

THE BRUNNIN
OF
WESTHOUGHTON (HOWFEN) MILL



A HISTORICAL DRAMA

BY

ERNEST FORD

(by kind permission of Derek McMahon)

With additional Songs poems and dialogue from

Ken Scally & Lawrence Hoy

Introductory narrative

The early 1800's were a turbulent time, Napoleons invasion of Spain in 1807 dragged our armed forces into a vicious war of attrition. This was known as the Peninsular war.

The mechanisation of industry was increased to feed that war. The new technologies were introduced to increase output. The Trade Guilds were hampering this. It would need a state of emergency to remove their power. As the government debated the combination laws the new mill machines were causing unrest and job losses in the cottage industries.

Overture.

A selection of rousing melodies from the production

Narrator

The eve of the Howfen fair 1811. The White Lion public house. Westhoughton. James (Jim) Smith; Thomas (Tom) Kerfoot, and Peter (Pey) Padget, were discussing developments at the mill.

Tom. Come on Pey! Give us a song? Its Howfen fair tomorrow.

Peter Padget, I would sing Tom, if I had the humour! Job Fletcher towd me as owd Rowe the mill owner has installed more power looms. Talk is he wants upwards of 40 power looms installed by next year. It'll mean more tradesmen forced into the mill on low wages.

Tom. Bloody hell! We'll all end up in the Bowton Workhouse at this rate.

Jim. Well then, we might as well have a good Howfen fair before we all end up on the street or the workhouse.

Peter. Well, all reet then, stick a mild beer on't table and I'll oblige thee.

Tom, A pint o mild for Pey, he's remembered his singing voice.

Peter. I want you beggars singing with me or you'll be wearing this pint

All Cheers and laughter

Song 1 Howfen Fair, Collected by Ernest Ford

Chorus All

Neaw lads han yo'fowt, nay wiv not fowt yet
Lets all get together and we'st muster up a set
Wi'st lay our clugs abeawt em.
Wi'st mek em gawp un stare
Wi'st tell um straight they'll at feight if they come t'Howfen fair

Pey

Its twelve months neaw, sin I've bin t'Howfen fair
An if I never goo again I thinks I've had me share
For a mon ats rough an ready and full o plenty sport
It's just the place because theres games on every sort

Tom

I seed a mon maulin' wi some keaws,
one shoved its horn reet through his britches arse
It tossed im up in th'air he coom deawn wi a bump
And weren't he fain fot crawl in th'edge an scrat his britches rump

Jim

I seed a cawf teed up to a rail,
I gid that cawf three whistlers under't tail
I hit that cawf till it could hardly see
I said ast pay thi back fer what thi fayther did to me

Applause and cheers

Tom. That's put the smile back on everybody's face, we can get all the lads without work together for a chat tomorrow. We will have a good fair, then see what we can do about them looms. Look Jobs just walked in. Hey Job! Is it reet about them looms?"

Job. Aye it is Tom, not just power looms, he's looking into one of them new scutching machines and maybe steam powered Jenny's an all.

Tom. See lads, Pey was reet, we need a meeting.

Jim. We are with you Tom. But if that combination law gets tightened up, we could be arrested.

Tom. Thy's reet enough lad but we have to do summat, its autumn 1811, if Rowe installs and has 40 looms rattling away in 1812. We will all be slaves to yonder mill.

Jim. You're reet lad, but we can only tell them who we trust. Let's have another song Pey?

Peter. Aye but thy'll have to get th'ale in again, I can't sing on an empty stomach!

Tom. You owd beggar, Pey! **All laughs**

Narrator

As the winter of 1811 began to bite, more machinery was being installed all over the northern counties of England. More tradesmen forced into mills on low wages. Government agents were said to be stirring up the workers to destroy the new machines. This was to force a state of emergency. Soon a frame breaking law, punishable by death or transportation would be passed. In spite of the laws unrest grew, in early 1812 the attacks on mills intensified. The Luddite uprising had begun.

