

The Destruction of Birkacre Mill

KENNETH J SCALLY



The Destruction on Birkacre Mill

The attack on Arkwright's spinning frames

**A Novella by
Kenneth J Scally**

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Foreword

This is a work of fiction based on actual events. Events which led to the cotton spinning riots of 1779 and the destruction of Arkwright's spinning mill at Birkacre. Sir Robert Peels spinning mills at Altham and Brookside, were also destroyed in this series of attacks. The historical journals only pay lip service to the events, even though many of the biggest names in textiles, were forced out of the county palatine by these gangs of frame breakers. These included Sir Robert Peel and Richard Arkwright.

The events centre around Richard Arkwright, leasing the mill complex at Birkacre and the furore caused by the introduction of mechanised spinning and carding machines. In some books there are no mentions of Birkacre at all. The events at Birkacre were only eclipsed in the Luddite rebellions of 1811-1812, that was over thirty years in the future. This story has everything factual I could discover. Then I have created characters, their lives loves and aspirations, I also tried to add the fear, the excitement, and the drama, through dialogue to link the events together. At all times I have tried not to judge and show empathy to both sides.

The destruction of Birkacre Mill

Chapter One

A golden opportunity

Richard Arkwright was an English inventor with great entrepreneurial skills, he was one of the leading lights of the early Industrial Revolution. He was credited as the driving force behind the development of the spinning frame, it was also known as the water frame, after it was adapted to use waterpower. He also patented a rotary carding engine to convert raw cotton to "cotton lap" prior to spinning. Although he held the patents for the water frame, he had used elements from both the Crompton's mule and the spinning Jenny of Hargreaves. He was one of the first to develop the ideas of mass production in mills, with the factories housing both mechanised carding and spinning operations. After the success of his first mill at Cromford he decided to make a more efficient mill, which was designed for greater production using semi-skilled labour. This was a success, soon afterwards he built mills at Bakewell, and Wirksworth. His success as a businessman and innovator was widely recognized in his own time.

After there had been several mills attacked in Nottingham, by frame breakers, Richard Arkwright decided he needed a place out of the way, to refine his ideas. He had been discussing these ideas with some of his investors, Thomas Walshman and John Cross, Thomas had just returned to Cromford from Manchester, after meeting with fellow industrialists, he was always eyeing up new opportunities. He entered the Cromford Mill offices' and jovially approached Richard Arkwright's clerk, Miss Blake.

"Excuse me Miss Blake, may I speak to Richard?"

"Bear with me Mr Walshman, I will check if he is free?" she scurried to Arkwright's office.

"Excuse me sir, Mr Walshman wishes to speak to you?"

"Please bring him through Miss Blake?"

"Certainly, Mr Arkwright." She quickly left the office, returning with Thomas Walshman.

"Thomas old friend, how can I be of assistance?"

"I think I can be of assistance to you, remember our conversation on acquiring a quiet back water to try out some new innovations." Richard smiled.

"Miss Blake, could you bring refreshments please? Oh, and a decanter of Brandy."

"Certainly, sir."

"Pray be seated Thomas."

The handshakes and pleasantries were exchanged, and Miss Blake returned with the refreshments.

"Brandy sir?" she enquired.

"Yes, indeed Miss Blake." said the visiting entrepreneur, the young lady poured the drinks.

“What is the news that brings you directly from Manchester to Cromford?”

“After my meetings I had dined, with the estate manager of the Earl of Balcarres’s estate at Wigan. He told me of an industrial complex on the banks of the river Yarrow, which is near Chorley. It comprised of a textile mill, a corn mill, a coal mine, and two forges. It is owned by John Chadwick of Birkacre, Apparently, he bought the estate of Burgh and Birkacre in 1727. In a short time, there was a busy iron working industry in the Birkacre Valley. The forges were named Higher and Lower Forge and the mill was for the making of iron bars. The machinery for these splendid iron works was driven by waterpower. the mill was later adapted for spinning.”

“Well how much does he want for it?”

“This may be advantageous to you Richard, he requires an income from the land, so he will require a lease contract.”

“Splendid Thomas, it is even better, use it for as long as we need it then walk away. I should imagine a three-year lease will be all we need.”

“Just as I was thinking Richard.”

“Let us get the others together and we shall visit Lancashire. I was born and bred in Preston it is less than ten miles from my family home.”

Richard and Thomas convened a meeting with fellow investors, Jedediah Strutt, Samuel Need and John Cross. Jedediah had to decline to travel due to pressing matters in Stoke on Trent, but the others all readily agreed to go. They decided to stay with the Standish’s of Duxbury. Richard was originally from Preston and formerly had a friendship with Sir Frank Standish, at the time of the 1768 Preston parliamentary election. Sir Frank had been elected for one of the Preston seats and with Birkacre being in the Parish of Standish, it was important not to be seen, as interlopers. The local landowners could often be very territorial beasts, therefore, a friendship with Duxbury Hall could be advantageous. Correspondence went to and from, and the arrangements were made. The transport was organised, and the Standish family was pleased to welcome old friends. Birkacre could also be a lucrative investment for them, as they also owned the mineral rights for the ore and the coal mine. John Chadwick, who had developed the industry at Birkacre, was a man who would be classed amongst the growing group of industrial entrepreneurs. He was a man who had a finger in all sorts of enterprises, coal mines, metalworking, textiles, and agriculture. He even had several ships sailing out of Liverpool, probably exporting the results of his enterprises. Unfortunately, he had some health issues, he thought it was time to slow down a little. The mill had already been converted to spinning, which would be a bonus for Richard Arkwright. The venture was looking to be a potential success.

The Party set off at dawn by coach, the journey would require an overnight stop at Salford, before carrying on to Duxbury. They had been booked into the Black Horse coaching Inn, via a business colleague, George Forshaw. George called into the Black Horse to wish them well with the venture, he also warned that the practice of frame breaking had spread into

Manchester. This was a trend prevalent in the areas where there were many handloom weavers and spinsters operating, they were suspicious of mills and mass production. They saw the machines and the mills as the enemy of their livelihoods. Eventually the conversation got on to the more amicable subjects of food and drink. By the time George's pre booked Hansom cab arrived, the group of industrial pioneers were well refreshed. The following morning after a hearty breakfast to clear the heads, the coach set out for Duxbury Hall. It was a pleasant trip, the driver and guard had two pistols each and each of the passengers had a pistol. Highway men and footpad's had been numerous in the Salford area, defence was a priority.

As the coach trundled along through the rolling countryside of south Lancashire. The lovely west Pennine moors provided a stunning backdrop to the scenery to the right. Whilst to the left lay rich farmland. They passed through the hamlet of Farnworth, had refreshments at Bolton at the famous Old Man and Scythe coaching house. They then carried on the road to Chorley, they arrived at the village of Adlington mid-afternoon. Then they only had around three miles to go. As they approached the Yarrow bridge, they saw the estate gates of the Duxbury, we are almost at our journeys end my friends called Richard Arkwright.

Chapter Two

Duxbury hall.

Duxbury Hall was built in the Elizabethan style, a stone base, an exposed timber frame with a rendered brick infill. It had been the home of the Standish family for many decades since they acquired it from the Duxbury family. It was believed to be the birthplace of the Pilgrim fathers military commander, Myles Standish of the Mayflower. The family were related to the Standish family of Standish Hall, roughly seven miles away. Always well to do, members of both households represented the Lancashire towns, of Wigan and Preston in parliament. The current occupier of the hall Sir Frank Standish, Baronet, had been elected as MP for Preston in the infamous election of 1768. Richard Arkwright had been barred from voting in the gerrymandering which occurred, and he subsequently left Preston. It would be good to recount tales with an old friend.

The coach arrived at Duxbury Hall; the footmen were expecting them. After a courteous greeting, the footmen immediately began to unload the coach. Sir Frank hurried over to them.

“Richard old friend, lovely to see you!” gushed Sir Frank. “Come introduce me to your friends.”

“I certainly will Frank, these fine gentlemen are, Thomas Walshman, Samuel Need and John Cross.” Sir Frank shook their hands eagerly.

“Come gentlemen, I have refreshments awaiting your pleasure. I have also taken the liberty of inviting John Chadwick to dinner. then you can get acquainted with him. You will be able to view the property’s tomorrow.”

“Splendid Frank you didn’t let the grass grow under your feet.”

“Not in my nature Richard, anyway, I may have good income to invest. I want to see the play unfold.”

“Always the shrewd one Frank.”

“Enough tittle tattle gentlemen, I have fine tobacco and Brandy for your delectation. Pray come to the drawing room.” The industrialists followed in Sir Franks wake.

The meal was a simple rustic affair, a soup of seasonal vegetables, Game pie followed by an apple pie and cream dessert. It was a welcome repast, and more suited to the palettes of these self-made men, than the pseudo continental fare common in the cities. The conversation was cordial, John Chadwick did not suffer fools lightly. He was facing his final years and wished to enjoy them, at this stage in his life he would settle for a fair deal. His priority was to guarantee his self a decent income. The Port and Brandy got the tongues wagging, Sir Frank could not contain himself.

“What of that wretched election of 1768 Richard, do you know gentlemen, the scoundrels would not let Richard vote! The blaggard’s had no right to do that. He had been made a freeman of Preston, and they denied him, and a good few more stout men their rights. Those two

blaggard's Colonel Burgoyne and Sir Henry Houghton! They were unhappy with the canvass, so they both brought gangs of toughs into town."

"Do you remember when we went into the Eagle and child to drum up support for our cause, Houghton's toughs came in and attacked us."

"I do indeed my lad, we had to fight our way out of that tight corner!" Sir Frank let out a huge guffaw.

"Both parties had brought crowds of roughnecks into the town from the surrounding neighbourhood. If I would have known that they were bringing bands of brigands to disrupt our campaign. I would have brought two dozen Coppull colliers from my Pits. they would have put them in their place. Aye, they would have scattered Burgoyne and Houghton's men, without a bye your leave. The town was rife with intimidation, cruel threats, cajolery, and gross bribery. When many honest and true men stood against them, the roughnecks did no more but turn their hands to rioting and bloodshed. They were a disgrace!"

"And were we not also a disgrace Frank! There was so many fellows of gentle temperament decamped the Tavern when the trouble started, and was there not so many bottles of wine and fine brandy alone on the tables? We availed ourselves of them, as not to waste such fine liquor, we were quite intoxicated to say the least."

"We were indeed Richard, I had some great experiences in my tenure as an MP, I had some troubling times too."

"I'll have you know. This fellow here was a thorn in my side, during my time as a member of the house, where you not, John Chadwick?"

"Indeed, I was Frank, I couldn't let you go into parliament to sit on your arse! Not when you pledged to stand up for your voters."

Everyone laughed. John Chadwick turned to Richard.

"Mr Arkwright you have impressed me with your managerial skills, your vision, and your manner. I think we will be good for each other, could you and your friends come and view my premises at noon tomorrow?"

"We most certainly can Mr Chadwick." They shook hands.

"I must be away now gentlemen, there is no need to come before noon, Sir Frank can be a very thirsty gentleman in good company, I fear you will need your rest." Sir Frank laughed loud and strong.

"I am sure you are right sir." replied Standish. He called for his butler.

"Mr Johnson! Would you kindly tell Mr Chadwick's footman to ready the carriage, and then you may get a drink for the staff? The tidying of this room can wait until the morning."

"Thank you, sir I will." John Chadwick was soon on his way and the room was filled with tall tales and reminiscences of both daring and dastardly deeds.

Chapter Three

The Birkacre site.

After a breakfast and a walk around the grounds, Richard sat with Sir Frank in the drawing room.

“You do know Richard, they call you the Cotton King, yet you aren’t from an engineering background. Come tell me your story, most people love a rags to riches tale. I fear it was snobbery about your early years that barred you from the sixty-eight election. Although your outstanding work in textiles, resulted in you being made a freeman of the borough. Come on lad I want to know the man I may do business with?”

“It’s a long story Frank, I was the youngest of thirteen children. Only seven of us made it to adults. My dad was a struggling tailor, he struggled along and worked hard but ne’er did well. I think it was his trade that gave me a love of fabrics, but my desire for wealth was driven by childhood poverty. My cousin Ellen taught me to read, write and cipher. She really put my foot on the first rung.”

“Fascinating my boy, you really did have it tough. No wonder that lot from Preston looked down on you. Tell me Richard, how did you end up in textiles?”

“It was a long journey, Frank; my first job was an apprentice barber. I ended up with a small barber’s shop and got married to my first wife Charlotte, she died in childbirth. I was devastated, I was nearly lost. After I had overcome my demons, I decided to have a break from Preston and try and set a business up elsewhere to get my life sorted out. I labelled myself a hairdresser and went into wig making, I was quite successful, that was when I married Margaret in sixty-one.”

“This is so fascinating Richard, so how does a Barber who makes wigs, get into cotton spinning? No do not tell me yet, I will get Johnson to bring us tea. Johnson!”

Mr. Johnson came back with the refreshments and a couple of pipes. Sir Frank thanked him then turned to Richard.

“I had been traveling around the north of England, I had been collecting hair for wigs. When I came across a dyeing process for outdoor clothes. I felt that I could utilise the process for tinting the hair colour and more importantly, it would make the wigs waterproof. It was a process from the textile industry, which my father’s trade was a part of. So, I then began to study spinning and weaving techniques. I was making drawings copying and studying the workings of the spinning machines. At the same time, the waterproof wigs were quite successful and were making me good income. The profit enabled me to make a prototype of my first water frame. I was improving designs and merging technologies. It seemed to be a gift I had, I also secured patents on the frames.”

“A splendid job my good man if you do not mind me saying so. What gave you the idea for the Mill?”

“In 1771 myself and Jedediah Strutt; had the idea of a water powered factory on the banks of the River Derwent in Cromford, Derbyshire. The spinning frame was a great success in the cottage industry, but if we could have hundreds of frames driven by a great water wheel, the thread we created would bring great wealth. The gearing we designed from the water wheel, successfully worked my machine, Now, that it was powered by water, it became known as the Water-Frame. There was one more piece needed, to complete the jigsaw.”

