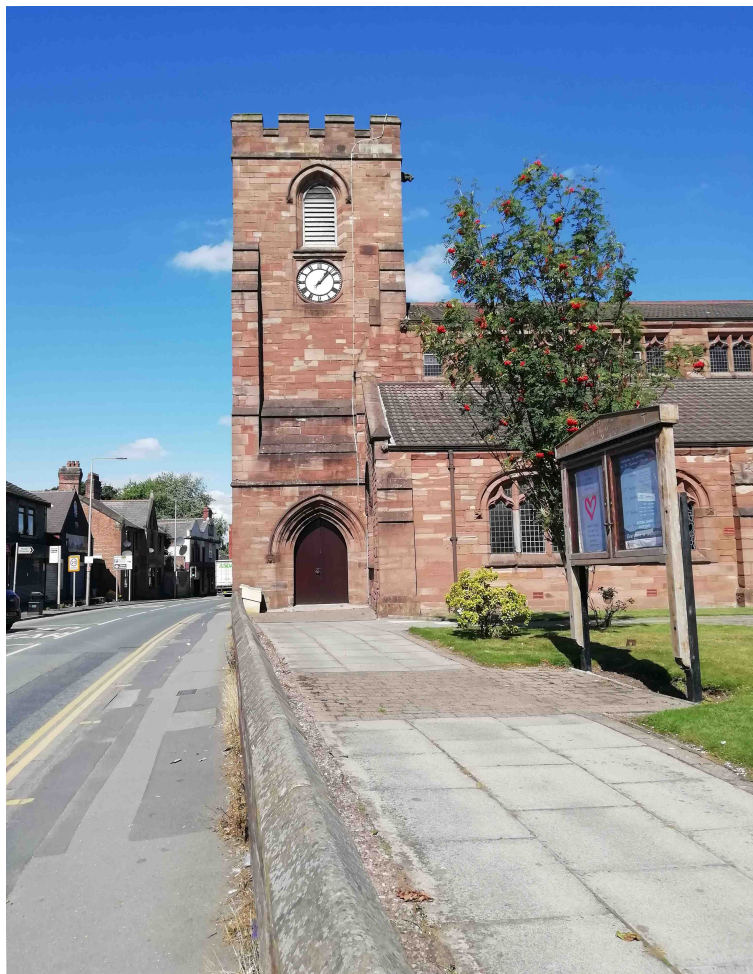


An Illustrated Companion to The Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield



**WITH SELECTIONS FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT NOW IN
PRESERVATION AT WIGAN ARCHIVES**

By

The Makerfield Rambler

Part 4 : 1666

(This edition: April 2024)

1666

“It was supposed to have beene a Scot and there slaine when duke Hamilton invaded England”



“[1666, January] 15 -Munday. ... I had the compeine of one Hugh Toppin of Warrington who told me there was the head of some Christian lay bare to publike view above ground and that it wa[s] a charitie to bury it which I said I would doe.

16. -tusday. I went to bury it. It lay in the high lane as one gets to barly mans just att the crosse cawsaw[. I carried] it in my hands to the dungeons slift [left?] of the towne field and there buryd it[. I] digd the hole with my fingers. It was supposed to have beene a Scot and there slaine when duke Hamilton invaded England.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

At 4am on 8 July 1648 an army of about 15,000 Scots under James, 1st Duke of Hamilton, had crossed the border into England. His aim was to join with a force of English Royalists under Sir Marmaduke Langdale and, ultimately, to restore Charles I to the throne. A clash with the Parliamentary defenders at Preston on 17 August left Hamilton's force seriously depleted, but around 7,000 foot and 4,000 mounted soldiers continued their journey southward, with regiments of Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army comprising about 3,000 infantry and 2,500 cavalry in pursuit. The subsequent events were reported to the Speaker of the House of Commons in a letter written by Cromwell from Warrington on 20 August:

“At last the Enemy drew up within three miles of Wigan; and by that time our Army was come up, they drew off again, and recovered Wigan before we could attempt any thing upon them. We lay that night in the field close by the Enemy; being very dirty and weary, and having marched twelve miles of such ground as I never rode in all my life, the day being very wet. We had some skirmishing, that night, with the Enemy, near the Town; where we took General Van Druske and a Colonel, and killed some principal Officers, and took about a hundred prisoners; where I also received a Letter from Duke Hamilton, for civil usage towards his kinsman Colonel Hamilton, whom he left wounded there. We took also Colonel Hurry and Lieutenant-Colonel Innes, sometimes in your service.

The next morning [19 August] the enemy marched towards Warrington, and we at the heels of them... We could not engage the enemy until we came within three miles of Warrington, and there the enemy made a stand, at a pass near Winwicke. We held them in some dispute till our Army came up, they maintaining the pass with great resolution for many hours; ours and theirs coming to push of pike and very close charges, and forced us to give ground; but our men, by the blessing of God, quickly recovered it, and charging very home upon them, beat them from their standing, where we killed about a thousand of them, and took (as we believe) about two-thousand prisoners, and prosecuted them home to Warrington Town... As soon as we came thither, I received a message from Lieut.-General Bailly, desiring some capitulation; to which I yielded...” (Vol. 1, “Letters and speeches of Oliver Cromwell”, Thomas Carlyle (ed), Methuen, 1904).

The “pass near Winwick” where the battle took place was the valley formed by St Oswald's Brook on the east side of the present-day A49, about half-way between Newton-le-Willows and Winwick. In the summer of 1648 the Brook was swollen by the heavy rains mentioned by Cromwell and others; this combined with the hedgerows either side of Hermitage Green Lane and the steep sandstone bank on the valley's south side to form what Parliamentarian Captain John Hodgson refers to in his memoirs as “a most advantageous place” for the Royalists to make their stand. Another account records that, “in their way, at a place called Red-bank, in a narrow lane, [the Royalists] made a stand with a Body of Pikes, and lined the Hedges with Musketts, who so rudely entertained the pursuing Enemy, that they were compelled to stop (having lost abundance of men, and Col Thornhill himself) until the coming up of Col Pride's Regiment of Foot, who after a sharp dispute put those brave Fellows to the run...” (“A Brief Chronicle of the Late Intestine War...”, James Heath, 2nd ed, 1676).

In the confusion at Wigan, the Scottish Colonel James Turner had been injured by one of his own pikemen and was “intreated” by Lt-Gen William Baillie “to goe into some house and repose on a chaire; for I had sleepd none in two nights, and eate as litle” (“Memoirs of His Own Life and Times By Sir James Turner...”, Edinburgh, 1829). It is thought that the “house” where Turner rested was Cop Holt Farm. The forward infantry regiments under Col Turner's second-in-command, Lt-Col George Meldrum, Col Sir Alexander Hamilton and Col Alexander Erskine, Earl of Kellie, were positioned on the bank on the south side of Hermitage Green Lane as shown in the photograph. Cromwell is thought to have had his battle HQ at Newton Park Farm, some distance to the north.

Following the Royalist surrender and a short rest at Warrington, Cromwell re-traced his steps through Wigan and Preston and then progressed into Yorkshire. One account suggests that he spent the night of 22 August “near Ashton Cross”.

From Roger Lowe's description, the severed head found by him in 1666 was lying near the main Wigan-Warrington road (present-day A49), presumably to the south of Ashton and possibly near the junction with Penny Lane (A599). The two armies had almost certainly passed this way en route to the battlefield in 1648, those bringing up the rear of Hamilton's army being harassed along the way

by Cromwell's advance guard or "forlorn". Another possibility, assuming the head had any Civil War connection at all, is that it came from the victim of a later skirmish in the same area in 1651. Again a Scots-dominated Royalist force had passed through Ashton - this time led by the future Charles II, who had spent the previous night at Bryn Hall as the guest of Sir William Gerard - and again, almost 3 years to the day after their clash at Winwick, the two sides had come to blows north of Warrington.

It has not been possible to shed any light on Lowe's intriguing reference to "*dungeons*" in the vicinity of Townfields.

The photograph was taken on 16 November 2017.

“John Jenkinson desired me to goe to Winwick to stand as a godfather”



“[1666, January] 23. — John Jenkinson desired me to goe with his child to Winwick to stand as a godfather Mr Bowkr had faild and could not come so he intrested me to go with hime which I did and we went into Clarke’s att after the christening and spent 3s. Then we went to widow Barkrs and we spent othr 3s.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

It would seem from the Diary that John Jenkinson kept an alehouse at or near Ashton. When off duty he and Roger Lowe could occasionally be found scouring the hedgerows in search of 'birds'

nests, or bowling with Daniel Chaddock and others in the alley at Golborne Copp.

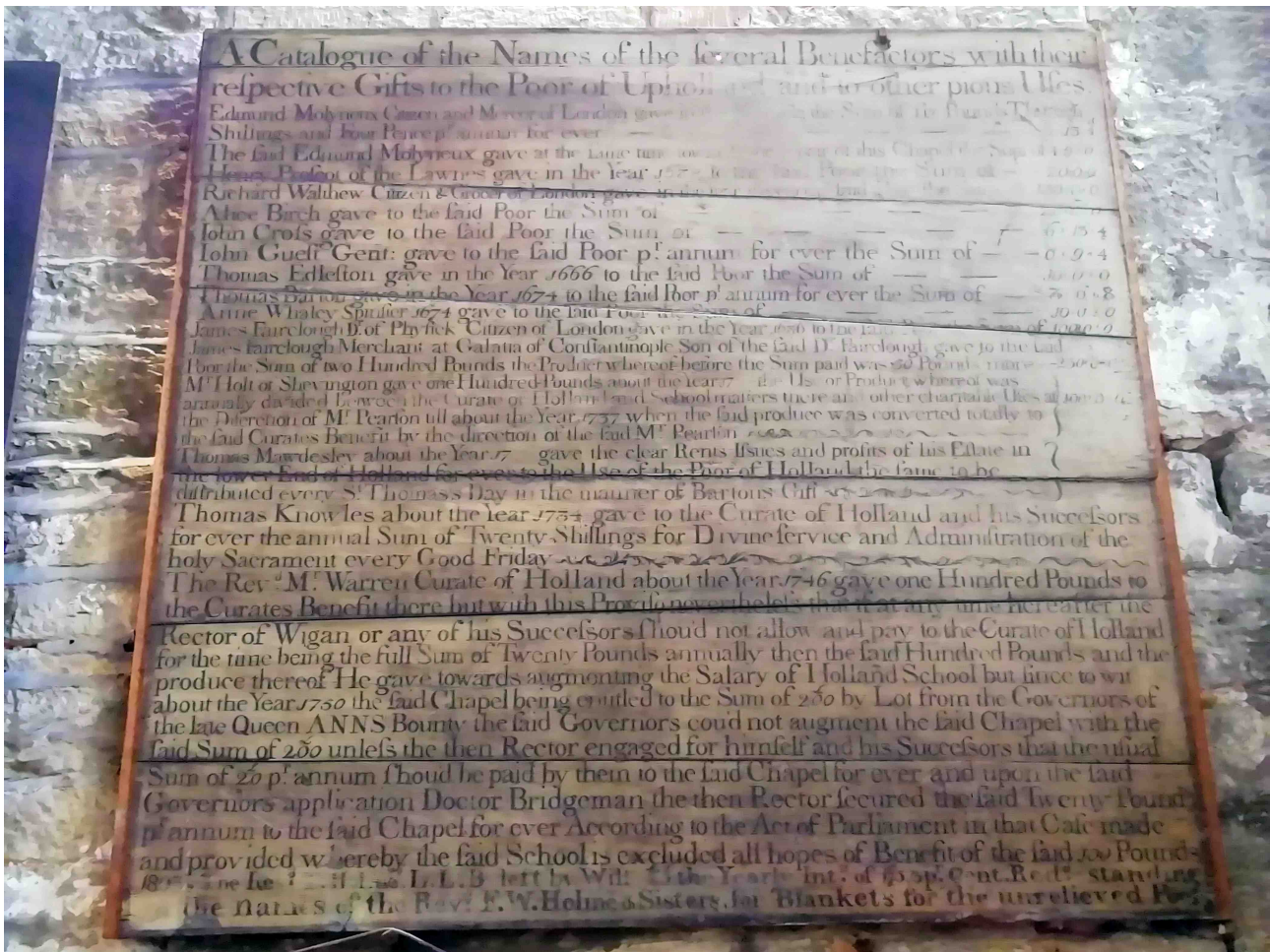
John Jenkinson's first choice as godfather, John Bowker BA, had been ordained as a deacon and priest by Bishop Thomas Fulwar on 29 October 1658. Three years later, on 9 October 1661, Mr Bowker was licensed as curate and preacher at Standish (National Archives ref. E179/61/85; Cheshire Archives & Local Studies ref. EDV 2/8*). He is described as “minister” of the parish church there in the Wigan Court Leet rolls for 1673.