In the Yorkshire woollen trade, the invention of the shearing frame, ruined the cloth finishers or Croppers. The loss of these cottage industries increased the numbers of the Luddites, who risked hanging and transportation as they destroyed the machines that stole their livelihoods. Nottingham was almost in open rebellion and the trouble began to spread across the Pennines into the cotton towns of Lancashire, as more and more power looms were introduced into the mills.

The Luddite rebellion had reached the Lancashire hinterland.

Song 2 the Luddite anthem

Come, Luddite lads of great renown,
That loves to drink good ale that's brown,
And strike each haughty tyrant down
With hatchet, pike and gun.

Although the specials still advance,
And soldiers nightly round us prance,
The Luddite lads still lead the dance,
With hatchet, pike and gun.

Brave Ned Ludd shall win the day
Cried Luddites as they marched away
With lusty stroke the power looms broke,
With hatchet, pike and gun.

Night after night when all is still,
And the moon is hid behind the hill,
We forward march to do our will,
With hatchet, pike and gun.

Great Enoch he shall lead the van,
Stop him who dares, stop him who can,
Press forward every gallant man,
With hatchet pike and gun

Traditional

Poet with incidental music

In 1812 the neets were cowd
It was a dangerous thing to speak aloud.
No food no work, handlooms stood still
The power of steam came to Howfen mill.

Song 3 The handloom weavers tale

1809 saw the Power looms appear
we had seen good times for many a year
but now we see empty weaving shops
In Atherton and Westhoughton, the trades been stopped

the government's been asked to regulate trade
but that's not how the brass is made
to reject power looms would be unwise
they just don't give a damn about people's lives

the fire was kindled in Westhoughton town
Weavers would not take their handlooms down
Amongst the weavers an oath was made
To band together to save their trade.

Ken scally

Narrator

In the early years of the 19th century the transition from hand loom to power loom weaving was ill timed. A wave of industrial action spread across England, as the suppression of the working classes brought the unrest to boiling point. There were almost 300 capital offences in the penal code. In the years between 1822 and 1832, over 300 people were executed at Lancaster. For offences that today would carry a few months sentence.

The combination laws had made it illegal for groups of two or more to meet and discuss industrial conditions. They could be arrested and charged with plotting against the crown. If found guilty, Hanging or seven years transportation could be the sentence.

Groups of people made sure they were not seen together, they met in open fields or at houses.

Poet with incidental music

At a secret meeting in Peter Padgett's house
Each man was allowed to air his grouse
They joined the Luddites who were led by Ned Ludd
To smash the power looms for the common good

Tom (Angry) I'll tell thee now lads! Summat has to be done; them power looms are doing nowt but tightening the belts of us all.

All Voices of approval. Fair play Tom! Thy are reet. Hear hear. **Etcetera**

Jim. Toms reet thy knows. Why, my oatmeal barrel is so empty, the mice are boycotting my pantry. How my wife manages to stretch it out so long, I'll never know'

Tom. It's with watering it down a bit more every meal, that's how. Its nowt but gruel but thy can't stand by and watch thy childer grow thinner every day.

Jim. Dost thy know lad just ten years since, Weavers wages in Atherton was 13 shillings and 10 pence a week. What are they now?

Tom, glumly. Now our Barry's earning 6 shillings and 4 pence a week, if you average it out, its value today is less than half of what it was, ten years ago. Whilst taxes have just about doubled. Well lads, what sort of country are we living in, when our government allows that to happen?

All Voices of disapproval, Terrible! bloody wicked!

Jim. Well, I know what's causing it at least around here! That bloody mill, and I reckon the cure is in my hands! Them and a sledgehammer.

Job. Angry, And mine Jim! Aye thy are reet lad, smash the damn looms and burn em!

Jim Shouting. Reet! That damn factory has got to go. Now who's for another meeting, a big un! Here in Chowbent.

All. Aye!

(Song) 4 Hand loom Weaver's lament G (Trad)

You gentlemen and tradesmen, that ride about at will,
Look down on these poor people; it's enough to make you crill;
Look down on these poor people, as you ride up and down,
I think there is a God above will bring your pride quite down.

