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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.



A HISTORY OF THE SALTAIRE ALMSHOUSES

By Roger Clarke

The story of the Saltaire almshouses illustrates the conflict between the idealism of benevolent paternalism and the reality of managing differing human needs. The main players are the men who exercised control in the Mill - Sir Titus Salt (founder), Mr Titus Salt Jr (his son) and Mr (later Sir) James Roberts (Mill owner in the early years of the 20th C).

It also highlights contextual differences. Titus Salt's Bradford was chaotic and unplanned, due to the laissez-faire attitude of a government unwilling to address the problems of rapid urban development. As a result, Salt imposed his own structure and standards on Saltaire. By 1900, the legislative context was very different, and responsibility for public services lay with Shipley Urban District Council (UDC).

The Elizabethan poor law, imposed two centuries before the industrialisation and urbanisation of the mid 19th C, was ill-equipped to meet the new demands placed upon it. Each parish was responsible for provision for its own poor. Both outdoor relief, paid

to supplement the wages of working and able-bodied paupers, and the cost of workhouses, placed a burden on each and every parish, although parishes varied greatly in size, wealth, character and needs. The cost of poor law administration rose from £619,000 in 1750 to £8 million in 1818 ("The Age of Reform 1850-1870" by Sir Llewellyn Woodward), and the system was generally regarded as being corrupt and widely abused. Workhouses provided shelter for a wide range of inmates, from the sick and elderly to the able-bodied poor and children. In his book "Yorkshire Through the Years", local author Ian Dewhirst notes that "the 74 inmates (of the workhouse) at Bradford during the 1790s comprised mostly women, old men and children, including six bastards and as many lunatics." The work carried out in workhouses varied from stone-breaking to hand-grinding of corn and oakum-picking (the process of untwisting old hemp or jute rope, prior to its impregnation with tar for use to pack leaky planks of ships), but obviously many inmates would not be fit to do work of any kind. Most workhouses were severely overcrowded. Dewhirst also tells us that in Leeds the beds were crowded 20 to a room, each with

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multiple occupancy, and that the bedclothes were scoured once a year. There had been a workhouse in Bradford since 1738 at Barkers End, on the south side of Barkerend Rd, but the most infamous was in Little Horton Rd, on the site of the present St Luke's Hospital (which had its origins in the workhouse infirmary). Here, the Master was suspended for habitual drunkenness and immoral conduct, there was gross incompetence within the staff, and one inmate died through ill treatment. The system had to change. The

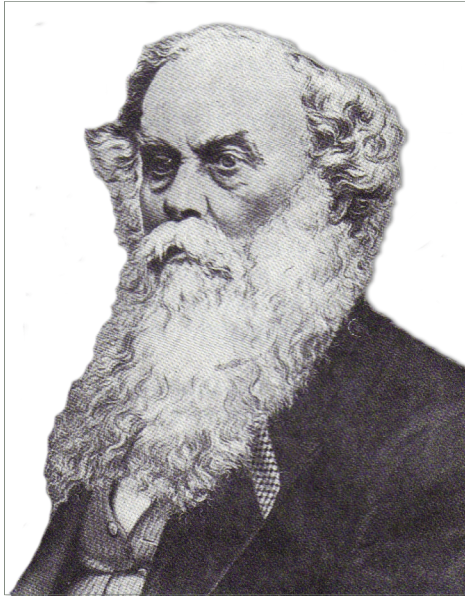


Illustration 1: Sir Titus Salt, founder of the Saltaire Almshouses

1834 Poor Law Amendment Act took the responsibility for the poor away from local parishes and placed it under the control of local Boards of Guardians. Parishes were grouped to form Unions, and for Shipley this meant combining with 14 other parishes to form the North Bierley Union. The other parishes were Allerton, North Bierley, Calverley with Farsley, Clayton, Cleckheaton, Drighlington, Heaton, Hunsworth, Idle, Pudsey, Thornton, Tong, Wilsden and Wyke; Eccleshill was added later. This particular Union covered an area having a total population of 62,432. A workhouse was built in 1858 at Nab End, Clayton Heights, almost four miles SSW of Shipley, at the top of Great Horton Rd - one of the highest points in the district. The cost of land was a more important consideration than the centrality of its location. Lockwood and Mawson, the architects of Saltaire, designed the workhouse.

The workhouse had accommodation for 250 paupers. It had a general infirmary for the sick, maternity wards, a sanatorium, a nursery, and accommodation outside the grounds for 20 children between the ages of one and four years. It was self-sufficient in food, in that it grew its own

vegetables, kept cattle and had its own water supply. (In 1948, the buildings were adapted, leading to the opening of Thornton View Hospital on the site).

The residents of Saltaire were eligible for this provision if their poverty and level of need warranted it. Jack Reynolds notes in his book "The Great Paternalist", p308, that "there was poverty in the village (Saltaire); for working class life at almost any level was never all that far away from want.

Though Titus Salt was a charitable man and usually made financial gifts to the poor at Christmas time he did not usurp the functions of the Board of Guardians. In 1871 there were said to be nine paupers in the village, and Dr Jones¹ indicated that in 1892 there were more paupers in Saltaire than in a nearby group of back-to-back houses of the superior type."

Provisions in Saltaire

Sir Titus Salt had his own solution to the problem of old age and infirmity in Saltaire, which he addressed locally. He looked back at a long tradition of providing almshouses for the old and sick. Almshouses had their origins as medieval hospitals, which were run as an adjunct to the monastic system. Later, landed gentry built them on their large estates for their infirm workers. In Georgian and Victorian times the tradition was revived, but this time in an urban setting, and many of the new breed of entrepreneurs chose this as a way of displaying their philanthropic ideals. Sir Titus had already conceived of making

1. Dr H. Jones was a Shipley medical officer, who in 1893 investigated housing and health issues in both Saltaire and Shipley.



