the High Street.

In parallel with the drawing up of plans, in November 1999 an enquiry had been made to Methodist Homes for the Aged (MHA) as to whether they might have any interest in the site. In January 2000 they responded that they would be interested and proposed to carry out a feasibility study in relation to building a care home on the site. In anticipation of the sale, it was decided to cease holding services at Trinity. The last service took place on 13th April 2000 and the Church was officially closed, after some 127 years of operation. During the time that MHA were continuing their work, the sale of the contents of the Trinity Church was carried out over the period from June 2000 to January 2001.

Eventually, MHA had plans prepared which resulted in a formal Planning Application being made to Vale Royal Borough Council in August 2001. The application was for 22 apartments for senior citizens (aged 55 years and above), ancillary accommodation, car parking, landscaping and to include demolition of part of the Church building (Trinity Spire and Garth Walls to remain).

This application was granted full Planning Permission by the Council on 25th October 2001, but did not proceed. Towards the end of 1999 monies had become available from a number of sources including the Single Regeneration Budget, European Funds and grants to Social Services to assist older people to maintain their independence in their own homes as long as possible. MHA applied for funding towards their scheme for the development of the Trinity site but were advised that Frodsham did not meet the criteria for any support as it was not classified as a deprived area. This was a serious blow to MHA and they decided to withdraw their interest in the site.



The landmark Trinity Spire with Garth Wall to the left and Trinity House apartments to the right (Courtesy of F&DHS member, Heather Vernon)

On 15th June 2002 a fire was discovered in the Church and whilst the Fire Brigade attended to extinguish the fire, damage had occurred to the foyer, windows and roof. The Fire Brigade classified it as a case of arson but despite police investigations the perpetrator(s) was never found.

Further discussions regarding the sale of the Trinity site resulted in the decision to issue Requests for Tenders to the Market and this was done on 5th July 2002 with a closing date of 7th August 2002. The successful tender was submitted by Charter Developments (N.W.) Limited and the sale of the site to them was confirmed on 15th August. Charter Developments requested access to the site prior to completion of the sale, which was agreed by the

Church, to permit them to repair the fire damage to the roof and make it weatherproof. The sale of the site was completed on 31st October 2002.

Charter subsequently submitted a formal Planning Application to Vale Royal Borough Council and full planning permission for 11 two bedroom apartments with garden space and associated parking which was granted on 29th September 2003. The apartment block was originally to be called "The Spires", but this was subsequently altered to "Trinity House" and its construction, together with work on the associated land was undertaken during the period 2003-05.

Acknowledgements

Gill Baxter, F&DHS Archivist;

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Cheshire Archives & Local Studies – Two images of Trinity

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MY VERSION OF EVENTS ON FRODSHAM TOWN COUNCIL 1987-2015

PART 1: WALKING

Graham Bondi

Viv and I moved into Ellis Lane on 25th October 1985 and we attended a parish meeting in May 1986. As a result of this I was co-opted onto the Tree Group chaired by Harry Pyle and spent occasional Sunday mornings throughout the winter planting trees. At one of these sessions Ralph Pickering told me that the latest Local Plan was coming out and I could get an early view of it at the consultation stage by going to Sutton Weaver. I was horrified to see that the Green Belt around our house had been removed by the distance of two or three fields. I naturally objected to this and found quite a few like-minded people. I began to appreciate the value of the Green Belt, not just by my house, but for the whole of Frodsham. The outcome (after a lot of protesting) was my receiving a letter from VRBC saying that the map had been printed in error – it was just the Area of Special County Value that should have been removed. A new map was produced.