CHORUS: You tyrants of England, your race may soon be run,
You may be brought unto account for what you've sorely done.

When we look on our poor children, it grieves our hearts full sore,
Their clothing it is worn to rags, while we can get no more,
With little in their bellies, they to work must go,
Whilst yours do dress as swanky as monkeys in a show.

You go to church on Sundays, I'm sure it's nought but pride,
There can be no religion where humanity's thrown aside.
If there be a place in heaven, as there is in the Exchange,
Our poor souls must not go there; like lost sheep they must range. **Traditional**

Poet and incidental music

On the 20th of March at Clapper Fowt

Their numbers had swelled from almost nowt

Not another month were allowed to pass.

Before armed men stood again on't grass

Narrator

These meetings were infiltrated by the magistrates' spies known in Lancashire at the time as the Specials. The Specials were under the pay of the government, most likely Joe Nadin an employee of Manchester magistrates who's special constables or bulldogs, were active in both Lancashire and Yorkshire. They seemed to make a point of inciting people to break the law to further their own ends. The names of possible troublemakers were passed to the local militia, and the Special's rewards came in the form of money for the information, capture or arrest of any offender.

Such was the case when on the 20th of March 1812, a man named Sidlow, made a violent speech at a meeting in Clapper Fold in Atherton, known locally as Chowbent. In his speech he advocated the burning of Westhoughton mill. But strange to relate this man was never arrested and soon disappeared from the area.

Song 5 The Handloom weaver

I'm a hand loom weaver all to my trade,
but I can't make no brass these days.
Machines work fast it is very plain,
So, I roam the town for work in vain.

The parson says thee have faith in God,
but he'll not do nowt I wish he could,
So, I've no time for the likes of him.
cause the lord can't stop us growing so thin.

Now Sidlow says we must fight them all,
and swear an oath for the mills downfall.
We'll march along with our heads held high,
and spread our thoughts o'er the country wide.

So, we'll take the oath of General Ludd,
For we are willing to shed our blood.
We'll march with the Luddites with a strong will,
and destroy the looms at Westhoughton mill

Ken Scally

Sidlow. I think you all know me, I'm Sidlow! I think I can safely say that I know most of you lot down there. Faces, faces that's all you are and hungry ones at that! I've listened thee

all ranting on, I've been looking at thy hungry faces and I'll wager there's hungrier faces than thine a whom. Faces that are starved by yon Mill!

Pey Padget. Harken thee Sidlow! I've never seen that face o' thine looking hungry. Where does thy get thy jack bit from, owd lad?

Noises jeers and laughter.

Sidlow. Hey up! you can laugh now can you. That's the trouble with you lot! You can laugh whilst thy kids at home skryke with bally warch, and sickness browt on by hunger! A hunger caused by yon factory. The factory that's eating your livelihoods away

Voice in the crowd. He's reet thy knows! And what dost thy propose then, Mr Sidlow?

Sidlow. There's, a factory o'er there in Westhoughton, that could do with a visit? A factory with Power looms that could be due a tuning, with a sledgehammer and an axe. Who amongst you is with me!

Crowd Cheers

Poet with incidental music

To Westhoughton mill in fours they went

To break the looms, was their intent.

But the soldiers were warned of this attack

They were lying in wait and drove them back.

Narrator

The mob dispersed and returned to their houses of hunger and idle handlooms. A further meeting was planned however, for the 19th of April when they would meet and march to Westhoughton mill. Feeling another betrayal, this march did not take place.

Whilst potato skips lay empty at home, the wheat and oatmeal tubs contents dwindled to such a low level. This level meant that more water was required to make the porridge, facing hunger the luddite group decided to continue with their meetings.

On the 24th of April a much stronger mob of close to 100 persons, many from Bolton gathered. This meeting assembled at Atherton Market Place and immediately proceeded on its mission to destroy the cause of their woes, Westhoughton Mill.

