

# The Saltaire Journal



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**Our Mission**  
*To document the history of the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Saltaire, by providing a means for historians to publish findings on that history, and on topics which relate to that history.*



## THE SALTAIRE CONVERSAZIONE By Roger Clarke

This paper developed from discussions with local residents of Saltaire who repeatedly spoke of the importance of the annual *Conversazione* in the village, but were unable to provide more than a sketchy description of the event. Local press reports about it are concerned with the facts of each event but do not question its origins and the pattern of its development over the years. This paper reviews the origins of the event in the village, and why it became so successful. It discusses some of the social and economic factors which determined its declines and revivals, and its ultimate demise. An appendix provides notes of *Conversazioni* held. The whole is a commentary on social history, and the event chronicles changes in fashion, science, technology, etiquette, eating habits, recreation and humour.

Philosophical and Literary Society held an event which was neither philosophical nor literary. It focussed on scientific and technical advances, together with some art-work, and was called a *conversazione*. The Society's report of its 1864 *conversazione* mentions Louis J Crossley, who is thanked for arranging an extensive series of telegraphic communications with the principal towns in the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> And in 1866, the Mayor of Bradford, J V Godwin, presented a *conversazione* to the Bradford Philosophical Society at St George's Hall, where all manner of technology and natural exhibits were on display.<sup>3</sup> *Conversazioni* are still held today, in a variety of formats, the term being subject to a wide interpretation. Recent examples include a fine art exhibition in Dundee with musical entertainment and food for its guests; a presentation at St

### INFORMATION

Article	1-6	This (typically) three-day social event was held annually at the Institute (now commonly referred to as Victoria Hall), Saltaire, between 1878 and 1964, albeit with protracted periods of absence because of national crises such as the two World Wars. No previous research into its origins, or the manner in which it developed, has been found by the author.
Chronology	7-15	
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Addendum: the poem	16-17	
Book Reviews	18-19	"Conversazione" is defined as "a social meeting for promoting literary, scientific and artistic matter; a gathering at which learned topics are elucidated by specimen and illustration". In fact, the title seems to have been used to cover many different kinds of activity. For example, in 1830, the Athenaeum Club had a tradition of holding a <i>conversazione</i> for members on Monday evenings. <sup>1</sup> In 1853, the Leeds
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1. They continue today in the form of talk-dinners.

2. The Crossley family of Halifax were friendly with the Salt family, sharing common values in politics (Radical Liberal) and religion (Congregationalist). They also had a large fortune made through carpet manufacturing. The link between the families was strengthened further by the marriage of Catherine Crossley to Titus Salt Jr.

3. In addition to fossils, mollusca and South American insects, the display included spectroscopes, stereoscopes with Alpine views, telegraphic instruments, luminous electricity in rarefied air illustrated by Gassiot's cascade in a glass tube, and Chadburn's lantern for opaque objects. (From a programme held at the West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford. Ref. DB26/C3/4/55.)

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Edmunds College, Cambridge of a range of learned speakers followed by wine, coffee and snacks; and a purely social event, held by the Institute of Marine Engineers, Science and Technology, with dancing and entertainment “to entertain valued clients and to reward employees”. The University of Sydney used the title to describe the meeting of their students with representatives of industry; and the University of Wales and the Cambridge Natural History Society have each used the term to describe exhibitions.

In the mid nineteenth century, there was a Saltaire Literary Society which met at a house on Albert Terrace before moving to 6, Victoria Rd. However, no evidence of its involvement in the Saltaire Conversazione has been found.

It has been suggested that this Italian word is in keeping with the Italianate architecture in the village, and that the Salt family admired the Italianate fashion. This may have been the reason why the organisers adopted it as a title for this important social occasion.

As to the venue, Victoria Hall had been opened in 1872, a full dress concert marking the occasion. Building work had started in July, 1869, and finished in 1871, but the building needed to be internally decorated. Victoria Hall was built to provide adult education for the workers of Salts Mill, and to provide recreational opportunities for them. In this latter regard, Sir Titus intended that it would provide all the amenities – but none of the evils – of a public house. It was, and has been over the years, the main centre of social recreation for villagers.

The only pretence of intellectual eminence in the Saltaire event was in the displays of the latest scientific inventions, and of paintings, which were features of the early Conversazione. The rest was pure indulgence in eating, dancing and entertainment for all levels of the village community. It was a glittering social occasion.

The Conversazione was held in early January each year. The scheduling of such an event just after Christmas and the New Year festivities is puzzling. However, it

could be argued that Christmas and New Year celebrations are family affairs, whereas the Conversazione was for the whole community. In support of this idea, there is one reference to “an annual conversazione or grand Christmas gathering” (*Shipley Times and Express*, 5th January, 1878).

January is a particularly bad time of year in terms of weather and travel, and the organisers must have been mindful of this, not least because the winter of

1875/76 had been the most prolonged winter on record, with snowfall recorded from November until May. In parts of mainland Europe it is common for community carnivals to be held in February, when the weather is even worse. These are the festivals of Mardi Gras, a carnival period culminating on Shrove Tuesday (the last day of feasting before the fasting of Lent). The Saltaire Conversazione did not have these religious roots. The problems with fog, ice and snow which were encountered over the years with the Saltaire Conversazione could have been avoided if only the event had been held in July!

Key to understanding the Saltaire Conversazione in its early years is the involvement of the Salt family in its organisation. The first Conversazione was held just a year after Sir Titus Salt's funeral. He was buried on 5th January, 1877, and the first Conversazione was held in

the second week in January, 1878. Could it have been a kind of memorial to Sir Titus – an extended Wake?

The involvement of Titus Jr and his wife, Catherine, in the organisation of the Conversazione appears to have been critical. Titus Jr was the eighth child and fifth son of Sir Titus and Lady Caroline Salt. He was chairman of the Salt Schools Governors, the early organisers of the Conversazione. His wife, Catherine, was later described as “a leader” of the event. Denys Salt, grandson of Titus Jr, has suggested that Titus Jr's interest in scientific advances, and Catherine's interest in the social life of the village, were in harmony with the nature of the event. They enjoyed entertaining in a grand style at their nearby Milner Field mansion, and twice entertained royalty there.<sup>4</sup> Titus Jr installed all manner



*Illustration 1: Photo of Victoria Hall.*

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of the latest technologies at Milner Field, including telephones. He also denuded his conservatory of exotic fruit, ferns, shrubs and mosses, to decorate Victoria Hall for the *Conversazione* each year.<sup>5</sup> That the Salts were a driving force behind the *Conversazione* is supported by the fact that, following Titus Jr's death in November, 1887, there was a decline in the brilliance of the *Conversazione*s for the next eight years. A reporter in 1898 looked back at the event and commented that after Titus Jr's death "the guiding hand disappeared and a deep shadow fell athwart much that had shone with vigorous life".

In the early years, the annual *Saltaire Conversazione* began on a Thursday evening with a grand opening, attended by top society figures from the West Riding of Yorkshire, in particular the Bradford area. The evening

included an expensive and sumptuous meal, with dancing to the best bands. Friday's event was a special dance with more villagers attending. Saturday afternoon featured a children's party. But the most popular event occurred on Saturday evening, when lower ticket prices made it accessible to many more villagers. Thus the *Conversazione* catered for all levels of village society, and in so doing fitted the nature of the village very well. In 1878, *Saltaire* was a very ordered, structured, self-contained society.



*Illustration 2: Photo of Catherine Salt, courtesy of Shipley College Resource Centre, which houses the Saltaire Archive.*

Status and position were determined by your job and your housing. There was a sense of community in a village with very definite boundaries, in which the majority worked at the mill, and kinship links were very important. The schedule of the *Conversazione* reflected the village's community structure, and the venue – Victoria Hall, the recreational centre of village life – was a fitting one. It was a statement also of a joint ideology. The Middle Class Victorian ideals of industry, sobriety, charity and self-help were shared across a broad section of the population. The educational and leisure opportunities offered in the village encouraged workers to aspire to these ideals, and the example of the Salt family which achieved so much from relatively modest beginnings must have been obvious to all. Perhaps these were some of the reasons why the event continued for as long as it did. Whether such a phenomenon could have occurred in Bradford, where

dissent between classes was open and evident, is doubtful. In Bradford the changes brought by the Industrial Revolution were still being worked through.

Arrangements for the first *Conversazione* give an insight of the entertainment provided. It commenced on 12th January, 1878, with lavish decorations, mirrors, flowers, ribbons and bunting adorning Victoria Hall. Entrance was gained via Lockwood St where a special canopy was erected to protect the guests, the main entrance hall being used to provide extra accommodation. As well as dining and dancing, there were other entertainments. This first event was a showpiece for the technology of the time. Pride of place was to be given to electric light machines which had been borrowed from Mr L J Crossley and brought with great difficulty from Halifax. They were installed in the gymnasium, but were never demonstrated because Mr Salt's portable boiler and engine were not equal to the task of powering them, the experiment being abandoned.