Now positioned next to the north wall of the Gerard Chapel at St Oswald's Church, Winwick, the baptismal font shown here was retrieved from the churchyard. It is made of sandstone and has been dated to c.1400.

The photograph was taken on 9 September 2023.

*The “Exhibition Book” at Cheshire Archives also records that Mr Bowker subscribed to the Act of Uniformity on 15 August 1662. This may account for the “*extreme*” falling out between minister and diarist “*about religion*” that occurred as they went from Ashton to Haydock on 10 February 1666. However, “*when he came to Ashton back againe he sent for me and we ware friends*”. Relations were fully restored when the two next met in Wigan: “*Mr Bowker envited me to Ann Casons [and] gave me a part of a bottle or two of Rasbary ale*”.

“a place called Lawnes”



“[1666, February] 2. — ffriday. I went with John Potter and his wife to his wives sisters who lived att a place called Lawnes and we ware much made of...”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Lawns Farm is situated to the south of Upholland, between the present-day M58 and the Wigan-Kirkby railway line.

A “Catalogue of the Names of the severall Benefactors with their respective Gifts to the Poor of Upholland and to other pious Uses”, now displayed in the south aisle of the parish church, includes:

“Henry Prescott of the Lawnes gave in the Year 167? to the said Poor the Sum of 20-0-0”.

Henry Prescott was born on 9 June 1649 at Rough Park, near Upholland, the fifth son and seventh child of Thomas Prescott and his wife, Margaret Hey. He was married first to Lydia Williamson, née Peake, and then, following her death in 1685, to Susanna Puleston. His grandfather, William Prescott, had suffered financially for his support of the Royalist campaign in the English Civil War and had been forced to sell the family home, Ayrfield House, in 1655. Appointed deputy registrar for the Diocese of Chester in 1686, Henry was eventually able to recover Ayrfield, adding it to a portfolio of properties owned by him in and around Upholland.

Roger Lowe's visit seems to have pre-dated Henry Prescott's ownership of The Lawns. Alternatively it may at that time have been occupied by tenants. Frustratingly, the name of Lowe's

host in 1666 - John Potter's sister-in-law - is not given.

An offer in March 1697 to buy The Lawns from Henry Prescott* was evidently rejected, as documents in the "Alison of Park Hall" collection at Lancashire Archives** indicate that a century later it was still part-owned by a descendant, the Rev Richard Prescott. A plan of the Lawns estate on 15½" by 15½" parchment is preserved at Warwickshire County Record Office, together with other documents relating to a sale in 1805-18 by co-owners William Zouth Lucas and Mary Ward of Northamptonshire***.

The Farm has been home to the Ashton family since 1924.

*From Henry Prescott's diary, now preserved at Cheshire Archives & Local Studies ref. D5409: "23 March 1697... this Even ... a special Messenger, one Lyon, to offer mee the purchase of the lawnes".

**DDAL 112: "Lease for 7 years at £80 rent: W Z L Ward, esq. of Gilsbro, co. Northampton, and Rev. Richard Prescott of Upholland, to William Knowles of Upholland, husbandman -- messuage in Upholland called the Lawns (36ac.) -- Witn: Isaac Saul; 12.4.1793".

***CR162/716 and -/284. The Wards' share of The Lawns had been inherited from Mary Ward's uncle, Woodford Lamb. It was offered for sale with a reservation on any minerals found under the property.

The photograph was taken on 20 September 2019.

“up to Holland”



“[1666, February] 2. —ffriday.... after dinner we went up to Holland to Thomas Prescotts and ware merry and then [to] Humphrey Naylors and stayd awhile...”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Although Charles Towne's painting shows Upholland at the start of the 19th century, it appears at that time to have changed little since Roger Lowe's visit a century-and-a-half before. Indeed, many of the village's 17th century buildings survived until quite recently. Among the handful still standing is the Grade II-listed Derby House, also known as the Old Manor Court House and reputedly once used to hold prisoners. A plaque on the north-side, facing School Lane, has the year “1633” and is inscribed with the eagle-and-child emblem of the Earls of Derby. This family - the Stanleys - had acquired the manor of Upholland in 1489, and it remained in their hands until 1717 when it was sold to Thomas Ashurst of Ashurst's Hall, Dalton. Another plaque, on the south-side, displays the Legs-of-Man emblem (a further reference to the Earls of Derby), “1633” and the initials “ILS”, “RC” and “IC”.

Thomas Prescott's house had been the venue for the wedding of Lowe's fellow apprentice, John Chaddock, in February 1664. He was most likely one of the Prescotts of Ayrefield House and a brother of the diarist and diocesan registrar Henry Prescott (1649–1719).

Humphrey (otherwise Humfrey, Houmfry etc) Naylor (otherwise Nayler) occurs frequently in the Upholland parish registers for the period. In 1659, with Dr Samuel Bispham, Thomas Ashurst and 12 other gentlemen of the township, he was appointed governor of the re-founded Upholland Grammar School.

Main image: “The Priory Church and Village of Upholland” (1815), Charles Towne, 17.5cm x 20cm oil on board; Wigan Archives Accession No. B48.010, purchased 1948. The photographs were taken on 20 September 2019.

“and so came to Lawnes againe”



“[1666, February] 2. — ffriday.... and so came to Lawnes againe where we all of us supt and then John Potter and I came home and Honest Thomas Birchall ... would not leave us but came home with us but James Low stayed all night there and left us which was not well taken...”.

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Although much altered over the years, a cruck frame in the Lawns farmhouse betrays its pre-17th century origins.

The industrial history of the site is told by a small exhibition in the preserved K6 telephone box just inside the farm gate. Although not mentioned in the Diary, mining was almost certainly taking place in the vicinity at the time of Roger Lowe's visit. The Lawns Delf pits - which, by tradition, worked both coal and stone - first appear in the Mines Lists for 1874, at which time they were in the occupation of John Laithwaite. A tramway brought raw materials from the mine to a brick and tile works on the site of the present cow-sheds and the playing field directly east of the farmyard. Operations ceased in the mid-1930s but the works were recommenced by Messrs Simkins and Gaskell after WWII, continuing as The Lawns Brick Co until about 1953 when a partial collapse of the kiln led to a permanent cessation and eventual demolition.*

In 1935 Lawns Farm welcomed a royal visitor in the person of the Duchess of York, mother of the late Queen Elizabeth II, who was there to inspect a Quaker scheme to provide work and promote

self-sufficiency for the unemployed.**

Chimney stacks either side of the footpath beyond the farmyard provide ventilation for the tunnel used by the Wigan-Kirkby railway line, constructed for the Liverpool & Bury Railway Co by James and William Thomson in 1846-8.

*6 underground and 7 surface workers were employed at Lawns Delf in 1896 according to a list of West Lancashire stone mines compiled by HM Mines Inspector Henry Hall for the purposes of the Metalliferous Mines Regulation Act. 32 were employed there in 1923, per the Mines Lists. The NCB's Catalogue of Abandoned Coal Mines (sheet 137A, 2nd ed/1983) has the Middle Mountain mine at Lawns Delf being abandoned in 1935.

***"Wigan Welcomes The Duchess: Dense Crowds Throng The Route", Liverpool Echo 9 July 1935.

The photograph was taken on 17 October 2019.

“hanged himself”



“[1666, February] 2. —ffriday.... At this time there was one Gaskell who owned Tower hill house above the Lawnes had hanged himself.”
[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

The Diary entry seems to correspond with a record in the Upholland registers (now at Lancashire Archives ref. PR 2907/1/1) that “Henerey Gaskell of Holland Tour Hill” was buried on 27 January 1666. This is followed by the information that “Old Margaret Gaskell, widow Tower Hill” died on 21 and was buried on 22 December 1674. “Henerey Gaskell and Margaret Ettelstone both of this parish” had been married in May 1655.

Two further instances of suicide by hanging are recorded in the Diary.

As Christopher Hill observes in “A Turbulent, Seditious and Factious People: John Bunyan and his Church 1628-1688” (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1988)-

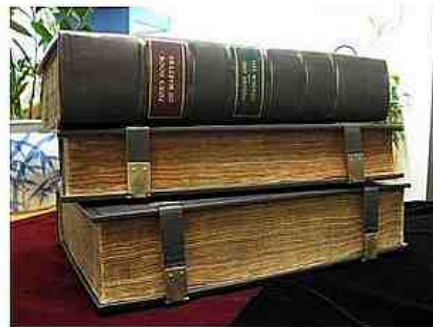
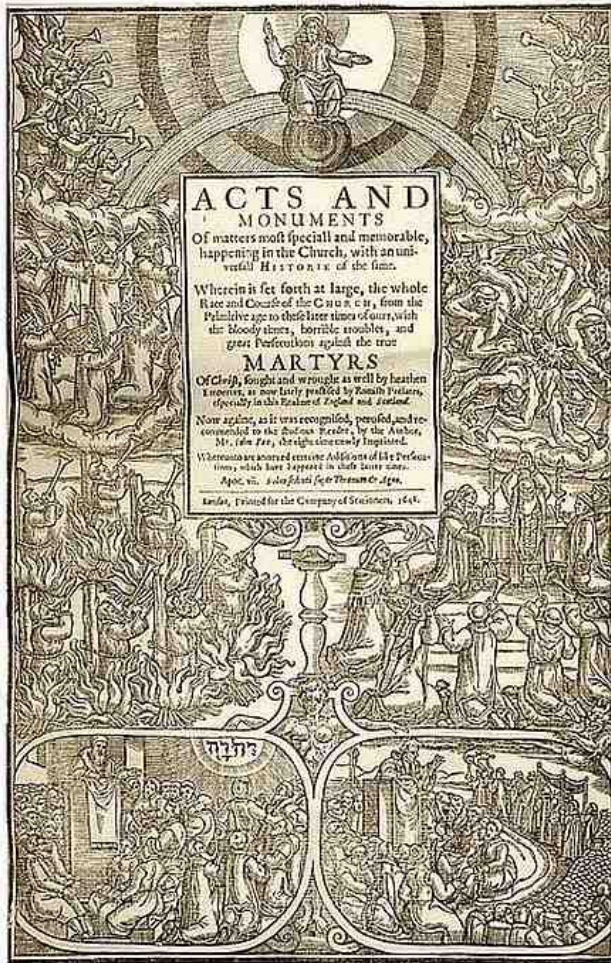
“Sociological and psychological historians have not got very far in explaining why there was so much despair in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, leading some to suicide, some to atheism, some to conversion. It seems to have been at its height in the hectic middle decades of the seventeenth century. It may be that anxiety was especially prevalent in this period because they were the years of the great economic divide, in which the lucky few might prosper whilst the mass of their neighbours were plunged into deeper poverty. Predestinarian theologies both stimulated anxiety and offered relief. Conversion perhaps played a role like that of the drug culture in our similar age of economic crisis, personal insecurity and degradation”.

The photographs were taken on 17 October 2019.

++Suicide remains the most frequent cause of death in British males under the age of 45. Men

and boys who are experiencing suicidal thoughts can turn for help and support to CALM (<https://www.thecalmzone.net>, tel. 0800 58 58 58), PAPYRUS (<https://www.papyrus-uk.org>, tel. 0800 068 41 41) or The Samaritans (<https://www.samaritans.org> tel. 116 123).++

“a booke of martirs”



“[1666, March] 8.—thuersday.... I parted and went from Leigh to Mr James Woods house who livd then at James Dawsons in Atherton and was in a weake condition. We ware a little mery the othr day. I stayd till noone readinge a booke of martirs and then departed to my brothers who livd aat Rylands house at Dazy Hillock..”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

John Foxe's “Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Days, Touching Matters of the Church...”, popularly known as “Foxe's Book of Martyrs”, was for centuries essential reading for those of Roger Lowe's religious persuasion. The first edition, published in 1563, purported to document the persecution of dissenting Christians up to and during the reign of Mary I. Foxe himself and later editors after his death in 1587 amended and added to the text. Lowe may have had access to the edition published in 1641, shown above, which continued the story up to “the time of our Sovereigne Lord King Charles now reigning” and included a portrait of Foxe at age 70 (credited “G. Glover, sculpt.”) together with a biography written by his son, Simeon Foxe.