“What would that be Richard?”

“Enough loyal workers to fulfil my ambitions. I copied the methods of the silk mills, bringing trained workers into one workplace. I built tied cottages close to the factory, I then moved the workforce into them, but only young families. That meant that the men, women and, especially the children, could all work together in the mill. Their rent was deducted from the wages, therefore, no rent arrears. A portion of the wage was paid as a tommy note for the mill shop, which I owned. That immediately stopped the husband drinking away the wage. Thus, allowing the wife to feed the family. I am also thinking of having a school connected to the mill, the children can work half time. Their time split between school and mill, giving them a basic education in reading writing and cyphering. In my opinion the educated worker is a valuable worker.”

“I fear it will not be long before you are also called Sir. I feel a knighthood may beckon you. Enough of this now, even though your exploits have been so inspiring. It is time for Birkacre.”

Sir Frank summoned the coach, the party was assembled. They made their way to Birkacre; it was a beautiful setting in a lovely verdant wooded valley. The river Yarrow was rattling its way from the west Pennine moors to the Lancashire plain, the weir had been made for the mill and forge complex, otherwise the valley was mainly unspoiled. The industrial buildings were quite substantial there were also tied cottages. Some at Birkacre and more at Coppull. Arkwright was quite pleased with what he saw. They were met by John Chadwick.

“Greetings Mr Arkwright; I pray you and your companions are well after a decent slumber.”

“Indeed, we are Mr Chadwick, after an arduous journey, good food, fine wine, excellent company and conversation, we could not fail to sleep restfully.”

“Ah, I see Sir Frank is with us?”

“What do they say at the country fairs Mr Chadwick; there is no show without Mr Punch!”

They both laughed heartily. And went to inspect the properties.

The cotton mill was the first to be inspected, it was just what he required. First a scutching room, which would accommodate his new roller carding machines. The latest addition to the Arkwright family of industrial machines, were almost identical to the Lewis Paul carding machines, which he had modified, improving their ability to disentangle, clean

and intermix fibres. He had quickly patented his so-called invention that year. Looking at the building, he was planning to have a mixture of Water frames and Jenny's. It was just a matter of modifying the gearing and the belting. He would inherit the staff of Chadwick's in the mill, he could retrain and utilise good metalworkers from the forges, then in a couple of months they would become experienced multi skilled tacklers in the mill. He would bring some experienced men from Cromford to help the transition. The supply and customer chain would be the same as it was under John Chadwick. Then it would be expanded, as output rose. They got down to negotiation. John Chadwick wanted one hundred and eighty pounds, for a three-year lease. Arkwright refused to pay over One hundred and fifty, after much haggling they shook hands toasted each other's health. He leased the new cotton mill, the higher and lower forges, a corn mill, three ponds and several fields at a total rent of £151 per annum. Arkwright's Birkacre mill was born. Mr Chadwick would be employed in an advisory role for six months. the deed was signed and witnessed by Hilkieah Lawson, Esquire, attorney-at-law, Under-Sheriff for the Southern Division of the county of Lancashire. A likeable character, who had brought his wife Nancy. The legalities over it was time to retire to the Kings Head, for ale and porter. The Landlord had fine wines ready just in case ladies were present. If he could solve a few gearing questions, Richard Arkwright would be the first man in Lancashire with both mechanised carding and spinning operations.

Academics began to question the factory system; two polarised camps were beginning to emerge, industrialists against the supporters of craftsmen and artisans. The notable reformer and anti-factory campaigner, Ralph Mather, after a long study on life in factories for women and children, published a report detailing Arkwright's new factory system:

"Arkwright's machines require so few hands, and of those only children. With the assistance of an over-looker, a child can produce as much thread as would upon an average ten adult skilled spinners. He did also utilise Jennies for spinning with one hundred or two hundred spindles, or more. These would be going all at once, requiring but one person to manage them. Within the space of ten years, from being a poor man worth five pounds, Richard Arkwright had purchased an estate worth over £20,000. Whilst thousands of women and children, when they can get work, must make a long twelve-hour day to card, spin, and reel 5040 yards of cotton. For this arduous labour, they have, but four-pence or five-pence and no more."

The mood of the people was darkening, anger and unrest was growing in the county of Lancashire. and reports like this did nothing to suppress the anger and resentment. In fact, they only exacerbated the situation.

Chapter Four

Production starts, unrest begins.

Richard Arkwright's mill was soon going to full capacity, but rivals were spying on his working practices. His employees were working over twelve hours a day from six in the morning until seven at night. They claimed he employed children as young as six years old, it was said he had a disdain in employing those over forty years. This was to get families into his cottages and have the whole family unit working in the mill. Accidents did happen, and fatalities occurred. This transition to mill life put many of the domestic manufacturers out of business or decreased their earnings. This caused much hardship putting pressure on the parish, which was the poor relief fund. To strengthen his position against his many competitors, Arkwright obtained a "grand patent" in 1775, which he hoped would consolidate his position within the fast-growing cotton industry. Public opinion, however, was bitterly hostile to exclusive patents, with a petition sent up to Parliament, from domestic textile workers.

Arkwright was intensely unpopular with other manufacturers; they were suspicious of his patents and suspected him of plagiarism. It also transpired that the town councils and the landed class, were afraid that the poor rates would be burdened with persons thrown out of work by the new inventions. At Wigan, the local magistrates, the towns principal inhabitants, and the cotton manufacturers met and agreed to suspend the use of all machines and engines worked by water or horses for carding, roving, or spinning, till the determination of Parliament on the subject was known. The Quarter Sessions at Preston, however, passed resolutions on the advantages of machinery. Citing the dangers of competition from other counties if its progress were checked.

The move by many groups to try and stop the spread of the factory system, led to the onset of a particularly violent period. This culminated in gangs of machine wreckers, on the move looking for the patent engines, which were affecting domestic trade. The resolutions of the magistrates and manufacturers of Wigan declared that the work produced by machines was inferior to hand work, and called the machines a mere monopoly, for the immense "Profits and Advantages of the Patentees and Proprietors." None of this mattered to Arkwright, he had walked into an existing supply and distribution network with even shipping available from Liverpool. He had a ready-made experienced staff, and skilled smiths. His modified spinning frames and carding frames were a success, it was a time for joy with Arkwright and his investors.

The complaints against the entrepreneurs did not slow down the march of technology, instead it was the opposite. For as the innovations became more reliable, the machine use expanded. The increase was so widespread and rapid. the textile industry became the driving force of the industrial revolution. It seemed nothing could stop the road to mechanisation. The petition to parliament was a noble attempt of working people peacefully putting their views to the government, but as this commentator wrote, it was a forlorn hope.

“The petition to parliament was interesting, as it is perhaps the only document expressing the workers' opinions about the new changes. The petitioners explain that in addition to the distress caused by the American colonial dispute and the war with Spain, these events have caused a casual Diminution of Commerce. This mechanisation is domestic evil of very great magnitude, it has sprung up during the last few years in the form of the introduction of patent machines. These innovations are threatening the petitioners with a total loss of employment. They do not hesitate to avow their share in the Riots. Last September, they declared, their sufferings became so 'intolerable as to reduce them to despair, and many thousands assembled in different parts to destroy the causes of their distress. By demolishing one of the largest patent machines together with some smaller ones.”

It was evident there could possibly be an explosion of anger and violence in the areas where there was widespread domestic spinning and weaving. The anger would be focussed on the large spinning mills.

Chapter Five

Life in the mill.

John Hall had been employed at the mill as a tackler or frame mechanic. he was a former yeomanry sergeant and farrier who apprenticed as a smith. He was employed by Birkacre, well before Chadwick had sold the leases to Arkwright. He had been granted a tied cottage with his wife Elizabeth and daughter Kate. Under the new regime the only way they could keep the house was, with all three of them working at the mill. It was a scenario that was repeated all over the Birkacre valley. Arkwright had an insatiable thirst for profit. With his water frames, he could spin the yarn so fast that the supply of the raw cotton could not be sufficiently replenished. The break down was in the scutching and carding. Once the primary process as speeded up, the supply of raw materials and the spinning process, would all fall into place. The shifts were between ten and twelve hours long, the child workers were struggling.

“It’s not right John that little lass of ours, grafting for ten hours, when he took over, he said there would be schooling for them.”

“You have said nowt wrong Lizzie, those bold promises have come to nowt. I will see the lads in the pub after church on Sunday.”

“Aye, and I will see the mothers in the mill, see if I can organise them to get their men at the pub and attend the meeting. We need Arkwright to get the school going.”

“We will have to go now love I am at the higher forge today; you and Kate better get to the Mill. I might see you in the mill yard for a bite to eat?”

“Aye I will see thee later in the mill yard lad.” The Hall family set off to their respective workplaces, in the pre-dawn darkness.

There were many mutterings that day, the people looked with optimism at the tenure ship of Arkwright. But the dream employer to some, was becoming a nightmare. There had been a few children injured already, luckily none were serious. The work force would be happy with the half time idea. They thought the dream of educated children was becoming a reality. It was rapidly becoming a pipe dream again, there seemed to be enough participants for a meeting. All was quiet until Sunday after the service, the men walked over to the King’s head where they met to exchange views. All attendees seemed in agreement, for the school and shorter hours for the children. It was felt that it was wise to win one concession first, the children’s health was most important. John Hall volunteered to be a spokesman as did Bill Walmsley and Edward Halsall, they would request a meeting on Monday. The talk went into a chat about the industry, Tommy Sharples chipped in a few thoughts.

“I have heard a few things from Wigan, most of my family are there. There are tales that over in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and now Lancashire, there are groups of frame breakers roaming. They are domestic workers their trades are being lost to the new machines. They smashes them to keep their trades alive. If Birkacre was attacked he would

want us to help defend it, so he should educate our kids for us like he promised!” the lads cheered.

“I’ve never heard of these frame breakers Tommy?”

“Oh aye, why do you think he left Derbyshire, because he thinks we’re nicer folk?”

“It does make sense Tommy.”

“And I’ll tell you something else I know, John Hall.”

“What is that, Tommy?”

“Wiggin Borough have banned Jenny’s with a capacity of more than twenty spindles.”

“Because the domestic spinners can normally keep up with that, so it is to protect domestic spinners. They don’t want poor folk thrown out on the street, if they are rendered destitute the parish must fund those poor souls. They do not want to do that, but the real reason is, if they allow the big jenny’s the frame breakers may pay a visit. A few burnt out mills are not good for the towns economy.”

John Hall sat stroking his chin for a moment, he was deep in thought about Tommy Sharples words.

“I can definitely see the logic of your words Tommy. Is that how you really see the situation, as it stands?”

“Aye it is John, the Wiganers wish to keep the domestic spinners in business, as well as allowing the factories to remain profitable. That would appease the Frame Breakers.”

“So, if Arkwright floods the market with his yarns and wefts, the domestic spinners and the mills obeying the instruction will all suffer?”

“Along with the towns prosperity John.”

“So, I would say Tommy, neither side likes Arkwright?”

“Very true John, he has been a wanderer for years, spying, copying stealing the ideas of others and throughout his wanderings, he has left in his train of dark designs, a wake of desperate men. Men who have chosen secretly, to meet and rise up with fire and gunpowder. Their aim is for the ruin of Richard Arkwright and his inventions. Which are the machines and frames that undermine tradesmen and artisans, those machines are also bringing misery to those forced to work for him. It will not be long before he harnesses the power of the river to the loom. Thereby casting the hand loom weavers onto the street, they will then be forced to trudge to the mill for a pittance!”

“Thank you, Tommy, you have given me inspiration for our meeting with Arkwright.”

The following morning at nine o’clock, they met at the mill yard. There was John Hall, Bill Walmsley, and Edward Halsall. they saw Richard Arkwright entering the Mill yard, they approached him.

“Good morning, Mr Arkwright I am John Hall, this is Bill Walmsley and Edward Halsall. We are all your employees and tenants. Our wives and children also work in the mill. We have word of frame breakers being active in parts of Lancashire, could we speak on this matter?”

“Certainly, men, follow me to my office,”

“Pray be seated.” The delegation sat down. “Now what news troubles you men so much, you will delegate yourselves, to encroach on my valuable time?”

“We have heard disturbing reports of Frame breakers in Manchester, Preston, Blackburn, and Bolton. Wigan borough have banned Jenny’s with a capacity of more than twenty spindles.”

“Enlighten me lads, why would Wigan do that?”

“Because the domestic spinners can normally keep up with that number of spindles, so it is to protect domestic spinners. The last thing they want is workers to become destitute and evicted from their homes. If they are evicted the parish must fund the destitute, they do not want to do that. Another pressing reason is, if they allow the big spinning Jenny’s to operate, the frame breakers may pay a visit. The shells of burnt-out mills would be a disaster for the towns economy.”

“That makes sense, but I would never do that. I would increase production.”

“Then you would need good men and true to repel frame breakers, what better men than men defending their jobs and homes.

“Now why do I feel there is a catch in this?”

“Because there is. Our children work full shifts in the spinning mill, ten hours is far too long for kids between six and eleven years old. They are worn out; we want the school you promised. If we get our school for under elevens, the work force will feel you have upheld your end of the bargain and fight off the attackers. You must be pleased with output so far? Then let the children learn and be happy. Then the adults and teenagers will work hard for you, and if the need arises fight for you.”

“I like you Hall, you are a bit like I was. I have a teacher in mind, there is a building I have earmarked for a school. In the interim, I hear there are a few army veterans and widows in the valley. The ones good with children, see if you can get them on board. They can watch the children between ten o clock and two. Maybe some storytelling, walking in the valley playing games. Then back in the mill for three hours, which will allow me to judge profit and loss. Keep your ears to the ground in Wigan. Find out who commands the Wigan militia Mr Hall! I do not trust the Chorley yeomanry. Oh, lest I forget Mr Hall, take an hour off find a couple of sprightly old ones to watch the children.”