I had been quite energetic over the Green Belt affair and it was suggested that I stand at the next parish council election the following year. I did just this and was elected to the parish council in May 1987. Naturally I continued on the Tree Group, and I also joined the Footpaths Committee. I think it was still chaired by Cynthia Lawson although she was no longer a parish councillor. For a while the Footpaths did good work untroubled, but after some time a few difficulties arose. I feel it was difficult for Cynthia to promote and defend the committee's actions as a non-councillor. It all came to a head when a review of footpaths that could become bridleways took place. Of the footpaths under review the committee supported the upgrading of at least half of them, while the full council supported the other half! Cynthia and just about all the other co-opted members resigned. Harry Pyle asked if I would try to rescue the situation and take over the chair of an effectively crippled committee that relied heavily on co-opted members. I regarded myself as the Jim Hacker of the parish council because it was not so much as any great skill and experience in such a role as having managed not to upset any of the other councillors or the co-opted members. However, I was determined to make the best of it and was fortunate enough to persuade some of the previous co-opted members back, and reconcile most of the councillors. Before long we had a viable committee again. I was elected chair of Footpaths in January 1989. I had already learnt, at least in part, that the best way to achieve success in any endeavour was with the enthusiastic help of others, and this is the way I tried to run the committee. One of the first achievements was a survey by Gordon Bell and Joe Beswick of all the 110 rights-of-way in the parish of Frodsham: mainly footpaths with a fair number of RUPPs (roads used as public paths) and just a couple of bridleways. This detailed lengths, widths and condition, and highlighted a number of problems that were listed on a hit-list by the committee. Top of the list were a handful of impassable paths. I suppose it took a year or two to finally sort out the 'top twenty', but progress was always seen to be made. Each committee member was assigned a number of paths to monitor and report on. Some did a bit of vegetation clearance with Joe Beswick taking the lead in this respect. It was this background work over many years that enabled Frodsham, with the support of Cheshire County Council, to make all the rights of way in the parish viable options for exercise and enjoyment.

When Viv and I moved to Frodsham we were surprised that there was no 'Walks Around Frodsham' booklet. Most other places nearby had one: I remember that Great Barrow had a fine booklet of walks. About the time I took over the chairmanship I produced a leaflet of a walk around East Frodsham that passed close to our house. This seemed to go down rather well, so I considered the possibility of producing a booklet of about ten walks of varying lengths that covered all parts of the parish. I could have done this myself, but thought it best to be produced by the parish council. I did half a dozen of the walks with other committee members such as Denise Baker, Ethel Barker and Hilda Johns making their own

contributions. I spent quite a bit of time drawing maps, writing up points of interest and taking photographs, then getting advertising and quotes from printers. The first edition came out in 1991 and proved a big success, there being two reprints before it became necessary to do a second edition. This success attracted the attention of Cliff Royle. If I remember correctly he had approached the Frodsham History Society about some ideas concerning walks such as beating the bounds of the Ancient Parish and a walking challenge, but they had not taken up the ideas. However, with the support of Joe Beswick who asked if we would publish the booklet if he wrote it up, it turned out even better than I had hoped because the first effort produced the Frodsham 100 Challenge, pub. 2008.



The booklet contained ten walks that averaged ten miles. Each walk would be led by a team member on a pre-arranged date and every participant could have their attendance signed off that led to a certificate at the end proclaiming they had completed the challenge. Up until then the monthly walks organised by the Footpaths Committee had started to struggle with poor attendance. The 100 challenge was much more successful and was a real bonus for us. We ended up with a celebratory dinner party at the Helter Skelter where certificates were presented. A couple of years later Cliff and Joe produced the Beating the Bounds booklet for the council to publish. Over the years there were always issues to deal with like the campaign to change quite a few miles of footpaths into bridleways, or the closure/diversion of routes for the new dredging lagoon on the marshes. There were a number of

consultations to deal with, and a couple of new initiatives. The first new initiative took place in 2004. At the beginning of that year CCC asked us if we would like to provide two or three guided walks around Frodsham for two county wide walking festivals, the first in April, and the second in September. The committee jumped at this and the struggle was to narrow it down to two or three walks for each event. Then a few weeks later CCC informed us that they could not afford to run two events and that the April one was cancelled. The whole committee agreed that we should do our own Frodsham Festival of Walks; we had the enthusiasm and plenty of ideas, we just needed to raise the money for a promotional leaflet. I managed to get a reasonable sum from CCC and a bit more from VRBC so did not need to ask for much from the full council to cover an unbudgeted item.