Almost from the outset and continuing up to the present day, John Foxe's credibility as a competent and impartial historian has been called into question.* In response to such criticisms, Walter E Bauer says

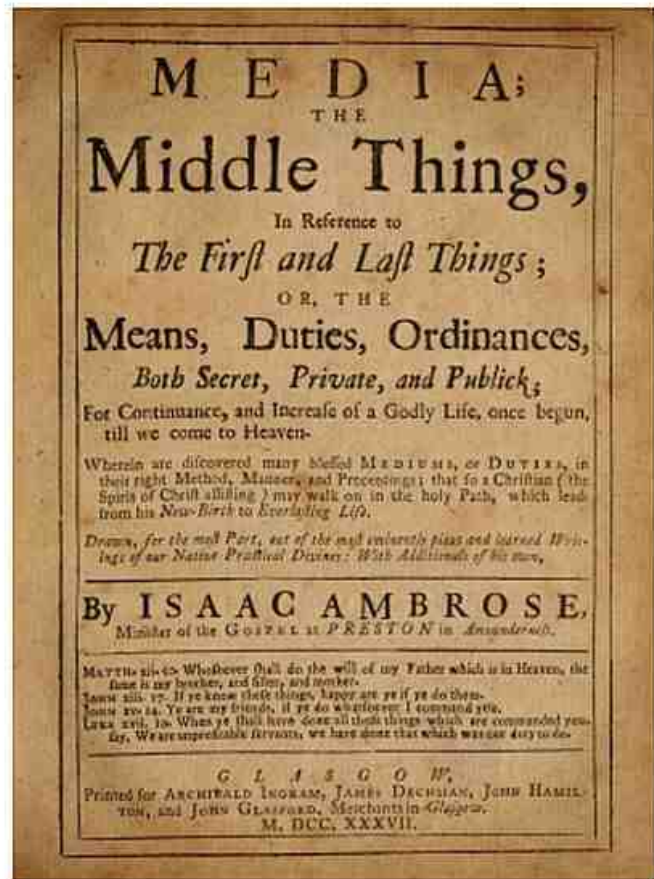
“Nothing could be easier than to show that Foxe was often inconsistent, that he had some queer

notions about godliness, that he elevated a number of idiots and scoundrels to the rank of sainthood, and that in his work there is many a 'suppresio veri' and 'suggestio falsi', but in the final analysis all this is largely a matter of personal opinion and not of demonstrable fact. The simple fact is that from the beginning of the 15th century to the death of Mary hundreds of people were burned at the stake for heresy under a law for which the church was no less responsible than the state. An impartial investigation of the Acts and Monuments leads one to the conclusion that in his martyrologies Foxe has given a fairly accurate description of a horrible episode in this history of civilization. What if the picture is somewhat darker than the reality which it is intended to portray? And what if it is lacking in perspective and refinement of detail? It is the best picture we have, one which, if viewed critically and in the proper light, helps one to visualize an important scene in the drama of human history. And for this service, whatever his shortcomings may be, Foxe has made posterity his debtor".**

*Typical of the criticisms are those levelled by Canon Francis Ripley, priest in charge of the Catholic parish of SS Oswald & Edmund Arrowsmith at Ashton. In his 1981 "Diary of a Small Town Priest", Canon Ripley asserts that: "The work is full of coarse ribaldry at the expense of those whom Foxe regarded as opponents . . . , and common criminals are made into martyrs".

**From "Foxes's Martyrs", in Church History Vol. 3 No. 4/Dec 1934. Thomas Freeman suggests, further to this, that some misunderstanding has arisen from reliance on corrupted Victorian transcripts of the original works: "Text, Lies and Microfilm: Reading and Misreading Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'" (Sixteenth Century Journal Vol. 30 No. 1/Spring 1999). The unabridged texts of the four editions published during Foxe's lifetime can be viewed and compared at <https://www.dhi.ac.uk/foxe/>.

“I had a booke of Mr Ambroses late minister of Preston”



“[1666, May] 28.—Munday... Att my comeing home I had a booke of Mr Ambroses late minister of Preston who at the end of the booke had these psalms in meeter:

Psalm 100

All men of mortal birth
That dwell in all the earth,
O make a noise to God with joys
and serve the Lord with mirth.

O come before His throne
With singing every one,
For certainly the Lord most high,
Even He is God alone.

He made us and not we,
Not we our selves, but He;

His folk and flock and pasture stock
He made us for to be.

With praise come to His gate
And to His courts relate
His laud and fame, and bless His name
His honour celebrate.

For God is good for ever,
His mercy faileth never;
His truth doth last all ages past
And constant doth persever.

Psa. 108, 1 part

O God, I fix my heart,
My glory bears apart,
And as my tongue, so shall my song
Praise Thee with music's art.

Wake, harp and psaltery,
Right early wake will I;
Thy praises, Lord, will I record,
The people standing by.

I'll praise Thee with my song
The nations all among;
To heavens high, to clouds of sky
His truth and mercies throng.

Exalted be Thy name
Above the heavens' frame;
Let earth below the trumpet blow
Of Thy renowned fame.

Psal. 150

Praise ye the Lord most high

*Within His sanctuary;
In topmost tower of His great power
With praise Him magnify.*

*Praise Him for acts renowned
With excellency crowned;
According to His greatness do
Praise Him with trumpet sound.*

*O praise Him cheerfully
With harp and psaltery,
And let the dance His praise advance,
And timbrals melody.*

*Praise Him with joint consents
Of stringed instruments;
The organs bring, loud cymbals ring:
Each one His praise presents.*

*High-sounding cymbals ring,
Let every breathing thing
The praise record of this great Lord
And hallelujah sing.”*

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

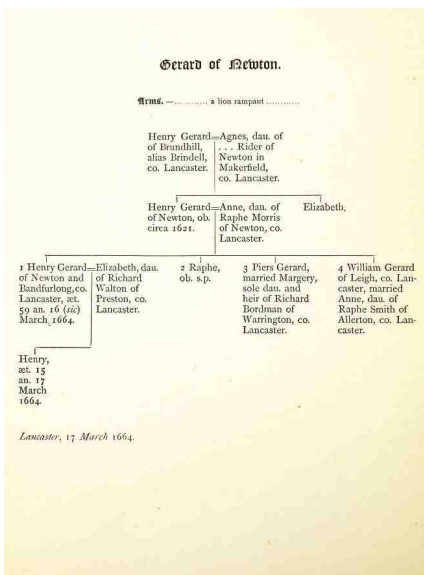
Isaac Ambrose (c.1600-1664) was the son of Richard Ambrose, Vicar of Ormskirk. Educated at Oxford from where he graduated BA in 1627, he entered the ministry and served first at Castleton in Derbyshire and then at Preston where he enjoyed the patronage of the Hoghton family. It was at Preston and (from 1656) Garstang that, over the period 1650-9, he compiled his trilogy: “Prima” or “first things”, on the doctrine of regeneration; “Media” - “middle things” - concerning the means, duties and ordinances for maintaining a godly life; and “Ultima”, a meditation on death, Christ's sufferings and the final judgement. In 1662 he suffered the same fate as James Wood at Ashton, being ejected from the church at Garstang on account of his refusal to conform to the new religious settlement.

The verses copied out by Roger Lowe are from the last page of “Media”, where they are described as having been “translated by Mr W B”.

The editor of the 1877 publication of Lowe's Diary observes that “Media” commends to its readers the examples of “many ancients that were accustomed to keep Diaries or Day Books of their actions and out of them to take an account of their lives”. This had led Ambrose himself to commence “such a Register of God’s dealings towards him and his dealing towards God” in 1641, and once a year thereafter to “examine himself by it”.

The full text of “Media” can be found at <https://archive.org/details/mediamiddlething00ambr>.

“We cald at Bein forlonge of young Mr Gerard”



“[1666, June] 24. — lords day... I had Thomas Hesketh with me and we went to the Brinne and cald at Bein forlonge of young Mr Gerard, and he accommodated us with drinke so returninge thanks we parted and came to Brinne to see some worke tooles that he had hid and so we came home.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Located off present-day Bryn Gates Lane, “*the Brinne*” had since Tudor times been the principal home of the Gerards of Bryn. It replaced a still-earlier “Brinne”, situated a short distance to the west near Landagte. Third baronet Sir William Gerard had abandoned the second “Brinne” around 1660 in favour of (Old) Garswood Hall.

Bamfurlong Hall - “*Bein forlonge*” - was demolished in 1953. It dated with certainty from the late 16th century (a piece of oak inscribed “J A 1577” was positioned above one of the windows) but an earlier building on the site may have been at least two centuries older. Like the nearby Bryn and Abram Halls, Bamfurlong was a moated site; ground and section plans from W Gardner's “Ancient Defensive Earthworks: Lancashire south of the sands” can be found in Volume 2 of the Victoria Country History of Lancashire (W Farrer & J A Brownbill eds, 1908).*

“J A” was John Ashton (c.1538-1610), whose family had held the Bamfurlong estate since the 14th century.** The estate passed to John Ashton's son and then to his grandson but by 1662 it was in the hands of Henry Gerard, a solicitor.*** There may be some truth in claims made by the Ashton family in 1684/5 that Mr Gerard had been engaged to assist in clearing their debts but had instead succeeded in “getting the premises into his own possession by various dishonest contrivances, &c” (National Archives, Exchequer Records, at refs. E134/36and37Chas2/Hil15 and E134/36Chas2/Mich31; presumably the “dishonest contrivances” involved his loaning money to the Ashtons via third parties, with the Hall as collateral, so that he could claim possession as principal creditor when the repayments were not forthcoming). In December 1662 “Mr Henry Gerrard of Bamferlonge” was ordered to contribute £100 “towards fynding of horse” for the local militia (Letter Book of Sir Roger Bradshaigh, Manchester Central Library ref. L1/48/6/1). He may have run into financial problems of his own in 1673, as a deed at Lancashire Archives ref. DDTA 235

confirms the sale on 1 November, for £200, “of all his goods and chattels at Bamfarlong, with a lease for 21 years of Bamfarlong Hall in Abram, Co. Lanc., and of two houses, etc. in Newton in Makerfield”. The purchasers were James Sorocold of Aye Bridge Farm, Ashton-in-Makerfield, and Jonathan Blackburne of Orford.

The defendant in the above-mentioned proceedings of 1684/5 was the “*young Mr Gerard*” - also named Henry - who “*accommodated us with drinke*” when Roger Lowe and Thomas Hesketh visited on 24 June 1666. On the death of Henry Gerard junior in 1691 the estate went first to his uncle, a Jesuit priest, then by sale to the Gerards of Ince and subsequently by marriage to the Walmesley family of Westwood.