Consequently it was the 18 Bell telephones installed in the basement which stole the show. They were connected to Milner Field mansion and the nearby High School. Other electrical experiments were set up, including vacuum tubes, Gassiot's cascade (a fountain of light), and a Wheatstone's



*Illustration 3: Photo of Titus Salt Jr, courtesy of Shipley College Resource Centre.*

4. In 1882, the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, and Princess Alexandra stayed there for the opening of Bradford Technical College, as did Princess Beatrice and Prince Henry of Battenburg in 1887, for the opening of the Yorkshire Jubilee Exhibition in *Saltaire*.

5. This description is given in an obituary of Mrs Catherine Salt in the Bradford Telegraph and Argus of 23rd January, 1930. The account goes on to say that the *Conversazione* was "organised to popularise the dress fabrics of the district, the local trade being then, as now, in a languishing condition". Given that it was written 52 years after the first *Conversazione* in *Saltaire*, this account may be reflecting the influence of the Duchess of Bective in 1882, rather than the original reason for the event (see Appendix). There are other inaccuracies in the report which lead to some doubt about the validity of the information it contains.

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*Illustration 4: Sketch of 1882 Conversazione,  
courtesy of Shipley College Resource Centre.*

torpedo exploder. Demonstrations of glass blowing were also given. The Glee of St Paul's Church Choir performed, and there was a kindergarten symphony played entirely on children's toys. It had been intended to have a new proscenium for the platform, but this was not completed in time. In consequence a shadow pantomime had to be abandoned, in lieu of which Mr L

S Learoyd created a series of magical illusions.

The expense of staging this event was considerable. It was organised by the Governors of the Salt Schools, and a committee of their friends and associates divided the responsibility for organising the different parts of the Conversazione between its members. One group

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*Illustration 5: Ballroom in Victoria Hall showing shields on the original balcony, courtesy of Saltire Village Society and Shipley College Resource Centre. The balcony was later removed.*

worked on advertising, another on catering etc. They hoped to promote membership of the Institute, and to raise funds for this establishment. Only much later did they begin to raise funds for local charities – always, of course, with the other aim of providing an enjoyable experience for the participants! The celebrations became increasingly lavish until 1887, during which year Titus Jr died. In 1889, the event was renamed “The New Year Assemblies”. In 1895 a new committee was established, and the original name revived. The Governors invited various organisations to join in, including the Musical Union, Choral Society, Social Evening Committee, Friendly and Trade Societies, and tradesmen’s organisations. The aim was to bring back the old glory of 10 years before.

In 1903, the future of the *Conversazione* was threatened, consequent to the municipalisation of Victoria Hall by Shipley Urban District Council. This municipalisation changed the financial provisions for the Hall. Previously the profit from the *Conversazione*s had been a source of revenue for the Sir Titus Salt’s Charity, whose Governors managed the Hall, but now financial responsibility lay with the Council. and it was proposed that the *Conversazione* was redundant. Eventually it was decided to go ahead and hold it, presenting the proceeds to the Charity, which had other commitments in the village. It was organised by a new group of supporters. These included the Governors of Sir Titus Salt’s Charity, Shipley Tradesmen’s

Association, the Trade and Friendly Society’s Gala Committee, the Musical Union, the Bowling Club of the Branch (a local public house), the Social Evenings Committee and Saltire Prize Choir. The event was a social success, with 950 children attending the Saturday party, but unfortunately it incurred a financial loss.

In 1905, the *Conversazione* was not held by the usual organisers for unreported reasons. By this time, the role of the Salt family was much reduced. Catherine Salt who, together with her daughter Isabel, and eldest son Gordon, had regularly attended the *Conversazione*, had by this time sold her Milner Field home to James Roberts, who had assumed sole control of the Company in 1902. Roberts adopted the mantle of philanthropy which had characterised the Salts’ years, and followed their example of charitable works. He supported the *Conversazione* through his regular attendance at the event, and through provision of decorative materials for Victoria Hall from his home – firstly the nearby Knoll and subsequently, Milner Field – but there is no evidence that he was involved in its organisation.

The period between 1905 and the outbreak of the Great War was a time when *Conversazione*s were held, but in somewhat diminished form. The 1914-18 War prevented a *Conversazione* taking place over this period. Almost a quarter of male workers at the Mill were called up to the Army, which had a profound effect on both production at

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the Mill and community life in the village.

The rebirth of the *Conversazione* in 1920 came at a time of strikes and recession in the rest of Britain, but in Saltaire there was an optimism that was to continue for much of the decade. Sir James Roberts had retired in 1918, leading to the creation of a new Board at the Mill which included Sir James Hill. In 1923, the Mill company was re-formed as Salts (Saltaire) Ltd – a public company with increased availability of funds for investment. A period of expansion followed, with new markets and new products. Then, in 1929, there was inflation and a fall in wool prices, which eventually led the Board, in 1933, to raise money by selling off the village's houses and shops to Bradford Property Trust Ltd (a private estate agency). The money was used to purchase new cap spinning machinery. "Having cut its losses and turned its back on the past, Salts now entered a long period of prosperity".<sup>6</sup> Although the financial link between the housing and the Mill was now broken, there was still a sense of community in the village, underpinning the role of the *Conversazione*. Between 1920 and 1939, the *Conversazione*s went from strength to strength. Donations to charity became a feature from 1925 onwards, and in the period 1926 - 1935 the *Conversazione*s raised £1,240 for such purpose. The organisers displayed much creativity in featuring themes for each event. The restrictions and austerity of the Second World War years undoubtedly accounted for the absence of the *Conversazione* for several years starting in 1940.

It is surprising that the *Conversazione* was revived in 1947, at the height of post-war rationing. However, in Saltaire, trade during the war years had been good because of the demand for material for uniforms for the troops, and the export trade flourished once again in the post-war years. The event was missing from the 1948 calendar but then continued throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s.

More items were coming "off ration" between 1948 and 1953, and by 1954 rationing had ended. Perhaps people could allow themselves to believe that the austerity had finally ended. Evidence of this came in the shape of the Festival of Britain in 1951, and was confirmed in 1953 – a year of optimism – with the Queen's coronation, Hilary's and Tenzing's ascent of Everest, England winning the Ashes, and Sir Gordon Richards winning the Derby! 1953 also heralded the Salts Mill centenary works outing – all expenses paid – to Blackpool, in which a great many employees participated.

The nature of the *Conversazione* changed too. It was still a typically three-day (occasionally four-day) event, but each event was themed, with dinner dances, popular at the time, frequently featured. The last *Conversazione* was held in 1964, when the organising committee's minutes recorded a net profit of £75-12-6d.

The 1965 *Conversazione* was planned, and was due to be held until December, 1964, when a meeting of the Committee decided to cancel it due to lack of public support. There were costs involved in such late cancellation. For example the Conri Tait band required a £25/£30 cancellation fee, which had to be paid out of committee members' own pockets. The Committee decided to distribute its remaining funds of £138 to local charities.

As to its ending in 1964, by then it had become obvious that patterns of living were changing radically. With greater employment possibilities, and more women (especially married women) in the workforce, there was a greater disposable income in many families. This was spent largely on the home, in the buying of telephones, refrigerators, washing machines and television sets, which were flooding the market. During the 1950s, electricity had become the lifeblood for modern homes. Patterns of leisure changed too, with more time spent around the television set, in the kitchen and DIY activities.

Additionally, in Saltaire there were other changes. Ilingworth Morris and Company had taken over the business in 1958 and transferred its scouring and combing work from Saltaire. The workforce was much reduced. Foreign imports also adversely affected trade. This change was reflected in the pattern of retailing in the village, and the number of bakeries reduced from three to two. With fewer people bound together by common bonds at work and home, the role of the *Conversazione* in affirming identity and belonging was no longer important. Victoria Hall was no longer the main centre of leisure for villagers.

It is also worth noting that the late 1950s and early 1960s regularly experienced snow and fog during January, culminating in the worst winter weather for many years in 1963 when the whole country was thrown into turmoil by freezing temperatures and drifting snow. The cold spell started on 23rd December, 1962, and continued until March.

The Saltaire *Conversazione*s passed into history, but had undoubtedly proved to be one of the main events in Saltaire's calendar.

Post Script - In present day Saltaire, Stacey Clarkin is the manager of Victoria Hall, and is intrigued with the history of the *Conversazione*. Stacey hopes to resurrect an event to be called the *Conversazione*, loosely based on what has gone before. Will this herald a new lease of life for the *Conversazione*, reflecting the optimism surrounding the regeneration of this World Heritage site in the 21st Century?