“Thank you, Mr Arkwright.” The trio left the office, in a happier frame of mind. John turned back. I have remembered the militia commander Mr Arkwright; it is Sir Richard Clayton. His residence is Adlington Hall, at Worthington, near Wigan, it is a couple of miles from Sir Frank Standish at Duxbury Hall.”

“Thank you, Mr Hall, your information is much appreciated.

Chapter Six

Birkacre school?

The workers met for their shifts at Birkacre, there were groups standing chatting. John Hall, Elizabeth, and little Kate came into the Yard, they were approached by Bill Walmsley and Edward Halsall

“That meeting with Arkwright went well John, too bloody well if you ask me. Do you trust him?”

“Not an inch Bill, I think he will give the kids a bit of leeway then go back to normal.”

“Well, at least we will know where he stands and if he is as ruthless as they say?”

“He wouldn’t have gone from rags to riches if he was not ruthless, so I reckon the school was a sales pitch to get the mill.” Said Edward.

“Happen your right.” said John, “we will meet at dinner break.” the trio went into the mill.

Around nine Arkwright came into the mill, he immediately sent the over-looker to bring John Hall to the office.

“Mr Arkwright wants to see thee in the office lad.” said the gruff over-looker. John followed the over-looker to the office where Arkwright was sat at his desk.

“You sent for me Sir?”

“I have indeed John, the children under eleven can have a two-hour break at lunch time. They will be looked after by some of the retirees as we agreed. The women will clean the spinning shops at one. full production must start at two. That is the best offer, I can only review the school idea when I have my annual figures in. I have made a concession, that is my final word.”

“Thank you for hearing us, sir.” John made his way to the Spinning shop and told of the minor concession. This was met with derision and heavy sighs.

“Well lad, thy tried thy best for the little mites.” said Edna Walmsley. “None can slight thee for that.”

“I know Edna, but he seemed so sincere yesterday. I really thought we were getting somewhere.”

“You, won’t win against the likes of him, if frame breakers come, we will not stand in their way!”

John Hall made his way to the lower forge.

John had only been back at his bench for twenty minutes, when he was called to an engineer’s meeting on the Yarrow bank by the mill. It was attended by most of the smiths and trades men. concerning the viability of digging a by-wash channel with a sluice gate for a

second waterwheel. Arkwright wanted more power to increase output from the mill. His plan to increase profit margins was being put into operation.

“The writing is on the wall here John, he will work us to death. Anyroad up. he pays the wages what do you reckon on the type of wheel he is proposing.” asked Harold the foreman.

“Looking at the Yarrow bank and the existing weirs, I would say a breast shot wheel is the only option. We could build the sluice gate, then we cut a channel ten yards up and to five yards in from, where he wants it on an arc, then we build our wheelhouse. The drive shaft would need to be as close to the ground as possible. The channel from the wheel will have to start at four-foot-deep with a constant fall to the river twenty-five yards downstream. It may not have the correct fall, but it still might work.”

“What do you mean by breast shot John?” Harold enquired.

“It is a vertical wheel with horizontal axle. The water hits the wheel roughly central, typically between one quarter and three quarters of the height. The wheel should have curved driving surfaces, not quite buckets. Just shaped to ensure that we have a smooth entry of the water we could scrape an efficiency around sixty percent if we are lucky.”

“Good work John, I know there is another idea from George, we will discuss that and get the two designs done; we will have a chat it may end up as a compromise, with elements of both drawings. Then we can call his highness to decide. Well done lads let us get about it.”

Both drawings were complete by the afternoon, and Mr Arkwright summoned the engineers. He strode into the forge looking like a little emperor.

“Right gentlemen could I view your drawings?”

“Certainly, sir, this is Johns design, and this is Georges. They are both good, but I was the man to choose the design, I think I would use Johns wheel design with Georges inlet and sluice gate.

“Let me see.” said Arkwright. “Ah, I can definitely see where you are coming from Harold, I like it, are we over 50% efficiency?”

“We hope for sixty percent.”

“Splendid, tell me boys, how did you learn so much about waterpower?” George raised his hand.

“Begging your pardon sir, we are from the borough of Chorley. As you know we are on the edge of the west Pennine moors, now into the borough of Chorley flows the river Lostock, the river Chor, the Blackwater brook, Clayton brook and the Yarrow, and at Adlington there is the Douglas. The water mills are in our blood Mr Arkwright. Around here, them who has not built them, has mended them.”

“Settled, we will have Georges sluice and feed channel, with Johns wheel and outlet channel. Can you come with me gentlemen, I wish to discuss the drive shaft set up and power transfer gearing?”

The forge lads followed Arkwright to the yarrow bank. adjacent to the mill.

“Right Harold can you put a stake by the wall here?” He pointed out a chalk line on the wall.

“We will need a final survey of the bank Sir, Mr Chadwick knows an excellent, surveyor. These drawings have been by eye and instinct. The survey will give us the correct result on the wheels efficiency. In the meantime, I think it prudent to plan for an extended driveshaft differential gearing as a backup.”

“Capital idea Mr Hall, thinking out of the box and formulating an alternative. I will see Mr Chadwick directly.”

“Now if we continue with a second wheel plan, the hole, it has to be square with this mark. So, from a line at right angles to the wall the drive shaft should link up with the wheel. To achieve this, the channels must be perfectly in line. That is as much interference as I feel I need to give as I have plotted where I want the drive shaft to enter the mill. But prudence must rule the day, we shall await the surveyors report. Mr Hall and Mr Walmsley, you have just done excellent work for me although you have a grievance with me, I am impressed.”

“Why sir? You are our employer we will do what is required of us to the best of our abilities. We have lost respect for you as a man, as you are one of those who does not keep his word. But that shall not affect our workmanship.”

“I have to admire men of principles, even though I consider them nought but romantic fools. The graveyards are full of those sorts.” Arkwright scoffed.”

“But at least they died with a clear conscience, Sir?” he looked at John, scoffed and returned to the mill.

“I think he just said no schooling for the kids then, John?”

“Correct Harold, that just about sums him up. Come on Harold, we will work out our materials and mark the trenches.” the men went back to their drawings.

Chapter Seven

An increase in waterpower.

Everyone from the forges was employed on the Arkwright plan, which was to acquire an under used section of the mill to be utilised as a cardroom. This needed waterpower, all of the existing carding frames would be moved there, with at least four more added. This new cardroom would allow him to increase the number of spinning frames, more of the storage and unnecessary office space would be given over to carding. With the extra frames production would increase by a third. He would have to hire subcontract carters, to take the yarn to the local weaving mills, the Lancaster Canal at Adlington or by road to Preston. The raw cotton would come in from the Douglas navigation at Wigan. The metal workers at the forges were well on with the gearing and belting for the card room, Mr Arkwright would soon have his powered cardroom up and running.

Arkwright had a surprise visitor; it was Sir Richard Clayton. He was the nephew of the late Richard Clayton, Chief Justice, who had left Sir Richard his Adlington Hall and Worthington estate. Sir Richard Clayton was a man of honour and well respected throughout Lancashire, he was created a baronet in 1774, then because of his previous military experience, he had been asked to command the militia.

“Good day Sir Richard, what a pleasant surprise. How may I help you?”

“As you may know, I have recently been placed in charge of the local Wigan militia. I have ex-soldiers and volunteer freemen at my command. Now you are on the fringe of both Wigan and Preston jurisdictions, but as Coppull is in the parish of Standish, I think Wigan will end up taking you under our wing.”

“Why, do you think we are in danger Sir.”

“A possibility Mr Arkwright, the Wigan town council has instructed our factories to use no more than twenty spindles on their Spinning Jenny’s. because of Frame Breaker gangs.”

“What is that to me Sir Richard?”

“They fear attacks from Frame Breaker gangs, they are attacking those who’s machinery puts the cottage industries out of business.”

“I will not sacrifice productivity because of threats from lawless scum.”

“Sir! The Wigan borough is trying to walk a line of protecting domestic spinners and protecting spinning mills, at a time when the army is over stretched. There is conflict in India, we are at war with Spain. There is a revolutionary war in America, we are in an armed standoff with France. We only have a small militia; it is sometimes better to play the politician than the hero.”

“That smacks of cowardice to me, Sir Richard Clayton!”

“How dare you besmirch my character with such a distasteful slur, I have run men through for less! You travel your own path now Mr Arkwright. Good day!”

Clayton stormed out of the office, as he was leaving, he walked by John Hall.

“It seems you didn’t have a good meeting sir?”

“My word it is John Hall? Your lads helped with my water mill on the Douglas at Worthington.”

“We did indeed Sir Richard.”

“You did a sterling job; I have just met with Arkwright; he is an impossible man!”

“I know sir, we also have had words.”

“What is it you are doing here John?”

“We are making a mechanised card room. he wants water powered carding frames. That will make more room for powered spinning machines. He reckons it will increase output by a third at least.”

“Do you think he will he make it John?”

“I reckon so, and half of his frames will be operated by children. One of mine included.”

“The man is a complete blaggard John; the frame breakers will target this place when they find out. Look after your family John, you are a good man, and they need you. Farewell and take care!”

“Thank you, Sir.”

A final more detailed survey of the river discovered, the riverbank was deceptive, there was not enough gradient. This meant the plans for the second water wheel were shelved, the fall of the river was not large enough to achieve sufficient power for a second water wheel. But all was not lost, the mill was already a primitive beam mill. What was needed was a modified extended driveshaft with differential gears, adjacent to the rows of frames. Then slave shafts could be fitted to the rows of machines. The drive shaft would then go through the dividing wall into the card room, the engineers set about designing and fitting the modified gear shafts and the slave shafts that would drive the carding frames. Within two weeks the rows of machines were fixed into place and the wheel was modified with more efficient curved paddles mounted. The sluice was opened, the wheel and the shafts began to turn effortlessly, it was a great success. All was now ready for the machinery, to be connected to the shafts. The gearing that had been installed in the card room, could be set in position. Arkwright was beside his self, gushing and singing praises to his own vision, pandering to his own inflated ego.

“Look at him?” said John Hall. “A simple thank you, lads, would be nice.”

“That one thinks only of his own self, no feelings for anyone! He cares nought for the welfare of our children.” said George.

“Sadly, George that is true. He is pure evil.”

Chapter Eight

1778 The productivity increases and trouble brews.

It took another week before the extra spinning frames and carding frames were delivered. The gearing had already been fitted in the finished Card room, and the belting was to be modified for the new Water frames in the spinning room. Much more raw cotton was needed for the expanded capacity, this was brought by narrow boat from Liverpool. They used the Liverpool to Rufford canal which joined the Douglas navigation, then by wagon from the Wigan canal terminus to Birkacre. The road from Wigan to Coppull was the old Wilderspool to Walton Roman Road, it was still in quite good order. Arkwright had sourced customers both in domestic hand loom weaving, and factory weaving. He reckoned he could quickly move, all that would be spun, added to this his attitude was getting more brash and draconian, his statements about frame breakers more outlandish.

In Darwen at a pub called the Black Bull a group of local spinners met a group of Blackburn spinners. they listened to a speech from George Bradshaw one of the Blackburn Frame Breakers, he struck at their emotions, giving a bleak view of the future.

“I’m telling you lads!” he cried. “We can’t compete against these spinning frames.

One unskilled worker can do the work of a few families. I am telling you and I speak the plain truth. If we do not do something, we will end up on the parish or in the mills or pits for the rest of our lives. A life of twelve-hour shifts, in poor conditions and low wages. Whilst the Mill owners, will look on from the comfort of their country halls and laugh at you. Then at the same time they will count their money.”

“But what can us local spinners do George?” Joe Halsall asked.

“You can do what us Blackburn lads have done, we attacked Postlethwaite’s mill. We smashed the frames and burned them all.” Bradshaw replied.

“Now hold on George, we can’t be doing that thy knows. We’ll go to Gaol.”

No, you will not lads, there are no soldiers over here, their all abroad, fighting wars. I am telling you Joe; them constables will run when they see you. We had been kicked down for long enough! We fought back! We have even made them cut their own Jenny’s down to twenty spindles. some of them cried doing it.”

What do you say lads, are we with the Blackburn spinners?”

Aye! came the resounding cry.

There is a mill not far from here called Clegg’s Mill, we will hit it hard on Sunday! We will meet in the clough, near the canal at ten o clock.”

For four days, Darwen was full of men, passing messages to each other. knocking on doors. Children were running errands, sledgehammers and axes were being gathered and passed around. Joe Halsall and his trusted companion, Abel Thorpe, were busy organising things, the excitement was intense with expectation. Then Sunday morning came, it was a nice, pleasant day, the sun was shining; birds sang in the trees. The sounds of church bells rang out over the fields in the woodlands of Lancashire’s hinterland. They began making their way to the clough in dribs and drabs soon they were all assembled. They were forty-three good men and true, Spinners and Weavers all. They were ready to strike a blow for the common working man, ready to destroy the frames that stole their livelihoods and brought despair to the families.

Joe Halsall surveyed the scene, there were forty-one men stood before him and Abel. They were armed with axes and hammers, all with a sense of purpose in their eyes. He fought back the tears and addressed his men.

“Spinners of Darwen, we march to rid the county of the curse of the spinning frames. The evil creation that brings despair to our families, will today be smashed, and burned. The Blackburn lads are by the canal bridge, are you with me!” There was a resounding cheer. They all followed Joe and Abel towards the canal. The throng of Blackburn lads cheered as they saw them marching to the canal. They met shook hands and greeted each other, then joined as one army. Then together they marched towards Clegg’s mill, brandishing their weapons, and cursing to the wind.

It was not a working day, at Clegg’s mill, but water engineers seemed to be working out the dimensions for a wheelhouse. It only meant one thing the mill would soon be driven by water.

“Looks like we are just in time Joe, they are mechanising.” said George. “Get your kerchiefs over your faces lads, we are moving in, no shouting we walk in quietly.”