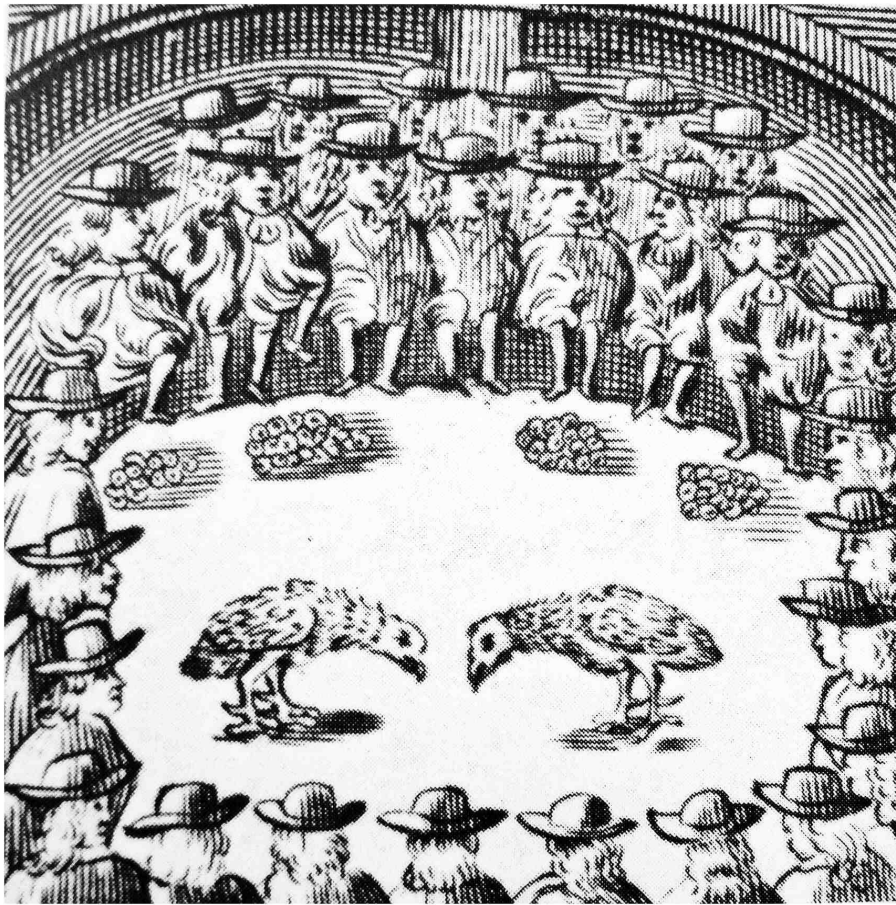
*A description accompanying a sketch of Bamfurlong Hall by “Pixxit” in the 5 October 1903 edition of The Wigan Observer states that “the middle portion was the original hall and [contained] a Catholic Chapel... When the house was turned into a farm, the date of which is more distant than I can ascertain, the addition, which is shown on the right-hand side of the sketch, was made, but eventually, owing doubtless to colliery subsidences, the original portion of the hall became unfit for habitation. It then became necessary to build again, and a house was put up on the other side and this is now in the occupation of the farm bailiff of the estate. The Hall is entailed property, and some years ago the wood and plaster work had to be renewed, but, I believe, it is an exact facsimile of what it was before. Inside the rooms are quite large and some lofty, and the stout oak beams on the ceilings are fastened in most cases by strong wooden rivets”.

**In a deposition of 1552-3 (in “Pleadings and Depositions...”, H Fishwick ed., Rec. Soc. Lancs. & Ches., 1899) John, then 14, alleged that servants of Sir Thomas Gerard of Bryn had attempted to divest him of his inheritance, behaving in a “*devyllyshe*” manner and putting him in fear for his life. His will is preserved at Lancashire Archives ref. DDGE(E) 1230.

***The Gerards of Newton, from whom Henry Gerard claimed descent, were distantly related to their namesakes at Garswood and Ince. The pedigree shown above, left, was taken at Lancaster on 17 March 1664.

The photograph of Bamfurlong Hall is from Volume 4 of the Victoria County History of Lancashire.

“went to see a cock fight”



“[1666, July] 16.—Munday. I went with John Potter and Joshua Naylor to Henry Birchell[s] to see a cock to fight[.] I was ill troubled in my mind that I went.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

“Cocking”, declares Charles Cotton in his 'Compleate Gamster'*, “is a Sport or Pastime so full of Delight and Pleasure, that I know not any Game in that respect is to be preferr'd before it; and since the Fighting-Cock hath gain'd so great an estimation among the Gentry, in respect to this noble Recreation, I shall here propose it before all the other Games, of which I have affore succinctly discoursed...”.

The practice was introduced into Britain by the Romans, and became hugely popular among all social classes until laws against it were first enacted in the mid-19th century.

An account of a “battle” witnessed by Roger Lowe's London contemporary, Samuel Pepys, on 21 December 1663 may help to explain why it particularly offended Lowe's Presbyterian sensibilities-

“Being directed by sight of bills upon the walls I did go to Shoe Lane to see a cocke-fighting at a new pit there, a sport I was never at in my life; but, Lord! to see the strange variety of people, from Parliament-man (by name Wildes, that was Deputy Governor of the Tower when Robinson was Lord Mayor) to the poorest ‘prentices, bakers, brewers, butchers, draymen, and what not; and all these fellows one with another in swearing, cursing, and betting... I would not but have seen it once, it being strange to observe the nature of these poor creatures, how they will fight till they drop

down dead upon the table, and strike after they are ready to give up the ghost, not offering to run away when they are weary or wounded past doing further, whereas where a dunghill brood** comes he will, after a sharp stroke that pricks him, run off the stage, and then they wring off his neck without more ado, whereas the other they preserve, though their eyes be both out, for breed only of a true cock of the game. Sometimes a cock that has had ten to one against him will by chance give an unlucky blow, will strike the other starke dead in a moment, that he never stirs more; but the common rule is, that though a cock neither runs nor dies, yet if any man will bet £10 to a crowne, and nobody take the bet, the game is given over, and not sooner.

One thing more it is strange to see how people of this poor rank, that look as if they had not bread to put in their mouths, shall bet three or four pounds at one bet, and lose it, and yet bet as much the next battle (so they call every match of two cocks), so that one of them will lose £10 or £20 at a meeting.

Thence, having enough of it, by coach to my Lord Sandwich's...".

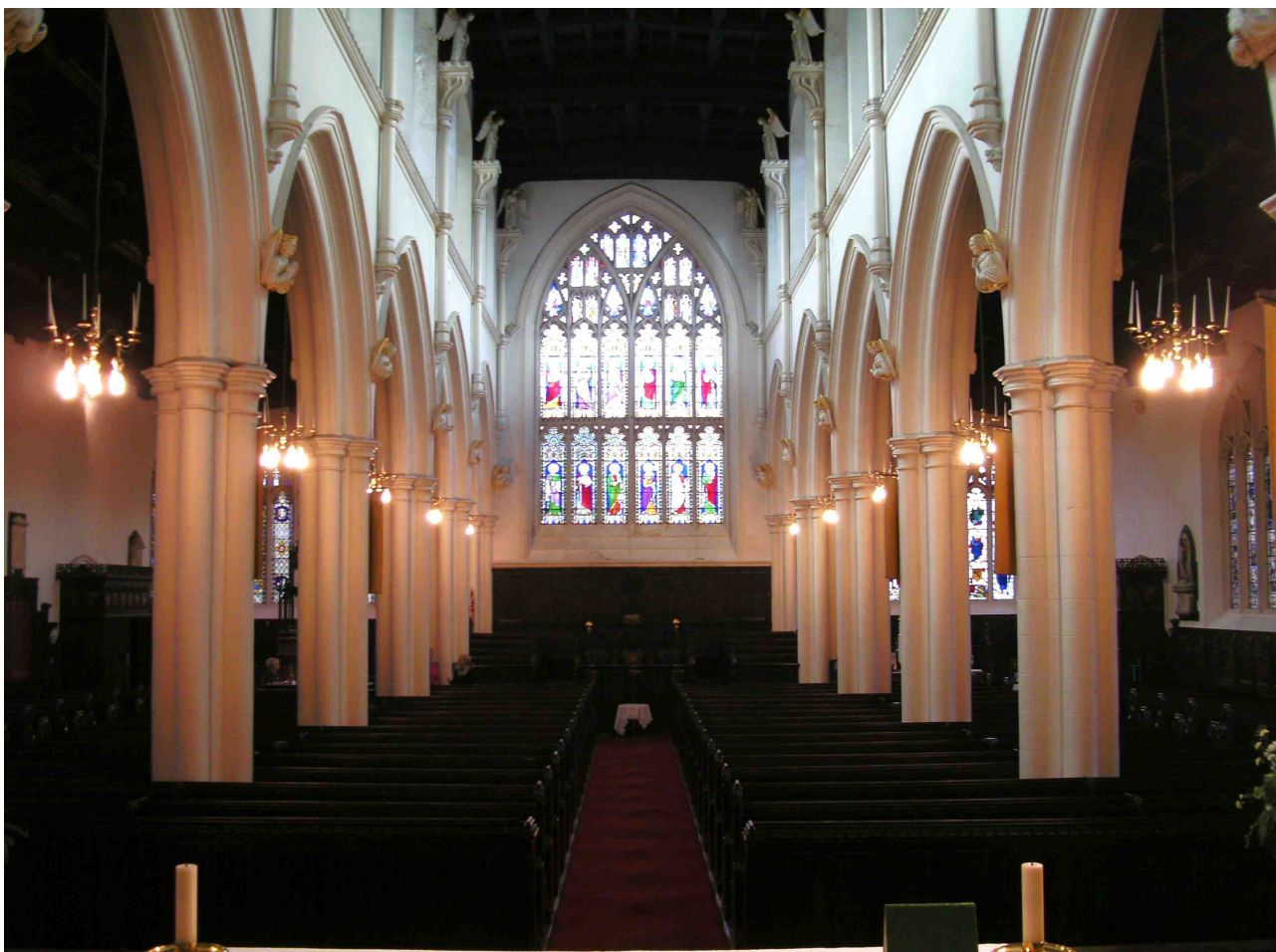
The "sport" is now subject in England and Wales to the general prohibition on fighting with animals in s.8 of the Animal Welfare Act 2006. Equivalent provisions apply in Scotland.

From other entries in the Diary it seems that Henry Birchall kept an inn at or on the outskirts of Billinge.

*"The Compleat Gamster: Or, Instructions How to Play at Billiards, Trucks, Bowls, and Chess. Together with all manner of usual and most Gentile Games either on Cards or Dice. To which is added, The Arts and Mysteries of Riding, Racing, Archery, and Cock-Fighting". The first edition was published anonymously in 1674. Later editions credited Charles Cotton as the author. The above illustration is from an edition of 1710.

** 'Dunghill Brood': an inferior bird, as referenced in the poem by nonconformist minister (and apparent cock-fighting fanatic) Dr Robert Wild, 1609-79: "Go, you tame Gallants, you that have a Name \ And would accounted be, Cocks of the Game; \ That have brave Spurs to shew for't, and can crow, \ And count all Dunghill Breed that cannot show \ Such painted Plumes as yours..."

“he preached against atheisticalness”



“[1666, July] 28.—lords day. I went to Wiggan on purpose to hear the Bishop for I was somewhat discomposd in mind by reason of Emm Potter and me fallinge out and I went to shake it out of me and I heard the Bishop he preached against atheisticalness.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Appointed both Rector of Wigan and Bishop of Chester in 1662, George Hall had been born 50 years earlier at Waltham Holy Cross, Essex. His father was Dr Joseph Hall, the first bishop of Exeter and later of Norwich. Graduating MA from Exeter College, Oxford, in 1633, he took holy orders and held office simultaneously in both Exeter and Cornwall but was deprived of his benefices during the Commonwealth period. The Restoration in 1660 saw an immediate improvement in his situation: he was made chaplain to Charles II, installed canon of Windsor on 28 July and created a Doctor of Divinity on 2 August.