Poet and Incidental music

Now at last things had died down

the mob now stronger had met in town

they marched in fury o'er the hill.

And quickly marched upon the mill.

Sidlow. Come on lads, we are many the soldiers know nowt of us. The Bowton men have joined us in our fight. The Mill its over theer we will give Westhowfen its liveliest neet for years!

Tom. Come on lads, iron bars and hammers to the front! Axes to the rear!

March tune The Handloom weavers lament. Much chanting and shouting two verses.

Poet and Incidental music

No soldiers this time barred the road

There was no muskets there was no sword

No blood was shed up to this time

The mob cried justice is not a crime

Sidlow

We are here! We are here Westhoughton! We have come to destroy the mill and save your trade. Men with the Hammers and iron bars break the doors down!

Banging and cheering

Jim. We can't break through this door! Its barred from the inside!

Job. There's a window here! Break it that will be our breech,

Sound of breaking glass.

Sidlow. Fetch a couple of men on the small side who can get through that gap. Come on lads now! Here, you two! Are you willing to climb through that frame and open the door from the inside.

Chris Metcalf. Aye Sidlow we will. **Grunts,** Sorry Sidlow! We can't get through, There's a young lad over theer! Appen we can put him through window.

Sidlow. Young un! Hats thy name? Con thy get through that window?

Abraham Charlson. Abraham sir, I've a gammy leg I need my crutch?

Chris Metcalf. We'll lift you through and pass you your crutch, you just need to take the bar off the door.

Abraham, I'll try Mr Metcalf. Can you hold my tinderbox Mr Sidlow, it's me Mam's. I daresn't lose it?

Sidlow. Aye lad, I'll look after it for thee, I can leet the tallow with it. On you go and open the doors for us.

Poet and incidental music.

Ten minutes passed inside that door.
As broken machinery piled on the floor.
A tub of tallow come into sightt.
They spread it on't cloth and fetched a light.

Narrator. A cry of triumph echoed around that mill as the fire took hold. Then the lads began to sing the luddite song

Song 6 the Luddite anthem

Come, Luddite lads of great renown,
That loves to drink good ale that's brown,
And strike each haughty tyrant down
With hatchet, pike and gun.

Although the specials still advance,
And soldiers nightly round us prance,
The Luddite lads still lead the dance,
With hatchet, pike and gun.

Brave Ned Ludd shall win the day
Cried Luddites as they marched away
With lusty stroke the power looms broke,
With hatchet, pike and gun. **Traditional**

Narrator. Then the alarm was given, and the mob began to flee.

Tom. Come on lads! make yourselves scarce, them soldiers from Bowton approach, every man for themselves

Poet and incidental music

As flames from that fire, warmed the folks outside.
Soldiers from Bolton began their ride.
But the mob had flown, when they arrived at the spot.
The tempers of the soldiers got really hot.

Sound of soldiers horses.

Jim. Hide in this ditch Tom. The moon will be hidden beyond them clouds soon. We can make a break for it then.

Tom. That moon hiding in the clouds, won't make any difference lad. See o'er yonder, that fires lighting all of the countryside up. We did a gradely job Jim.

Jim. We did it alreet Tom but I saw one of them bloody soldiers pick up young Abraham Charlson.

Tom. Young Abraham? Why that lads only about 12 years owd and struggles to walk, he had nowt to do with us, what have they took a young un for?

Jim. An easy target Tom, they might want to make an example of a young, crippled lad.

Chris Metcalf. I overheard that lads. They cant be that bloody callous.

Jim. I hope not lads?

Poet and incidental music

They rampaged through the houses, turning folk out of their beds.
They bayoneted haystacks, each soldier had seen red'
Dozens were arrested and to Bowton they were took
But were released bout charge, with thirteen left to book.