Illustration 2: Bradford Tradesmen's Homes, courtesy of Bradford Tradesmen's Homes

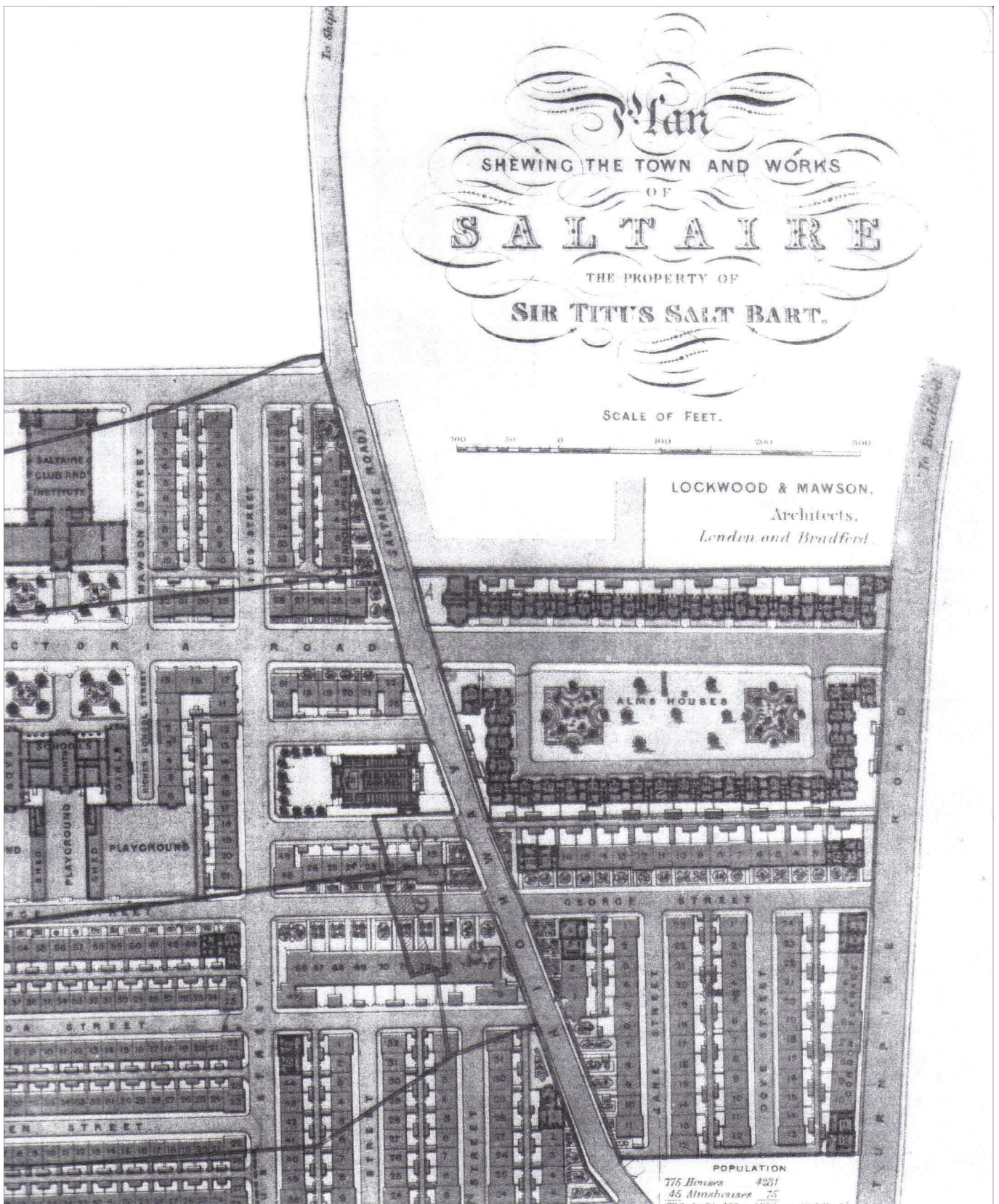
provision for the elderly through his financial support for the Bradford Tradesmen's Homes² at Lily Croft, Manningham. Then, in 1868, Sir Titus built 45 almshouses in Alexandra Square, Victoria Rd, the work being completed on 23rd September. They have an Italianate style of architecture similar to the rest of the village, but with Gothic overtones. The stone is beautifully sculpted (although sand blasting in 1971 damaged some of the detail). The majority of the almshouses are single-storeyed; some have upper rooms which add variety to the roof line but such rooms were designed not as bedrooms but as store rooms. Living accommodation was modestly sized; each house had its own oven, boiler and pantry, with a single bedroom on the ground floor. There are stone tablets in two of the porches recording the names of early residents, and a testament to the healthy environment prevailing in Saltaire. Their inscriptions note "Here the wicked cease from troubling and the weary be at rest" (see illustration 5) and "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord." One of the almshouses was used as a chapel (currently No 29), and could accommodate 70 people. It was formally opened for divine worship on 21st June, 1870. The adaptation to a chapel led to a reduction in the number of

available almshouses from 45 to 44. The almshouses are built conveniently close to Salts Hospital, and look out over attractive gardens which were originally maintained by the Mill gardeners. Accounts are available of homely celebrations at the almshouses attended by members of the Salt family (see *Balgarnie's Salt*, by Barlo and Shaw, p114; also an issue of the *Saltire Magazine* of the period).

Sir Titus was very generous towards elderly and infirm employees when they were no longer able to work in his Mill. Abraham Holroyd, poet, author, bookseller and antiquary, published his book "Saltire and its Founder" in 1871, and included in it a copy of the regulations of the almshouses which demonstrate this generosity and which are reproduced here:-

2. The Bradford Tradesmen's Homes charity was inaugurated in 1865 "with the object of erecting and maintaining at least 30 dwellings for elderly tradesmen and others who had at one time occupied a good position in society, but through financial reverses in life were no longer able to support themselves by their own resources. The houses to be provided were to be tenanted, free of rent, rates and taxes, by pensioners of the Tradesmen's Benevolent Society, and others." They were completed and occupied by the early part of 1870 (see *Balgarnie's Salt*, by Barlo and Shaw, p325).

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*Illustration 3: Plan of Saltaire Almshouses circa 1870,
courtesy of Shipley College Resource Centre*



Illustration 4: Early postcard image of Saltire Almshouses on west side of Victoria Rd (showing now demolished Saltire Methodist Chapel in background)

- “1. - The occupants of the almshouses may be either men or women, and either single, married or widowed.
2. - The almshouses will, so far as the occupants are concerned, be free from rents and taxes, and the obligation to make repairs other than such as may be rendered necessary by the wilful act of any occupant, will rest alone upon the founder and his trustees.
3. - Each married almsman residing with his wife in one of the almshouses shall receive a weekly allowance of ten shillings; and each almsman or almswoman living there without a wife or husband, shall receive a weekly allowance of seven shillings and sixpence, which allowances will be paid weekly.
4. - No person shall be appointed or chosen to be an occupant of one of the almshouses unless he or she be a person of good character, destitute of

- property, or other means sufficient for his or her support, and incapacitated for labour by reason of age, disease, or infirmity so as to be unable to earn his or her own living.
5. - The almspeople will be appointed by the founder during his life, and after his death by the trustees for the time being.
6. - Any applicant for the nomination of election shall send to the founder during his lifetime, and after his decease to the trustees, an application in writing, stating his or her name, age, occupation, and place or places of residence during one year preceding such application, also a written statement of the applicant's circumstances as regards means of livelihood, and a certificate in writing of the truth of the facts set forth in such a document, and of the personal probity and fitness of the applicant from some minister of the Gospel, or from two creditable householders who shall be

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HERE THE WICKED CEASE FROM TROUBLING
AND THE WEARY BE AT REST
IN
MEMORY
OF

JOB. 3. 17.