6. *The Growth of the Company* by Donald Hanson with research by J Stanley King, in "Titus of Salts", edited by Roger Suddards.

## APPENDIX

### A CHRONOLOGY OF CONVERSAZIONI IN SALTAIRE



*Illustration 6: Photo of assembled guests at a Conversazione, courtesy of Saltaire Village Society and Shipley College Resource Centre.*

PRESS reports indicate that 84 Conversazioni were held over the years, although reference to only 48 have been found to date. Most of the reports of the Conversazioni have been taken from the Shipley Times and Express, which typically devoted several column inches each year to describing it in great detail. Each report focused chiefly on the events of the first night, with descriptions of the decorations in Victoria Hall, followed by those of the supper and presidential speech, and finally the names of all the guests, together with detailed descriptions of the dresses and jewellery worn by the ladies. What a mammoth research venture for the reporter, and a boon for the fashion industry of the area with ladies vying for the most fashionable outfits! The reports reflect a gathering of high society with MP's, Lord Mayors, famous businessmen and many Lords and Ladies. Everyone who was anyone descended on Saltaire! The events of the other nights also received a mention, as did the Children's Party.

DETAILS of local weather conditions were taken from records housed at the Local Studies Section of Bradford Central Library, where there are daily records of meteorological observations dating from 1875.

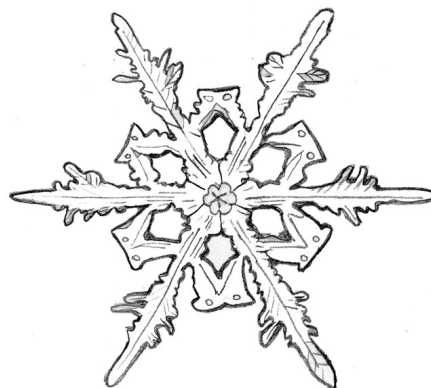
WHERE a year is missing from the list below, this is indicative of no press or other report of an event for that year being found to date.

**1878** For a description of the first Conversazione, see page 3.

**1879** The floor of the Lockwood St entrance to Victoria Hall was raised to make it easier for ladies to alight from their carriages, assisted by their liveried coachmen. Tickets for the grand Thursday occasion were half a guinea. Friday's tickets were 2/6d. Titus Salt Jr and Mr Stead (a co-partner in the company) provided exotic fruit and flowers from

their conservatories, along with ferns and mosses. The balcony in the main hall featured a bull's head, surrounded by maroon ribbons and greenery. The vestibule was adorned by a scent fountain. Refreshments were dispensed from three sandwich racks each with six sections. A farce was performed, called "Box and Cox". Dancing went on from 8-45pm to 1am, to the accompaniment of Hagga's

String Band. The dance area was covered in holland. Technological pride of place went to one of Edison's carbon telephones which was on its way from America to Lord Lytton in India. Microscopes and an aphenoscope were also displayed.



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## 1880

Snow fell in early January, and it was cold enough for the Red Beck dam in nearby Frizinghall to freeze, allowing skating to take place. At the Conversazione the music was provided by the G H Blackburn Quadrille Band (Mr Blackburn was a printer and music seller based at

49, Market St, Bradford) and by the Saltaire String Band. Also performing were a pianist, a solo singer, and a ventriloquist. Miss Jowett sang "Let me Dream Again", reportedly with great taste. There was a performance of "My Uncle's Will" (with a fee paid to the Dramatic Authors' Society of Covent Garden, London). Among the receipts for the event was an order of fine lace curtains from Nottingham. Many of the suppliers were local, however, with G H Bayley of 12, Victoria Rd providing wines, and Annie and Ellen Charlesworth of 2, Victoria Rd providing confectionary.

George Ramsden, butcher, of 39, Titus St supplied the meat. Mr Camm delivered the goods using a horse drawn, two-wheel spring cart. Most other suppliers were from Bradford. Expenditure for the event was £206/4/9d, and the profits were £129/1/2d, the latter going to charity. (Above details are from records held by West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford).

## 1881

Temperatures were well below freezing for the event, with night time minima of 16°F. The Charlesworths of 9, Victoria Rd provided bows and linings for decorations. (The latter Charlesworths were Mary, Alice and Elizabeth - sisters of the confectioners at No 2, see above.)

Mr Blackburn's Band was engaged once again, along with a memento reader, a ventriloquist and a conjurer. The presented drama was entitled "Ruth's Romance". Expenditure was £182/12/10d, and the profits were £136/19/11d. A menu for the event, dated 6th January, includes Soup a la Julienne, and sandwiches of all kinds - many types of potted meats and fish, including beef, ham, veal, tongue, hare, salmon, lobster, and pate de Foie Gras. Sweets were orange jelly, wine jelly, German cakes, and lemon sponge. For dessert there were pineapples, grapes, oranges and apples, with a range of ices such as raspberry cream, vanilla cream, and lemon water ice. To drink were tea, coffee, lemonade, soda water, ginger ale, lime juice champagne, and Zoedone.<sup>7</sup>

(Details, again, from West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford).

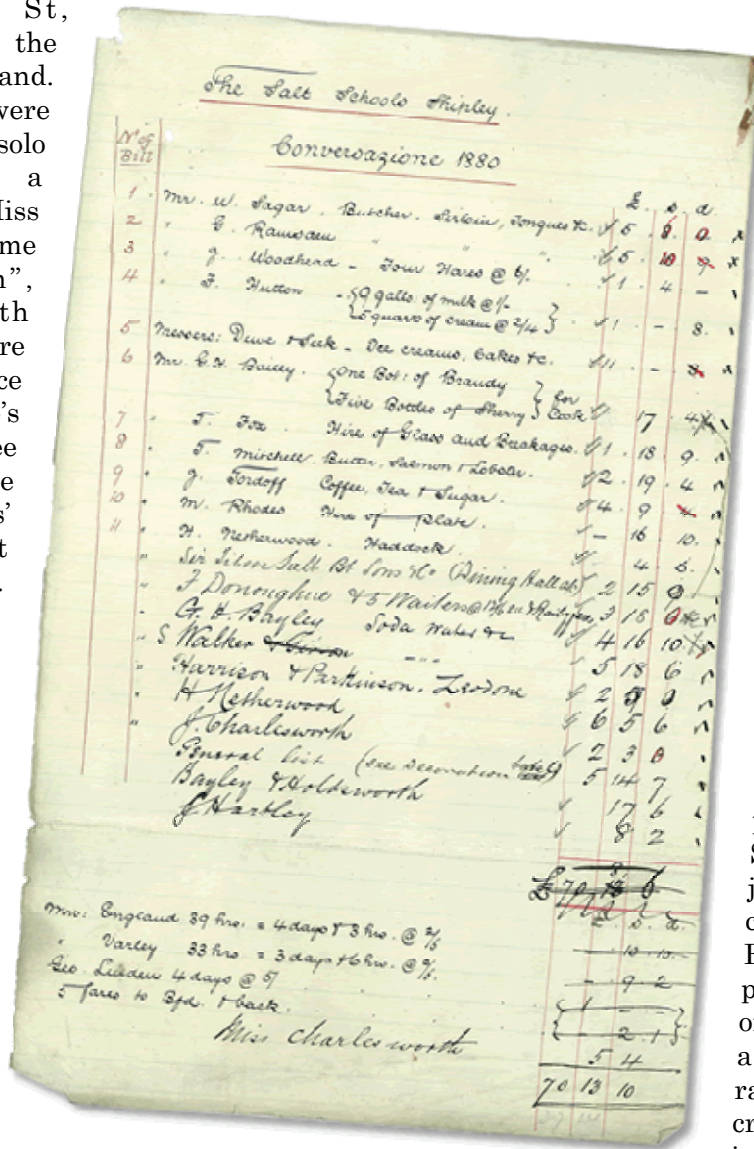


Illustration 7: Conversazione suppliers list, courtesy of West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford - ref.11D88/55.

West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford).

7. Zoedone was a mineral water, produced in 1880 by David Johnson, a brewing and drinks manufacturer, at Pentrefelin, Wrexham, using the fine quality of the water there.



**1882** The event had the Earl and Countess of Bective as the principal guests. The Countess had taken an interest in British woollen manufacturing, and had decided to promote the home consumption of these goods. As a result, the governors of the Salts Schools decided to ask every visitor to wear British woollen clothing. The main feature of the principal ball room was a depiction of “evening sunshine”, provided by six “Brush” electric lamps suspended from the roof. The current for them was supplied by a dynamo machine in the mill, powered by one of the mill engines. The electric light was supplied by Mr Louis J Crossley of Halifax.