Ten yards out from the mill, the frame breakers charged the mill. They broke down the mill doors and ran to the frames. They were a mix of Arkwright’s spinning frames and Jenny’s; they were soon smashing them with their sledgehammers and axes. The water engineers and the mill hands with them made a hurried retreat to the woods.

“Destroy every frame you see, leave none left standing!” cried George Bradshaw. The men did as George asked and after an hour of wanton vandalism, Joe called to them.

“You must pour tallow over the remains of the frames now! then fire the infernal contraptions!” They dragged piles of splintered wood into the courtyard then piled up the splintered remains of the frames and Jenny’s, then set them alight. Within an hour all that remained of the frames was charred embers. The groups then decided to separate and the Darwen group made their way back home. Some of them went back to the Black Bull tavern and sang many a ballad, then drank a toast to the events of the day.”

Another frame breaking attack had happened in Lancashire, a fire had been kindled and the authorities seemed powerless to stop it. The mill owners were bringing armed friends into the mills at weekends. These armed men with some of the mill owners trusted workers were forming unofficial militias, things did not bode well for the future.

Chapter Nine

A question of Patents.

Arkwright may not have been a great inventor. He may have borrowed the ideas of others for his machines, but he was able to build the machines and make them work successfully. Then he patented them, that was ammunition to his enemies in the textiles industry. Ammunition to try and knock him from his perch. Arkwright's achievement was to combine power, machinery, semi-skilled and unskilled labour, and the dominant raw material of cotton to create mass-produced yarns. His organizational skills would earn him the title, "father of the modern industrial factory system. This was due to the machines and the working practices he developed in his mill at Cromford, Derbyshire.

Arkwright's Water frame was arguably the most contentious innovation, and one that provided a flashpoint early on. It was invented in 1769. As the name suggests, this was a roller-spinning machine powered by water, it precipitated the rapid movement of the spinning industry, from cottage into factories. In 1760, Arkwright teamed up with an engineer and clockmaker, John Kay, to design and build the first prototype of what would become the water frame, Kay being the engineering brains. By the late 1760s, the pair had a working machine that was able to spin four strands of cotton yarn at the same time. Building on their early models, Kay and Arkwright refined the design and soon had machines that could spin tens of threads simultaneously. The machines did not require skilled labour to operate them, and as such, unskilled women and children were often put to the task to operate them. This removal of the need for highly skilled operators, would add significant cost savings to any mills that installed them.

In 1769 Arkwright patented the invention that made him rich, he claimed the invention was solely his. The industrialists hated the idea of paying royalties to a man who had stolen his business partners' work. Also, Arkwright had spent his early years in poverty. He was a man of no breeding; he did not care whose toes he stepped on climbing the ladder. He was an upstart barber to many of them, a man above his station. They decided to contrive to bring him down.

Arkwright patented a rotary carding engine to convert raw cotton to "cotton lap" prior to spinning. He immediately utilised these new machines. He had just become the first mill owner to develop mills, which housed both mechanised carding and spinning operations. This Roller carding machine of Arkwright's was almost identical to the cylindrical carding machine patented by Daniel Bourn in 1748. The cotton was first ginned and beaten, then fed on to the feed roller, called a "licker in". Its wire teeth were bent towards the direction of motion so that they lay hold of the fibres of cotton and carry them downwards and round to the main roller. The third roller, or doffer, removed the cotton from the main roller. A comb took the carded cotton from the doffer and delivered it in strips or slivers. Both machines followed the same process causing much consternation amongst his peers. There were elements of Lewis Pauls carding machine there, as well as the Bourn design. John Lees of Manchester, a Quaker, had

made further modifications before Arkwright, started utilising the machine. Arkwright added modified combs to the design and claimed the Patent causing a furore in the industry.

Arkwright applied for a "Grand Patent" to deflect his detractors, this application covered the spinning frame, carding frame and other inventions. Subsequent infringements on what he called his inventions by mill-owners, led him to take legal action to assert his rights. The holding of the Grand Patent did not settle the question of authorship, but was notable, for it set up petitions for clarifications of patent, which meant if Arkwright failed to adequately specify the technology in the patent documents, the court could set aside the patents. But that would be in the future, for now Arkwright was the most powerful man in the cotton industry. Only time would tell whether his enemies had the power to bring him down. Now was the time to maximise profit, he had Birkacre and his Derbyshire mills fully mechanised and working to the same procedures. He would go over to Manchester in the morning and search out new investment opportunities, He poured out a large glass of Port, then said to his-self, "to success."

Chapter Ten

More trouble ensues.

There was a meeting in the Spinners arms in Blackrod with the spinner's and weavers from Blackrod and Aspull. They had arranged to meet with a group of men from Chowbent and Howfen. The men of Chowbent entered the pub. Richard Lyon stood up and went to them.

"Are you Bob Black of Chowbent?" the man burst out laughing.

"Sorry mate I am Black Bob, it's a scary nick name what's your name?"

"I am Richard Lyon, Bob."

"From tonight you will be Dick of Blackrod, we cannot afford our real names banded around, it is because of our line of work. If these mill owners increase their production, the domestic spinners will be out of business. If they can get looms under power the domestic handloom weavers are finished. We must keep destroying frames, to have a chance of saving livelihoods. Now get your lads together, then we can have a chat." Richard pulled his men together.

"Right my boys this is my friend Black Bob of Chowbent, he has been leading frame breaker groups in the area, getting rid of the hated Spinning Jenny's and mules. He would like to speak to you." The lads clapped in approval.

"Good evening my lads, I fear you have the same heart as me?" they murmured in agreement.

"All be it a heavy one, I have seen too many good spinner families turned out on the street. They have been forced into poverty because of those damned Spinning Jenny's. first it was eight spindles then sixteen then twenty now they are approaching hundred! they take all the work, and our poor brothers and sisters are cast onto the street. Are we going to stand for it?"

"No! Never!" they cried.

"Then are you with me, to destroy the evil spinning frames?"

"Aye!" They cried with clenched fists raised. Bob turned to Dick.

"We meet Sunday, in Blackrod, on the entrance to the Horwich road. The lads must have axes hammers and we need a couple of lads who have and can use saws, we may shorten some Jenny's to twenty spindles. If they have a mill wheel, we will destroy the driveshaft. We must try and avoid harming mill hands, we need the people on our side."

"I agree we cannot succeed with the people against us."

"I will get you a flagon of ale, Dick of Blackrod."

They toasted each other's health for the coming engagement.

Sunday came with a mixture of excitement and anxiety, but they were all ready to do what had to be done. They set off on a march from the church, the day was beautiful, the sun's rays partially blocked by the light clouds, were painting their own light and shade on the verdant meadows and moors. It was a lovely sight to see, as the men were making their way to the Horwich road. They had been waiting there around ten minutes, when a group of around forty men approached, led by Black Bob of Chowbent. The group, comprising of the Chowbent men with the Blackrod lads numbered over seventy. They were all armed with hammers or axes and there were also three wood workers with good saws, ready to use as directed. The two groups met and greeted each other, then set off as one to seek their quarry.

After a march of around one-hour, Black Bob called them to halt. He turned to Dick.

"The large building to the left, it is a spinning shop. there are four spinners working as a team, with four eighty spindle Jenny's. If Mr Smith consents, we will trim the Jenny's to twenty spindles. If he does not, we burn the lot. How say you, Dick. Are you with us whatever the outcome!" Dick repeated Bob's words to the mob. They were in full agreement.

"Come my lads we will Parley with them." The mob moved forward, Dick of Blackrod and Black Bob went to the door. Bob called out.

"Mr Smith, we come to give you a choice, trim your Jenny's to twenty spindles, or we can burn the bloody lot. With twenty spindles apiece you can make the wage of the domestic spinners. As I said you have a choice, we prefer to do this amicably. Smith came out.

"Will you promise to refrain from harming me, or my three colleagues?"

"You have our word as fellow tradesmen sir, as good Christians we cannot see our brothers and sisters forced to the parish."

"I reluctantly agree!"

"Your cooperation is welcomed sir. Saw men and three hammer men to the fore!"

The saw men and hammermen marched forward Black bob called out.

"Two hammermen to me!" they marched into the old barn.

Sorry gentlemen, we must trim your Jenny's." The carpenters made ready.

"We will take care and do a neat job for you." The carpenters did the job and re-fitted the legs to the Jenny's.

"Thank you for your cooperation, it is with a heavy heart we do this, but the cause is just.

They crossed the moorland heading for Lostock, where there were reports of a bigger concern operating. A Bolton businessman named Earnshaw, was spinning, and weaving in a large building with ten Jenny's and four hand looms with possibly Arkwright frames as well. Earnshaw owned the spinning frames, but the hand loom weavers were subcontractors, with their own looms. Black Bob addressed the men.

“The next one is a pompous Pratt named Earnshaw; he is the owner of the spinning frames. The Weavers subcontract to him. The weavers and their looms will not be harmed, if he does not comply the Frames are to be broken up and burned in the mill yard. Do you understand, no unnecessary violence?” The lads all nodded in agreement then they continued their journey across the moor.

An hour later the group were approaching their quarry. Dick of Blackrod addressed them.

“Remember, no unnecessary violence, we surround the building Bob and me will talk to them. Caleb and George stand with us, you two make ready with your hammers just in case. I fear this Earnshaw character could be armed; he is that type. If he has a brace of pistols, these two lads could throw a hammer at him and knock him down before he could cock a flintlock.”

“That’s good to know Black Bob, let us get in position.” The lads quietly surrounded the Spinning shop, Caleb and George stood with Bob and Dick, ball peen hammers in their hands.

Black Bob cried out. “Henry Earnshaw, the mill is surrounded. We can cut your Jenny’s down to twenty spindles, or we destroy them with fire. Your endeavours are putting the domestic spinners on the street, give me your answer or we break down the doors!” There was a moments silence then the door opened, a rotund gentleman with two pistols came out into the yard.

“Vacate this place you blackguards, or someone will be in a pine box in the morning!”

“Stay your hand sir, we wish to do this without bloodshed!”

“You should have thought about that before you embarked on this misadventure sir!” he raised his pistols. It was to no avail as two small hammers flew through the air, one hitting his left arm the other his right shoulder. He fell down groaning, Caleb and George took the pistols and the cartridge belt and powder flask.

“Sorry about that Mr Earnshaw, there is nothing broken but some heavy bruising. Unfortunately, you chose the path of violence we must burn your frames.” They went into the building the weavers and spinners were standing in a huddle.

“Right my fine lads!” said Dick. “Who owns the Jenny’s!”

“We have a part share of them with Mr Earnshaw.” said one of the spinners.

“Is it an advantageous arrangement?”

“Not really sir, I think he has taken us for fools.”

“Our normal method, is to reduce the number of spindles the Jenny can carry to twenty, or burn them What would you wish us to do?”

“We are happy to walk away from them sir.”

“So, it shall be! Weavers who owns your looms?”

“They are our own handlooms sir we stripped them down and brought them here sir.”

“Then you will arrange to take them home, and you men can work together from your homes from now on. We shall burn the Jenny’s in the yard.”

Thank you, sir!” said the relieved weavers.

The Frame breakers set about smashing the Jenny’s, they dragged the debris into the yard as far away from the buildings as possible, then Bob winked at Dick. He dragged Earnshaw, over to the pile of splintered wood and metal. Then he made Earnshaw set the flame with his good hand. The remains of the spinning Jenny’s and the Arkwright Spinning frames were well ablaze. They wished the tradesmen well and set out over the moor and to home. On reaching the Manchester Road they stopped shook hands, bade farewells to new friends, and returned to their respective villages. It was a job well done. Bob called Dick over to him.

“I will keep in touch Dick; we make a good team. We must go for winning the people’s hearts and minds, we cannot upset the people and turn them against us. That is what blaggard’s like Earnshaw hope for. We must be Robin Hoods, marching with the people on our side. And I am proud to march with you. I hear Dick, that Arkwright himself, is at Birkacre mill?”

“He is Bob and has fully mechanised both his card room and spinning shop. He has a massive output of warps, wefts, yarn, and twine. And he’s working seven- and eight-year-olds on twelve-hour shifts.”

“That is inhuman Dick, that scoundrel needs tarring, feathering, then hanging. Alas we are nowhere near strong enough to take Birkacre. But bear with us Dick, our time will come. We will need the Blackburn Darwen and Chorley lads with us before we could consider that. There is one road in, one road out and he will have muskets a plenty. He has repelled attacks in Derbyshire, but our day will come. Trust me Dick. I promise.”

“I do trust you Black Bob and when that day comes, I will be at your side with my lads.” The two shook hands and went their separate ways.

Chapter Eleven

The labour of the child.

With the increased number of frames at Birkacre mill, for both spinning and carding, more children were being employed. The schooling for half timers was a pipe dream and would not materialise in the near future. Child labour was becoming the norm in both the cotton industry and the expanding coal industry. Children of poor and working-class families had worked for centuries before industrialisation. This was just normal things such as helping around the house or assisting in the family's enterprise when they were able. The practice of putting children to work was first documented in the Medieval era, when fathers had their children spin thread for them to weave on the loom. Children performed a variety of tasks that were critical to the economic wellbeing of the family group. All that changed with the mines, the factory and mass production.

The expanding factory system was criticised by reformers for harsh discipline and punishment. The young ones faced unhealthy working conditions, low wages, and inflexible work hours. The draconian factory rules were attacked for stripping the worker's freedom, dignity, and creativity. These child apprentices were either children of the workers in tied cottages, or paupers taken from orphanages and workhouses. it was a form of bond slavery. The children were housed, clothed, and fed but received no wages for their long day of work in the mill. A conservative estimate is that in the year seventeen seventy-nine, around one-quarter of the total workers in cotton mills were apprentices and that their numbers reached over 50% in some spinning mills.