1868.	Admitted to Almshouses.	Died	Age
Sarah Leach.	Nov ^r 20 th 1868.	Dec ^r 15 th	78.
1869.			
James Steward.	Jan ^r 1 st 1869.	Feb ^r 7 th	67.
Agnes Airey.	Nov ^r 20 th 1868.	April 16 th	42.
Thomas Parkinson	Nov ^r 8 th 1869.	June 30 th	51.
Lydia Butterfield	Dec ^r 11 th 1868.	Dec ^r 15 th	77.
1870.			
Harriet Bates.	Nov ^r 27 th 1868.	Jan ^r 26 th	70.
Robert Brown.	Nov ^r 24 th 1868.	Feb ^r 27 th	80.
Ann Nuttall.	Nov ^r 20 th 1868.	March 12 th	75.
Abraham Wildman	Jan ^r 25 th 1869.	March 19 th	67.
Samuel Shackleton	Dec ^r 31 st 1868.	March 30 th	67.
1871.			
Sarah Bland.	Jan ^r 8 th 1869.	Jan ^r 26 th	66.
Margaret Fortune.	Nov ^r 20 th 1868.	Feb ^r 9 th	69.
Ann Fisher.	Feb ^r 11 th 1869.	March 28 th	67.
Jonathan Brakes.	Nov ^r 26 th 1868.	Sept ^r 18 th	79.
Sarah Horsfield.	Dec ^r 24 th 1868.	Nov ^r 28 th	78.
Thomas Hartop.	Jan ^r 8 th 1871.	Dec ^r 23 rd	67.
1872.			
Elizabeth Dunckley.	Dec ^r 24 th 1868.	March 23 rd	74.
Jane Jowett.	Dec ^r 24 th 1868.	April 7 th	76.
Ruth Roebuck.	Feb ^r 10 th 1869.	June 30 th	74.
Thomas Jowett.	Dec ^r 21 st 1868.	Oct ^r 30 th	76.
1873.			
David Fortune.	Nov ^r 20 th 1868.	April 25 th	74.
Joseph Dunckley.	Dec ^r 24 th 1868.	Sept ^r 18 th	75.
Miriam Yates.	Nov ^r 20 th 1868.	Oct ^r 27 th	75.
1874.			
Mary Wilson.	Sept ^r 26 th 1869.	Jan ^r 26 th	71.
Mary Leach.	Dec ^r 28 th 1870.	Nov ^r 11 th	72.
1875.			
Mary Beldon.	Jan ^r 2 nd 1869.	Feb ^r 18 th	72.
Ann Dean.	Dec ^r 10 th 1871.	June 14 th	65.
Mabel Parkinson.	April 21 st 1869.	June 25 th	54.

Illustration 5: One of the two stone memorial tablets located in porches of Saltaire Almshouses, courtesy of P & P Reynolds

known to the founder, or after his death to the trustees, and who shall have known such applicant for at least five years; also a certificate in writing from a duly qualified medical man (who shall be the applicant's own medical attendant, if he or she have any) of his or her incapacity for labour, and the cause of such incapacity. If the applicant be married, the fact must be stated in the application, and the like information and certificates as before mentioned must be furnished as to the wife or husband, or satisfactory reasons assigned why the same are not furnished, which reasons must be vouched by a minister or two householders as hereinbefore provided in regard to the applicant's own fitness.

7. - Before any person shall be admitted an inmate of any of the almshouses, he or she shall sign a paper, in such form as shall be prescribed, by which he or she shall undertake to quit and give up the house to be occupied by him or her whenever required to do so by the founder or the trustees; to abide by and observe all the regulations now made or hereafter to be made in regard to the occupation of the almshouses, and the conduct of the inmates thereof.

8. - In the event of any inmate of the said almshouses leaving a widow at his death, such widow shall, if she give notice in writing of her desire to continue to reside in the said almshouses, be considered an applicant, and may be nominated or elected to be an almswoman, if judged a proper object of the charity, without any further compliance with the preceding rules for application for admission.

9. - Each house is to be kept clean by or at the expense of the occupant, and any damage to any of the houses, fixtures, or furniture, must be made good by the occupant, or otherwise the cost thereof will be deducted from the weekly allowance thereafter to become due to each occupant. The founder or

his trustees will make a periodical inspection of the almshouses for the purpose of ascertaining that this rule is observed.

10. – None of the inmates of the almshouses shall underlet the tenement assigned to him or her or any part thereof, or take any person to lodge or reside therein, without the written permission of the founder, or of the trustees, or of some two of such trustees first

obtained; nor shall any such inmate take in washing, or carry on any trade or business of any kind, nor shall any of the inmates absent themselves from the almshouses for a period exceeding forty-eight hours without the like written consent, and then only for such time as shall be thereby authorised.

11. – The Garden in the Square opposite the houses will be under the charge of the founder, and after his death of the trustees, and it will be the duty of each occupant to protect the property therein from injury. The chimneys will be swept at the expense of the founder or trustees.

12. – No clothes are to be hung out to dry in front of any of the houses.

13. – If any inmate of the almshouses shall at any time after his or her election marry, or wilfully disobey or infringe any of these regulations, or any of the rules of the Institution, or if it shall at any time appear that any inmate, or the wife of any inmate, is guilty of insobriety, or immoral or other improper conduct, or from alteration in his or her circumstances shall have ceased to be a proper

object of such a charitable Institution, the founder or trustees will, upon proof thereof to his or their satisfaction, displace and remove any such person, and the decision of the founder or trustees shall be final on any matter arising out of or bearing upon this clause.