Narrator

In the following days dozens of men and women were rounded up and sent for trial at Lancaster Assizes. Most were discharged but On the 25th of May the trials began and of the persons arrested and accused only Jacob Fletcher 34, of Atherton. James Smith 31 (Jim) and Thomas Kerfoot 26 (Tom) both of Westhoughton. Along with the lad Abraham Charlson, whose age was stated to be between 12 and 14 were found guilty of the burning. Another nine sentenced to be transported to Australia for seven years for oath swearing, rioting and assisting in the attack, were Christopher Metcalf; James Brierley; John Fisher; James Knowles; Henry Thwaite; Thomas Holden; John Hurst; Samuel Radcliffe and Joseph Greenhalgh.

Poet and incidental music

To Lancaster castle these thirteen were dispatched
To be tried for this burning, it was said they had hatched
then as the bells started loudly clanging
they stood before the judge his gavel banging.

Dialogue Spoken

Judge. As presiding officer, I must have silence. Prisoners! You four have been found guilty of a serious crime. The destruction of a mill and the looms and frames within. for this act you will pay the ultimate cost, and may the Lord have mercy upon thy souls". The sentence of this court is that you will be taken to the place of execution and there hanged by the neck until you are dead.

Mother Charlson. No! My Abraham is just a child. What country murders children on such flimsy evidence.

(Song) 7 The Mothers plea duet (L Hoy) Unaccompanied

Judge

"Silence in court: silence in court
Of me you'll stand in awe
You'll listen to me
Or in contempt you'll be
For I have the force of law
I have the force of law!"

Mother

"Your honour, your honour I beg of you
For mercy unto me
My little lad
No malice he had
Please spare the gallows tree
Spare the gallows tree!"

Judge

"Be silent woman, know your place
Who are you to speak?
Hold your tongue
You do me wrong
No mercy should you seek
No mercy should you seek"

Mother

"Your honour, your honour is justice served
Within the hangman's noose?
What e'er you do
I beg of you

His sentence to reduce
His sentence to reduce”

Judge

“Begone from me. Enough I say
You must no more harangue
You’ve wearied me
With this tiresome plea
The boy shall surely hang
The boy shall surely hang”

Lawrence Hoy

Spoken or Shouted

Mother. You are a murdering blaggard! May you rot in hell!
Spoken. Bailiff arrest the harlot, and throw her in the cells, do not let her see the light of day for two weeks.

Song 8 Abraham Charlson (Lawrence Hoy)

Here’s the story of a crippled boy: Abraham Charlson was his name
Who lagged behind the crowd: the poor boy being lame,
He felt the anger heavy in the air through voices loud and shrill
And he saw the Luddites gather round Westhoughton Cotton Mill

We will take the cruel owner’s mill and smash it to the ground
We’ll fan the flames of hell, and we will burn it down
Though there’s witnesses to mark our deed, there needs be no alarm
We’ll use the flint and tinder from the boy, for he may fear no harm

The deed was done, the fire was lit, the mill burnt to the ground
The men into the shadows went. Soon no-one was around
No witness there could state a name no man there to find
Except for little Abraham, the boy who limped behind

The Sovereign will have his way, justice must be done
Some poor soul he must pay; they must hang someone

The judge he is a cruel man for Abraham there is no hope
And he will face his Judgement Day upon the hangman's rope

Whenever good men of character think of evil that's been done
Remember Abraham, the boy who couldn't run
In innocence he stands condemned, Abraham carries blame
And now he's on the gallows Tree. For the lending of a flame

Lawrence Hoy

Poet with instrumental music

As all Lancashire awaited, the result of this case
The prisoners themselves expected three months disgrace
Then as the bells of the town started loudly clanging.
They found their release was to end in hanging
Another nine luddites faced much trepidation
Their sentence would be transportation
A ten-thousand-mile voyage, then seven years of gloom
For burning the mill and its power looms.

Jim. They would never have got us if it wasn't for the Specials. Those evil Blaggard's. I hope all of them rot in hell.

Tom. They were just after Judas money, that's all they were after, sure It was, "I'll give thee a name if thy'll give me a pound." I hope their ale turns to blood in their mouths.

Abraham whimpers

Tom. What's up lad, they won't go through with it, not a lad like thee any road.