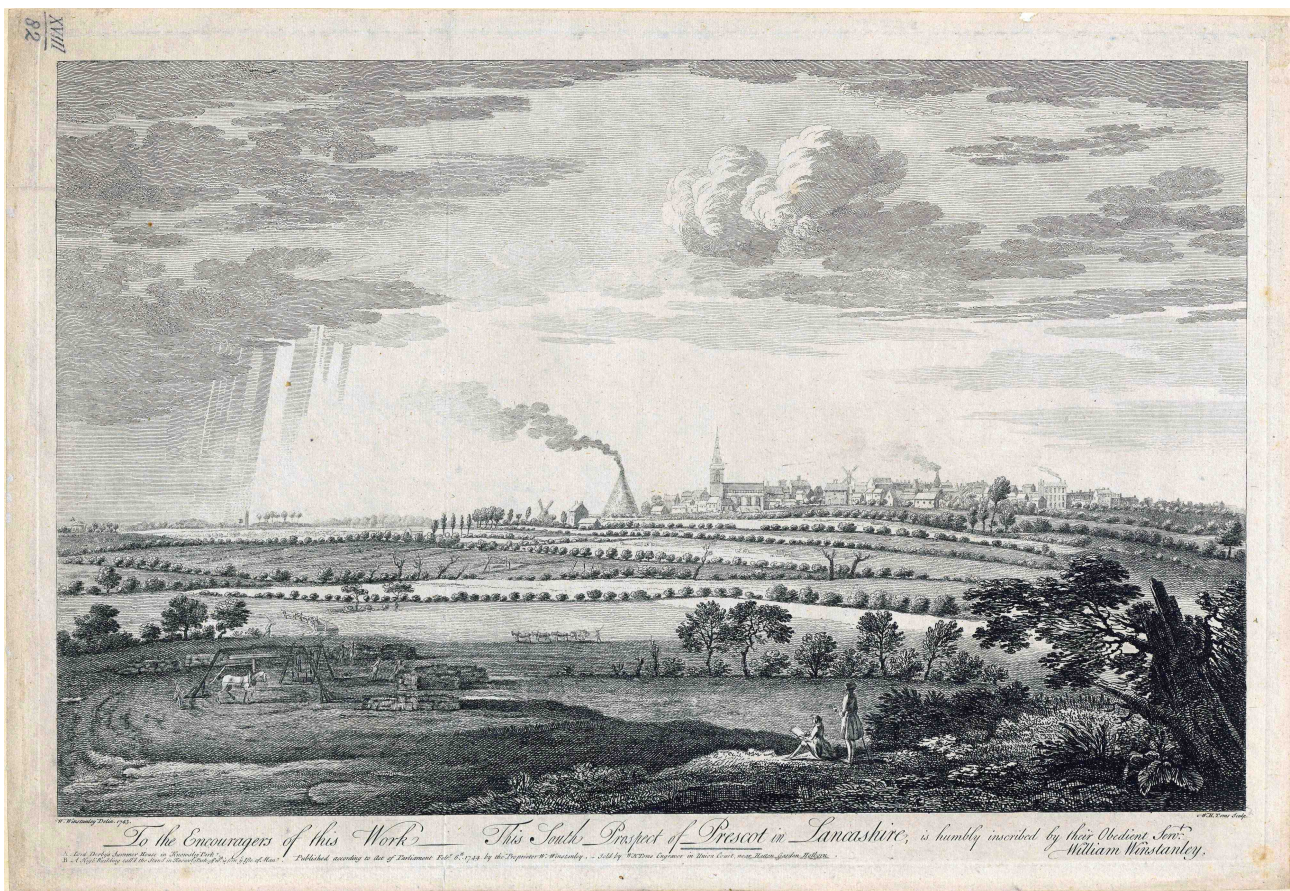
In spite of Roger Lowe's avowed Presbyterianism it is clear that, as a preacher, Bishop Hall was much admired by the diarist. On eight occasions in the period 1664-7 Lowe mentions going to Wigan “to hear the Bishop”. An indication of where Bishop Hall stood on matters that had recently so divided English Protestants, and a clue to his appeal to nonconformists like Roger Lowe, can be found in a sermon preached by him at the first meeting of the Corporation of Clergymen's Sons in 1655:

“It is true, Christ's Coat hath been miserably rent, in the whole cloth, as well as in the fringe: Do not so much as ask, who made the Rent? let the world judge of that. Do not suppose it hard to be drawne up, and made entire again: Down with whatsoever Animosities, and study of parties, and pertinacy to keep up, what hath been set up, which have already given to growing Sectaries such advantage, and to the Devill such occasion to laugh and triumph. Let those ill-invented Terms whereby we have been distinguished from each other be swallowed up in that name which will lead us Hand in Hand to Heaven, the Name of Christians. I know, here are many of different perswasion from me: But is there any here, whom I would not gladly accompany, and zealously further towards Heaven? Why then should we not be friends in the way? ... Why should some, in the Height of their Zeal for Liturgy, suppose there can be no service of God but where that is used? Why should others, again, think their Piety concern'd and trespass'd upon if I prefer and think fit to use a set Form? There must be Abatements and Allowances of each other; a coming down from our Punctilio's, or we shall never give a good Account to God”.

Other than that contained in the Diary there is no record of the sermon heard by Roger Lowe at Wigan on 28 July 1666, but echoes of it can perhaps be found in another sermon preached by Bishop Hall in the House of Lords later that same year. The occasion was a day of prayer and fasting, the object “That our Plague-sick Land may be healed, That the destroying Angel after his slaughter of so many thousands and Ten thousands, may be bidden to return his Commission as sufficiently executed...”. The Bishop decries what he considers a “superfluity or overflowing of the gall of wickedness” which “in Atheistical droling scoffs at whatsoever is most Sacred, and to be trembled at”. “We are cast to live”, he says, “in the very dregs of Time; The world lyeth (rather is steeped) in wickedness, was never so demonstrated a Truth as now: But 'Tu ne cede malis' is a good Reserve of holy Wisdom. If we cannot make others better, yet to be sure—'hic murus abaeus', that they make not us worse. To stem, and set vigorously against the stream of high-swelling and over-bearing wickedness, is a proof of Noble Christian strength; To be Vertuous and Religious, Chast and Pure, Regular and Exemplary, (even in this Generation) when it is so much the Fashion to be otherwise; This will be true singular honour, fit to be upon Sacred Record; and if your Faces shine not here among men, yet you shall assuredly shine as Stars in the Firmament among the Blessed Angels hereafter: Which God grant unto you all; To whom be all Glory, and Honour, and true Obedience now and for ever. Amen”.

The earliest surviving mention of a church at Wigan is in the Domesday Survey of 1086. The present All Saints Parish Church dates mainly from a rebuilding in 1845-50. This view looks along the nave from the altar towards the West Window made by William Wailes of Newcastle in 1849. Canon James Colling's “Short History and Guide” explains that, in the course of rebuilding the nave, “the stones of the old 14th and 15th century Perpendicular pillars and possibly of the arches, though not the capitals, were re-chiselled and used again... The roofs of both Nave and Aisles are the old medieval roofs, much repaired through the centuries but saved and used again when the church was re-built”. The photograph was taken on 9 September 2017.

“went to Prescott upon an idle occasion”



“[1666, August] 15.—I went to Prescott being Wednesday and I went upon an idle occasion god forgive me.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Roger Lowe's concept of what we might nowadays term “a suitable work-life balance” is an interesting feature of the Diary. Puritan divines such as Richard Rogers (c.1550-1618) counted “idleness” among the “the common sinnes which wicked persons do use at their worke”. His “Seven treatises containing such direction as is gathered out of the Holie Scriptures...” (1603) sought, inter alia, to demonstrate to the reader

“how we should looke to our selves when we are alone, and how we should be occupied in that time of the day wherein we are free from the workes of our calling and from companie, that is to say: In keeping our selves from idleness and vaine wandrings, and if it may not be in doing some good, at leastwise readie and prepared thereto, that we may alwaies even alone as in companie suspect our selves, and passe our time in feare, and be mindfull of Sathans enterprises”.

The diarist's berating of himself for his “*idle*” day in Prescott chimes with this contemporary view that the hours remaining after lawful duties and concerns had been attended to were more appropriately to be spent in quiet contemplation and self-examination. Indeed the fashion for diary-keeping in the 17th century is at least partly attributable to the advice of Richard Rogers and others that the last duty of the Christian, “before thy lying downe”, is

“to go through all the actions of the day, ... how thou hast passed it, how far fourth thou hast walked with God in it as thou art directed and taught; and wherein (as thou art able to remember) thou hast

offended, whether thou hast remitted thy care and watch, and how thou hast wandred thereby after the desire of thine owne heart. That thy soule may reioyce in the blessing which thou hast found, (so farre as thou hast bene guided aright) and thou mayest by this experience hope more confidently, that thou shalt with more ease keepe the same course hereafter: and for thy strayings and infirmities be sorrowfull and displeas'd with thy selfe, that so thou mayest both humble thy selfe and crave pardon for thy sin, & be the more carefull to sin no more in that manner".*

On the other hand, even allowing for the fact that it was in Roger Lowe's commercial interest that he should be out and about promoting both his business and himself as a trustworthy and reliable tradesman, he was - as Margaret R Hunt points out - to be found as often "in the alehouse or walking about the countryside with his friends as keeping shop...; it seldom occurred to him to worry about how he spent his time, and it seems never to have crossed his mind to account for it systematically".**

What was the "*idle occasion*" that enticed Lowe from his professional and religious duties that summer's day in 1666? Edward Baines mentions that two days in August were traditionally set aside for a fair in Prescott, this having at some stage replaced a fair "on the vigil, the feast and the morrow of Corpus Christi" allowed for by a charter of 1333. The "play howse" at Prescott - thought to have been the only free-standing purpose-built theatre in England outside London at that time - is first mentioned in a court roll of 1609, where it is recorded that Thomas Malbon "hath converted [it] into a howse for habitacion". Might it subsequently or occasionally have reverted to its former use? Another form of "entertainment" that has been a feature of urban life for millennia would almost certainly have been available at Prescott: the court records include an order of 1633 for the banishment from the town of "a woman called Pretty Peggy".*** The diarist himself having seen fit to draw a veil over the matter, we can only speculate.

*Full text at <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A10945.0001.001>. In a similar vein, diarist Ralph Josselin conjectures that the death of his 10 days-old son on 21 February 1648 may have been divine punishment for his "unseasonable playing at chesse" (as transcribed at https://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/earls_colne/diary/index.htm). See also "The Life of Adam Martindale written by himself..." in Chetham Soc. Vol. 4 (1845).

**"The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England 1680-1780" (California UP, 1996). Not unreasonably the author asks whether it was "temperamental unfitnes for trade, inadequate rearing, rural backwardness..., or simply that time and work discipline had not yet generally caught on that makes ... Lowe seem so distant from traders of the next century". His defence is that "*I could not trade if at some times I did not spend 2d [on a quart of ale]*" (Diary, 18 April 1664).

***"History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster", Vol. 3 (Fisher Son & Co, 1836), citing National Archives ref. C 53/120 mem. 9; F A Bailey, "The Elizabethan Playhouse at Prescott, Lancashire" (Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches. Vol. 103/1952); Lancashire Archives ref. DDCS/52.

The above image is from an original print at The British Library (King's Topographical Collection 18.82) of an engraving by W H Toms of William Winstanley's 1743 "South Prospect of Prescott". Another contemporary print of the engraving can be seen in the north vestry at the Church of St Mary The Virgin, Prescott.

Diary of Roger Lowe, 24 August to 30 November 1666



[From the previous page: “[August] 24th—friday. Being Bartholomew day I hired a horse and went with Thomas leech to Crosson Mr Pilkington was parson and one Will Harys livd with him and he oud I monys and we went to get it but found him not at home we found Thomas Naylor there...”]

... and through him and his sons persuasion we went with them to Chorley it was the faire I was no sooner gotton into the Towne but I met with Robt Reynolds and when I was alight he and I went to see a show concerning the lifes of man from his infancie to old age we p[ar]ted and when I came to receive my horse I wanted a sho[e] all I spent was 2d so I came easily homewards and amidst Chorley moor I gat a shoo came homewards and in Wiggan Mr Bowker envited me to Ann Cason gave me a part of a bottle or two of Rospbary ale and so I came home.

31.—thursday. I went to Warrington and att my comeing home I was not well yet got home.

September 1666

2.—lords day. I went with John Potter to Wiggan to hear the bishop but he was gone to Knowsley and he had burned 4 or 5 bey of stabelinge and shipeninge this morninge by the carlesnes of the groome who let the candle burne att his beds head and he fell esleep.

4.—tusday night. I went to old John Robinson was all night O how comfortable is the communion of saints.

18.—friday. I went with John Potter to Winwicke and Mr Potter envited me to dinner and att after prays for it was St. Mathews day he went with us into the Springe and we spent 4d and att night as we came home we overtooke Emm and Kenyon together and I was ill troubled.

19.—Saturday. I went to my brothers into Burtonwood and on lords day morninge we came for Ashton and cald to see Braidley Hall which I admird to se[e] so goodly a fabrick lying wast[e].

October 1666

13th.—friday. I went with Raph Winstanley and John Potter to the funerall of old Mr Bankes of Winstanley who was interred att Wiggan Mr Blakeburne preached.

16.—Monday. Mr Blakeburne wished me to go with John Naylor and Will Chadocke to see what people would [give] towards the reliefe of such needie p[er]sons as had sustained losse by the great fire in London and to set their names down which we did over the one halfe of Ashton.

29.—I went to Robert Rosbothame and was all night.

November, 1666

3d.—lords day. I went with John Potter to Winwicke and Mr Potter envited me to Diner and I went.

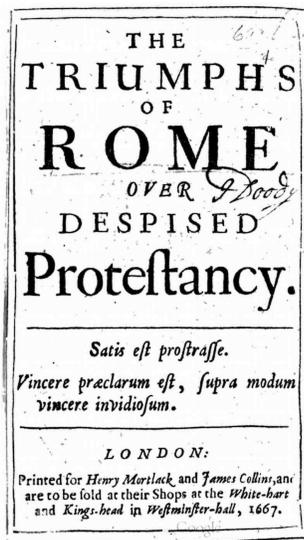
27.—tusday. I went to Leigh and made all things streight with my M[aste]r and turned over John Greenhough and Thomas Greenhough to discharge the debt I owd which my M[aste]r assented to. He would have faine concluded me with the debt but I would not so he tooke Thomas Greenhoughs bond with his son John Greenhoughs bond for all the debt I owd to him so he cleard me before John Chadocke in his own shope and before John Greenhough who came with me home and att Joshua Naylor's spent either 6d.