Children who worked long hours in the textile mills became very tired, the young ones found it difficult to maintain the speed required by the over-lookers. Children were usually hit with a strap to make them work faster. It was documented that; "one child was five minutes late, the over-looker took a strap, and "beat her until she were black and blue." The infants, when first introduced to these abodes of torture, were put at stripping the full spools from the spinning jenny's and replacing them with empty spools. A report said. "They are put to work in a long room where there are about twenty machines. The spindles are apportioned to each child, and woe be to the child who shall be behind in doing their allotted work. The machine will be started, and the poor child's fingers will be bruised and skinned with the revolving spools. Whilst they try to catch up to their comrades, the brutal over-looker will frequently beat them." Some mills had a good ethos to child labour and were much more benevolent, but they still found child labour vital for profit.

In cotton mills children might start as scavengers, crawling beneath working machinery to clear away dust, dirt, and anything else that might cause problems for the mechanism, and to gather any cotton to prevent wastage. Crawling among the moving parts was extremely dangerous, and accidents and fatalities were common. Children might have their hair ripped out, their fingers and arms broken or cut off. When they were older and had grown too big to

fit below the machines, they might become piecers, working at spinning machines repairing breaks in the thread, before moving on to operating the Jenny's. The rigors of working such long hours in such conditions from an early age took its toll on the human body. The following were hazards of working in the mill; Eye inflammations, lung disease, deafness, tuberculosis, mule-spinners' cancer or brown lung, and body deformities. many of the child labourer's reached adulthood with knock-knees, humpbacks from carrying heavy loads, or damaged pelvises from standing for 10 to 14 hours a day. This was the lot, of the children who were so profitable to the mill owners such as Arkwright.

The children of Birkacre were not as numerous as in some mills but were still around fifteen per cent, of the workforce. With the simplicity of operating a water frame spinning machine, they were doing a very profitable job from an early age.

Chapter Twelve

Trouble in Blackburn.

Soon after the death of James Hargreaves, a wave of violence and disorder erupted again in Blackburn. This was directed against his spinning Jenny's, and other labour-saving frames and machines. A riot began which culminated in much more serious frame breaking than the earlier outbreaks of violence. It must be said only machines of more than twenty spindles were destroyed. The mob also scoured the countryside around Blackburn, they were searching for and destroying any machines driven by water or horses. Robert Peel's factory was targeted amongst others.

Five days earlier, George Bradshaw, a spinner from the town of Blackburn had arranged to meet up with Joe Halsall in the Black Bull at Darwen. George was early and already drinking a pint of mild ale from a tankard. Joe walked up to him; George looked up and saw Joe.

"Landlord! a tankard for this man if you please! How do you fare Joe it has been many a week since our last meeting?"

"I am well my friend, now you have not come all this way for a quiet jar of ale. How can the Darwen lads help you?"

"Now you are talking my language Joe my friend. We are going after Robert Peel, he has water powered Jenny's, at his mill in Altham. The main body of the Blackburn lads will kick off in the town. My lads and your lads we will meet at Ossie, I mean Oswaldtwistle, then together we go for Peels mill at Altham. Another group will hit Peels mill at Brookside. It will be good practice for Arkwright's mill at Birkacre. The Blackrod and Chowbent lads are after that prize. They did a good job on Earnshaw's mill in Lostock."

"I heard about that George, they destroyed the frames and hurt no one. I second that, a job well done I'd say."

"We shall meet on Saturday nine o'clock, at Ossie and march together. What do you say?"

"I will have our lads there for you, after Altham we head home. The town of Blackburn could be a little out of control. I don't want any of my lads banged up for nothing."

A wise choice Joe, I will get our lads to do the same. we don't want to spoil our work by sticking our noses in where it don't belong?"

"Agreed!" they shook hands. "Now it's my shout George, one for the road?"

"And why not, mild ale please Joe?"

It was Saturday morning, at nine o'clock the men of Darwen, met the men of Blackburn at Oswaldtwistle. Old friendships were renewed, and the expanding group marched towards the village of Church.

"By gum it is good to see the lads together again George, we will give that old rogue Robert Peel a shock today."

“It is a good day for Jenny smashing. They are all powered by the river Calder, so it is a straight smashing up of the lot of them, no shortening the spindle lengths on this one.”

“What if they have armed men in the mill George?”

“I can normally talk them down, don’t worry. He is an evil so and so, the men will not lay down their lives for him. Come on lads! press on.”

The group were soon on the Calder bank, they could see the mill, the group of machine breakers edged forward.

“Right my bold lads, whilst we about this task of ours, the Harewood lads will be attacking the Brookside mill, Peel’s other venture. He shall lose two mills in one day!” the lads cheered. “Axes and hammers at the ready lads, keep moving forward.” One of the mill hands came out of the mill he saw the approaching column.

“We’ve been seen lads; we must surround the mill. We must leave the house and farm buildings alone. We only target machinery within the mill!” The Frame breakers did as they were told, all entrances to the mill were covered. George called out to the people in the mill.

“Mr Peel we don’t want anyone hurt, please come out of the mill!” George waited a moment then he turned to Joe.

“They don’t seem to want to comply Joe, we will divide the force, take your boys to the rear entrance have the hammer men ready. Make sure you hit the hinge areas.”

“Yes George!” Joe took his lads round the back, redirecting any of the Blackburn lads to the front.

“Break the doors down!” cried George; the axe and hammer men set about hitting the hinge areas with the tools of destruction, and around the locks.

“Nip round the back Tom and tell Joe and his lads, to start on the rear doors.” Tom sprinted around the back he called to Joe.

“Break the door, Joe! Hit it with everything you have got!”. Immediately the axes and hammers were swinging. the noise was deafening.

At the front of the mill the more experienced Blackburn lads were weakening the left-hand hinges of the large double doors. The left-hand side was moving, Peels voice boomed out.

“Stop your hammering I want to talk!”

“Say your piece Mr Peel!” cried George. “Tell the other group to stop Tom!”

Seconds later there was silence, then Peels voice boomed out.

“I will give you five minutes to disperse, I have a pistol and I am not afraid to use it.”

“We have eighty strong lads, if you kill one of us, the others will rip you to pieces. Now come out and let us do our work, then you and your men will not be harmed.”

“Never!”

“Hammer men concentrate on the left hinges, it is moving!” The lads at the back heard the noise and started again. The noise was deafening. There was a crash the left-hand door caved in pulling the right-hand door with it. Peel came out with his pistol. He went to shoot the pistol, but nothing happened.

“Give me that gun before you hurt yourself!” Said George and snatched it from him.

“Now get your men out and they won’t be harmed.”

The frame breakers watched as the men came out, out of the twenty mill hands nine were children between eight and thirteen, they looked terrified.

“Come on young ones you are safe, it is only the carding frames and Jenny’s that will suffer.” said Joe. He led them to the riverbank, then shouted to the other eleven.

“Hey lads! Can you take these kids home, they have had a frightening experience?”

“We will sir and thank you for not harming us.”

“Be on your way then and have a safe journey.”

As the Altham mill hands made their way to the road, the attackers had started dragging the machines into the yard, setting about them with sledgehammers and axes. Jenny’s, Water frames, Carding frames all went under the hammer, without an auctioneer in site. The air was full of the clanging of metal upon metal as castings and brackets and winding wheels were shattered and bent with sledgehammers. Some of the attackers were dragging the broken debris to the river and hurling the remnants of the machines into the River Calder’s quickly flowing waters. Robert Peel had gone quite mad, he was trying to stop the frames being broken, He was lucky not to have been injured by a sledgehammer. When he saw the remnants of his frames being cast in the water, he ran around screaming, then jumped into the river crying murder. The mob tried to coax him out for his own safety but to no avail. He was last seen running down the riverbank in an agitated state.

Most of the frames were smashed and burned but one Jenny was cast into the river Calder in one piece and was lodged on the rocks. It would stand as a monument to the events of the day. Mrs Peel was informed and was seemingly emotionally affected by way her husband decamped the scene. She sent two of her farm hands to look for him. George surveyed the scene with satisfaction.

“Good work my lads, I now want the driveshafts and gearing destroyed! Joe, can your lads destroy the water wheel and sluice gate? My lads will do the drive shafts, belts, and gears!”

“It will be a pleasure, George! Abel! Take half a dozen men and close the sluice gate then wait for us to smash the water wheel. When I give you the nod, you can then destroy the sluice gate and stonework, it will never be used again.”

“You can trust us, Joe!” cried Abel. The air was once again alive with the noise and banging of axes and sledgehammers on wood and metal, soon the bonfire was ablaze again as the wooden parts of the water wheel and sluice gate, were cast into the flames. With a word of apology to Mrs Peel, the marauding band made their way back to Oswaldtwistle. There they said their farewells. George went to Joe and Abel and clasped them by the hands.

“Well, my friends Joe and Abel, thank you once again. Your lads have been brave and industrious they never once have shown fear. You go home with our thanks; you should not meet anyone in authority on your way home. The other Blackburn groups will be leading the militia a merry dance in the town. Farewell and God bless you all.”

“Thank you, George, I fear we may have one more action to perform. I have been contacted by the Chorley lads. It seems they will be planning an attack on Arkwright’s mill with groups from Chowbent and Blackrod, supported by Colliers. It is a large mill fully mechanised, Arkwright, has been courting the Wigan Militia. It is said he has recruited armed friends who have pledged to help him defend the Mill. It has wooded hills to the south, the river Yarrow, and wetlands to the north. That means there is only one road into the site, it runs off the Chorley to Coppull road. It contains the cotton mill, two forges, a corn mill, and a coal pit. The cotton mill is a large mill on the North bank of the Yarrow, it is in two parts, the smaller part houses a storeroom, scutching room and card room with mechanised carding frames. The large section is the spinning mill, with Jenny’s and Water frames. Like I said, it is fully mechanised, it may have two water wheels, they also employ a lot of child workers. It will be either be a Saturday or a Sunday job; would you join us when we get the nod?”

“Nothing would please me more than drive that man out of Lancashire. Count us in.”

“I will be in touch George when I know the details. let me know how the Harewood lads went on at Brookside?”

“I will lad, farewell Joe.” The two groups said their final farewells and marched home.

Chapter Thirteen

Dark clouds gather.

The atmosphere in the room was electric, the tension could have been cut through with a knife. Arkwright's temper was rising.

"You sir seem to be implying, that you will not defend my holdings from the mob?"

Sir Richard Clayton, banged his fist on the table, pushed his self out of the chair and glared at Arkwright.

"How dare you sir, say such a thing! I have told you before, I have a small militia of one hundred part time soldiers and veterans, we have to be responsible for the Wigan town boundary, and also our satellite villages of, Orrell, Pemberton, Ince, Hindley Aspull and Standish. There are half a dozen town constables, you might not have realised it sir! But Britain is at war with Spain, we fight our enemies on the Indian sub-continent. In addition to that, we are embroiled in a revolutionary war in the American colonies, there are no regulars we can call on. Now let me reiterate, firstly, Birkacre is technically not in the Wigan borough. The Chorley militia have refused to help you, because of your attitude. There has been no direct threat to your mill. I cannot station my men indefinitely at Birkacre. If you or I have reliable intelligence, I can act on it."

"Poppycock Sir Richard! In your god forsaken town of Wigan, the magistrates suspended the use of machinery, just so they can sit on the fence. The ruling class and bourgeois solidarity has clearly been fractured in Wigan! Because the other manufacturers in your town, are simply jealous of my achievements. I will not be treated like this!"

"Leave my office before I throw you out Mr Arkwright. That is my last word on the matter."

Arkwright stormed out of Sir Richard Claytons office and into the courtyard, he glared at his coachman.

"Harris! Get me away from this rat-infested hell hole! This atmosphere is poisonous! Back to Birkacre with speed." The coachman shrugged his shoulders and set off at the normal pace, he was not going to punish his horses on the whim of an arrogant sort. Above the clatter of the wheels and the snorts and nickering of the horses. Harris could still hear the mutterings and rambling of Arkwright in the coach. "*The miserable old goat is on one today.*" He thought as the coach trundled past St Wilfred's church in Standish.

"Harris! How far is it now! I have not got all day." cried Arkwright.

"We will be on Coppull moor in a few minutes, then through Hic Bibi to Birkacre." Harris smirked as Arkwright resumed his ramblings.

They pulled into the valley; Harris parked the coach. He opened the door and Arkwright stormed out and into the mill. He saw John Chadwick and called over.

“Excuse me John, do you know if Fairhurst’s gun shop is still trading in Bishopsgate Preston?”

“They were last year Richard, why do you ask?”

“The militias are useless, That Clayton fellow is a coward! In fact, the whole population of Wigan should be shot as traitors.”

“Calm yourself sir you will be doing yourself an injury ranting like that. Why do you want a gun shop?”

“I will form a militia of my own to defend the mill, we shall fortify it. I need muskets!”

“You do realise Richard, there are three wars going on at the moment, he may only have fowling pieces for sale.”

“Nonsense John, he is a businessman. He will control his stock. Fowling pieces indeed. He stormed out to the door and called out to the coachman.

“Harris water the horses, we are going to Preston!” The coachman looked at the guard.

“Preston Ted! I wish some sailors would press gang him when we get there, the whinging old goat.” Ted burst out laughing.

“If they did, we would have this coach and a tidy business. I will live in hope Harris.

Two hours later they arrived in Preston without further ado, Arkwright stormed into the shop. Mr Fairhurst was still trading. Arkwright strode up to the shops counter.

“Mr Fairhurst, I presume.”

“Yes sir, how can I be of assistance?”

“I require twenty Brown Bess muskets and twenty flint lock pistols and sufficient powder and ball.”

“You do know Sir, that there is warfare affecting British interests around the world. The Ministry of War have put an embargo on firearms sales. All stock was made available to the armed forces only. I can let you have five Muskets, three fowling pieces and two pistols. I can let you have some powder that is allocated for quarrying and mining. Unfortunately, you will have to make your own balls out of melted scrap.”

“Do you not know who I am!”

“Wait a minute, I recognise you. Richard Arkwright! You were in Frank Standish’s camp in the 1768 election, I was in Houghton’s corner. If I remember they barred, you from voting. You have done alright for yourself since I hear.”