Abraham. Do you think so? Eh Mr. Smith? What do you think. Mr. Kerfoot? **(He screams)** I don't want to die! Mam come and get me!

Tom. Now calm down young un, thy believes in God dost thy?

Abraham. Aye I do Mr. Kerfoot.

Tom. There then lad, if he doesn't need thee, he won't call thee. But if he wants thee to help him out in a better place than this. He'll receive thee with a smile on his face. He'll expect thee to have a smile an all.

Abraham. I'll try Mr. Kerfoot, **(Sobs)** But I want to see my Mam first! **(Screams)** Mam! Mam! Come and get me! I've done nowt wrong!

Jim. They say the damage to the mill amounted to £7,000. Is that reet Tom?

Tom. I don't really know lad. I was ne'er any good at sums and money, not having none o' my own. But if a quarter of that sum would have been spent on putting food in folks' bellies. There would be a lot more lads and lassies above the sods than under em.

Jim. Ne'er mind Tom, some good might come out of all this.

Tom. Dost think so Jim. If thy asks me, it will all be forgotten within a month. What date is it now Jem?

Jim. Fourteenth of June lad, we go down tomorrow!

Abraham. No! No! They can't! I don't want to die; I didn't know what were goin on! Please God save me.

Chris Metcalf. The poor lad, I'll tell thee what Jim! That Sidlow must have been a magistrate spy There's only him knew about Abraham's tinderbox. And guess who never got arrested?

Thomas Holden. You're right Chris Metcalf! Yon Colonel Fletcher who got us Bolton lads to take the oath must have been a spy too. I tried to find him after the we were ambushed on the first attempt, and no one had heard of him.

Jim. You're both right Chris and Thomas, but you and the other eight lads won't fare much better than us from what I've heard. A ten thousand miles voyage and seven years in a penal colony.

Chris Metcalf. Aye Jim, its daunting but it was our choice to do what we did. They are hanging that child, just to show folk they will stop at nothing to keep us down.

Thomas Holden. Very true Chris god help us all. I'll never forget that judge and jury. And the looks of scorn they gave us.

Song 9 Twelve Good Men and True

Said the jury, "Thomas Holden, guilty you must be."
Twelve good men and true
They had asked my view and I told em true, but they still convicted me.
Twelve good men and true

Chorus

And it's hard tack and a broken back Hard tack and a broken back
Seven long years till we all come back
Twelve good men and true Twelve good men and true.

You must speak to Colonel Fletcher and tell him of my plight
Twelve good men and true
To poor men like me a good friend he'll be, and he will make things right
Twelve good men and true.

We are crowded down below the decks and there we all must stay
Twelve good men and true
And we dare not speak nor mercy seek while we sail to Botany Bay
Twelve good men and true

Now the rationing is harsh and strict, and we lie here all forlorn
Twelve good men and true
There's no fresh meat nor bread to eat and we wish we'd never been born
Twelve good men and true

Oh, I wish that Colonel Fletcher was lying here in chains
Twelve good men and true
For he did not try, he left me to die, down here in grief and pain
Twelve good men and true

If those twelve men were to visit, here's my plan I'll give to you
Twelve good men and true
Take them down below decks and stretch their necks. That's what I would do to
Twelve good men and true.

Lawrence Hoy

Narrator

Thomas Holden Christopher Metcalf and the other seven were imprisoned at Lancaster until June the 18th. Then Thomas Holden wrote to his wife.

My Dearest wife.

I regret to inform you I am leaving for Portsmouth as of tomorrow morning, but I hope to meet again when innocence will be rewarded. I cannot say I go in good spirits, on account of leaving my native country on this false charge that has been said against me. It is very hard that innocence should suffer in this manner with leaving my family like this, never more to see my native shore.