30.—friday—St. Andrews day. I went to Garswood ...

[on the following page: "... about Widow Taylor's busines of exchangeinge the leas[e] and Sir William made a promise per the wa[y] between hall and kitchen that he would speake to his sonn for it was he that must do that busines"].

[From "Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield", Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

“he let the candle burne att his beds head and fell esleep”



“[1666, September] 2. — lords day. I went with John Potter to Wiggan to hear the bishop but he was gone to Knowsley and he had burned 4 or 5 bey of stabelinge and shipeninge this morninge by the carlesnes of the groome who let the candle burne att his beds head and he fell esleep.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Recalling the above incident, David Sinclair writes in Volume 2 of his 1882 “History of Wigan”-

“It seemed as if the Fates had decreed that [Bishop George Hall's] eventful life should be terminated by some unnatural means, for, having after a long and chequered career narrowly escaped from being suffocated by smoke and consumed by fire, his pious life was at last, in 1668, within a few yards of the same spot, brought to a close by a simple accident. At Wigan he died, 23rd August, 1668, from the effects of a wound caused by his falling and accidentally stabbing himself with a knife, which was in his pocket. The accident took place in his own garden at Wigan”.

The parish registers at Wigan Archives ref. DP 24/1/2 confirm the burial of “The Right Reverend Father in God George Ld. Bp of Chester & Rector of Wigan” on 24 August 1668. With the rebuilding of the chancel at All Saints, Wigan, in 1845, the black marble slab covering his grave was

moved from its original position and can now be seen high up on the outer wall of the south aisle of the church. An inscribed epitaph composed by Bishop Hall himself says he is worthy of notice only because he was the son, “*imo umbra pontius*” (“or rather the shadow”), of Dr Joseph Hall. The same inscription can be found on a memorial to him in Chester Cathedral, where the imagery of light and shadow is continued with a candle motif and a declaration that the author is content to have burnt himself out if, in the process, he has given light to others.

Shown above, left, is “The Triumphs of Rome over despised Protestancy”, first published in 1665, in which Bishop Hall defended Protestantism against what he considered to be the errors of Roman Catholicism. The title was of course tongue-in-cheek, but perhaps also calculated to catch the eye of Catholic readers. The photograph of the Chester memorial (left, below) was taken by Andrew Abbott on 4 January 2014 and is reproduced here under the terms of a Creative Commons licence. My photograph of the memorial at Wigan was taken on 9 September 2017.

“we cald to see Braidley Hall”



“[1666, September] 19. —Saturday. I went to my brothers into Burtonwood and on lords day morninge we came for Ashton and cald to see Braidley Hall which I admird to se[e] so goodly a fabrick lying wast[e].”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Roger Lowe's brother, William, was often a source of worry for the diarist. We first meet him viewing “*a house and ground near Pisley [Disley?] Windy mill*” but for most of the diary period he lived at Windle, a convenient stopping-off point when travelling from Ashton-in-Makerfield to St Helens, Prescot or Liverpool. In October 1664 Roger was chosen to be a godfather to William's son, Raph, but the following January came news that the lad had “*dyd at Thos Gerards house in Windle and was buryd att St. Elins this same day*”. On 2 May 1665, “*my Brother with his wife came with his beasts removing out of Windle into Houghton to Dazy Hillock to Petr Rylands house he [tha]t was the sequestor and I brought them towards Houghton and I was exceedingly troubled in my mind for my poor Brother*”. What prompted the further move to Burtonwood is not disclosed, but by 1667 William was living “*att one Traves house near Windleshey Chapell*” and Roger fell back into the habit of calling on him when visiting Liverpool etc.

Situated a short distance to the north of Burtonwood, the building that the Lowe brothers “*cald to*

see” on 19 September 1666 was mainly the result of work undertaken by Sir Peter Legh III (1415-1478) in the middle of the 15th century. Sir Peter's father had acquired the property by marriage c.1410 to the heiress of its previous (and, presumably, original) owners, the de Haydock family. A description of the Hall in 1465 survives in the “Terrier of Estates of Sir Peter Legh in Cheshire, Lancashire and Elsewhere” (copy - in Latin - at Cheshire Archives & Local Studies ref. D 5225/1, from which the following is a translation):

“The aforesaid Peter Legh holds the manor of Bradley in the vill of Burtonwood within the parish of Warrington to himself his heirs and assigns for ever, that is to say, a new hall with three new chambers and a fair dining room, with a new kitchen, bakehouse, and brew-house, and also with a new tower built of stone with turrets, and a fair gateway, and above it a stone 'bastille' well defended, with a fair chapel, all of the said Peter's making, also one ancient chamber called the Knyghtes chamber, all which premises aforesaid, with other different houses, are surrounded by a moat with a drawbridge, and outside the said moat are three great barns, namely, on the north part of the said manor house with a great shippon and stable, with a small house for the bailiff, and a new oven built at the eastern end of the place called the 'Parogardyne', with all the members and demesne lands to the said manor house belonging or appertaining, with one large orchard, enclosed with hedges and ditches on the south part of the said place called the 'Parogardyne', with an enclosed garden beyond the old malt kiln”.

The property at this time additionally included two areas of woodland named “Overbradlegh Hey” and “Nethir Bradlegh Hey”, a watermill and a fulling mill.

Further improvement works were carried out by the Leghs in 1597, but by 1639 the family preferred the grander surroundings of Lyme Hall. The mother of Sir Peter Legh XI (1623-42) is said to have allowed Bradlegh Hall to fall into disrepair, although its further deterioration in the 17th century has been attributed to Civil War-related violence. It was eventually sold to the cotton manufacturer and banker, Samuel Brooks (1793-1864).

Part of the 15th century gatehouse still remains, as does the moat (now crossed via a stone causeway rather than a drawbridge) and a fish-pond. The present Hall's 18th century brickwork conceals some 16th century (and possibly earlier) features, including part of an inscribed beam of 1597 and a bed believed to have been slept in by the future Richard III when on his way to retake Berwick from the Scots in 1482. The gatehouse remains are Grade II*-listed, with the Hall now the subject of a separate Grade II listing. The whole site, excluding the farm-house and certain other features, is scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. A detailed study of the gatehouse remains including a section plan showing the supposed mechanism for raising and lowering the drawbridge can be found in *Trans. Hist. Soc. Lancs. & Ches.* Vol. 27 (1875), pp.126-30.

The above photographs were taken on 10 August 2017. Replicating Roger Lowe's journey from Ashton to Burtonwood and back on foot took me about 90 minutes each way, excluding time spent at Bradlegh Old Hall etc.

“the great fire in London”



16 money Mr. Blakeburne wished to go with John Naylor and Will Chadocke to see what people would give towards the reliefe of such needie persons as had sustained losse by the great fire in London and to set their names down which we did over the one halfe of Ashton.

Received the 26th day of November 1666, of Mr. James R. the Summe of £1000 which was collected in the said Parish on the Fast Day, being the 10th day of October 1666, towards the Relief of those Persons who have been great Sufferers by the late Sad Fire within the City of London.



“[1666, October] 16. —Monday. Mr Blakeburne wished me to go with John Naylor and Will Chadocke to see what people would [give] towards the reliefe of such needie p[er]sons as had sustained losse by the great fire in London and to set their names down which we did over the one halfe of Ashton.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

In perhaps the best piece of on-the-spot reportage ever written, London diarist Samuel Pepys describes in minute detail how the “great fire” took hold over the course of Sunday 2 September 1666. At 3am, viewed from the window of his maidservant's bedroom, it had appeared to him no more than a distant flicker. But by evening the conflagration had spread

“as far as we could see up the hill of the City, in a most horrid malicious bloody flame, not like the fine flame of an ordinary fire... We staid till, it being darkish, we saw the fire as only one entire arch of fire from this to the other side the bridge, and in a bow up the hill for an arch of above a mile long: it made me weep to see it. The churches, houses, and all on fire and flaming at once; and a horrid noise the flames made, and the cracking of houses at their ruins... Everybody endeavouring to remove their goods, and flinging into the river or bringing them into lighters that lay off; poor people staying in their houses as long as till the very fire touched them, and then running into boats, or clambering from one pair of stairs by the water-side to another. And among other things, the poor pigeons, I perceive, were loth to leave their houses, but hovered about the windows and balconys till they were, some of them burned, their wings, and fell down”.

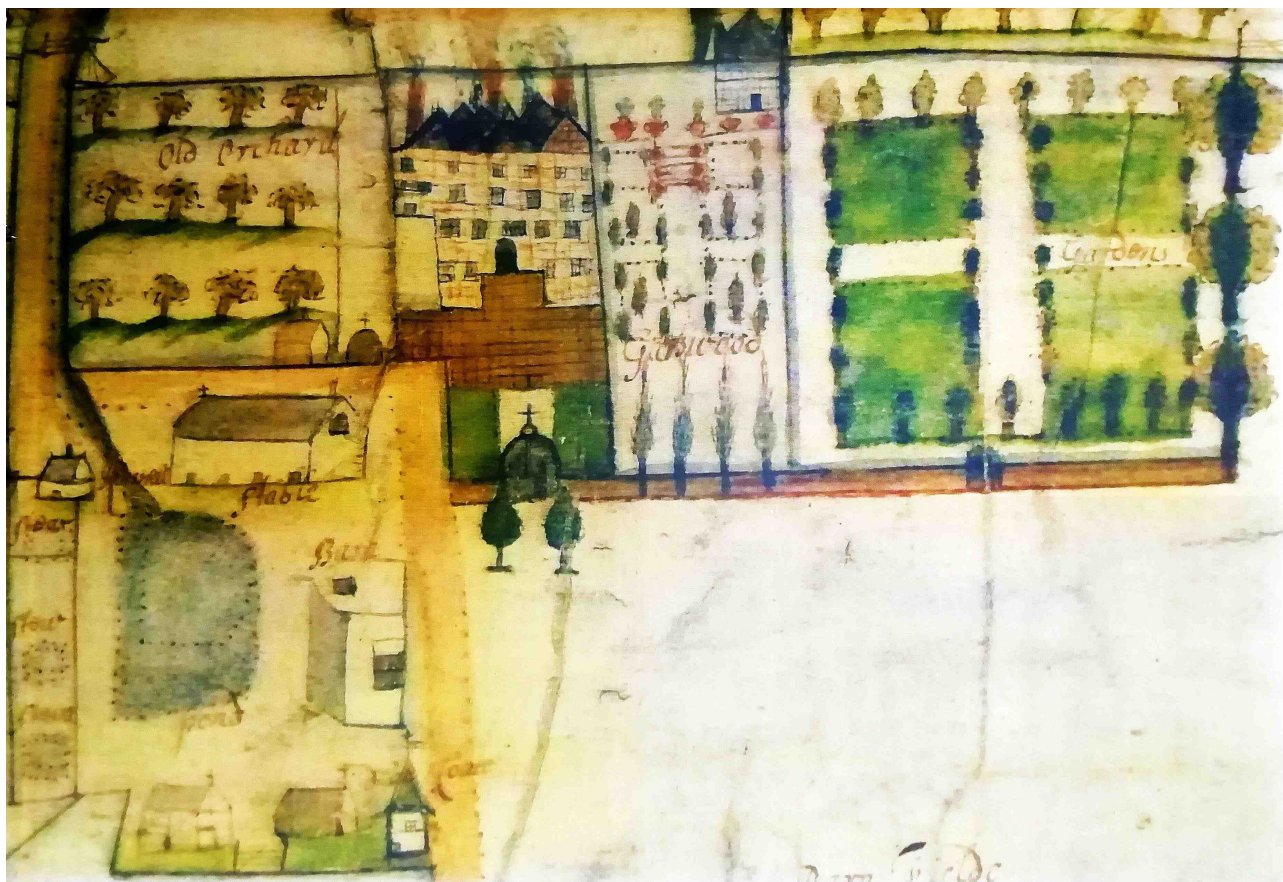
London burned for 5 days; by the time the last of the flames had been extinguished, 80% of the city had been destroyed and thousands were homeless.

