

1. Connecting the Victorian Era - A Portrait of Leeds

Introduction

A brief study of Leeds provides an insight into the social and economic fabric of the Victorian century, placing a spotlight on the working class districts of Holbeck and Hunslet, hugging the River Aire, and semi-rural Bramley. A returning visitor in 1901 would barely recognise Leeds unless venturing into the slum areas and world of back to backs. No longer a town, Leeds was now a vibrant city. What a transformation!

The Thorseby Society, 'the historical society for Leeds and District' was founded in 1889. It has a long-established library and archive collection and records the population in 1801 as a little over 50,000. This jumped to nearly 430,000 in 1901. Aside from the manufacture of woollens and worsteds, cloth halls began to emerge, especially the magnificent White Cloth Hall behind the Corn Exchange. In a frenzied period of building activity between 1823 and 1829, four other markets were built: the Bazaar, Shambles, South Market and Central Market. All testified to flourishing trade and commerce.

Expansion in the second part of the century was built on the back of a diversified economy. Headrow was the hub that would house the Town Hall, Thornton Buildings, Thornton Arcade and Art Gallery. Along Briggate, running south from Headrow to Leeds Bridge and the River Aire, would be the Empire Palace Theatre and County Arcade & Cross Arcade, completed just before 1900. Nearby was Park Row, oozing prosperity, and home to financial institutions and legal practices that reflected a city no longer dependent only on textiles.

Between a merchant elite and lower orders of the eighteenth century, there had always been craftsmen, shopkeepers and cloth workers, who were artisan middle classes. By the 1830s they comprised a fifth of the population. Some, with greater entrepreneurial abilities, became extremely wealthy, overtaking wool merchants as the leading citizens. With an upper-middle class status they comprised about one twentieth of the population of Leeds.

Benjamin Gott was one, becoming one of Europe's largest employers. Gott's Bean Ing Mill was amongst the first to concentrate all manufacturing processes under one roof. His smaller mill at Armley, to the west, is now Leeds Industrial Museum. Gott contracted Robert Smirke, architect of the British Museum, to design Armley House in the style of a Greek Revival Villa. Set in extensive grounds, and built between 1810 and 1822, Armley housed his extensive and expensive art collection with works by Rubens, Titian and Caravaggio.

Another major employer was John Marshall who built a factory in Holbeck at the turn of the century, employing 2,000 workers. In June 1840, with his son James, he opened Temple Mill, adjacent to the Marshall Mill in aptly named Marshall Street. Covering two acres, this Grade 1 listed flax mill resembled an Egyptian temple, cocking a snoot at Benjamin Gott.

As landowners and developers turned villages into suburbs, so the extremely wealthy moved further north, building mansions at Weetwood, Roundhay and Adel. John Marshall amassed a fortune, estimated at £1.5m - £2.5m. He had a Headingly winter home, summer residence in the Lake District and house in Grosvenor Square, London. Other prestigious houses in Leeds were The Elms, built at Weetwood for banker Henry Oxley and 'Foxhill' in 1862 for the brewer F.W.Tetley.

By the 1840s both banks of the River Aire, a few hundred metres south of the town centre, were lined with factories, including textile mills, engineering works, chemical works, dye-

houses, oil mills, iron forges, print works, corn mills, tanneries and saw mills. Surgeon, Dr Robert Baker, writing in 1858 said of the River Aire: 'it is now nothing but an open sewer, containing the sewerage of Bradford and Shipley, and lastly of all the mills, dye-houses, tanneries and workshops which crowd its western banks'. He was not alone in his views.

Writing in 1841 in the Leeds Intelligencer, Charles Fowler said: "The River Aire is charged with the contents of about 200 water closets and similar places, a great number of common drains, the drainings from dunghills, infirmary (dead leeches, poultices for patients etc), slaughter-houses, chemical soap, gas, dung, dye-houses and manufactories, spent blue and black dye, pig manure, old urine wash, with all sorts of decomposed animal and vegetable substances from an extent of drainage between Armley Mills to the Kings Mill." He added, "amounting to about 30,000,000 gallons per annum of the mass of filth with which the river is loaded."

Bank Mills, a flax mill, used water at a rate of 1,000 gallons/minute or 600,000 gallons a day. The water was then returned to the river which became polluted with the effluent from dye works, mills, tanneries, and ash and cinders from engineering works. The River Pollution Commission of 1867 estimated that 50 dead animals were removed from the river each day. The stench of this detrius was so appalling that windows at Bank Mills were kept firmly shut.