The festival was a success, but it was a bit of a slow burn early on. I do not have data from the first couple of years, but in 2006 there was a footfall of 156 people over 12 walks, whilst in 2015 there were just on 500 over 20 walks. We were learning our way as we went along. Initially there were, in the main, three of us organising the event: Anne Pitt (later Anne Scriven), Tony Hinkins and myself. Later we expanded into a sub-committee which included non-council committee members Kath Gee, Susan Kellett, Peter Webley, Anne Shaw. We seemed to have little trouble getting experts to lead themed walks as the event went from strength to strength. The town council soon started to allow us a budget for the event which meant we could produce a colourful leaflet and advertise the festival widely.

I could write a lot of anecdotes about the festival, but there were two that eventually led to another initiative. I was leading a walk from the community centre and had got a short distance up Langdale Way when a man called my attention and explained that he had a heart condition and the road was too steep for him; he was going home! When on another walk that was entitled "Absolute Beginners" which was intended to instruct people how to find their way around Frodsham and footpaths in general, a lady announced that she could not manage to scale Abraham's Leap. She had thought that for beginners it would be a gentle stroll. We were close to an alternative path so I was able to vary the route to suit. It was clear that we needed to be more explicit about the walks and to do risk assessments for

them. This then became a health and safety introduction before every walk. I was also wondering what we could do for those that had some ambulatory problem. It was something of an open door when the committee were approached to see if we would set up a Frodsham Walking for Health Group. This proved a big success and the last I heard (before Coronavirus) the Group were still going strong with even more regular members and the programme extended to offer short and medium walks.

I used to conduct walks away from the Frodsham area once or twice a year. Perhaps the most popular was the "Steam West and Walk East". Being a steam locomotive fireman on the Llangollen Railway meant I was in prime position to organise a trip up the line to Carrog and then walk back over the hills. I tried to do it on days when two steam engines were in operation so that when we had got to the top of the first hill we could see the second steam train arrive and depart from Carrog. Most walks were to the north of the line, but on one occasion we walked back to the south over the Berwyns. I also did a shorter walk to Valle Crucis Abbey and over Velvet Hill, after a trip on the railway of course!

For completeness I should mention at least one of the footpath creation projects we undertook. This arose through a suggestion from Anne Shaw that a diversionary footpath away from the main track from Bradley to the edge of Hob-Hey Wood, which was mostly in the care of Frodsham Town Council, would make a safer route. This was because of horses galloping down the 'bridleway', and that it got very muddy. Because the wood only extends a limited way towards Bradley she said that steps up from the bridleway would be required at the Bradley entrance to the wood.



The diversionary path into Hob Hey Wood from Bradley

It was fair to say that the main track got muddy and that there was a narrow bit on a curve that might be a problem with horses, but I had never seen any horses doing any more than a steady walk. Nevertheless I said I would look at the feasibility. There were signs of a narrow trodden way running parallel to the main track and I was following this when I saw two horses galloping down the bridleway (officially a Restricted Byway). Aficionados may say they were only cantering, but it was enough to persuade me that there was something in Anne's suggestion. The problem was at the Bradley end of the wood the drop down to the track was considerable and would

require many steps angled across the steep embankment. Furthermore, it did not avoid the narrowest part of the bridleway. It was then that I noticed that the fence had a gap in it and that it was clear that people had been walking up the side of the field beyond. It was on set-aside land and the wear in the grass indicated it was well used. It seemed to me that there would be a lot of community benefit if this unofficial path could be preserved. In time, the field may be ploughed up and/or the fence repaired with barbed wire. Accordingly I asked the Wrenches if they would be prepared to sell a strip of land down the side of their field and got a positive answer. The price asked was reasonable, but the problem was that a small area of land commands very similar legal and valuation fees to a large plot, not to mention the cost of fencing it off. Thus there was quite a bit of opposition in the Town Council. Fortunately a majority of councillors could see the community benefit and understood that we were behoved to provide a safe route to our woodland. It was a close call: when I eventually told David and Jane that we were in a position to exchange contracts they were within a week or two of ploughing up the whole field. Contracts were exchanged on 13th March 2009.

The Wood is now managed by a Friends Group and the walk through it continues to be a popular edge-of-town environment and exercise route for the local community.