“Never mind that prattle Fairhurst! I want what I asked for!”

“You can have what you can have and that is what I offered you. My books are checked monthly by the War Office, my stocks are limited. So, take it or leave it! And I want cash! it is £3 for each musket. The fowling pieces are £2. 17s. 6d”, the pistols are £2.5s. and seven and threepence for the powder. So that is £28. 12s. 9d and remember cash.”

“Wait here Harris! guard come with me to the bank.”

Mr Fairhurst looked over at the driver, he could see him merrily laughing away to himself.

“Mr Harris, that is your name?”

“Yes Mr Fairhurst.”

“What do you find so funny?”

“Oh, it has been one of those days sir, nothing is going his way. I fear he may have a funny turn before the day is out. He was demanding the whole population of Wigan be shot as traitors earlier, and then his altercation with you.”

“It was fun, but pray listen Mr Harris. today he seems a bungling oaf, short on temper. But believe me, he is cold hearted and vengeful. He possesses a great deal of cunning, he will either end up a millionaire or at the end of a rope, maybe both. Cross him at your peril.”

“I can see that sir in some of his dealings. I will take care.”

“I have been waiting to get one over on him since 1768. Today I succeeded. will you have a nip of Brandy with me?”

“Why thank you sir.” Fairhurst poured two glasses.

“To our friend Mr Arkwright, Mr Harris.”

“To our friend Mr Arkwright, Mr Fairhurst.” They both emptied their glasses.

“Would you mind helping me with the order Mr Harris?”

“Certainly, Mr Fairhurst.”

Mr Arkwright returned from the bank and the weapons were loaded into the coach. Harris opened the door and placed the step down for Arkwright, he just grunted at Harris and climbed into the coach. Mr Fairhurst came out to wish them well.

“Excuse me Mr Harris, my wagon driver, his suffering a little ill health. If he has to retire, would you consider working for me. take my card and write to me. Thank you, gentlemen, and a safe journey.” Arkwright ignored him.

Harris released the brake; as he whistled and shook the reins, the coach moved forward. They made good time back to Birkacre, they arrived just as the sun was sinking down on the mill. Richard Arkwright was still fuming. He was the greatest entrepreneur in the country and had been belittled by a small-time gunsmith from Preston, and a bumpkin squire from Wigan. He need a large Brandy to settle himself. He reached for his silver hip flask and took a long deep draught.

The coach rolled into the mill yard Harris and Ted, began to unload the munitions from the coach. Arkwright walked to the Mill where Mr Chadwick met him.

“How did you fare Richard?”

“That imbecile Fairhurst would only supply me with ten weapons, five muskets, two pistols, and three fowling pieces! Oh! And powder, he had no ball and only quarry powder.”

“I told you that before you went Richard, you only consider yourself and not the problems others may face. You must realise a warlike country such as England, must suffer constraints when the needs of the military arise. You must accept it gracefully or face the wrath of the war office.”

“Whatever! I will allocate ten men as my defenders and tell them they must lay their lives down for the mill if necessary.”

John Chadwick listened to Arkwright’s words and shook his head. Arkwright looked at him with disbelief.

“What now? Shall I not give them a weapon and tell them to lay down their lives for me.”

“They will have to volunteer like soldiers who take the royal shilling. A volunteer army is more willing to fight. You can’t just tell them to stand there and get themselves killed.”

“What should I do then?”

“Put a request for volunteers up in the forges and Mill and see how many you get, then take it from there?”

“Capitol idea, I shall do that. I must see John Hall in forge two, can you do the poster John?” Arkwright scurried off. to the lower forge.

Arkwright arrived at the forge he went into the office. he approached the clerk.

“Excuse me my good man can you get me John Hall.” the clerk scurried off into the forge. he returned almost immediately with John Hall.

“How can I help you Mr Arkwright.”

“I have procured some firearms; they have no musket balls I was told that we could make our own with scrap metal.”

“As long as it is non-ferrous sir.”

What is that, John?”

“It cannot contain iron, Iron could expand and jam in the barrel, we must use either Pewter or Lead. Even Bronze may do at a push. We should have enough lead and pewter bronze is too expensive.” I need to measure the weapons sir.”

“Come with me they are in my office.”

John Hall followed Arkwright to the office where he was shown the firearms, he measured the barrels.

“Your pistols are the same calibre as the muskets, which is standard army issue. The fowling pieces are smaller. In the forge I will have a standard Army issue shot mould we will have to fabricate something for the fowling pieces. I will need a pistol and a fowling piece to check my moulds.”

“I am dubious about giving a weapon to you Hall, how do I know you can be trusted?”

“That’s not a problem sir, just take them to someone you trust.”

“Just take the bloody things Hall!”

“Just one thing sir, how did you manage to get seven army issue firearms during a war, their sales are restricted?”

“Just do your job man.” Arkwright stormed off. As John made his way to the forge Harris called him.

“That really wound him up John, the restricted sales of muskets.”

“I know, he’s like a kettle ready to boil over. Thanks for telling me, Harris, he is in a foul mood now.”

John was lucky, he had the correct moulds for both the Muskets and the Fowling pieces. He had a pile of squashed pewter tankards he had collected over the years, he put a few of them in a melting pot. and the kettle next to them. “*I think I deserve a brew.*” he thought to himself. Once the metal was molten, he prepared his 12-shot mould, gently he poured the liquid pewter in to the hole, then let it cool. Once the metal had cooled, he opened the moulds and there sat twelve perfect musket balls, they just needed the side nibs filing. He repeated the operation seven times then got the smaller calibre mould which made eight shots He did five moulds then locked up the forge. He took the musket balls and guns back to the mill. The clerk was still there, so, he made sure the clerk signed for them gave John a receipt and locked them away. John went home with Elizabeth and Kate.

The following morning Arkwright interviewed ten employees to train as defenders. He had three old soldiers to teach them how to load and fire, by the end of the week they had three old soldiers and seven volunteers. The old soldiers were in their element teaching them marching and discipline. They seemed to have had a second lease of life.

Chapter Fourteen

The March to Birkacre.

Richard Arkwright had realised his temper had put him at odds with the powers that be in the area, he had to put that right. He had invited Sir Richard Clayton, Hilkiah Lawson, Esquire, Under-Sheriff for the Southern Division of the county of Lancashire. The meeting also coincided with the visit of an old friend Mr Josiah Wedgewood, a famous entrepreneur of the potteries, and of course Sir Frank Standish. Richard Arkwright addressed his guests.

“You are mighty kind to allow me to host all of you worshipful gentlemen of His Majesty's Commission. And also, men of the old Lancashire County blood. I fear I will scarce feel as much pride as I do now, seeing you fine upstanding gentlemen of his majesties bench, standing shoulder to shoulder with me. Albeit whilst I am in the midst of looking after my bonny little throstles, in their nests over yonder.” Arkwright Pointed to the mill. Some guests actually thought him a little mad.

“And some of you are not only magistrates, but brother manufacturers, as you well know.” said Chadwick.

“Arkwright replied. Gentlemen, you have looked after me like elder brothers, reining in my temper. You have taught me to look to my own labour for my own living, and to trust my own hands to guard my own head. But let my mistakes of the past stay in the past; our bonny North Country is broad enough for all. There is much elbowroom for working or fighting, just as long as all is legitimate and the fighting fair.”

“Nothing like a clean sheet and no grudges hey Mr Arkwright?” said a sceptical Sir Richard Clayton, as he studied Arkwright; he still did not have much trust in the entrepreneur.

“That I'm sure of Sir Richard. Now, ladies and Gentlemen! there is a free tap, local balladeers, and fiddlers at the 'King's Arms a little later, and the merrier you are, the more I shall like it. Now, gentlemen, if you will do me the honour to look over the new mill layout, you will find some of my improved carding machinery. Which my detractors try to defame, indeed Mr. Chadwick. for all my patents, some say I have not a leg to stand on! But one must carry on, to prosper.”

“Is this your foreman Mr Shaw, ready to lead the way?” said Haworth.

“It certainly is Mr Haworth.” As the group went to inspect the mill. Sir Richard Clayton discreetly left the meeting.

What Richard Arkwright did not know was, the Frame breakers wheels were already in motion. Epistles had been sent back and forth between Blackrod, Chowbent, Chorley, Darwen and Blackburn. Arkwright's frames were hated above all by the Lancashire domestic workers. A large force was massing to claim the greatest prize, the destruction of Arkwright's Birkacre mill. They were to meet Sunday the third of October, at eleven o'clock, the meeting place was to be Adlington. The frame breakers would then march down to Birkacre, there were so many groups wanting to be involved. Dick of Blackrod and Black Bob of Chowbent, were reckoning

over a thousand men. They had received much correspondence from dissidents all over the south Lancashire towns.

The day was upon them, it was Sunday the third of October. The Blackrod group made the short journey to Adlington; they were there for ten o'clock. People with sledgehammers and axes were mingling in, coming from all the surrounding villages. Dick was gazing around the west Pennine moors to the east, the rolling wooded hills of the Douglas Valley to the west. It was a beautiful sight with the reds, browns and greens mingling as the leaves prepared to fall. The hues of the autumn fields now fallow since the harvest, combined with the backdrop. It was a scene for the finest artists. A voice disturbed his thoughts, he turned to young Martin Sharp, a collier from Haigh.

“Look how beautiful our land is Martin, we cannot let them destroy it with their factories, mines and quarries. Why can we not take just enough for our needs? Why all this greed? You probably think I’m a sentimental fool who surely has lost all his senses?”

“If I thought that Dick, I would not be stood by your side, my trusty hammer over my shoulder. Who are this lot coming from Chorley way?”

“May the lord keep us and preserve us, Martin! there must be over a thousand of them. It is the Blackburn, Darwen and Chorley lads!” Another cry came.

“Look on the Bolton Road it’s the Chowbent and Bolton lads I have never seen as many. Raise up our banner Martin! Mathew beat the snare drum! The Blackrod banner fluttered, and the tattoo sounded. The two approaching groups also raised banners and their drums began to beat. It was a scene from the wars of antiquity as well over two thousand hammer and axe wielding men met, with resounding cheers, on the road just outside Adlington. There were hugs, handshakes, tears, and cheers, as working men from every place between the Mersey and Ribble rivers. met with one purpose.

Dick of Blackrod, Harold Fairhurst of Aspull, Black Bob of Chowbent, George Bradshaw of Blackburn, Joe Halsall of Darwen and Albert Calderbank of Chorley, stood in front of this army of the common man. Dick took the floor.

“Albert are you familiar with Birkacre? We need to choose the best point of attack.” Albert thought for a moment.

“The Yarrow is in a wooded valley; it turns northwest just before the first weir. Then it passes the cotton mill, which is on the north bank. Then the Yarrow flows under the bridge on the Coppull to Chorley Road. It then flows into an area of wetland. There is nought but one road in to Birkacre, it is a bottleneck of the highest degree, we will have to face muskets if they are armed. There is only one possibility that I can see. There is a track to the corn mill behind the Cotton mill, we could do a diversion and attack when they are dealing with that. We can send the main body into the main road; the sheer weight of numbers will win the day.”

“That is a great plan Albert I am all for that.” said Dick. Then George Bradshaw interjected.

“My friends there has never been any proof that the mill has armed defenders. I say we just attack, destroy the mill machines and water engines. Burn the buildings then decamp the scene as quickly as possible. Hit them hard, do what we have to do, then off we run.” The men gave a great hurrah! Dick turned to Albert. “Albert Calderbank! lead us to Birkacre.

Chapter Fifteen

The first assault.

Sir Richard Clayton had been riding with two friends, and the nephew of his fiancé. They were enjoying the country air and had their fowling pieces ready in case they came across any wild fowl. It was a beautiful morning in the fields of Adlington, they were taking in the stunning views, when he heard a tumultuous roar, and what may have been military drumming? They rode to the Bolton Road and were almost struck dumb by the sight. What seemed to be at least three thousand workers with axes and hammers banners flying.

“Oh, my dear lord! An army of breakers, there is only one target it can be, Birkacre! My friends, ride with haste to warn Arkwright! tell him over three thousand men march upon him, that will make him show some urgency. I must raise the militia, take no unnecessary risks Alex!” Sir Richard turned his horse and rode to Wigan.

Birkacre was a little quiet, some repair work was going on in the forges. A few tacklers and metal workers were making modification to the new card room gearing. The volunteer defenders were busy with firearms practice, under the watchful eye of Mr Arkwright and his friends. More of the tacklers and engineers were doing some routine maintenance in the spinning mill. Over on the riverbank, a group of Arkwright’s guests including Josiah Wedgwood the famous potter were drinking tea. Mr Wedgwood was holding court and commenting on how Birkacre, was reminiscent of Thomas Telford’s Coalbrookdale complex. that was also group of related industries, profiting in one large interacting site. It was a beautiful day sun shining, birds singing, the company was fine, when the peace was broken by three galloping riders.

The horses were sweating, the riders were red faced and breathless, the party dismounted and ran to Mr Arkwright.

“My dear fellows, what is amiss to make you ride in this manner?”

“It is wreckers! frame breakers, sir! We were riding cross country with Sir Richard Clayton. We heard a tumult and went to investigate the cause, when we came upon a really large group of Brigands carrying sledgehammers They were converging on Adlington, they must have numbered close to three thousand adult males!”

“Are they moving towards us!”

Not yet sir, they were still combining and amassing. We think they will only be here in about four hours, for they have travelled from far and wide and needed rest. Birkacre has got to be their target.”

“What my lad, are you sure, could you not be mistaken?”

“Never sir, there were four pairs of eyes in our party, two of our number who have served with distinction in the army. We have our fowling pieces with us, we offer our services sir.”

“And you are indeed welcome to join us gentlemen.”

Mr Arkwright addressed his friends, his employees, and his assembled defender volunteers.