By royal proclamation 10 October was appointed a national day for fasting and the taking up of collections “towards the Relief of those Persons who have been great Sufferers by the late Sad Fire within the City of London”. The returns are preserved in “Poor Sufferers by Fire in Lond.” and “Posting Book for ye collection money for releife of those that have had great losse by ye lamentable Fire within ye Citty of London & Liberties thereof” at London Metropolitan Archives, refs. COL/SJ/03/006 and -/007. The response was disappointing; just under £13,000 in donations set against estimated losses of more than £10 million. Of the former sum, £1,800 was purloined by the London Lord Mayor, Sir William Bolton - “which”, wrote Pepys, “is the greatest piece of roguery they say was ever found in a Lord Mayor”.

John Blackburne matriculated at Oxford in 1640, aged 18, and became a Bachelor of Divinity in 1662. He first occurs in the Diary of Roger Lowe on 22 May 1664, when Lowe heard him preach at Wigan. Mostly he preached at Billinge Chapel, close to the family home at Blackley Hurst. Lowe attended his funeral at Winwick on 15 December 1666.

The painting shows the fire and a group of survivors as seen from a boat near Tower Wharf. The Tower of London is on the right, old St Paul's Cathedral on the left. The artist and date of the painting are not known.

“I went to Garswood about widow Taylor's busines”



“[1666, November] 30. — friday. St Andrews day. I went to Garswood about widow Taylors busines of exchangeinge the leas[e] and Sir William made a promise [on] the wa[y] between hall and kitchen that he would speake to his sonn for it was he that must do that busines.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Beyond an anonymous-looking gate just north of the A58/A580 junction at Pewfall, a private track leads to the site of the original Garswood Hall. This was home to the Gerard family from the time of the 3rd baronet in the middle of the 17th century until about 1800 when they moved to the later Garswood Hall by Ashton Cross.

The Gerards have left very little trace of their presence either on the ground or in the archives. The Hearth Tax assessments indicate a residence of 21 or 22 hearths during the period 1663-73 (at National Archives ref. E179; this can be compared with 27 hearths at Bryn Hall, which the Gerards had occupied until c.1660). A hand-painted map included in the Gerard estate records at Lancashire Archives shows a building not dissimilar, in its external appearance, to Birchley Hall at Billinge. Following the Gerards' departure at the end of the 18th century the Hall was demolished to make way for a farmhouse. What may be the remains of a walled garden dating from the time of the Gerards' occupation can still be seen at the site. Local place-names - Garswood Gates Farm, Icehouse Plantation, Deer House Farm, Old Garswood Park - and entries in the 18th century “Great Diurnal of Nicholas Blundell of Little Crosby” (Rec. Soc. Lancs. & Ches., 1968-72) give some further clues to what may once have existed there.

The entry of 30 November 1666 in the Diary of Roger Lowe is a good example of how Lowe's

ability to read and write gave him access to all levels of the social hierarchy, accounting for much of the Diary's interest and value as a historical resource. He also records the comings and goings of members of the Gerards' domestic staff at Garswood including gardener John Hunt, an unnamed chambermaid, a priest named Cuthbert Clifton who had ministered to the family both at Bryn and at Garswood where he died in 1675, servant Mary Lashley, huntsman Thomas Clough and Sir William's steward, Edward Stockley.* The Diary also helps to date the Gerards' move from Bryn to the first Garswood Hall. In 1651 Sir William Gerard had briefly hosted the future Charles II at Bryn Hall but it is clear that, by the mid-1660s, the Gerards were firmly ensconced in their new home.

*Evidently the steward was not a popular figure, hence the obituary penned by Lowe following his death on 6 November 1676: "*Munday. dyed that Sicophant Edward Stockley whose pillicie and naturall indowments tended to the subversion of the poore Tenants being Steward att Garswood & is now dead & hath receivd the reward of his deserts like a disembling knave as he was*".

“Mr Potter preached in a very pethaticall manner out of the 14 Revelations...”



“[1666, December] 15.—Saturday. I went to the doelfull funerall [of] the reverend Mr John Blakeburne at Winwicke. Mr Potter preached in a very pethaticall manner out of the 14 Revelations 1 part of the 13 verse blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; he in the close of his sermon spoke excellentlie truly tho mournfullie in comendation of Mr John and indeed the neighbourhood sustains great losse by [his] death.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

A “Thomas Pottar minister in Ashton” occurs in the Winwick Parish Registers of 1656 (Cheshire Archives ref. P158/1/2), the christening of his son John having taken place at Winwick on 5 September. We next encounter him in the minutes of the Committee for the Relief of Plundered Ministers, where it is recorded that

“Mr Tho Potter [was] admitted the 29th day of January 165[8] to the cure of the chappell of Newchurch [Culcheth] in the parish of Winwicke in the county of Lancaster upon a nominacion exhibited the 25th day of Dec 1657 from Mr Charles Herle, rector of Winwicke aforesaid, and the inhabitants of the said chappellry and certificates from Charles Herle, James Wood, Braydley Hayhurst, Sam Boden, Sam Wood” (Lambeth Palace Library ref. MS 998, at p.181).

In 1662 he was simultaneously appointed preacher and curate at Winwick*. He presided at a number of Christenings, weddings and funerals attended by Roger Lowe, and the diarist would frequently call on him when passing through Winwick en route to Warrington or Chester.

The circumstances of Mr Potter's death and burial in 1671 are described by Lowe as follows:

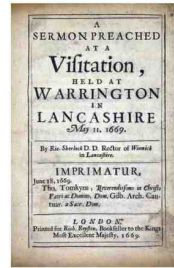
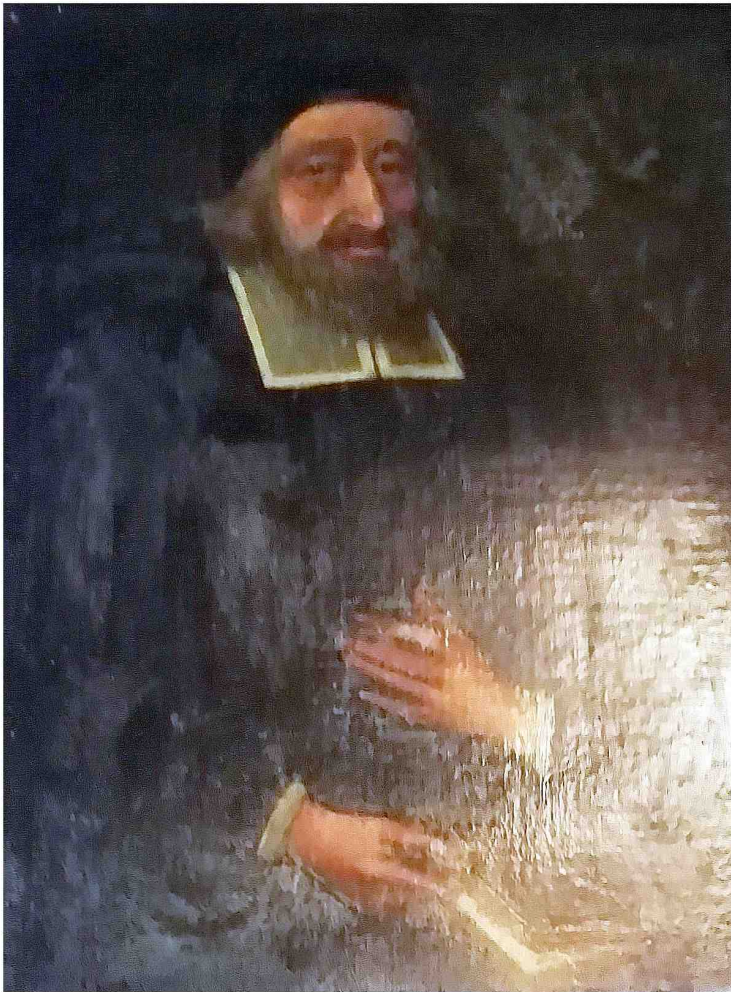
*“[November] 11. —Saturday, between the hours of 4 & 5 in the morninge dyed Mr Potter vicar [sic] of Winwicke, he heard Tho. Gifford passing peale on his dyeing bed and asked who was dead, and he lived about half an hour after. He was buryd on the lord's day in the chancell att noone and his wifes coffin was bared all over and he laid top of her”.***

*The Parish Register records the Christening of Richard , “son of Mr Thomas Potter, curate”, on 24 February 1662. Confirmation of appointment to the Winwick curacy is given by the 1662/3 “Exhibit Book” at Borthwick Institute, York, ref. V.1662-3. But if - as more than one writer has assumed - this was the Thomas Potter that had previously ministered at Ashton and Culcheth, why does the Exhibit Book refer to his ordination as priest and deacon at St Asaph, Denbighshire, in 1661? I can only assume that either the information about Mr Potter's ordination is wrong or there was some irregularity about his pre-1661 status that needed correction.

**On 8 September 1667 (10 September 1667 according to the Parish Register) Lowe had attended the funeral of “Margaret, ux of Mr. Thomas Potter curate”. A corresponding entry in his list of *“such as dyd within My Aprentiship...”* indicates that she was *“formerlie Margret Lyons uxor Rich Lyon [of] Parke Lane”*.

Image: Sketch of St Oswald's Church, Winwick, looking from east to west. Date and artist unknown.

“... the Doctor comes and prohibits any drinke till after prayrs...”



“[1666, December] 16. — lords day. I went to the funerall of Ann Taylor who was married to Raph Ashton in Abram* and I went fastinge from home so att noone when we had buried the Corps and expected according to custome to have some refreshment and ware a companie of neighbours sate together round about a table as John Potter Tho Harrison and others the D[octo]r comes and prohibits the filling of any drinke till after prayrs so I came home with Thomas Harrison and we expected to have cald at Neawton but here we ware disappointed but att last with much vexation I gat to Ashton with a hungry belly and honest Thomas Harrison and right true harted Ellin tho hastie yet all love did much refresh my hungry palate with a big cup full an[d] after that ½ full againe of goo[d] pottage.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

Richard Sherlock - “the Doctor”- was nominated for the rectory of Winwick in 1660 but did not

actually take up the appointment until 1662. Born at Oxton in 1612, he was educated at Oxford and Dublin, graduating MA in 1633 and receiving a doctorate from Dublin in 1660. Winwick was the culmination of what had already been an eventful ministry. As a young priest he had been caught up in the Irish Rebellion of 1641-3, was taken prisoner by Parliamentary forces after the Battle of Nantwich in 1644 and, in 1652, was ejected from his curacy in the Oxfordshire village of Cassington. A spell as chaplain to Sir Robert Bindloss of Borwick Hall brought him into contact with Charles Stanley, 8th Earl of Derby. The Earl gave him oversight of certain of his interests in the Isle of Man and afterwards presented him to the living at Winwick where he remained until his death on 20 June 1689.

In a sermon preached in 1669 Dr Sherlock exhorted his fellow clergymen to stand firm against a continuing tendency towards nonconformity and division in matters of religion-

“... All the Kingdoms and Nations in Christendom, ancient and modern, from the first to these last and worst of times, have felt, by sad experience, the bitter effects of divisions and errors in Religion; and none more then our own, so lately bleeding, even to the last gasp of death, and almost buried in her own confusions; which took beginning from the prophesying of Lies, and overspreading of mistakes and errors in Religion, sowing the seeds of Schism, Faction and Sedition, in separate and divided meetings, or Conventicles in private; joyned with a sacrilegious vow-breaking performance of holy duties in Publick: All which are now as much, if not more practised then ever; some of whose Factors and Followers, do really intend, all do certainly tend to involve this Church and Kingdom, into the sad condition of intestine war, blood and Confusion, from whence by the great mercy of God, we so lately escaped.

And now to you, the Reverend persons, who are come to visit us in our distempers and infirmities, to you it belongs, as much as in you lies, to give stop to our overflowing Divisions: To restrain our licentious exorbitancies, both in doctrine and practice, in Praying and Preaching, and this, whether in the house of God, or in the houses of men...”.

Other published writings include “The Quaker's Wilde Questions..., with brief answers thereunto” (1654; a polemic against Quakerism, to which founder George Fox responded in 1659 with “The Great Mystery of the Great Whore Unfolded”), “The Principles of the Holy Catholick Religion, or the Catechism of the Church of England Paraphrast” (1656) and “Mercurius Christianus: the Practical Christian, a Treatise explaining the duty of Self-examination” (1673). The latter is his best-known work and has been re-published several times**.