14. – The founder during his life, and the trustees after his death, will have the power to alter, modify, add to or expunge these regulations from time to

time at their discretion, in order the better to carry out the intentions of the founder and increase the utility of the Charity.”

It should be noted that there is a marked similarity between the provisions in *Saltire* and those almshouses built by Salt’s friends the Crossley family in Halifax. Sir Francis Crossley built almshouses for Halifax residents in 1855. He allowed £500 per annum to meet running costs and to provide a small income for residents. His brother Joseph built a larger development in Arden Rd, Halifax, where 48 almshouses were constructed between 1863 and 1870. He gave residents a weekly pension of ten shillings per week for a married couple and seven shillings for a single person. These latter properties are now managed as a sheltered housing scheme, retaining essentially their original purpose.

Like Francis Crossley, Titus Salt took a personal interest in admissions to the almshouses, as an account of the life of Abraham Wildman, politician



Illustration 6: The Joseph Crossley Almshouses, Halifax, courtesy of Dave Shaw

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Illustration 7: Early postcard image of Victoria Rd, showing Saltaire Almshouses on east side of road

and Saltaire pensioner shows. Born in 1803, Wildman was a man of modest means who was passionately involved in the campaign for shorter hours for workers in factories and mills. He was responsible for drawing up petitions to this end to both Houses of Parliament. More locally, he was the first relieving officer for the Keighley Board of Governors under the new Poor Law. Unfortunately his private life was full of tragedy. His daughter was crippled in a mill accident, his son went to Australia (never to be heard from again), and his wife died soon afterwards. His own health was not good. Fortunately he was also a poet, and Abraham Holroyd, who had a shop at No 79, Victoria Rd, preserved some of his work. Holroyd became aware of Wildman's reduced circumstances, and approached Salt on his behalf. Titus offered Wildman and his daughter one of the almshouses in 1868, making him one of the early tenants. Given that Salt never supported legislation for shorter hours in mills, this was perhaps a surprising offer. Sadly, Wildman

suffered with paralysis which led to his death in 1870 (see "The Poets of Bingley, Haworth and District" edited by Charles Forshaw, published by Thornton and Pearson, 1891).

Following Wildman's death, his daughter Alice continued to live in the almshouse. The 1881 census lists Alice as an unmarried weaver aged 31 years, living at No 19 Almshouses with her two nieces, Fanny and Mary (both aged 17 years), who worked in Salts Mill as a spinner and a weaver respectively.

During his lifetime, Sir Titus formally retained his role in the ownership and management of the almshouses, although other arrangements were considered. Years later, on 6th May, 1887, the Wharfedale and Airedale Observer notes that "during his lifetime Sir Titus Salt had repeatedly considered provisions of a scheme for the permanent endowment of the almshouses as a "Charity". Having carried them on for some years, however, he hesitated to put his original intention

into effect, and his death intervened before any scheme was matured.”

Sir Titus died in 1876, bequeathing in his will the almshouses to his widow, Lady Caroline Salt, and Titus Jr “for their own absolute use and benefit, as joint tenants and not as tenants in common.”

The will also directed that they were to receive a “Legacy of £30,000, to be invested as a permanent fund, the income whereof is to be applied annually ... for the benefit of the sick and aged poor, for the time being residing in Saltaire aforesaid, or within three miles from the Saltaire Institute”. The will makes no explicit provision for the maintenance costs of the almshouses. In 1878,

Lady Caroline and her two unmarried daughters Helen and Ada, left the area to live in Clapham, London.

Problems

Subsequent to the successful establishment of the almshouses in 1868, their ongoing management was to prove problematic. A document dated July, 1877 (courtesy of West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford - Ref. BBD1/1/10B/1) details some of the difficulties. There were problems with admissions, and managers had difficulty in determining the

financial status of applicants – the poorer the applicant, the greater the likelihood of admission, and so perhaps not all assets would be declared. Relatives were equally devious in leaving their dependents destitute, rather than caring for them

(“an indifference to filial duty in the hope of obtaining charity”). Relatives also failed to take residents out of the almshouses when they could obviously afford to do so – when, for example, they employed servants in their own homes. And finally, almshouse residents began to open their houses to solicit money from the “crowds of excursionists” who visited Saltaire at weekends and holidays.

A more serious problem was that while residents were expected to be able to

care for themselves, in reality some single residents (especially men) were unable to do so. At first the management hoped that other residents would help in nursing and caring for their fellows. But they concluded that “the habit of activity and thought for others is lost, and the leisure of not a few is spent in gossiping and grumbling.” An experiment was devised for bedridden or incapable residents to be accommodated at the nearby hospital under the care of the Matron, but it was soon obvious that this was impractical. Several cases of insanity, several of drunkenness, and one of theft, led to



Illustration 8: Titus Salt Jr

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the abandonment of the experiment.

A Revised Role

Not to be deterred, the management considered creative solutions to such problems. For example, weekly allowances might be paid (for a limited period) to the deserving poor to live with relatives or friends. Subscriptions might be paid to Convalescence Homes (in Scarborough, Buxton, Harrogate, Ilkley and Cookridge) to accommodate residents following illness. On site, with residents remaining in the almshouses, two or more sick nurses might be employed to care for them. These ideas were drawn up in a Code of Suggestions by Titus Jr, and submitted to a meeting of 40 people on 21st November, 1877. It was at this meeting that Titus Jr gave the first indication that “a part only of the almshouse buildings be retained as almshouses, the remainder being let off as ordinary dwelling houses and the rents be devoted to the general fund of the Salt Schools.” As a result of this latter proposal, the 17 houses on the east side of Victoria Rd were let to other tenants (see below).

Titus Jr acted quickly on the Code of Suggestions. By 1879, two nurses had been appointed to cottage homes in the Shipley and Saltaire districts, and 22 people were receiving weekly allowances as out-pensioners residing with friends. Hospital minute books also note that subscriptions were made to Convalescence Homes (as above) on a regular basis.

Examination of census returns reveals the gender, age and marital status of the almshouse residents in 1871 and 1881. [Census analysis is complicated by changes in numbering of the houses on Victoria Rd. In 1871 the almshouse area had the designation of ‘Alexandra Square’, and was numbered separately from Victoria Rd (ie Nos 1 to 44, Almshouses). In 1880 the houses on the east side of the Square were readdressed as ‘Victoria Rd’, while the rest of the Square retained

its 1871 address, and its houses retained the description ‘Almshouses’. The houses with Victoria Rd addresses housed ordinary workers from the Mill. The present-day system of numbering, with all the properties being numbered as being in Victoria Rd, has been in place since 1900 (personal communication, with thanks, from Christopher and Paul Earland who researched this for their privately published account of the Post Offices of Saltaire)].