“My dear friends and colleagues, we now are faced with a really dire threat. A large group of frame breakers are poised to move against us. Those who wish to leave may do so.” Most of the employee’s, slipped away.” Richard Arkwright was left with Sir Richard Claytons friends, his ten volunteers, Mr Chadwick, and his friend Mr Thomas Walshman.

“Both I, Mr Walshman and Mr Chadwick, have a brace of pistols. I have ten-armed volunteer defenders and with Sir Richards three friends, we have sixteen guns. Who amongst you has military training?” One of Richard Claytons lads stepped forward.

“I was a lieutenant in the King’s own sir, I was released to recover from wounds. My name is Alexander Heskett. and the gent in your volunteers with the grey beard is former Sergeant Jack Roby. I worked with him in the militia he was a great soldier, a former fusilier.

“Can you and the sergeant, please organise the defences?”

“I can indeed sir, it is just a holding operation until the Militia arrive.”

“Splendid Lieutenant Heskett, I will leave it to you. you can allocate a duty to me later.”

“It would be more prudent for you to be the guardian angel to your guests. If I may be so bold sir.”

“You have a wisdom that belies your youth, Lieutenant Heskett.”

“Can we access the first-floor windows on both sides?”

“Yes, you can lieutenant. Mr Hall, will show you around the building.”

“Thank you, sir, please lead the way Mr Hall.” Then the fifteen volunteers marched to the mill.

Meanwhile Sir Richard Clayton had been riding through Aspull, Whelley, and Scholes. He had called in churches and houses he knew, dragging his men out. He then went into the town sending riders to Standish. Sir Richard was rapidly getting the militia together, he had sent riders out relaying messages, all was going well. They set off at forty minutes past twelve and by one o clock, they were marching through Standish. The militia were ninety-four men strong, with muskets. Sir Richard turned to his right-hand man, Sergeant Ainscough.

“We only have a small flask of powder each and a handful of balls. We are outnumbered at least twenty to one. We could fire one volley at them, then when we were reloading be swamped by two thousand angry men swinging Axes and Sledgehammers. We would be dead in seconds, or would you recommend a bayonet charge Sergeant?”

“I see you still have your humour sir; we don’t have bayonets!”

“Then we are surely on a suicide mission, eh! Sergeant!” they both laughed.

“How good are you at bluffing Sergeant, because we need something, or I will only be able to request terms for the safe conduct of the employees and defenders and I mustn’t forget to include us. I feel will be forced to let them burn the cotton mill down.”

“What is the alternative sir?”

Simple Sergeant, possibly one hundred dead frame breakers, and one hundred and fifty dead Militia and mill people. And then of course, the mill burnt down.”

“You have always had a way of filling me with hope sir!” The comrades laughed heartily.

The frame breakers had been led over the fields on a well-used track, by Albert Calderbank, the column came out on the Chorley to Coppull road. Calderbank called out.

“We go down the road half a mile it is then a steep walk down into the valley. you will see the road to the mill is on the left just before the bridge over the Yarrow.”

The column reached the top of the hill and looked down at the river and the bridge far below. George Bradshaw steadied the men and raise his hand high.

“Raise your banners men! Drummers beat the tattoo!” The front of the column became a vision of colour then the martial sounds of the drums bid beat forth. The column moved slowly forward down the hill.

At the mill, the remaining personnel, and defenders, stood aghast as the great roar and drumming resounded through the valley.

“They’re at top at brew!” cried the lookout.

“Everyone into the mill!” cried Arkwright.

They were all in the mill twenty good men and true in total, against possibly three thousand dissident textile workers.

The throng of humanity spread into the mill yard; it was like a giant wave in a flood. The defenders were all loaded and cocked. Black Bob of Chowbent and Dick O Blackrod went forward to dictate terms.

In the mill the defenders watched as two masked men with a flag of truce walked slowly to the mill.

“State your business rebels!” Cried Arkwright.

“Resistance is futile Mr Arkwright! All this cotton mill of yours and its vile machines, will be put to the torch!”

‘It is not the mills and machines you would be burning, but your bread and meat, the clothing and comfort of hundreds on hundreds of happy firesides. It is not the masters you are undoing, but your fathers and brothers, your sisters and your wives, your own children, and old folks!’

“How dare you say that Arkwright! It is you! You who has Children working twelve-hour days, along with their mothers and fathers in the dark of the mill. They have to rise at five in the morning, and then with nothing but a crust inside them, they toil in the mill. It is not a happy fireside, but a vision of hell. You are turning the freemen of England into the slaves of king cotton!” Cried Dick.

“I will not surrender to a rabble!”

“Then you have an hour to consider your fate!” Dick replied.

The two men went back to the ranks.

“They have an hour!” Bob called to the army of frame breakers.

“They have given us an hour and we only have just over a hundred musket balls. We are outnumbered forty to one. If we kill a hundred of the mob, none of us will leave here alive. The retribution will be brutal. I say we surrender now!” said the old sergeant.

“Shut up you, cowardly old fool! we are not surrendering!”

“Sir! You will not address me like that! I’ll cave your bloody skull in, you popinjay!” the sergeant moved towards him musket butt first, young Mr Heskett stepped before him.

“Easy now sergeant pay him no heed, he has no knowledge of military matters.

“Calm down Richard,” said Walshman “Or your men will walk out on you. This position is untenable.” Arkwright shrugged, they all sat down awaiting guidance from the inventor.

The hour was nearly up, the white flag was lofted again. Bob and Dick marched to the mill. to offer terms.

“They are coming! called out one of the defenders, one of the defenders was dozing he awoke with a start, not really knowing where he was his musket was discharged towards the crowd.

“The Blackguards have fired on a flag of truce! Attack!” close on a thousand stones and river pebbles flew at the widows, then the wreckers charged, three defenders were injured. The lieutenant ordered everyone to fire a volley into the air!” not all the shots went into the air, a few men went down, The Lieutenant cried out.

“Reload men, those with a second pistol fire them as we reload. A group of attackers were forced into the Yarrow because of the panic from the volley of gunfire. As they scrambled to the bank, two bodies were left in the river, drowned by the weight of their comrades. The attackers were about to regroup when a cry came from amongst their ranks.

“The Militia are here!” the crowd regrouped and pulled back from the mill to the road. They watched the militia form up into three ranks of thirty, it seemed like standoff would ensue.

“The militia are better fixed than us, but I fear they have not the sufficient training or nerve. I say abandon the mill, we retreat across the river and get behind the militia and to safety.” said the young Lieutenant.

“Typical of the cowardice I have witnessed today!” said Arkwright. The young officer cast him a look of disdain.

“Who is for retreating. All hands went up. It seems you are on your own Mr Arkwright. Mr Hall get the door!”

“Mr Heskett, if you men get out, I will bar the door from the inside, then escape through the broken window. We should make it across the river Yarrow unseen, then they will waste a lot of energy attacking an empty mill.”

“Good thinking John! Come on men!”

The door was opened slightly, the Lieutenant darted to the Yarrow bank. Luckily the mill was on a slight angle to the road, just out of sight of the attackers. He signalled when it was clear and one by one the defenders crossed to the river until there was only John Hall in the mill. He locked the door from the inside, then slid out of the window. As he was about to cross to the Yarrow, he saw a man creeping towards the young officer, he sprinted across and hit the assailant with a full-on tackle, John then banged the man’s head on the hard ground. The man was out cold.

“Come on sir, that beggar nearly had you, we may not be so lucky next time. Sergeant, please take them through the reeds and be careful.”

“I have hunted these wetlands all my life, I know them like the back of my hand. They will be safe with me John.” He led the mismatched group of defenders across the river and into the reeds. Young lieutenant Heskett turned to John Hall.

“John, I owe you, my life?”

“I feel you would have done the same for me sir. You seem to be a man of honour, not like some of those beggars we just got out.”

“Yes, quite John.” he burst out laughing. “You would have made an excellent non-commissioned officer.”

“Never mind that, let us move into the reeds whilst they are distracted.”

Chapter Sixteen

Preparing for the second assault.

John Hall made his way to the front of the group, then he led them through the lush undergrowth. into the wooded area and onto the road behind the militia, with Lieutenant Heskett and the Sergeant bringing up the rear. Sir Richard Clayton ran over to his friends.

“Thank God you are safe lads! and you Mr Heskett I am so glad you are safe. Your father would have strung me up if any harm would have befallen you”.

“This man John Hall sir, he was invaluable. I wished he could have been my sergeant in the wars, he is a brave strong cool-headed man. He saved my life and brought us back to you.”

“Nonsense Lieutenant, you and the Sergeant did all the work.” replied John.

“You are too modest sir.” Sir Richard pulled out a hip flask, a toast, to John Hall!” He took the flask, and took a deep draught then passed it to John, who raised the flask and also took a swig.

“By God that is a fine cognac! May I pass it to Mr Heskett?”

“You most certainly may, Mr Hall. John Hall passed the flask to Heskett who raised the flask in salute and took a drink. John then surveyed the scene enfolding, further down the hill from the militia position.

“What do you do now Sir Richard?”

Would you recommend a bayonet charge John? Or maybe three volleys. Or even three volleys, followed by a bayonet charge.”

“I fear you jest Sir Richard; a bayonet charge would be buried in minutes. They are behind barricades so they may advance using the barricades as shields, the inexperienced infantry may break and run with a mob like that advancing. Volleys would only instigate a charge from the rioters.”

“Exactly my thoughts John, so what would you do?”

“I would keep my men here, sleep by rank, an hour each to try and stave off fatigue. I would just keep the men in position, facing them down. If they charge their daftest will be in the vanguard. If the lads could fire three shots a minute, then they could kill over a hundred of them within the first minute. None of us want that, they are not battle hardened they would be lucky to get two shots off. I reckon their vanguard of about six or so hundred, will stay behind the barricades facing us down. They will stay put whilst the rest of the force destroys the mill and the water wheels. Then the mob retires, and the vanguard stay put. The mill burns and then the vanguard retire. The mill will definitely be destroyed, so let us have no more death and grieving families.”

“I think you have read my mind; you are a fine tactician sir.”

“I was a non-commissioned officer in a regiment of dragoons sir. The Major gave us orders, then the lads would look at me with pleading eyes. I saw so many deaths through incompetence and class bigotry, I could not wait to get out. I buried to many good lads who died needlessly.”

“I agree with you wholeheartedly John and at least you survived to save my future wife’s nephew here. The family owe you something, for I feel in the morning you will be a redundant worker.” Sir Richard turned to Sergeant Ainscough.

“We must rest the men Sergeant, first rank to remain standing, second and third rank rest. Change after an hour. We will take turns on watch; we must appear relaxed to the mob. They may try to test us. Be wary Sergeant.” Sir Richard tapped his old friend on the shoulder.”

The standoff continued all through the night, the guard was changed on one-hour intervals. The Sergeant made sure every rank got a good rest. Around nine o clock, ladies from Coppull brought the militia refreshments bread and cheese, water, and small beer. The militia were thankful. soon after ten there was activity in the horde below.

“John! Alex! What do you make of this?”

“May I borrow your spy glass sir?” Sir Richard handed it to John. “They look like Colliers, maybe from Chowbent and Walkden, they are most likely from the Duke of Bridgewater’s mines.”

“Reinforcements, and a tough bunch at that, eh John?”

“Undoubtably sir, I would continue to hold position. This lot have energised the rest, but I think we are safe from attack, for they know we do not have the strength to attack them.”

“Wigan militia!” Sir Richard cried. “They will intimidate us but will not attack. All ranks! Do not cock your muskets! I repeat do not cock your muskets! We cannot afford to accidentally discharge a musket.”

Soon the taunting started, along with the cursing and gesticulating. It went on for three or four minutes.

“Front rank present arms!” Cried the Sergeant, the Wigan muskets were presented. “Now my lads! Ice cold stares right at them.” The horde went quiet, then after three or four minutes the taunting began once more in earnest.

“Just keep staring lads do not worry.” Said Sir Richard,

The militia men bravely stood fast. Their faces showed no emotion, muskets were presented, and ice-cold stares directed at the attackers.

As the militia were watching the aggressive vanguard of frame breakers, an angry Arkwright shouted from the back.

“Why haven’t you attacked them Clayton, my mill is under threat!”

“If I attacked, we would all be dead! Including the families in the cottages, and the forges, the corn mill, the mine, and anything else in their way, would be destroyed. This way they may get bored and go. they still think the mill is defended. If they do attack Birkacre, it will just be the mill and frames lost.”

“Just the mill and frames man! that is the only thing that is important, at Birkacre!”

“Sergeant Ainscough! one more word from that man arrest him.”

“Yes sir! With pleasure.” the Sergeant smiled. “Now get out of sight sir you are supposed to be in the mill.” Arkwright scurried away. Sir Richard struggled to keep his laughter silent, John Hall gave him a crafty wink.

Can I have your attention Sir Richard, there is activity in the centre of the horde. Sir Richard raised his spy glass. Half of the Colliers have joined the vanguard on the barricade, the rest are leading a charge to the mill. Keep your eyes on the barricade lads, we do not want a reckless attack. Prepare to set up as the front of a firing square! Front rank, to the floor! Second rank, kneeling and present arms! Third rank standing and present arms! Now keep staring at them!” When the vanguard saw the formation, the irate rioters raised the axes and hammers, the standoff was back on. As the mob charged the mill from front and rear, a mass of stones and river pebbles came flying through the windows in an incessant barrage. This vicious assault which lasted a good five minutes, would have devastated any marksmen.

“My god!” said young Heskett to John Hall. “That is frightening John, we would not have got a single shot off!”

“I know lad, a musket sometimes is less effective than a long bow, a sling or mere pebbles and rocks. This lot will have the doors down in less than ten minutes, then they will destroy the frames and waterwheel. Soon the whole of the mill will be engulfed.”

As the militia watched the enfolding scene from their vantage point, this concerted assault was reminiscent of the fall of many a castle in antiquity. The sounds of wood and metal breaking and splintering as the axes and hammers pounded the doors was deafening. The attackers were in a frenzy, the great main door finally fell apart under the onslaught. The mill was breached, then a group of around one hundred were directed to destroy the waterwheels. Teams of armed men were ordered to stand guard by the forges, the corn mill, the cottages, and also blocked the road to the Birkacre pit. The organisers were men of honour they would not damage anything to the detriment of the people. Just the works of their nemesis Arkwright. once the mill was destroyed, they would leave peacefully.