The reporter notes that “It is rather perplexing, however, is this electric light. At times it seems that there is too much of it. Some faces, and some toilettes, are advantaged by it. Others are glared out of all naturalness. The blondes suffer the most, the light giving a certain ghastliness to their countenance.” He also notes that “the dancers are of many sorts, from the solemnly elephantine to the dashingly picturesque.” The balcony was decorated with the Bradford, Salt, Bective and Hedforth Coats of Arms. A photograph was taken from the platform by Mr Albert Sachs. Above the platform was the inscription “to hold as ‘twer the mirror up to nature.”

There was a second ballroom, in which the band was in communication

with that in the first, so that their playing was synchronised. A small rockery and a waterfall were built in the entrance hall, and for the non-dancers there were billiard tables, and a display of scientific instruments such as microscopes. There was also a theatrical performance of “Cut off with a Shilling”.

As usual the local newspaper devoted several column inches to haute couture, particularly to a description of Mrs Titus Salt’s dress. She wore “Japanese yellow cashmere; deep lace flounce on the front of the skirt, looped up with cream ostrich feathers; bodice low and gathered full

back and front, with deep lace falling round the edge, and also drawn up as a tucker; sleeves of sprigged cream net, and a large white aigrette, fastened up by a diamond pin on the shoulder; ostrich tips looped up the lace ruffles. Pearl necklace, pendant and earrings. String of pearls and a wreath of white bouvardin in the hair”.

**1883** The Institute was £500 in debt and had difficulty balancing its books. Economies were called for. Nevertheless, the *Conversazione* went ahead, with the stage decked out with two cast figures of Discobulus of Myron and Venus de Medici, surrounded by exotic plants. There were also stuffed birds, a ventriloquist, a conjuror, and the staging of a farce called “To Paris and back for £5”.

**1884** The *Conversazione* was extended to four nights, with “Cool as a Cucumber” as the staged farce, the event receiving very brief coverage in the *ShIPLEY Times* and *Express*.

**1885** The four night arrangement continued, and the high spot was individuals in fancy dress circulating amongst the guests. They included a Chinese mandarin, Mary Queen of Scots, Dominoes, a Puritan maiden, and an Elizabethan Earl of Sussex. “Old faces kept turning up under new guises.”

**1886** The event was advertised, with prices of 6d for the Saturday night for members and 1/6d for friends. It was held for three nights only. The event was not reported upon.

**1887** There had been a huge snowstorm in late December, but the first night, known as Governor’s Night, went ahead on the Wednesday (5th January) as usual. The farce was “£100,000 for a damaged heart”, and



*Illustration 8: Photo of a dress worn by Catherine Salt for a fancy dress ball at her Milner Field home, courtesy of Bradford Museums.*

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one of the songs featured was “The Merry Little Fat Gray Man”. Fashion comment was that there was “an absence of long trains, and heavy colours were avoided.”

**1888** There is an absence of any report of the Conversazione in the press. The event was probably not held that year, quite possibly because in November, 1887, Titus Jr – the moving spirit of the Conversazionies – had died.

**1889** The event, having been renamed “The New Year Assemblies”, reportedly “lacked the magnificence of the Conversazione”. Bradford Coffee Tavern Co. provided the catering.<sup>8</sup> The press report has the earliest found reference to any involvement of an outside catering firm. Previously the different parts of the event such as decorations, publicity, and catering had been organised by different voluntary groups. However, it is not until 1939 that specific reference is made to an outside agency being given responsibility for the decorations. Over the years, the introduction of electricity led to more specialist firms being engaged in the preparations.

**1891** The local press carried an advert for the event, but no report.

**1893** There was ice ten inches thick on the river, with skating much in evidence. The annual event was presented as an Assembly, and as in 1890, local press reporting was limited to a mere two column-inches.

**1894** No account of the event has been found, but research indicates that the weather was very severe, with twelve weeks of sub-zero temperatures from 30th December. There were problems all over the country, and the River Thames was blocked by ice floes. The weather station at Lindum Terrace, in nearby Manningham, recorded 12°F or 20 degrees of frost on 19th January, and 13 degrees of frost on 8th January.

**1895** Conversazione returned in name and deed. The event was held over four days despite the weather, with snow, gales, and 21 degrees of frost recorded locally. The Lockwood St entrance was back in use, and a new vigour was evident in the event. There were flags, emblazoned shields, fairy lamps, Chinese lanterns, Phillipson and Turner’s Quadrille Band, mirrors and art muslins, and a “musical melange” of fairy bells, musical glasses, xylophones, and musical balls.

Refreshments etc		Expenditure	
Ammonade, water, etc. @ 2/6		7	
Soda water @ 2/6		3 15	
Canned on Dr		1 10	2 10 53
Drummers, Walker & Gibson		4 10	4 10
Orange & Tea Girls		7 7 8	
Carriage on Dr		10 10	7 18 6
Bradford School of Cookery		1 6 6	
Halloway		1 8	
Dave & Leach	confetti	8 9 9	
Shroud & Co	Harris, Pulling, etc.	8 3	
Sajan	Butcher	1 3	
Mitchell	Butcher	3 15 6	
Almsgill	Butcher	6 13	
Radcliffe	Butcher	1 19	
Beston Bros	process	4 5	
Hardley	loan of glass	3 1	
Bread etc	Smoking	1 4 8	
Charlworth	Confetti	7 6 8	
Bayley		12 8	
Weston (Cook)		2 5	
Mr Walker (Assistant to)		13	
Mr Satch, Milk 2/6	Buyer 7/6	4 9 9	47 8
Lordoff (Sea 2/6)		3	
Atkins, as per list		4 19 1	
Mr Bover 2/6	Buyer for 2-1/2	2 12	7 11 1
Mr Fox	loan of glass		
Newby	Sea	5	
Mr Bayley (Celery etc)		17 6	
Mr Rhodes	loan of plate	17 6	
Reformed Carriage		6 6	2 6 6
Secondary School Committee, loan of glass			

Illustration 9: Conversazione suppliers list, courtesy of West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford – ref.11D88/55.

**1890** The Assemblies continued, but attendances were down on a very foggy opening night. Victoria Hall’s main entrance was used in preference to any access via Lockwood St. Press reporting was down to a meagre two column-inches.

8. The Coffee Tavern Association was a national organisation which had been set up in 1878 to provide cheap restaurants and cafes to compete with public houses. It was part of the Temperance Movement. By 1893, there were 33 Coffee Taverns in Bradford.

**1897** The event was celebrated with “all the gusto and éclat which bespeak perennial youth”.

**1898** Attendance was up to 250 on the first night and 500 on the second. The 100-guinea piano which had been won by the Saltaire Prize Choir was used to accompany soloists.

**1899** 1,000 tickets were issued for the Children’s Night. The reporter noted that “everything passed off merry as a marriage bell”.

**1900** The press report gave the objectives of the promoters in staging the event. These were to raise funds, and to increase the number of members and subscribers to the Institute. Main beneficiaries of funds this year were the Salts Schools – between 1895 and 1900, £585 was presented to the Governors. Providing enjoyable entertainment came last on the list of aims. The event was organised by the School Governors and by public bodies in Saltaire. The price of admission to the first night’s entertainment remained at its previous level of half a guinea. Decorations included many mirrors and oil paintings, as well as the usual greenery. Dancing was to Phillipson’s String Band and was said to be the main attraction of the evening. Audiences to the concert were reported to be “thin”. There is a note that the lights were fitted with incandescent burners, and so presumably gas was still used as well as electricity. The dinner menu, which was much more substantial than the previous year’s sandwiches, featured salmon mayonnaise, boar’s head, roast and boiled turkey and chicken, game pie, pigeon pie, roast beef, York ham, tongue, and salads. Desserts were trifles, Charlotte Russe, pineapple cream, tipsey cake, cream and wine jellies, Belgrave jelly, lemon jelly, custards, meringues, Othellos, French pastry and ices.

**1904** No details of the event are reported in the local press, other than that 750 children and 200 adults attended the Children’s Party, and 350 were at the villagers’ event in the evening, which was clearly still popular with the workforce.

**1905** The usual organisers resolved not to hold the *Conversazione*. However, the Musical Union decided to fill the huge gap left in Saltaire’s social calendar. It staged a similar event at the same time as usual, and even called it the *Conversazione*. It were unable to occupy the whole of Victoria Hall, but used its available rooms for dancing and the Masonic Rooms for smokers.<sup>9</sup> Catering services were provided by Mr Charlesworth of Saltaire (who would at this date have occupied the corner shop on Gordon Terrace at the Bingley Rd/ Saltaire Rd junction).