Throughout the century there was a huge increase in 'lower orders' who, depending on family size, would typically pay of 2/- to 4/- in rent, about one fifth of wages that ranged from 11/- to 15/- per week for males. Women were paid far less, and often less than half. Humphrey Boyle, a Leeds shopkeeper, estimated the minimum a family of five could manage on was a shade over £1. This meant the most basic level of subsistence, in a battle of, not so much living, but survival.

There were not enough houses to accommodate the influx. Property speculators, seeing the chance to make money, erected terraces of cheap back-to-back houses, without any proper drainage or sanitation. These crowded narrow streets became the slums of Leeds, drawing criticism from social reformers. In part, the need arose as a result of the factory system that required a huge workforce. Growing rapidly in prosperity, Leeds attracted manufacturers, tradesmen, and shopkeepers, as well as those working in the professions of banking, law, accountancy and architecture, along with subsidiary trades. Gradually, those with means moved to the suburbs.

Factory Life

Woollen cloth had been manufactured in the Leeds area since the 13th century. Expansion of the woollen and worsteds industry came in the 15th and 16th centuries with Leeds specialising in broadcloth. Advantages over other cloth-making centres were the availability of water, the abundance of cheap labour, fulling mills and, crucially, artisan skills such as cloth-dressers and dyers, wealthy merchants and a mass of large clothiers.

Leeds became a finishing centre, a financial centre and major marketplace for raw materials. In 1800, the income of small independent farmer clothiers, employing their families, was just above subsistence level. Slightly larger master clothiers, employing up to a dozen people, worked alongside journeymen. At the top were the manufacturers with up to a dozen looms, employing many outworkers, spinning and weaving at home. The wealthier had a fulling mill too. Most remarkable is survival of all three types of clothier.

Apart from the enormous Gott and Marshall mills, the average mill had only 68 employees in 1835 with one Bramley mill employing just 11 workers. Conversely, Hayley's Waterloo mill

had 91 workers with 473 at Willan in Holbeck. About one in four was employed in textiles. Hours were long. Evidence in 1833 showed that David Bryan, aged 18, averaged 97 hours per week with 16 hours rest, in a period of two months; 113 hours a week in the mill. When machinery stopped, earnings ceased. Children worked hard, often missing their usual half hour break for breakfast and drink in the afternoon to keep up production output. Some mills preferred using sub-contracted piecers, as young as 6 or 7. Their wages "were almost too small to calculate on an hourly basis."

A Factory Commission Report 1833 revealed that, of the total workforce, 60% were under 18. This was more pronounced in flax mills of Holbeck. In 1843, of 2,000 employees at Marshall, about two-thirds were female, rising to 75% by 1847. Just five firms in Leeds owned 53% of spindles and employed 63% of flax workers. Most mills were characterised by harsh regimes and dangerous working conditions, and cruel exploitation of women and especially children, destroying family life and traditional social values.

Separation of family members at mealtimes, poor diets and long hours adversely contributed to the physical and moral welfare of the working classes. In the 1841 census, children made up 42% of the textiles workforce. Well over 50% between the ages of 10 and 19 were in paid employment. In one 1841 census sample, nearly 25% of the workforce was between the ages of 7 and 9. Fines for overworking were trivial, from a guinea per offender in the 1830s to 2 guineas by the 1850s and 1860s.

Factory inspectors were virtually powerless to control and monitor working conditions in the mills. Much like inspection today in the care sector, apart from what is reported, you observe only what you see and hear, in a visit comprising a fraction of a working week, let alone a year. Even where children rested or ate was beyond control. Much food was lost, given pressures of production, and that spoilt from dust was given to overlookers' pigs. Hastily eaten food might be eaten standing up. William Cooper, an employee of Mr Benyon's flax mill, worked from 5:00 am to 9:00 pm with a break of 40 minutes for dinner. Along with William Hebden, James Carpenter, Eliza Marshall and many others they gave testimonies to the Factory Commission.