Dr Sherlock's “High Church” religion would probably not have endeared him to Roger Lowe. This may also explain why, except in regard to his care for William Harvey***, he does not otherwise feature in the Diary.

*In the appended list of “*such as dyd within My Aprentiship...*”, Anne Taylor is described as “*Aunt Pegges daughter*”.

** A biography of Dr Sherlock by Bishop Thomas Wilson is included with the 1712 and later editions of “The Practical Christian”. An edition of 1843 by Rev Harold H Sherlock, afterwards Rector of Holy Trinity, Ashton-in-Makefield, includes some additional biographical information courtesy of “Mr Henry Shaw of Land Gate, Ashton in Winwick; one of whose maternal ancestors, Mr John Sherlock (son of one of the Doctor's cousins), was Bishop Wilson's fellow pupil, both having been educated together by Dr Sherlock”. In his preface to the 1843 edition Rev Sherlock commends the work “to the parishioners of Winwick generally, and, more especially, to that portion of them residing within his own district of Brynn and Garswood”.

***“*Wiliam Harvie cald Nuttoo he livd with Dr. Sherlocke att Winwicke*”

but came to Ashton and there dyed [on 31 August 1673. H]e was basely conceivd of the body of Ellin Harvie uxor to Roger Lowe senr. and begotten by one Marsh”.

Images:

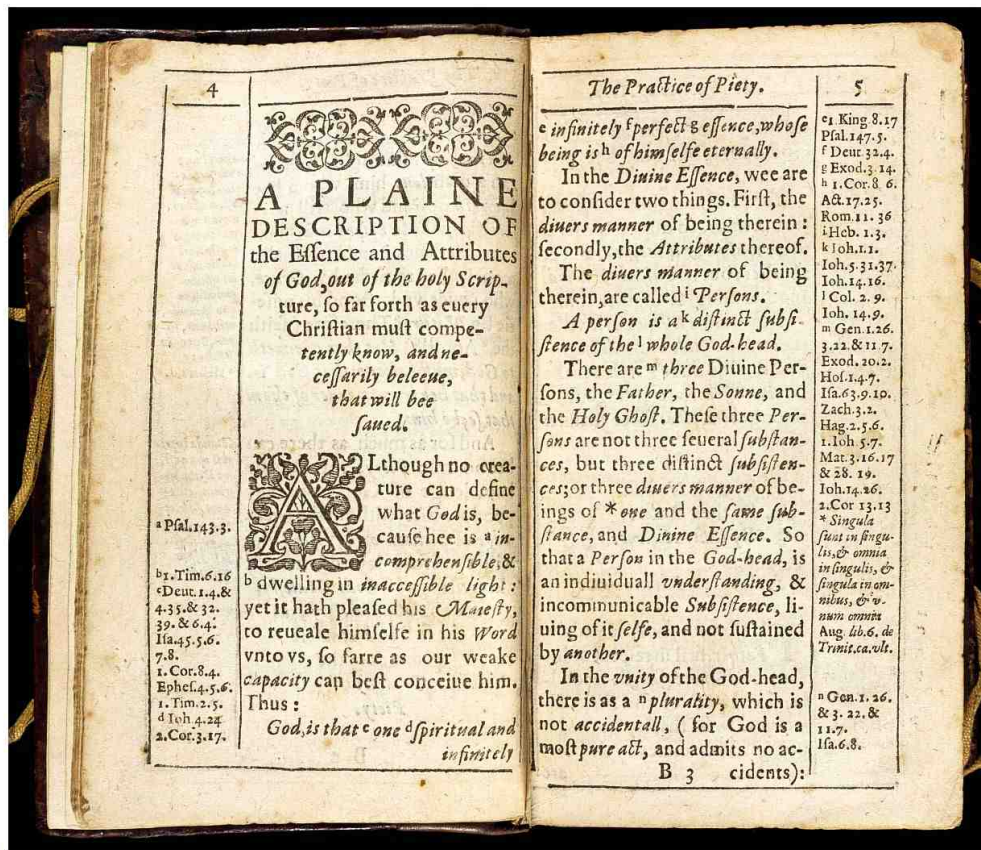
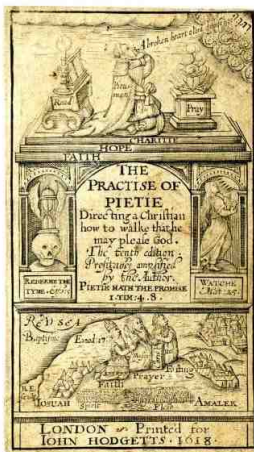
Left: Portrait of Richard Sherlock DD, “late Rector of Winwick”, by Michael van de Gucht. The original can be seen at St Oswald's.

Right, above: Title page from a contemporary printing of “A Sermon Preached at a Visitation held at Warrington in Lancashire May 11, 1669”; Engraving from a 1699 edition of “The Practical Christian”; List of Winwick property-owners in 1673 headed by “Richd Sherlock Rector”, from the Hearth Tax assessments at National Archives ref. E179/132/355.

Right, below: Sherlock memorial brass at St Oswald's, Winwick. Dr Sherlock's will of 14 June 1689 directed that “this corruptible body of mine ... be buried in such decent manner as by my executors shall be thought fit betwixt the Chancell and the body of the Church under a stone laid there for that end with this inscription on the stone in Brass Exuviae RICHARDI SHERLOCK D.D., Indignissimi Hujus Ecclesiae Rectoris. Sal infatuatum conculcate”; in translation: “The Remains of Richard Sherlock DD, The Very Unworthy Rector of this Church. Tread under foot the worthless salt”. Below these words was added (anonymously, but attributed to Henry Prescott of Chester): “Behold the modesty of this holy man, who wished this unworthy epitaph inscribed on his grave while his life and merits exceed all praise”.

The photographs were taken on 9 September 2023.

“As I was readinge she gave up the ghost”



“[1666, December] 21.—friday night. I went into old William Hasledens in Ashton[. H]is wife was sicke and I read in the practice of pi[e]ty. As I was readinge she gave up the ghost.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigam Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

The forty-four chapters of “The Practise of Pietie, Directing a Christian How to Walke that He May Please God” offer practical advice on Christian living. Nearly half focus on end-of-life preparation, counselling, for example, that-

“IF thy Sickness be like to encrease unto Death, then meditate on Three things: First, how graciously God dealeth with thee; Secondly, from what evils Death will free thee; Thirdly, what good Death will bring unto thee.... And to this end, when the time is come, as the Angel in the sight of Manoah and his Wife ascended from the Altar up to heaven in the flame of the sacrifice, so endeavour thou, that thy spirit in the sight of thy friends may from the altar of a contrite heart ascend up to Heaven, in the sweet perfume of this or the like spiritual Sacrifice of Prayer”.

The book was among the few material possessions of the Puritan preacher and writer John Bunyan when he first embarked on married life c.1647.*

The earliest dated edition of “The Practise of Pietie...” is from 1612 but this influential book has continued in print to the present day and, since the first translation into French in 1625, has been made available in many different languages. Its author, Lewis Bayly (c.1575-1631), was appointed Bishop of Bangor in 1616 and in that capacity ordained the “Mr [John] Angier” to whom Roger Lowe refers in his diary entry for 4 June 1664. Bishop Bayly had previously served as chaplain to James I's eldest son, Prince Henry, and went on to perform the same service for King James

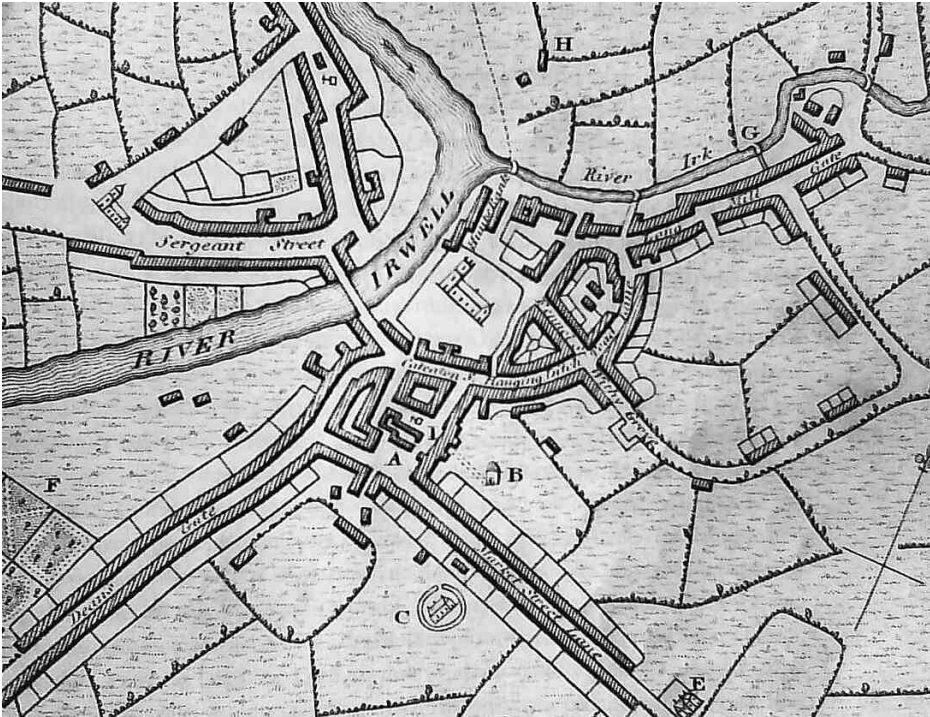
himself.**

Shown above (left) is the frontispiece from an edition of 1618 and (right) pages from an edition printed for the same publisher - John Hodgetts - in 1617. The identity of the painter of the portrait of Lewis Bayly, shown top left, is not known.

*As related in Bunyan's spiritual autobiography "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners" (1666): "This Woman and I, though we came together as poor as poor might be, (not having so much as a Dish or Spoon betwixt us both) yet this she had for her part, [Arthur Dent's] The Plain Mans Pathway to Heaven, and The Practice of Piety, which her Father had left her when he died... Wherefore these books, with this relation, though they did not reach my heart to awaken it about my sad and sinful state, yet they did beget within me some desires to Religion...".

** A more detailed biography by Grace Webster introduces an 1842 edition of "The Practice of Piety", now made available digitally by Soli Deo Gloria Publications at <https://www.ccel.org/ccel/bayly/piety.html>. A full-text transcript of a 1695 printing can be found at <http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A27107.0001.001>. For additional commentary see Fred Sanders' "Lewis Bayly and the Practice of Trinitarian Piety" (26 October 2009) and "Every True Practitioner of Piety" (27 April 2018), both at <http://scriptoriumdaily.com>.

“We came to Manchester and with much adoe gat a fire in Ffennall Street...”



“[1666, December] 27.—Old Thomas Harison was come over out of Halsall and his sone and others amongst whome I was one went to Jenkins to drinke and Mr Hopwood had seen a letter out of Ouldham to envite me with John Jenkins to his house and John moved me to goe soe I was resolved to goe forthwith that night and it was a showry snowy night but indeed the maine reason that moved me to goe this night was because Emm was gone to Chadocke Hall whome I intended to see but could not soe we came to Manchester about 3 or 4 o'clock and with much adoe gat a fire in Ffennall streete at one Humphrey Peacockes where we stayd till prayers in the church and then we went to morninge prayr when it was done we went into a little old womans house att goeing out of the church and we boughte a pudding for 1d and a loaf 1d and eate part and gave rest to old woman and so parted to Ouldham where we stayed till munday and then came home away by Middleton and over Walkden moore where we were much discontented but with much trouble of mind and weariness of body we came home.”

[From “Diary of Roger Lowe of Ashton-in-Makerfield”, Wigan Archives ref. D/DZ A58]

At the time of Lowe's visit, Manchester's Fennel Street was part of a fashionable residential district. The now-pedestrianised route skirts the north-east side of the Cathedral (the former collegiate church), separating it from the site of the manor house of its 15th century founder Thomas de la Warre. The house served as a residence for the college of priests and choristers until its dissolution

in 1547. Since 1653 the location has been home to the school and library begun by Sir Humphrey Chetham.

Shown above, left, is a copy of a map of Manchester drawn about 1650. Fennel Street can be seen to the right of the collegiate church with, directly north-east of the church, some of the buildings that would later form Chetham's School and Library.

The photographs were taken on 1 June (Chetham's Library) and 17 September (Cathedral) 2017.