Thomas Holden

They were taken to Portsmouth harbour and incarcerated aboard the prison hulk HMS Portland, until November 1812. They were transferred onto the convict ship the Fortune, for transportation

Poet and incidental music

That lad Abraham Charlson cried for his mam
As he was led to the slaughter like an innocent lamb
And on the 15th of June these four paid the bill
For the burning that happened at Westthoughton mill.
It was early November eighteen hundred and twelve

The other nine were transported to a living hell
On the shores of place, that they called Botany Bay
Where those poor lads would live out their last days.

Narrator

The Luddites had allies in high places, but no one could stop the march of the industrialization and the march of technology. Even the poet Lord Byron made pleas for clemency for the cottage industry artisans in their desperate, actions to save their trades.

Poet and incidental music

Luddite

The poet Lord Byron circa 1812

As the Liberty lads o'er the sea,
Bought their freedom, and dearly with blood,
So we, boys, we will die fighting, or live free,
And down with all kings by Ned Ludd!

When the web that we weave is complete,
And the shuttle exchanged for the sword,
We will fling the winding sheet
O'er the despot at our feet,

And dye it deep in the gore he has poured.
Though black as his heart its hue,
Since his veins are corrupted to mud, yet this is the dew
Which the tree shall renew.
The seed of Liberty, planted by Ned Ludd!

Narrator

To summarise, the machinery and much of the mill was destroyed. In the following days dozens of men and women were rounded up and sent for trial at Lancaster Assizes. Most were discharged but Job Fletcher, James Smith, Thomas Kerfoot and Abraham Charlson who was only 12, were found guilty and were hanged for the burning. nine other men were transported to Australia for lesser offences assisting and riot

The nine men deported to Australia for seven years were Christopher Metcalf; James Brierley; John Fisher; James Knowles; Henry Thwaite; Thomas Holden; John Hurst; Samuel Radcliffe and Joseph Greenhalgh.

They all hailed from Howfen, Chowbent, and Bolton.

Finale

Song 10 Raise up a glass for the Luddites

It was the year of 1812, the nights they were cowed
It was a dangerous thing, just to think aloud
the handloom weavers were idle, who used to be proud
So, raise up a glass to those the Luddites.
Who fought for their trades to the end

Across Lancashire, Yorkshire, and Nottingham too.
Machines forced out tradesmen, from the trades that they knew
they gathered axes and hammers and knew what to do.
So, raise up a glass to those Luddites.
Who fought for their trades to the end

Them who escaped the noose, they soon cursed their plea
They found that their homeland, never again they would see
Transported seven years, in a land beyond the sea
So, raise up a glass to those Luddites.
Who fought for their trades to the end

And now my dear friends, sure I feel I could cry
To see those poor tradesmen, on the gallows so high
So proudly they lived, and so cruelly they died
So, raise up a glass to those Luddites.
Who fought for their trades to the end **Ken Scally**

Narrator

**This work was based on the poem the Brunnin of Howfen mill and its related dialogue.
Written by the late Ernest Ford. circa 1979.**

Additional songs, poems, and dialogue from Lawrence Hoy and Ken Scally

Traditional material collected by Ernest Ford and Ken Scally.

The End

This is an amazing contribution from Ken Battersby, 3rd great grandson of Christopher Metcalf, one of 200 convicts transported on the Fortune, November 1812

My 3rd Great Grandfather Christopher Metcalf (sometimes spelled Medcalf in the records), who was a tailor by trade and who was one of the Luddites involved in burning down Westhoughton Cotton Mill in 1812. As a result, he was transported to Australia for 7 years for his actions and died there in 1831. You asked me if I could email you more information about him.

I am directly descended from Christopher Metcalf (my 3rd Great Grandfather) through his daughter Ellen Metcalf (my 2nd Great Grandmother) who was born at Clapham (Yorkshire) in 1798 - before Christopher Metcalf was transported. Ellen Metcalf married William Charnley and they had a daughter Fanny Medcalf Charnley (born 1837). Fanny married Richard Battersby who is my Great-Grandfather.

My father (also Richard Battersby) was always a staunch union man, supporting workers' rights in the shipbuilding industry but, as far as I am aware, he never resorted to burning down shipyards!! Instead, being a shop steward for most of his working life, he stuck to picketing and peaceful strike action. I do now wonder though whether his interest in trade unions and workers' rights is inherited through Christopher Metcalf's DNA.