Cheap unskilled female and child labour was used as a substitute for capital investment. The youngest worked as doffers, piecers and hecklers, working to the whistle of an overlooker "whose cruelty appeared to increase with the volume and speed of machinery." At Marshall, children of both sexes were often strapped for "not looking sharp," with some as young as 8. Spinners and doffers were fined for sitting down, despite heavy and exhausting work that would result in crooked legs and deformed bodies. Dust created breathing problems and it was hardly surprising that older hands developed asthma. For parents, who could afford it, camomile tea was given to young workers so that dust could be coughed up. Apart from ingestion of flying particles of flax they could cause conjunctivitis.

Between half and three-quarters of adult women woollen workers were burlers. Away from noise, the burling house enabled the largely female workforce to exchange news. They were regarded as "the gossips of the community." Factory girls were thought, "the lowest class of the working population" and unskilled labourers "an unfortunate and degraded class, inferior in morals and domestic culture." In 1858, in the flax industry, a male labourer earned 15/- a week, women 6/6p and lads about 5/-. Weavers got 10/- to 15/- and overlookers a guinea.

The giant mills at Holbeck and Hunslet, in these densely populated parts of Leeds, stood out amongst narrow streets of back to backs. Here, well-paid factory hands with skills co-existed

with the poorly paid, most of whom were migrants. Meanwhile, in the semi-rural suburb of Bramley, small clothiers had more in common with weavers and spinners they employed. They were rightly suspicious of mill owners, deliberately over-producing to stifle competition and speculating on prices by building up stocks in a form of hedge fund; "an evil to the community" was one comment.

In Holbeck in 1837, weavers "were not above half-employed." Their plight was desperate. In 1843, between February and March, 9,000 weavers signed a petition complaining about dire working conditions, "wretched in the extreme." Machinery, replacing manual labour, was an evil striking at the "actual existence of the working classes," especially the power loom, "that engine of misery." Outdoor poor relief rose and committees were formed for the "Relief of the Distressed Poor." In Holbeck, a soup kitchen issues flour, meal and potatoes whilst at Bramley several families left for America. Redundant workers were paid 6/- for doing nothing, rather than 7/6p to break stones as a mountain of 150,000 tons of crushed stone lay unused.

Industrial, factory and political reform became inseparable in the local context. In 1832 some Leeds shopkeepers complained of union attempts to coerce shopkeepers into subscribing to union funds to support the struggle against low wages. Their premise was the more workers earned, the more they would spend. Mill owners were accused of bringing sorters, dyers and weavers into their factories on reduced wages with the lure of regular work. They also made spinners redundant by introducing mules, contracting out work at fixed rates and employing even more children and juveniles to keep the wage bill down.

Lower Class Living

Property developers bought large areas of land and put up cheap back-to-back housing which they rented out to the workers. Some terraces were never finished, whilst others were built in open fields. Roads and pavements were narrow as was a tunnel reaching the back halves of the back-to-backs. This saved space, and meant more houses could be built on the site as access roads and pavements brought in no rent. Inside, the houses were cramped, with two rooms, one up, one down, each about 14 feet square. Often there was a cellar, rented out as a one-room dwelling. There was no piped water supply or sewerage system. The 'necessary' or toilet was often a wooden screen around a hole in the ground. Sometimes there weren't even any 'out offices,' or outside toilets. A bucket was emptied into a common midden.

By mid-century many areas where the working class lived had become filthy insanitary slums. There were cholera outbreaks in 1832 and 1839, and Dr Robert Baker showed the disease was most prevalent in working class districts of the town. Dr Baker was a factory inspector too, publishing dreadful conditions under which many people lived. He commented in 1839, 'I have been in one of these damp cellars, without the slightest drainage, every drop of wet and every morsel of dirt and filth having to be carried up into the street; two corded frames for beds, overlaid with sacks for five persons; scarcely anything in the room else to sit on but a stool, or a few bricks; the floor, in many places absolutely wet; a pig in the corner also; and in a street where filth of all kinds had accumulated for years.'

Dr Robert Baker's comments were echoed by inspector, James Smith reporting in 1845. 'By far the most unhealthy localities of Leeds are close squares of houses, or yards, as they are called, which have been erected for the accommodation of working people. Some of these, though situated in comparatively high ground, are airless from the enclosed structure, and being wholly unprovided with any form of under-drainage or convenience, or arrangements for cleansing, are one mass of damp and filth.....The ashes, garbage and filth of all kinds are

thrown from the doors and windows of the houses upon the surface of the streets and courts. The privies are few in proportion to the inhabitants. They are open to view both in front and rear, are invariably in a filthy condition, and often remain without removal of the filth for six months.' Dr Robert Baker previously reported that in 1832, during the cholera epidemic, 75 cartloads of 'soil' were removed from just one privy in the Boot and Shoe Yard.