In 1871, 31 of the 44 almshouses housed widows, the small majority being sole occupants, but almost half having dependants living with them. The dependants were either children or grandchildren, or (in three cases) were female lodgers of similar age. The youngest widow was Susan Cooper (28), housed at No 12, with her sons James, aged six, and Arthur, aged three. Five almshouses housed unmarried women, the youngest being 49, and all five being pensioners. Only three, elderly widowers are housed. The remaining elderly men in the almshouses lived with their wives (just five families). Excluding Susan Cooper, the ages of the heads of households ranged between 49 and 86 years, with the majority in their late 60s and 70s.

By 1881, the occupancy profile was quite different to that of 1871, with only 26 properties identified in the census as almshouses (ie excluded are the cottages on the east side of Victoria Rd). Of these 26, four were unoccupied, seven housed elderly widows, three elderly spinsters, four elderly retired couples, seven young families and finally Alice Wildman and her nieces. Workers were present in all the young families.

A supplement to the Wharfedale and Airedale Observer and Ilkley Free Press on 6th May, 1887, confirms the revised provisions associated with the almshouses. It states that “After the almshouses had been managed on the pensioned-tenant system for a number of years, it was



Illustration 9: Salts Hospital, with the third storey expansion of 1908 clearly visible

decided for various reasons to alter the arrangement. One of the leading causes of this decision was the fact that many of the inmates became too old to care for themselves. In several cases, nurses had to be appointed to attend to them, and two or three instances occurred of the inmates being found dead in bed when their houses were entered in the morning.” The article also mentions pensioners being neglected by their families. It goes on “Taking all the facts into consideration, Mr Titus Salt (ie Titus Jr) decided not to settle the buildings permanently as almshouses, and in recent years his policy has been to let the houses as ordinary cottages when the pensioners died, and to devote the income received from this source to the Governors of the Salt Schools for educational purposes. Few of the houses are now occupied solely by pensioners, but the managers continue to give pensions to old people living either at their own homes or with friends.” It continues that “In the administration of the fund every effort has been made to secure that the beneficiaries should not be pauperised.

We understand that Mr Salt’s greatest difficulty has been in this direction. The princely method of celebrating Her Majesty’s Jubilee by the gift of these handsome almshouses to the public of Shipley, as represented through the Shipley School Board by the Governors of the Salt Schools is a particularly graceful one, for it crowns with completion one of the noblest tasks which the late baronet set himself, and suggests that generosity is an inherent quality of the Salt family.”

Hospital Expansion

Developments at Salts Hospital, which adjoined the almshouses in Victoria Rd at their northern end, also had an effect on the number of almshouses. When it opened in 1868, the hospital was a two-storeyed building with six in-patient beds. Originally conceived as a dispensary and casualty ward for victims of accidents at the Mill, for many years it treated only those people who lived within three miles of the Saltaire Institute and had been connected with Saltaire or worked at Salts Mill. By the turn of the century these

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criteria had been changed and anyone living within three miles of Saltaire was eligible to be treated there. As a result the original structure was too small. Rebuilding on a different site was considered but discounted as too expensive and not within the original terms of the hospital's founding. Eventually, in 1908, a third storey was added and adjacent buildings were incorporated. An operating

theatre was installed, plus an electric lift, and accommodation was increased from nine to 17 beds. It re-opened in 1909. Further extension occurred following the purchase in August, 1923 of cottages Nos 65 and 66 (information courtesy of Bradford Council Conveyancing Section – Deed 21559). These cottages were rebuilt, heightened and used to accommodate eight more patients, staff and a new X-ray unit. The new extension opened in 1926.

New Ownership

In 1887, the almshouses (including those on the east side of Victoria Rd), were donated to the Governors of the Salt Schools (as trustees for the inhabitants of Shipley), as a Jubilee gift from the Dowager Lady Salt and Titus Jr. The Governors took over responsibility for administration and maintenance of both the almshouses and the legacy (see above). The reason why such a gift was made is not entirely clear. Titus Jr had been heavily involved in organising the Royal Yorkshire Jubilee Exhibition of 1887, which was planned as a testimony to his father, and was designed to raise funds for new accommodation for the Saltaire Schools of Science and Art. The venture failed to fully raise the required funds, and perhaps he felt that this gift compensated the Governors for the shortfall. Titus Jr was also engaged in investments in America, and was



Illustration 10: Sir James Roberts

actively involved in running the Mill, and perhaps these combined pressures contributed to his sudden death, from a heart attack, in November, 1887, a month after the exhibition closed.

A Dispute

The issue of the revised use of the almshouses was to resurface in later correspondence between Edward Salt and James

Roberts, in 1903. Edward Salt comments that “these cottages ceased to be almshouses when they were presented to the Salt Schools for educational purposes by my mother and my brother Titus, to whom they were bequeathed absolutely by the testator. They ceased to be used as almshouses some years before the transfer, as it was found from experience that almshouses are very unwieldy when old folks get so decrepit that a matron had to visit many of them daily to get them out of bed and dress and feed them, an experience which has caused many almshouses throughout the country to be let off to paying tenants and the proceeds applied to maintaining the old folks at the home of their relations.” He later refers again to “these so-called almshouses” and repeats that “these are not almshouses”.

This later correspondence arose in a dispute between Roberts and the School Governors in 1903, the origins of which can be related to developments occurring at the turn of the century. On 29th December, 1900, under a banner heading “Municipalisation of Salts Schools Proposed”, the Shipley Times and Express reported that Shipley UDC would assume responsibility for the Salt Schools buildings, “including 43 messuages or dwelling houses with the gardens and appurtenances thereto belonging and formerly known as Alexandra Square at Saltaire aforesaid. In addition, the debt of £6,500

at present existing on the Trust would be defrayed by the Council (ShIPLEY UDC)". On 1st January, 1902, ShIPLEY UDC (plus the School Board, the West Riding County Council, and the London Clothmakers Company) finally assumed that responsibility.

In the same newspaper just one year later, in January, 1903, there was a series of letters between James Roberts and the Governors of the Salt Schools. At this time Roberts was in sole charge at the Mill, and in many ways had assumed the role of philanthropist and benefactor which had been vacated by Sir Titus 27 years earlier. He is perhaps best known for his gift of Saltaire Park (later Roberts Park) to Bradford Corporation in 1920 (not, it is to be noted, to ShIPLEY UDC).