**1906 & 07** The Musical Union continued to organise the event in 1906, for one night only, and again in 1907.

**1908** The Musical Union moved the event from Victoria Hall to its own new rooms on Commercial St in Shipley. It is noteworthy that the popularity of the *Conversazione* at Victoria Hall seems to have led to similar events being held by two other local groups. St Paul’s Church Young Men’s Association organised an annual *conversazione* from 1901 to 1909, usually on Boxing Day and the two following days. Plays were staged which were performed by the members, and other amenities included a café and a range of entertainment, including singing, conjuring, archery, shooting and ping-pong. In Keighley, there was a “*Conversazione Week*”. This was five days of activities, and was held between 1890 and at least 1899. It is not known who organised it, but there is a press report that 4,000 people attended.

**1920** There has been found a brief account of a revived Saltaire *Conversazione*, after an absence of “about a quarter of a century”. The main decoration at the 1920 occasion had the theme of “Flags of the Allies”.

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9. The precise location of the Masonic Rooms is not known, but clearly they were in either the building or its immediate vicinity.

10. Mrs Gates was the wife of Ernest Gates, who became director of the Company in 1918, together with other members of a syndicate. Mr Gates also ran his own company, E H Gates and Co, based in Leeds Rd, Bradford. In 1923 he had been elected president of Bradford Chamber of Commerce.

## THE SALTAIRE CONVERSAZIONE

By Roger Clarke

**1921** Japanese lanterns were featured throughout Victoria Hall. The dining room was presented as a West End restaurant with silver candlesticks and electric lights with gaily coloured shades. There was a green and white colour scheme, and a large electric globe illuminated the ballroom.

**1922** Brief press reports of the event described the orchestra on the stage being “hidden by a forest of palms”.

**1923** The event saw Victoria Hall bordered with black and white checks, with streamers and festoons of sky blue, gold and white up to the centre of the ceiling. On the stage was an old English garden. A model sailing ship was a prominent attraction.

**1924** A fancy dress theme was adopted. Popular costumes were of Pierrot, gypsies, and red Indians. At the children’s event there were several Titus Salts, and Brenda Mitchell was impressive as a cabbage. Prizes were provided by Mrs E H Gates, who had expressed a wish to do this before her untimely death.<sup>10</sup> The Melody Boys, together with the Conri Tait Orchestra of Sheffield, provided the music. The stage was once more transformed into an old English garden and featured a café. The fashion commentary was that “skirts are longer, and the bouffant outline is gradually superseding the slim silhouette, but its progress is slow. Fashions are verging in the direction of the demure”.

**1925** The featured orchestra was the Revellers Havana Band. The event began on a Wednesday, and had an oriental theme, with colours of apricot and white, thrown into relief by touches of black. There was an Aladdin’s Lamp for illumination. Mr Ernest Gates presided.

**1926** It was reported that the Saltaire Institute Society had been disbanded a few months earlier, and that it was

unlikely that the event would be held – but it was! A silver fruit bowl was given to Mr E Clifford Fry for his services to the Conversazione.

**1927** A main feature of the event was the brilliant electrical effects provided by J E Kay and Co of Bingley Rd. There were 130 electric lamps in the centre piece in the Hall. Catering was provided by the North Parade Café in Bradford. The Friday Tea Dance was to the Parisian Syncopated Orchestra.

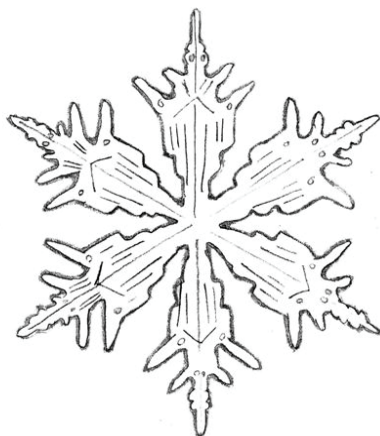
**1928** There were more special lighting effects. In the 13th dance, the lights were turned off and the stage illuminated to great effect with lime lights.

**1929** Gold lighting was used at the Conversazione. An inscribed clock and a cheque were given to Mr J W Humphries who had been the door keeper and cloak room attendant at Victoria Hall for 48 years.

**1930** The main feature was the installation of a motor-driven mirror bowl in the main hall. Mirror facets caught gleams of coloured lime lights which reflected around the hall. This

was provided by Mr Norman Briggs and Messrs J E Kaye and Co. Wagstaff’s Zelo Dance Band from Manchester provided the music. The supper was provided in the York Room of Victoria Hall, at candle-lit tables. Spinks of Bradford provided the catering. A feature of the meal was the formal entrance of the meringue to the tune of the Frothblowers Anthem. The meringue had FBS picked out in silver cachous, representing Froth Blowers Surprise! 250 people attended the first night, and 400 the second, when there was a whist drive, as well as dancing to the Vauxhall Dance Band. The Valetta and the Military Two Step were introduced into the dance repertoire.

**1931** The Yorkshire Evening Post of 8th January, reported that the



Conversazione again had an Oriental theme, with antique Japanese curtains at the windows, garlands of golden chrysanthemums, and oriental lanterns. There were 200 guests on the first evening, and the President (Arthur J Hill of Denton Park) alone had a party of 80. This was a real Society occasion with Sir Frank Sanderson, Sir Donald Horsfall and Sir Francis Watson with their Ladies, local MP Horace Lockwood and Sir James and Lady Hill attending. The press report gives great detail of the ladies' dresses. The music was provided by Conri Tait and his band.

**1932** The event was "curtailed due to national crisis" ie not held. The crisis was not identified, but in September 1931 there had been riots in London and Glasgow because of the government's economy measures. The Labour government under Ramsey MacDonald reached deadlock over management of the Great Depression, leading to the formation of a coalition government with the Conservatives under Stanley Baldwin in October, 1931. Planning for the 1932 Conversazione would have been at a critical point at this time.

**1935** Wagstaff's Zelo Dance Band was once again featured. The theme in the main hall was of a modern road-house called "The Rosotel" (a take on the Rosse Hotel, located just outside the village). Whist and bridge drives seem to have been popular, and were incorporated into the Friday programme, along with dancing.

**1936** Conversazione attendees made a most enjoyable voyage on the "SS *Saltaire*" – the bridge and upper deck of which was featured on the stage of the main hall. The rest of the hall had companion ways, ventilators, searchlights, deck rails, and painted backgrounds of seaside locations. The Charles Steel Orchestra from the Queens Hotel in Harrogate provided the music. A press note records that between 1926 and 1935, the conversaciones had raised £1,240 for charity.

**1937** The Ambassadors – the famous broadcasting orchestra from Keighley – performed for guests. Velvet and beaded satin were prominent in the ladies' dresses.

**1939** Victoria Hall was transformed into a Palace of Light using multi-coloured fairy lights. Modern corporate styling was also in evidence, with Scenic Display Services of Listerhills Rd, Bradford organising the décor. T Collinson and Son of Halifax provided the catering.

**1947** Following the Second World War, the Conversazione was revived, and despite post-war austerity seems to have been on the same lavish scale as usual. A total of 2,000 people attended the three nights. The year had one of the worst winters in living memory, but fortunately for the Conversazione the snowfall did not become severe until 27th January. There was only an average amount of snow on the ground for the celebrations.

**1949** Victoria Hall's interior was decked with 15,000 yards of butter muslin in delicate pastel shades, and the event attracted 1,900 guests.

**1950** Some 1,400 attended to find the stage in the main hall decorated as an Italian garden by moonlight. The reporter noted that the dancing was still very traditional, and that there was little danger of "jive, jitter-bug or be-bop" here.

**1951** Despite an influenza epidemic, attendance totalled 1,900, although there was a sad toast to absent friends on the first night. Guests enjoyed a newly decorated Victoria Hall.

**1952** The *Conversazione* was rejuvenated by J Eric Haygarth of Baildon, as a new-style social event. Victoria Hall was decorated with rainbow-coloured drapes in butter muslin at the windows, and it was floodlit. It was reported that a similar occasion 25 years earlier had 1,000 lights as a centrepiece in the dance hall. The first night had crowds of dazzlingly-attired guests, while the second was less formal, with dancing to Don Haydn and his orchestra. The Saturday had a children's party, followed by old time dancing in the evening. Ticket prices were 30/- on the first night, one guinea on the second, 8/6d for the Friday night old-tyme dance, and 3/6d for the Saturday evening. The tickets for the children's

## THE SALTAIRE CONVERSAZIONE

By Roger Clarke

party were 2/- (under 16), and 2/6d (adults).