There is a display in Lancaster Castle Museum about a certain Thomas Holden – a luddite who was also involved in the attack on the mill. I have found a reference (see below) to Christopher living in Foundry Square (apparently now the market in Black Horse Street) and Thomas Holden living at Hag End near Bolton. If Foundry Square is the one in Bolton, it means that both Christopher Metcalf and Thomas Holden, both heavily involved in the Luddite movement, lived only about a mile from each other and they were transported to Australia on the same ship (HMS Fortune) in November 1812 so I think it would therefore be safe to assume that they probably knew each other quite well. According to Lancaster Castle Museum, after being found guilty they would be made to walk all the way, wearing heavy irons, from Lancaster Prison to a prison hulk (Perseus) in Portsmouth, before eventually being transferred to HMS Fortune for transportation to Australia, arriving in June 1813 after a voyage of 7 months, arrival in Australia marking the start of their 7-year sentence. Christopher Metcalf died in Australia in 1831 in Liverpool Hospital, Sydney, which was built using convict labour and run as a hospital for soldiers and convicts. Presumably he never returned to England, and I can find no record of him having any other family in Australia, so I can only assume he died alone and in poverty.

Ken Battersby Millom

The Home office record for Christopher Metcalf, one of 200 convicts transported on the Fortune, November 1812

Name, Aliases & Gender

Name:	Christopher Metcalf
Aliases:	none
Gender:	m

Birth, Occupation & Death

Date of Birth:	1770
Occupation:	Tailor
Date of Death:	1831
Age:	61 years

Sentenced to 7 years

Crime:	Rioting
Convicted at:	Lancaster Session of Pleas
Sentence term:	7 years
Ship:	Fortune
Departure date:	November, 1812
Arrival date:	11th June, 1813
Place of arrival:	New South Wales
Passenger manifest:	Travelled with 199 other convicts

References

Primary source:	Australian Joint Copying Project. Microfilm Roll 87, Class and Piece Number HO1 1/2, Page Number 84. UK Prison Hulk Registers (HO9/8).
Source description:	This record is one of the entries in the British convict transportation registers 1787-1867 database compiled by State Library of Queensland from the British Home Office

The late Ernest Ford writer and poet

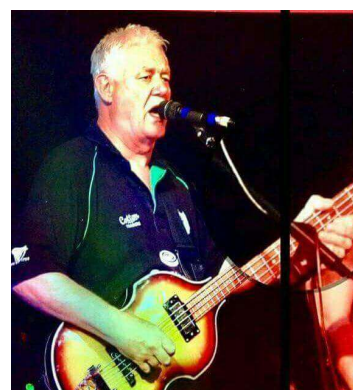


DIALECT poet, songwriter, scriptwriter, artist, playwright or amateur historian - call him what you want, but Ernest Ford was good at it. The popular Westhoughton author and poet, died, aged 76, in October 2006 and left a hefty contribution to Lancashire life. Ernest Ford was famed for his poetry, prose and comedy written in his hometown dialect. We are not sure if Ernest published this work, and if it was ever performed. But with the permission of his family especially Derek McMahon, we hope to bring it to life. Ernie gave me a copy of his first draft back in the early 1980's when he worked at Gulick Dobson. In Higher Ince, I found it in my attic when going through some old documents. We just had to have a go at it. I Ken Scally, along with my great friend and many times musical collaborator Lawrence Hoy, another prominent folk singer, writer, and teacher in Wigan. I am sure we can.

A special mention to Ken Battersby of Millom whose 3rd Great Grandfather was transported to Australia for his part in the destruction of Westhoughton mill. The documents Ken Battersby provided, were a great asset. Lawrence had covered Thomas Holden in an earlier production, "Beyond the seas." the link was amazing and very helpful.



Ken Scally
Local musician and writer



Lawrence Hoy
Local musician and writer