In December, 1902, Roberts had made an offer to the Governors to buy the almshouses and to make them available to "the worthy aged of Saltaire" rent free - as had been the case when Sir Titus was alive. Such a purchase would have provided the Governors with funds which would have yielded investment income that would compensate them for the loss of rental income. Roberts wanted to then personally allocate the almshouses to elderly Salts workers, at the same time releasing properties in the village for the use of current workers. The Governors were being asked to make a decision which would then have to be approved by ShIPLEY UDC, the Board of Education and the Charity Commissioners, prior to the sale being finalised.

The sticking points for the Governors were that they wanted the almshouses to be let to anyone living within a three mile radius of Saltaire, and they wanted to appoint a committee to oversee the allocations. The correspondence became increasingly acrimonious, and the Governors turned down his generous cash offer. It is remarkable that the correspondence was made public through the local press, but the ShIPLEY Times did not identify its sources; it would appear

that the only person who had access to all the correspondence in question was Roberts himself. James Roberts was later to be elected to, and become chairman of, ShIPLEY UDC, and later still would become involved in another disagreement with it - this time involving Saltaire Park.

A Century of Provision

For more than 100 years following the above events the majority of the almshouses have fulfilled their original purpose of providing shelter for the aged and infirm. In 2009, the majority of the almshouses are still council-owned (that council being, since April, 1974, Bradford Metropolitan District Council) and administered by ShIPLEY Community Housing Trust (since February, 2002). They are the only dwellings in the village to be managed in this way. In 1933, the other houses in the village were sold by Salts (Saltaire) Ltd to the Bradford Property Trust Ltd in order to raise money to upgrade machinery at the Mill. The almshouses were not included in this transaction.

In 2009, of the original 45 almshouses, 41 remain (ie Nos 24 to 49, and 50 to 64). Four of these are now privately owned, but the remainder are run by the Trust - a registered social landlord which manages the cottages accordingly. There are no young families housed in the Council properties. The larger cottages are let to families with teenagers, while the remaining properties (effectively bungalows) are let, in the main, to tenants with mobility and disability problems. The predominant age group is 55+. Sir Titus would have approved of such socially responsible administration.

Postscript

The almshouses continue to present issues for both residents and Bradford Council. In 2008, the writer reported on a current dilemma, for the readers of the *Saltaire Sentinel*, (the free, monthly local community newsletter); the two reports (from February and December issues) are reproduced

THE HISTORY OF THE SALTAIRE ALMSHOUSES

By Roger Clarke

below for the benefit of Journal readers.

“Parking at the Almshouses

It is almost inevitable that whatever problems are faced by the Council in Saltaire, there will always be a conflict between the needs of the current population and the need to conserve the past. Both are important and both are the legitimate concerns of the Council. The interesting thing is how the conflicts are resolved.

In this context, I became very interested when I heard about a problem which has surfaced recently.

The current population of the almshouses need to park their cars close to their houses. Most motorists take this for granted for convenience and security, but the residents have an additional reason. Many of them have been housed here by the Shipley Community Housing Trust because the houses are single storey bungalows, ideal for tenants with mobility problems. They need their cars nearby to function effectively in their everyday lives. The cars are a necessity and not just a luxury. The problem is that the paths within the almshouses complex were designed for pedestrians. They are narrow and bordered on one side by grass. Parked cars have begun to turn the verges into an unsightly quagmire, which neither the Council nor the tenants want to happen. Both are proud of this attractive environment in Alexandra Square, but a purely functional solution to the problem might not satisfy the Conservation Department who are responsible for protecting this World Heritage Site.

I understand that the first step was encouraging. A meeting was held in November, 2007 to hear the concerns of residents at first hand, immediately emphasising that they are party to open discussion and debate of the issues.

Conflicting interests were aired, but there was no immediate solution evident. The most sensible thing was to find out all the facts of the case and state them as clearly as possible. A survey is to be carried out and the results discussed. The most appropriate forum for this discussion has not yet been indicated – the Saltaire Project Team, a further meeting with residents or some other arrangement.

Let’s hope that the process will continue to be as transparent and open as it has been to date, that anxious residents are kept informed of progress, and that a solution be found which satisfies the able bodied and disabled residents as well as both departments of the Council.”

And in the second report:

“In February, 2008, your Sentinel reported on problems with car parking at the almshouses at the top of Victoria Road. Shipley Community Housing Trust (Incommunities) and the Conservation Department of the Council had a difficult problem to balance the needs of the residents with the requirements of Saltaire as a World Heritage Site. An inconclusive meeting in November, 2007, has been followed by further information gathering from residents. They were asked to complete a questionnaire to identify the most needy in terms of access to their cars. The Conservation Department stated that they will look at the possibility of disabled parking bays for residents with a need i.e. disabled badge holders.

Given that there is too much demand for limited resources, the Council should be complimented in its open and transparent approach to the problem. Not all residents will be able to have exactly what they want, but cannot complain that the Council and Incommunities have failed to involve them.



Illustration 11: The Saltaire Almshouses, June 2008, courtesy of P & P Reynolds

There may yet be other ways to satisfy demand, and the Council have accepted that in the interim visitors can still use the access path to pick up and set down when required.

The process continues, and the Sentinel will keep readers informed of progress.”

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Roger Clarke

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.saltairvillage.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.

BOOK REVIEW

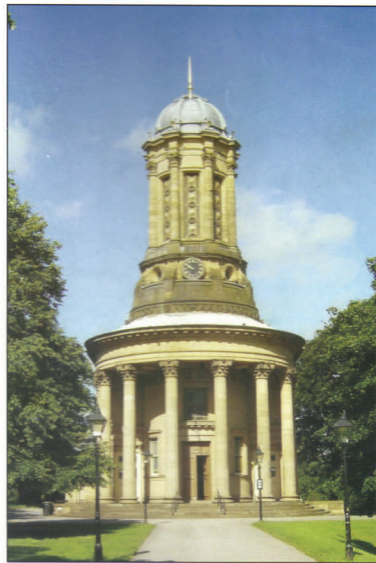
This book is a highly recommended read and has been produced to mark 150 years of worship and fellowship at Saltaire Church. In architectural terms, the Church is the jewel in the crown of the World Heritage Site, but the book is rightly at pains to emphasise that the Church is not defined as a mere building – it is a community of worshippers proclaiming the Christian faith.