**1953** The Coronation Conversazione was an event of surprises. The President (Sir Reginald G Bailey) arranged a surprise cabaret show for guests – and was in turn surprised to receive a horse shoe from Gay Times, one of the Queen's racehorses, presented to him by Mr Geoffrey Hirst, MP for Shipley. Décor was in the Queen's racing colours of purple and gold. The stage was dominated by an illuminated crown flanked by two St George banners. Don Haydn's Concert Orchestra provided the music. On the Friday night the old time dance attracted 360 people and the Saturday Children's Party was attended by 450 children and 200 adults.

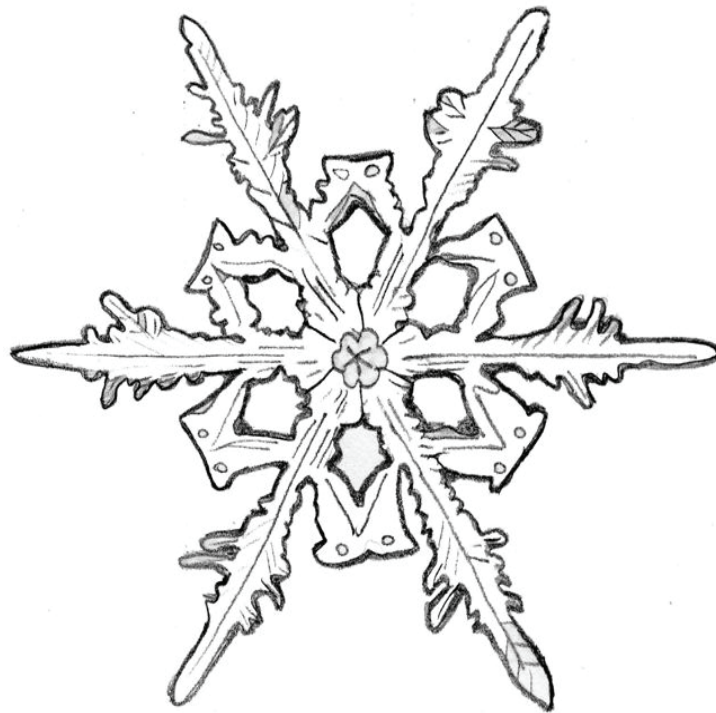
**1954** There was a fashion show, with a display of gowns, furs and jewellery valued at several thousand pounds, arranged by the well-known couturiers Marshall and Snelgrove. There were also spring suits from Town and Country Fashions. The centre piece was an illuminated waterfall with 30 jet fountains spraying 3,000 gallons of water an hour.

**1955** The accent was on springtime with green and white décor. A fashion comment was that the new fashion was for heavy fuchsia pink silk, based on Dior's H Line. Also noted was the fact that on the second night the admission was 9/- cheaper than on the first.

**1956** 350 people attended the first night, 480 the second, 550 the final one, and 550 children attended the

Children's Party. Dances on the final night included the Crinoline Gavotte, the Cherie Saunter and the Lingering Blues.

**1957** The theme was Alpine, with snow-capped peaks and Bavarian chalets. Rock and roll was played on the second night. For the 700 children there were Punch and Judy, and a grand march into tea. In all, 2,000 people attended. The resignation of the Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, was announced to the assembled guests by the local MP. Ticket prices were 30/- for the first night, 21/- the second, 4/6d the third, and 3/- the Children's Party. (Party hats seem to have been provided by the organisers for the children each year, with masks and balloons as occasional extras).



**1958** A Fisherman's Paradise was the chosen theme. Nets were hung from the ceiling, and there were lobster-pots, lifebelts, ropes, ladders, marker buoys and floats. On stage was a mast (complete with flashing light) with two large sails and a maritime background. There was a flashing light on the mast. Such lavish decorations obviously took their toll, because the event made a net loss of £103/4/9d. 400 attended the first night when turkey was on the menu. The second night featured chicken, and the third had steak and kidney pie.

**1959** The weather was dreadful, with snow and ice. It was fitting then that the theme was The Riviera. The stage was decorated to show a Mediterranean Bay with multi-coloured sunshades. Hot soup was served

before guests went home. The night-time temperature was recorded at 19°F.

**1960** Reports of Committee meetings in 1960 include many comments about the “appalling cost of decorations” and buffet suppers were proposed instead of sit-down meals. Attendance at Committee meetings began to fall, leading to a smaller Committee of the more enthusiastic members being formed. The President of the *Conversazione* Committee was H F Hartley of Harden Grange who was a famous race horse owner. Victoria Hall was decorated in his racing colours of cherry, white and blue. It was said to have given a Springtime effect. The balcony featured a horse shoe and horse’s head motif. Ken Popplewell’s Orchestra provided the music. The menu featured cold salad. For the children there was a magician and dancing. It was reported that the girls danced mainly with each other while the boys “just ran around”. In 1960 there was again a net loss, this time of £38/8/2d, the Reserve Fund being used to make charitable donations. It led the Chairman to comment that “while it is socially successful, it is financially disappointing. The *Conversazione* as a function is dying and dying fast”.

**1961** Despite the pessimism of the previous year, the event was a sell-out. This was the first *Conversazione* to have a dinner dance format. Guests dined on Cream of Asparagus Soup; poached fillet of sole *Bonne Femme*; Roast Norfolk turkey and stuffing; chipolata sausages; creamed and mashed potatoes; garden peas; fresh fruit salad; petit fours; coffee. Tombola was introduced (raising a remarkable £91/7/6d), and there were spot prizes for the dancers. Despite high attendances, and ticket prices of two guineas, 25/-, and 3/- for the Children’s Party, there was again a net loss, of £81/10/11d.

**1962** The event featured cricket personalities Herbert Sutcliffe, Bob Platt, Frank Millett, Ronnie Burnet and Brian Close. A dinner dance, less formal than previous occasions, was held. The financial picture was improved, the event making a net profit of £79/5/5d.

**1963** Little was printed about the *Conversazione*, apart from a fashion comment that there were shorter dresses and fewer wide, full skirts. The trend was for closer fitting sheath dresses in subdued colours, especially black. It is noteworthy that the report of the event was overshadowed in the press by reports and adverts for television equipment and programmes – the paper being full of them. However the minutes again record a profit, of £90/13/0d.

**1964** No newspaper record of the last *Saltaire Conversazione* could be found, but minutes of the organising committee record a net profit of £75/12/6d.

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## CONTRIBUTORS

Roger Clarke, Dave Shaw (Book Reviewer), Dave King (Book Reviewer), Kate Clarke (Illustrator), Pamela Reynolds (Document designer and typesetter).

# Addendum: *Saltire* Conversazione



Check again on the tickets.  
At two guineas a time they were dear.  
Them and the wife's new dresses,  
Could clean me right out, I fear.

There's work on the Lockwood Street entrance  
Where carriages are due to arrive.  
We're going to walk, being local,  
But Society and gentry will drive.

From all over't West Riding they come here.  
With their furs and their tail coats and spats,  
With the best of their jewels and ball gowns,  
They never will miss Conversatz.



To see and be seen is important,  
Reporters are here to record  
Who wore what, and said what and did what,  
What glittering splendour afford.

The Institute's looking quite splendid,  
Courtesy of Mr Salt and Charles Stead,  
Denuding conservatory contents,  
Including the pineapple bed.

There's mirrors and flowers and bunting,  
A scent fountain to sweeten the air,  
Chinese lanterns, beaded satin and velvet,  
And all sorts of culinary fare.

There's boars head, and foie gras and lobster,  
And to follow there's cheese mascarpone,  
Charlotte Russe, wine jelly and trifles,  
Lime juice champagne and Zoedone.

I want to see the electrics,  
This new source of power and light,  
Wheatstone's torpedo exploder is there too,  
To give all the ladies a fright.

Bell's telephones installed in the basement  
Let us speak to the Milner Field staff,  
There's a conjuror and memento reader,  
And a comic to give us a laugh.





# The *Saltaire* Journal



There are actors they have brought up from London,  
In a farce which they called "Ruth's Romance",  
Hagga's String Band are also available  
In case you should get up to dance.



It's not just for toffs and the high ups,  
Here in Saltaire we all get a share.  
Tomorrow's still got performers and dancing,  
Cheaper tickets for any who care.

The best day for most is the Saturday.  
A children's party to start out the fun,  
Fancy dress, balloons, masks and prizes,  
Brenda Mitchell won (dressed as a cabbage).



Last of all is the Villager's knees up,  
No-one missed it – the best of the year,  
Cheap tickets and popular dance bands,  
Best of all there was plenty of beer.

It's better than Christmas and New Year,  
Early January's the date when it's set.  
We go every year without failing,  
After all it's the place where we met.