Spinning frames, carding frames, multi spindled Jenny’s, beltings, and gear shafts, were all dragged into the yard, where they were set upon by hammers and axes. There were two piles building up on the riverbank, one of splintered wood and the of other bent and broken metal. Then holes appeared in the roof and slates began to fall. Ladders were put up against the walls, the roof and the rafters were being broken. The mill was caving in on itself. Men climbed up the ladders with tallow and oil, then torches were brought to finish this deed. Then the torches

were thrown onto the dry beams, which had just been coated in tallow and the oil that had soaked them. This caused a blaze hotter than the fires of hell; it soon engulfed the interior of the mill. The crowd let out a resounding cheer. the intense heat was cracking the stonework. The mill would soon be a useless shell.

The watching militia and some of the Birkacre residents, stood almost in shock as Arkwright's edifice crumbled before their very eyes.

Chapter Seventeen

The aftermath.

Dick of Blackrod and Black Bob of Chowbent, shook hands, Albert Calderbank, George Bradshaw, and Joe Halsall mobbed them.

“We did it lads, we did it! We destroyed Arkwright’s mill, and all his devilish frames. Have we had any casualties of our own.” asked Dick?

“We had two drowned in the river and one trampled on the riverbank. There was one shot and killed in the first charge. A couple wounded but they will be fine.” said George.

“It could have been much worse George, if the militia had been badly led, we could have had volleys of musket balls ripping through us, and the militia would have been hacked to death.”

“Aye lad, the full weight of the British army would have come down on us for that.” Then Bob spoke up.

“I fear these machines are here to stay, we may have won a few battles but the more I think about it, we will lose the war. I think our class is in for a mighty struggle, we must tell the tales of the Lancashire frames, to our children and if we are lucky, our children’s children. I feel they also will have to take up the fight.”

They all clasped hands and cried, “We Will!”

“Now let us get about our men, for we want no more damage to Birkacre.” The leaders went to marshal their charges.

Over on the road overlooking the scene, the Militia and people from the mill were looking down with disbelief. The mill had been demolished in less than one hour by thousands of disaffected workers. John Hall surveyed the scene, every frame, the waterwheel and shafts, everything wooden now just a mound of ash. A pile of twisted scrap metal was all that was left of the intricate workings of the frames. The charred shell of a burned-out building was all that remained of Arkwright’s pride and joy. At least the children would not be working twelve-hour shifts for a while.

“This may not be over yet lads!” Sir Richard Clayton barked. there had been movement on the barricade. the barricade was opening.

“They might fancy their chances boys! Reform firing lines! Front rank, to the floor! Second rank kneel and present arms! Third rank stand and present arms! Now keep staring at them!” The barricade was pushed back, four men came out carrying a flag of truce they walked halfway up the hill. One of them called out.

“Sir Richard Clayton! Do you respect this flag?”

“Of course, I do, I am not a frightened mill hand. please come forward.”

“Thank you, Sir Richard!” they marched almost up to the militia.

“How may I assist you gentlemen?”

“Our work here is now finished sir; we only wanted the mill and the frames destroyed. There has been nothing else touched in the valley whatsoever. We lost four men in total in the first engagement, we wish to get them to their families. We will march out of the valley, then you can march your men in sir. I also must commend you on the way you conducted yourself and your men. You showed us you were a brave man, a man who would not retreat. You kept your head in a tense standoff, to avoid a blood bath, which would have resulted in the deaths of all your men and possibly hundreds of ours. Thank you, sir.”

“And thank you sir for sparing the valley and controlling your men. You kept their discipline throughout. Thank you and farewell.

The breakers made their way back to the main body of men, the drums struck up the tattoo, the banners were raised. The mass of men began the march home, singing as they went. As they were clearing the crest of the valley, Sir Richard marched his men into Birkacre. It was Monday the fourth of October 1779, the flagship of Richard Arkwright’s empire and his blueprint for factories of the future was a burned-out shell. His patent frames were charred wood, ashes, and mangled metal. Sir Richard called John Hall and Alex Heskett, over to him. I can’t thank you enough lads and you especially John, it was good to have you with us, and thank you for looking after Alexander.” John was just about to answer when he heard Elizabeth calling.

“John my love! You are safe!” she threw her arms around him. Then there was another shout.

“Richard, how did you manage to drag Alex into all this madness!” then Alex cried out.

“Father meet John! He saved my life!” Sir Richard quickly intervened and explained the weekend’s events to Squire Heskett.

“My word Mr Hall, you have been busy. Are you a mill hand?”

“No sir, I work in the forge here. I was a farrier, but here I have been working on machinery and water mills, gearing systems for the water frames and such like.”

“An engineer eh! And this is your lovely wife and child, it is not?” John nodded. “Were you in a tied cottage Mr Hall.”

“I was sir, Elizabeth and I were both working in the Mill so I fear I will lose it now.”

“I thought as much John, please come round tomorrow with your family. I have a proposition for you.”

“I have taken the liberty of recommending you for the position of smith, I think you will like it. See you tomorrow Mr and Mrs Hall and you too Kate.” said Alex.

“Bloody hell, he has just offered you a job!” Elizabeth gave him a hug.

“Don’t worry,” said Sir Richard, “They are a good lot.” Squire Heskett turned around.

“Richard do not dawdle here too long. My sister is with my niece at the house, they are waiting for you. I cannot go with you I’m afraid, I have a previous engagement.” He turned and briskly walked to his horse. Alex laughed’

“I will come with you Sir Richard and explain everything with you, father has business in the tavern on Mondays. Indeed, the judgement day would not get in the way of it.” They both laughed.

“Then sir you may deflect Ann’s bullets, for I am sure she will give me a grilling.” He smiled and tapped his nephew to be on the shoulder.

Richard Arkwright approached Sir Richard, he took him too one side and nervously thought about the words he would use.

“I fully understand the tactics you employed now, Sir Richard. I could not see beyond my own self-importance. You remained calm at all times with a mixture of courage with a bit of bluff. My machines were destroyed but all our lives were saved. I owe you a huge apology for some of my appalling behaviour. I am sorry for any offence I may have caused you and thank you for protecting our people.”

“Apology accepted Mr Arkwright.” Mr Wedgewood approached Sir Richard.

“When I saw the mob sir, I thought I had breathed my last. But you, Sir, are made of stout stuff. I must thank you, for your handling of the situation. I shall call into Adlington Hall with one of my dinner services as an appreciation of your efforts.”

“Thank you, gentlemen, I must do my rounds and write my report. I shall take my leave.” Sir Richard did a courteous bow and left them.”

“Can I borrow you and your family John; I need your help with the report? you know this place inside and out.” Elizabeth smiled and turned to Kate.

“We are helping Sir Richard he is a Knight who has met the King.” Kate giggled; Sir Richard blushed.

Chapter Eighteen

On the Preston Manchester Road.

The Column was trudging onto the Manchester to Preston Road, some forming right some forming up on the left, two of the lads who died were from East Lancashire the other two were from Chowbent. The leaders met, Dick of Blackrod spoke first.

“I am so sorry we lost those lads.”

“There are no need for apologies Dick, the lads knew the risks. It is what they wanted; it was the prize of prizes to drive Arkwright out of Lancashire! And we did it.” said Bob.” Their widows will be looked after, do not grieve for them. They died achieving their goal.”

“They all shook hands for the last time and the great column split. Dick and Bob leading their lads’ home. The now weary victors marched through Adlington, then as they approached Blackrod hill. The Haigh lads left the column, marching through little Scotland. Then the Blackrod and Aspull lads left the column. They stood in a group and watched as the Howfen and Chowbent lads, with the Walkden colliers continued the march home.

Dick saw the Aspull lads heading for home, he thought maybe we could all have a flagon together. He called to them.

“Come on lads, are you going to for a drink in the Black Horse.”

“Nay Dick, we are too tired we did not sleep last night.”

“You are right it has been a long couple of days; I will see you soon.” The adrenalin was starting to wear off, the hunger and tiredness taking over. He bade fare well to his friends and made his way home. He walked into the house he was met with an icy stare.

“Where the hell have you been Richard Lyon, out on the tiles like a bloody Tom cat. You had better have a good excuse my lad. You look worn out! Am I not good enough for you, do need to go elsewhere for your fun! Come on out with it!

“You are better off not knowing Anne.”

“Why have you committed a crime or something?”

“Alright! When I was out those Sundays. I was leading the Blackrod and Aspull lads, smashing the Spinning frames. We worked with the Chowbent and Howfen lads. Their leader was Black Bob O Chowbent.”

“Hold on, the leader of the locals was Dick of Blackrod!”

“That is me, I have been overnight at Birkacre! We have destroyed the spinning frames, the carding frames, the waterwheel, and burned down the mill. We faced down the Wigan militia overnight. Not one militia man or mill worker of Birkacre was hurt. We had two lads from Blackburn drowned in the Yarrow, a Chowbent lad was shot, and another trampled.”

Anne Lyon looked to be in shock, she stood up went to the range, walked back across the room, and stared at Richard.

“You are the infamous Dick of Blackrod?”

“All the leaders had false names, for security reasons.”

“The frames are gone from Lancashire Anne; our thread will be in demand again. I may just set the loom up and teach young Billy handloom weaving.”

“Anne fell into his arms.

“I am so proud of you! You big daft beggar, why did you keep it secret.”

“If anything went wrong, I did not want you implicated.” She looked at him, the tears were welling in her eyes. Then she kissed him passionately.

“Sit down Dick of Blackrod, I have some brandy hidden for a special occasion.”

“Where have you been hiding that, you little minx?”

“Never you mind Richard Lyon., but tonight just might be the one.” Ann scurried off and came back with two cups,

“Here’s too our future Dick!”

“I think I prefer Richard!” They laughed and drained their cups.

Over at Adlington Hall, Sir Richard Clayton arrived home with his fiancé's nephew.

“Where have you two, been hiding, I have been worried sick. You only went out for a Sunday morning ride?”

“Have my footmen and maids catered for both you, and your mother’s needs, my love?”

“Indeed, they have Richard, their manners were impeccable. But where have you been?” the excitement was too much for Alex.

“My dearest Ann, we rode into an army of three thousand frame breakers. I rode to warn the mill and Richard went to raise the militia. I had to rescue Mr Arkwright from the mill and a former sergeant saved my life!”

“You let him run wild in a war zone and a sergeant, saved his life! In a conflict against an army of three thousand men. What did you think you were playing at!” Sir Richard poured a large Brandy into a glass.

“*It will be another long night.*” he thought.

Chapter Nineteen

Epilogue.

Sir Richard Clayton did not remain single for long. In 1780 he married Ann White, who was the daughter of Charles White, an eminent surgeon of Manchester, and they had a daughter. He later became recorder of Wigan and High constable of Lancaster castle. It was reported and was alleged by the Edinburgh Review. "That the Birkacre mill was destroyed ' in the presence of a powerful body of police and military, without any one of the civil authorities requiring them to interfere, to prevent so scandalous an outrage. It was also reported by Josiah Wedgewood there were seven thousand rioters. Although the different accounts vary one could safely ascertain at least three thousand rioters were there. The Wigan militia in 1779 were not strong enough in numbers to take on a mob of the size. No blame could ever be afforded to Sir Richard Clayton.

After the Birkacre riot, Richard Arkwright left Lancashire and surrendered the lease back to Mr John Chadwick. Arkwright returned to Derbyshire, opening mills at Matlock Baths, amongst other places. He became High Sheriff of Derbyshire and was knighted by the King. Over the years he fought many court cases, against those whom he said had infringed his grand patent. He often claimed that he was credited the title of the father of the modern factory system. He had pioneered child labour for unskilled and semiskilled jobs. Jedediah Strutt, Samuel Need, Robert Walshman and John Cross, all close friends and partners all shunned him in later life.

John Chadwick died soon after he had regained the lease. In 1781 a new mill was built by Edward Chadwick, brother of John, the buildings were leased to four partners for twenty-one years. they were engaged in the trade of cloth dyeing and finishing. This business failed in 1782 and Wheelers Manchester Chronicle dated 12th October 1782, advertised the sale of the leasehold rights in Birkacre, A house, Printing shops etc., the sale of machinery, wheels, calendars, printing tables, also the sale of bleaching equipment. He did not have the entrepreneurial skills of his late brother; he was happy to live of the rents.

Sir Robert Peel was rather disheartened, he decided to leave Lancashire rather than trying to rebuild. After the frame breaker attacks at Altham and Brookside, his nerves were shattered. He decided to look around for another potential site, he sought to find somewhere far enough away from the rioters, but close enough to his customer base. Burton-on-Trent proved to be ideal. Most raw cotton arrived at the Liverpool docks and there was a direct link via the new Trent and Mersey canal which had been recently opened in 1777. Unlike the Lancashire he was leaving behind, Burton embraced the idea of new industry and Joseph Wilkes, a successful businessman and director on the Burton Boat Company, was more than happy to help finance Peel's new business. He fully recovered from the violence of Altham and became one of the most successful industrialists in the midlands. His grandson, also Sir Robert Peel, became the Prime minister of the country. He was responsible for repealing the

corn Laws in 1846, Which cost him his premiership due to a Tory backlash. He also founded the London police force, they were nicknamed the Peelers, and were the model for police forces throughout Britain.

The spinning trade slackened off in Lancashire, for nearly ten years. Then came the advent of steam. The mills could now break away from the fast-flowing streams of the northern hills and valleys. The towns were beckoning, the Wigan and Lancashire coalfields had over a centuries supply of quality coal. Most pits were close to canals, the canal side was a perfect place for a steam powered mill. The canals supplied the cotton, the coal, and the water, it would be the dawn of the second industrial revolution.

The End

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