At the close of each 50-year period of its existence, the Church has previously produced booklets to mark the event – the first in 1907, the second in 1957. This latest account, then, follows an established pattern, but with a stronger emphasis than its predecessors on the social congregation of the Church, rather than merely the building, and objective recording of its functions.

The first pages recall the early days - gatherings of Nonconformist Christians in Saltaire when most of the village was yet to be built. From early in 1854, worshippers would gather in a (newly-built) house on the corner of Albert Terrace and George St. They soon moved to a house at No 10, Caroline St, on the corner with Amelia St. Within a short time the congregation had moved to the Dining Hall in Victoria Rd, whence it moved, in due course, to its current, magnificent premises. The foundation stone of the new Church was laid by Mrs Caroline Salt on 27th September, 1856. The location of the stone, and the time-capsule documents that were placed beneath it, is a present-day mystery. Seventeen years after the Church's formal opening, the purpose-built Sunday Schools were opened on the other side of Victoria Rd. The book contains brief summaries of the ministers who served the Congregation in its first 50 years.

The second 50 years are recalled through accounts of the Congregation's major activities – its pattern of Church meetings, and other activities such as the Young Worshippers Class, and the grand three-day Church Bazaars (so much a tradition of Christian fellowship in those days). It also recalls the two World Wars fought in this period, and how the Sunday Schools, in the second of those wars, were requisitioned to serve as an emergency hospital in case of air raids, displacing the Sunday School gatherings to the rooms below the Church. As the Saltaire Church approached its centenary in 1957, it was already evident that the preceding 50 years had brought about fundamental changes in society, as churches ceased to

Saltaire United Reformed Church



150 Years Anniversary 2009
Church History

play as central a role as they had done in Victorian and Edwardian times. The remaining two-thirds of the book looks back over the last 50 years, with reflections on how those changes led to the need to radically adapt to new situations. The Sunday Schools were closed in 1968, and subsequently demolished. The development of tourism impacted in a practical way on the Congregation, as visitors with no spiritual attachment to their Church began to wander its aisles. More fundamentally, in 1972 the Congregational Union of Churches and the Presbyterian Church in England united to form the United Reformed Church. Two separate Acts of Parliament had to be enacted to bring about this union.

The writer takes the reader through an account of the numerous comings and goings in the Church's life over the last 50 years, from cricket teams fighting a losing battle with cow-flap and poor performances, to visits from Royalty. What strikes the reader is that, amid all the comings and goings, there is a huge sense of continuity in the Church's fellowship. Many of its stalwarts have had a life-time commitment to Saltaire Church, and such commitment brings a stability that is rare in today's society. The village without Saltaire United Reformed Church and its Congregation would be a far lesser and poorer place than it is.

DAVE SHAW

Author:	Valerie Jenkins
Price:	£3.50
Size:	H: 210mm W: 148mm
Pages:	64
Illustrations:	32 (approx) black and white photos and illustrations
Publication date:	April, 2009
The book is available at the United Reformed Church, Victoria Road, Saltaire, West Yorkshire, BD18 3LF. The Church is normally open every Sunday afternoon. From Easter to the end of September the church is opened daily by volunteers, subject to their availability, every afternoon from 2:00 p.m. until 4:00 p.m. Email: thesecretary@saltaireurc.org.uk	

SNIPPETS . . .

Edison's Phonograph at Victoria Hall



An early photo of Salts Band

Early in 2009, the brass band formerly known as the YBS (Yorkshire Building Society) Band changed its name to the Hammonds Saltaire Band, a name that reflects its history and origins. The Band has an impressive pedigree, with an unbroken sequence of 73 years under various names, and roots going back more than 150 years to when, in 1855, a brass band was formed at Salts Mill. While its recordings and broadcasts are well-known in the 21st century, the band's earliest recording venture took place almost 120 years ago, as a report in the Shipley Times and Express reveals...

“On 27th December, 1890, Mr William Lyrd gave a lecture and demonstration of this phonograph at Victoria Hall, Saltaire. He described how sound could be captured on wax cylinders, to be replayed at any time. He demonstrated with the repeated sounds of a coach horn – and then with a bassoon solo, the low notes of which caused much amusement amongst the audience. Two songs were then recorded, followed by the entire Saltaire Brass Band on stage playing a selection of tunes. All were then replayed to an astonished audience.

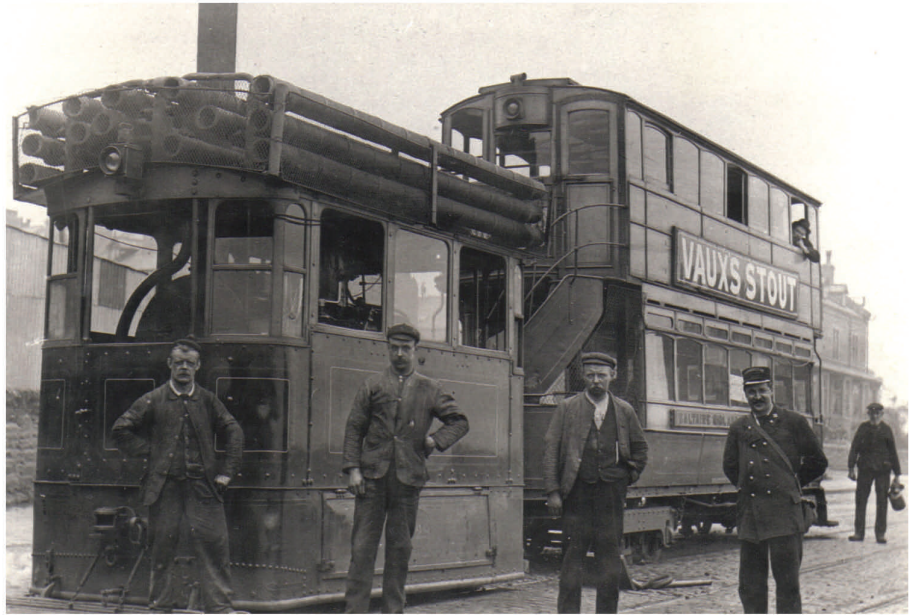
Mr Lyrd described the many uses for the device. Businessmen could record letters for their clerks to transcribe. Lovers could record a kiss or a sigh (which he demonstrated to the audience's delight). And finally, the phonograph could make dead men speak, noting that the poet Browning had made such a recording of his work before he died. ”

Let's hope we have the opportunity to see and hear this magnificent Band back in concert at the Victoria Hall before too long.