*Roger Clarke*



## **Addendum**

This poem was distributed to members of the Saltaire History Club at its September, 2007 meeting. Intended to be a light hearted diversion, it is presented here in the same spirit.

Thanks to Kate Clarke ([www.katydid designs.co.uk](http://www.katydid designs.co.uk)) for the three illustrations drawn especially for this edition of the Saltaire Journal.



# BOOK REVIEWS

## A TIME IN OUR LIVES



- a youth club in the West Riding of Yorkshire, revisited

**Greg Thomson**

This appropriately-titled book is a true story of a group of teenagers living in the early 1960s, who socialized through a youth club based at the now-demolished Sunday School in Victoria Rd, Saltaire. Such an account, were it to be the entirety of the book, would at the least be a commendable contribution to the historical record, but there is more to the book than just an account of events of 45 years ago. It goes on to describe the re-establishing of contacts within the group in the early years of the 21st century, as the group's members entered into their sixties. Furthermore, the book's author (one of the group) has been able to apply his professional knowledge to provide an analysis of the social dynamics of the group, both then and now. The distinguishing characteristics of the individual members in the 1960s are identified and evidence provided of where those values have been retained to the present day. (Is this a first for the application of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs theory to Saltaire folk?)

Could this be the story of any youth club, in any part of the UK, in the 1960s? Well, no. While Saltaire Congregational Church owned and managed the premises used by the club, rather unusually it was the members themselves who actually ran the club, from its day-to-day activities to its financial affairs. Furthermore the social structures of the families from

which the club drew its members were rooted in the West Riding of Yorkshire, with its urban communities based on textile manufacturing. These 1960s communities still retained values and habits that had been developed through several generations, and which in the present day are less discernable. The club's outings and holidays – unsurprisingly to well known British resorts – were preceded by the ritual of buying new clothes, the lads' suits being made up using cloth lengths as often as not from Salts Mill.

Being about real people who are seen not only as teenagers, but now, recent retirees, it is impossible to resist flicking back and forth in the book to compare photographs of the individuals then and now. Even without knowing the people personally, readers will find themselves making assessments of them from the accounts in the text. Another feature that struck this reader was how precisely drawn in time are the circumstances that governed some of the club members' interests. Not only are the group's musical influences very specifically of the time, but also their social interests compared to those of even the late 1950s are seen to have evolved. It serves as a reminder that social history has a depth and detail to it that is difficult to fully capture in its retelling, but that has been done here.

It's good to see from the book's photographs and stories that the smiles of its characters are still intact after 45 years. The book is likely to have wide appeal, and particularly so for those of a similar generation as the writer, where the accounts of events and circumstances will have a particular resonance.

**D a v e S h a w**

<b>Author:</b>	<b>Greg Thomson</b>
<b>Price:</b>	£8.95
<b>ISBN:</b>	978 - 0 - 9558631 - 0 (softback)
<b>Size:</b>	H: 210mm W: 48mm
<b>Pages:</b>	95
<b>Illustrations:</b>	32 (approx) black and white
<b>Publisher:</b>	G. Thomson 4 Beck Farm Barn Micklethwaite Bingley, BD16 3JN gaa@bfbarn.eclipse.co.uk
<b>Publication date:</b>	March, 2008
The book is available from David Ford's Saltaire Book Shop, 217 Bingley Rd, Shipley, tel. 01274 589144, or directly from the publisher.	

## **Wool City, A history of the Bradford textile industry in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century** by Mark Keighley

In its preface the book is described thus. '(This is) not the first book on the Bradford wool industry and it will not be the last. It does, however, attempt to paint a picture, perhaps in greater detail than previously, of the major events and developments that have shaped the city's fortunes since the Edwardian age.'

Mark Keighley, as a long time journalist and former editor at the Wool Record, the foremost mouthpiece of the Bradford wool trade, is perhaps more qualified than anyone else to carry out the task of producing such a book.

The book begins by briefly outlining the development of the local textile industry, from the establishment of the first fulling mill at Leaventhorpe, mentioned in 1311, up to the end of Victoria's reign. This includes the creation of many of the famous local firms such as Listers, Salts and Holdens and the establishment of Woolcombers Ltd. and the Bradford Dyers' Association. The main body of the book consists of a chronological record of events, from the beginning of the Edwardian era, up to the present day.

During the early years of the twentieth century we learn about the constant occurrence of fires, and other disasters – always a threat in the mills. An important chapter follows the course of Dr Frederick Eurich's researches at Bradford into the cause, and means of protecting against, the dreaded anthrax which had caused many deaths amongst textile workers.

Successive periods of boom, followed by difficult trading conditions, are also covered. Developments in textile machine design during the late 1950s and early 1960s, which produced such innovations as the Raper Autoleveller, the Ambler Superdraft spinning system and the Sulzer loom, are described. These, and other inventions, revolutionised the production of yarns and cloth whose processing methods had remained virtually unchanged for 100 years.

One of the most useful aspects of the book is its potted histories of the many firms, their owners and directors, who made Bradford into 'Wool City'. This information has not been gathered together into a single source before. Also helpful is the way in which the reader can follow the formation and progress of the large groups and combines which came to dominate so many parts of the textile industry. For those of us interested in Saltire, the coverage of the Salts of Saltire and Illingworth, Morris Groups will be of particularly interest, especially the chapter covering the goings-on

between the board of Illingworth, Morris and Pamela Mason, during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Despite the rapid decline of the wool textile industry during the last 20 years or so Mark does manage to raise a little optimism from the success of a growing number of small, specialist textile companies who appear to be experiencing an increase in demand for their quality products.

Overall the book is written in an easy-to-follow style.

Most topics are covered in a few short paragraphs and the average chapter length is only seven pages, so the book never becomes tedious. A comprehensive index and a bibliography for each chapter add to the ease of locating particular areas of interest or checking on source material. The inclusion of many excellent photographs adds greatly to the interest of the book and the text contains very few typographical errors. The book is well produced on good quality, gloss paper and it is reassuring to see that it has been printed locally by Fretwell Print and Design, Keighley.

'Wool City' will be enjoyed by anyone who is interested in the Bradford textile industry - and how many

Bradford families have not contained someone who has been a textile worker? In the longer term, future students of textile and social history will find a rich source of material.

Congratulations to Mark Keighley for having documented the recent history of 'Wool City' before it is forgotten.

**David King**

<b>Author:</b>	<b>Mark Keighley</b>
<b>Price:</b>	£30
<b>ISBN:</b>	978 - 0 - 9555993 - 1 - 6 (hardback)
<b>Size:</b>	H: 258mm W: 182mm
<b>Pages:</b>	289
<b>Illustrations:</b>	132 (approx) black and white
<b>Publisher:</b>	G. Whitaker & Co. Ltd.
<b>Publication date:</b>	July, 2007

If the book is difficult to find in local book shops enquiries can be made to the publisher at Grove House, 12 Riddings Rd, Ilkley, West Yorkshire LS29 9BF. Telephone: 01943 886000. E-mail: brian@whitaker.co.uk.

# SNIPPETS . . .

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## *Alpaca tasting at the Queens Hotel, Leeds...*

In the course of research for this issue of the Journal, particularly on the subject of conversaciones, several annual reports to council of the Leeds Philosophical & Literary Society were studied. The Society's membership included names that will be

familiar to Saltaire historians. William Fairbairn, FRS, of Manchester, who was responsible for the engineering design of Salts Mill, was an honorary member of the Society. Indeed, with effect from the 1864-65 report, one finds also Titus Salt himself, at that time living at Methley Park, near Leeds, listed as a new Propriety Member, with his second son George Salt included as a subscriber. The report for 1863-1864 contains a fascinating snippet:

*Mr Salt, of Methley Park, having most liberally offered to kill one of his finest specimens of Alpaca, for the Society's Museum, the Council while accepting the valuable present, considered that so good an opportunity for enabling the members to partake of the flesh, of this only partially acclimatised animal should not be lost, accordingly a dinner was prepared at the Queen's Hotel, where about 60 gentlemen assembled, and the Council had the pleasure of receiving Mr Salt as their guest.*



The report subsequently records Mr Salt presented the stuffed alpaca, together with a specimen of a fallow deer, to the Society.

*Image of alpaca, courtesy of  
Shaun Daniel of County Alpacas, Sowerby Bridge.*

# The *Saltaire* Journal

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GRAVE OF GEORGE SALT (1833 - 1913)

... FINALLY FOUND

Four of the children of Sir Titus and Lady Caroline Salt were, like them, laid to rest in the family mausoleum in Saltaire Church. The final resting places of the other children of the marriage have been known and documented for some years, with the single exception of their second son, George. George had worked in Salts Mill for many years before retiring from the business and moving to London, where he married Jenny Louisa Fresco at Westminster Register Office in 1885.