SNIPPETS . . .

George Salt's Steam Attraction

George Salt, the second son of Sir Titus and Lady Caroline Salt, had a deep interest in, and knowledge of, steam engines. Being just 20 years old when his father opened the Mill at Saltaire, it seems likely that George spent virtually all his working life at the Mill, before retiring at a relatively early age in the 1880s. He reportedly had an early influence on the choice of machinery at the Mill – it is thought that, even when the Mill first opened, economisers fitted to the boilers had been introduced at the suggestion of George*.



*Early example of steam locomotion in Saltaire -
a doubledecker steam tram*

In 1867, through the pages of the *Engineering* journal, he reportedly showed an admirable grasp of issues surrounding high pressure steam systems, and played a major part in the decision to install Corliss valves in the New Mill development, on the north side of the canal in Saltaire. He went on to design a vertical boiler described in the same journal the following year – a testimony to his inventive enthusiasm.

George seems to have had an aptitude for everything mechanical. An authority on timepieces, he also became an enthusiastic sailor and owned his own yacht, the "Oithona", which was sometimes moored at Scarborough, and later in the south of the country.

His interests in novel engineering systems were not limited to the Mill. From the *Bradford Observer* of 18th July, 1861, we learn that George (then 28) exhibited, at a display of steam-driven machinery, a steam carriage that he had acquired. The comments of the reporter were that "It was constructed for Mr Salt by Messrs Carret, Marshall and Co. of Leeds. It has accommodation for 9 to 12 passengers. There is much ingenuity displayed in the design, but we question whether it is adapted for moving along our streets and roads without danger to itself and others".

* An economiser is a device fitted to a boiler to save energy by using the exhaust gases from the boiler to preheat the cold water used to fill it. The suggestion that George played a part in their early introduction, and in the later boiler developments at the Mill, are to be found in an anonymous report on the Mill's boilers held at Bradford Industrial Museum. Attempts are being made to trace the author of the report, which is thought to have been written in the 1970s.

SNIPPETS . . .

TITUS SALT'S EARLY INVESTIGATIONS OF ALPACA FIBRE

The story of how Titus Salt found unwanted bales of alpaca wool in a Liverpool warehouse is one that has been retold many times. Briefly, the well-known account describes how, in the 1830s, Salt gathered up a sample of the unwanted fibre, returned to Bradford, and experimented with methods of spinning the unusual fibre until he had perfected the process. His success was, reportedly, the basis of much of his later fortunes.

Where did this story originate, and why has it become so much a part of the history of Salt and Saltaire? It seems that the first published account of such events was that provided by Charles Dickens in his article "The Great Yorkshire Llama" in *Household Words*, a weekly journal of the 1850s. In the same article, Dickens describes a visit he actually made to Saltaire when the mill was under construction. The story by the popular author clearly caught the public's imagination.

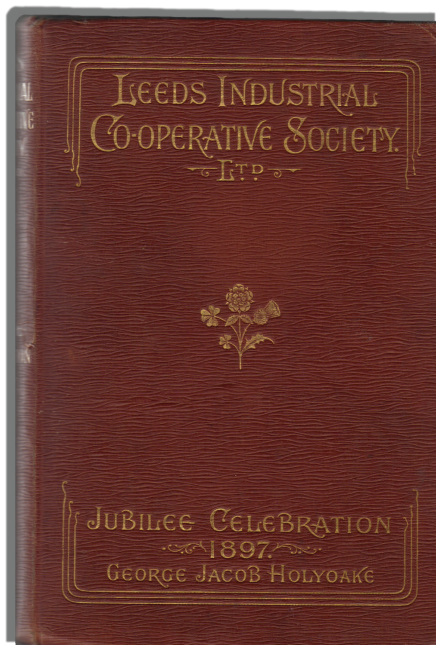
The story was then retold some two decades later by

Abraham Holroyd in his well-known book "Saltaire and its Founder", published in 1873. A further, and more precise, account followed in 1877, when Salt's biographer Robert Balgarnie describes how the basis of the story was undoubtedly fact, "as we can personally verify by statements from Mr Titus Salt's own lips".

The story has also featured in several later, derivative accounts of Salt's life.

But it is clearly not the full story. What, for example, of the concern Salt must have had for the feasibility of dyeing such an unfamiliar fibre? No mention of this is found in written, published accounts of Salt's life, but our attention has recently been drawn to words found in an unexpected quarter on the subject. In a book by George Jacob Holyoake, published in 1897 under the title

"Leeds Industrial Co-operative Society Ltd - Jubilee Celebration", he writes of a Richard Penrose, a leading activist within the Society, with the following words:



Fifty years ago (viz 1847) Leeds had a considerable dyeing trade, and still does a considerable amount of dyeing for Bradford manufacturers. It has often been told how Mr. Titus Salt obtained his first sample of alpaca wool, but it is less known, if known at all, what decided him to make his first purchase. Mr. Penrose was the manager at Croisdale Brothers, well-known dyers in East Leeds, and was on friendly terms with Mr. Salt, who, when he had obtained in Liverpool his first sample of alpaca, brought it to Mr. Penrose and asked him "whether he had ever seen material like it before." Penrose, being struck with the appearance of the fibre, at once said, "Titus, it will either be a penny or a golden collar" (whatever that might mean). Mr. Titus Salt was to call a week hence to learn how the alpaca behaved in the dyeing tub. It took the dye well, and when finished had a brilliant appearance. Mr. Salt duly appeared, and when Mr. Penrose saw him crossing the dye-house he was so anxious to tell him the result that he called out, "It is a gold collar, Titus," which proved a true prediction. Mr. Salt was so astonished at the look of his sample that he never opened his lips, which was probably prudence as well as surprise. He hastily wrapped it up, thrust it into his pocket, actually ran across the yard, went straightway to Liverpool and purchased at his own price the whole of the alpaca wool, stored as useless in the dock warehouse. From this incident rose Saltaire mills, Saltaire town, and the fortunes and title of Sir Titus Salt.

It is gratifying that this 19th century account of Salt's early concerns with the dyeing of alpaca wool has been recalled. Our attention was drawn to Holyoake's account by Keith Williams, architect, project manager, and engineer of the Renaissance Unit, in the Development Department of Leeds City Council, and we record here our appreciation of that.

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.

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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.

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