Confusion surrounded the funeral arrangements for George. The day after the death, the Bradford Daily Telegraph stated that he was to be buried in Saltaire. The Yorkshire Observer on 10 May similarly announced that the funeral was to take place at Saltaire Congregational Church. However by 16 May the Shipley Times and Express was reporting that "It had been intended that the interment should take place in the mausoleum... Negotiations to that end have taken place, but we understand that owing to the limited accommodation it is doubtful whether the remains will be brought to Saltaire".

This apparently unexpected outcome could not have been welcome news for George's widow Jenny Louisa, and the resolution of the predicament has not been found in any subsequent press reports. It was known that interment in the mausoleum did not occur, but the final resting place of George Salt has been a mystery until now. After several unsuccessful visits to various

South London cemeteries, a new online data base has now come to the rescue, and George's grave has been found in Teddington Cemetery, about two miles from his East Molesey home.

The grave is an unpretentious, unadorned pink granite memorial, low lying with a single dedication, the content of which, unlike the confusion that preceded it, leaves the reader in no doubt – if Saltaire was not to embrace George's body in death then it would embrace Saltaire, in words clearly chosen by his widow.

We do not know at present what happened to Jenny in widowhood. The lack of any further inscription on the grave suggests that her final resting place lies elsewhere. Attempts to trace Jenny Louisa via death records have been unsuccessful to date.

Thanks are expressed to Richmond-on-Thames Council for its sterling efforts in documenting its burial records, and making them freely available online.



SACRED TO THE MEMORY  
OF MY  
BELOVED HUSBAND  
GEORGE SALT  
2ND SON OF THE LATE  
SIR TITUS SALT, BART:  
FOUNDER OF "SALTAIRE"  
BRADFORD, YORKS:  
BORN APRIL 22, 1833.  
DIED MAY 8, 1913

"LORD ABIDE WITH ME"



# SNIPPETS . . .

## TEXTILE MACHINERY CAPTURED IN PHOTOGRAPHS



*The late Mr Albert Bowtell, courtesy of Mrs Joyce Bowtell.*

Photographs exist of some of the machinery installed in Salts Mill during its days of textile production. Several of the photos were used in two promotional brochures produced by the company, the first (in French) in 1918 (approx) under the name Sir Titus Salt Bart Sons & Co Ltd; the second, in 1924 (approx) under the name Salts (Saltaire) Ltd.

Additionally, there exist photos of the Mill departments in an empty state, following removal of machinery and presumably taken in the 1980s. All these photographs were held by the late Mr Albert Bowtell, and subsequently (2007) donated by his widow Mrs J Bowtell to the Saltaire Archive of Shipley College in Saltaire. The original photos have been digitally scanned and it is now hoped that former workers and textile machinery experts can help identify and document the pieces of equipment, their dates of use, the mill department in which they were used etc. For all those interested, the portfolio of photographs will be accessible in the Saltaire Archive.



*Twisting Machinery - one of the many photographs donated by Mrs Joyce Bowtell to the Saltaire Archive.*

# The Saltaire Journal

## THE FIRST ISSUE: WHAT WAS SAID

The first issue of the Journal led to kind words from several readers, including the following

- “Just wanted to congratulate all involved in the launching of the Saltaire Journals. I read the first one last night and found it really informative and well written - what a great start” Julie Woodward, Librarian, Shipley College, and Custodian of the Saltaire Archive.
- “Congratulations on the launch of the first issue, I read it before starting anything else

yesterday, very interesting stuff!” Craig McHugh, Saltaire World Heritage Site Officer.

- “Many thanks for the attractive first issue. Congratulations. I will certainly feature both the Journal and the Saltaire History Club in the next issue of the Bradford Antiquary” Bob Duckett, Editor of the Bradford Antiquary.
- “Many congrats on the new Saltaire Journal and long life to it. I am particularly pleased that Belwarp is ringing his bell for Saltaire again!”

Eddie Lawler, Saltaire dramatist, musician and writer.

- “Have just been reading the first issue of the Saltaire Journal and what a superb read it is Brilliant and many congratulations to those concerned. I like the house style presentation - not pretentious but absolutely right in keeping with a World Heritage project” Denys Salt, grandson of Titus Salt Jr and great-grandson of Sir Titus Salt.



**Saltire Journal,  
Issue 1, November 2007**

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Retirement from his career as Psychiatric Social Worker with Bradford Council, and injury related withdrawal from his sports of long distance walking and running, have given 65 year old Roger Clarke the time and energy to invest in all things Saltaire. Contributing regularly to the community newsletter, the Saltaire Sentinel, and to the community website at

[www.saltirevillage.info](http://www.saltirevillage.info), he is concerned with both the living history and the Victorian background of the model village. Tour guide, author and local historian, Roger's enthusiasm for Saltaire is infectious.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Most of the reports of the Conversazione have been taken from the Shipley Times and Express, which typically devoted several column inches each year to describing it in great detail. Each report focuses on the events of the first night, with descriptions of the decorations in Victoria Hall, followed by those of the Supper and Presidential speech, and finally the names of all the guests together with detailed descriptions of the dresses and jewellery worn by the ladies. What a mammoth research venture for the reporter, and what an

investment in the fashion industry of the area by ladies vying for the most fashionable outfits! It reads like a gathering of high society with MP's, Lord Mayors, famous businessmen and many Lords and Ladies. Everyone who was anyone descended on Saltaire! The events of the other nights also received a mention, as did the Children's Party.

Details of local weather conditions were taken from records housed at the Local Studies Section of Bradford Central Library, where there are daily records of meteorological information dating from 1875.

Information about the financial accounts after 1952 were taken from a Minutes Book held at Victoria Hall and made available by Mr Phil Fluke, courtesy of Shipley College. Howard and Jenny Whiting at Victoria Hall very kindly contributed information about the 1882 event. Dave Shaw has used his considerable internet skills to discover information about the history of Conversazione's generally. Pamela Reynolds designed the layout and typeset this document. Kate Clarke provided the artwork to illustrate the addendum. More of her work can be found at [www.katydididesigns.co.uk](http://www.katydididesigns.co.uk)

# The *Saltaire* Journal

## AVAILABILITY OF SALTAIRE JOURNALS & CONTRIBUTOR GUIDELINES

### SALTAIRE JOURNALS

The *Saltaire Journals* provide a means for historians to publish findings which relate to *Saltaire*, the UNESCO World Heritage Site in Yorkshire, England. The *Journals* are freely available on a world-wide basis to non-commercial parties such as local historians, and research and educational bodies. The facility is free to contributors and readers alike.

### CONTRIBUTOR GUIDELINES

The purposes of these guidelines are two-fold. Firstly they seek to set a common standard for contributors. Secondly, by giving advance notification, they reduce the amount of work involved in the editing process.

1. Wherever possible text should be submitted as a PC Word document. If the author lacks access or familiarity with PCs or Word, it may be possible to help, depending on the nature of the material.

2. Start sentences with a single space.

3. Avoid the use of the first person "I" where possible - use instead the passive form (eg rather than writing "I have not found...." use the words "... has not been found.")

4. Single digit numerals should be spelt out when used in sentences (eg "The five houses accommodated 10 adults.")

5. When referring to streets or roads by name, use the abbreviation of St or Rd. No full stop after the abbreviation is necessary (except of course where it happens to be the end of a sentence).

6. Similarly, the fifth son of Sir Titus Salt is normally to be referred to as Titus Salt Jr or Titus Jr (again no full stop except when ending a sentence).

7. Dates should be presented as eg 20th September, 1803.

8. Remember that the readership of the *Journal* is world-wide. Please do not assume that the reader has close familiarity with the local history or

geography of *Saltaire*.

9. Prior to submission of a piece of work, it is advisable to reread it from the perspective of a new reader, unfamiliar with the subject, and make adjustments accordingly.

### AVAILABILITY OF ISSUES

Each *Journal* consists of a single topic by an author or group of authors. The *Journals* are published as new research is written up, and are available to download from the *Saltaire Village* website [www.saltairvillage.info](http://www.saltairvillage.info). Any copyrights attached to an article is made known in its issuing. A limited number of copies are printed centrally, for deposition in libraries, archives and other outlets.

### EMAIL ALERTS

Anyone wishing to be placed on the emailing list, alerting them to the availability of a new issue, is invited to register by completing the form on the website.

**PUBLISHING:** Formal publishing and deposition is done by Nemine Juvante (*Saltaire*) Publications, a not-for-profit partnership dedicated to the publishing of works relating to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of *Saltaire*. If you would like to see your work published in this way, please contact Nemine Juvante Publications.  
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