Despite these and many other criticisms, most districts condemned as insanitary remained as they were until the end of the century - at least. There were some improvements; a water supply and a sewerage system were provided, and by 1901 four fifths of houses had a water closet. The Leeds Improvement Act of 1866 stipulated that back to back houses had to be built in terraces no more than four pairs long. Gated yards with shared water-closets and ash-pits were to be built between them.

The evidence of Eliza Marshall in 1832 to the Factory Commission is harrowing and haunting. It typified the stunted lives of children. "I live near the middle of Bayton Street, Top Close, in a cellar. I pay 1s a week for it. Nobody lives with us. I do nothing. I have no mother. I live with my little sisters. The youngest is going fifteen, and the other is sixteen. I am turned eighteen. My sisters work, one at Rush's, the other at Durham. I have 2s 6d a week from the town."

Eliza was nine when she came to Leeds, living in Meadow Lane and working at Marshalls. She moved to Burgess in Lady Lane, a worsted mill, where she learned to spin on a one-spindle frame. Eliza was paid 3s and then 3/6p working from 6am to 7pm. The firm was taken over by a Mr. Warburton, who, because she was a good worker, picked Eliza to work long hours, from 5am to 9pm. There was no time for breakfast or to stop for a drink. Dinner was thirty minutes. Work stopped at 5pm on Saturdays for an exhausted Eliza.

"I was not lame then. I had my strength very well. I had my health very well, till I took from 5 to 9. My sister was very well too while we worked from 6 to 7. She began to fail too when we began the long hours. I was turned 10 when I began to work from 5 to 9. My sister was 9." Eliza tried to leave Warburton's when her workload was increased. "I was like killed with it: my legs were like to break in two. It was the work and hours together that hurt me and always having to stop the flies with my knee.....It was having to crook my knee to stop the spindle that lamed me as much as anything else."

Eliza's mother found work for her and her sister at Wilkinson, another factory, but Warburton persuaded her to return to work for him. He was a harsh master. 'It was after I came back that he knocked me down. I was very weak, Sir, you know: I was soon knocked down. He came in one Saturday, and was so vexed with me for having left him... It was a common thing for him to beat the hands then....He had not struck me for a long time before, not since I was little. He has strapped me many a time when I was lesser."

Eliza continued, "I took my meals with me, I generally took a bottle of coffee with me for breakfast, and warmed it at top of boiler. Sometimes with milk and sometimes not. For dinner sometimes bread and butter, sometimes cheese and bread or a bit of meat. My mother used to cook it at night, and we warmed it there when we did not go home to dinner. I used to take no coffee at drinking time, only a bit of bread. Sometimes we did not live so well. We mostly had a bit of meat on Sunday and Monday, sometimes on other days."

When she was 11, Eliza started to become lame. By the time she was 17 she was so ill that she could no longer work in the factory. Then, about six months later her mother died, and her stepfather left her, leaving the sisters to fend for themselves. Finding any other work was

almost impossible. Eliza had been to Sunday school, but when she started the long hours, and was so lame, she was not able to work on weekdays, much less go to school on Sundays. She could read a little and had been learning to write,. She could also sew.

When her mother died, Eliza learned dress making with Mrs. Darley of Timble Brigg and had to pay half a guinea a year. By this time Eliza and her sisters were living in a cellar at Bank, opposite Holdfirth's factory. She didn't want to move nearer to Mrs. Darley to resume her sewing lessons. Referring to the hovel the sisters lived in, "We have lived there seven years among friends, nowt at hand to help us, and I shouldn't like to leave them."

"My mother was taken very ill, and I had to mind her, and then I was very poorly, and in the Infirmary myself: I have never been able to go backwards and forwards since. The iron I wear is so heavy. It supports me up, but I don't feel any stronger... Sometimes I get better, and then again I can hardly stir."

Diversifying The Leeds Economy

Leeds in 1858 was described as "the greatest emporium for cloth in the civilized world" but this masked impending decline. Over 10,000 were employed in woollen cloth and 9,000 in flax. By the late 1850s, half of the domestic linen market had been lost to cotton and jute products and by 1871 worsteds had reduced. Marshall closed in 1886. It only survived that long by using old machinery and women as cheap labour, earning barely half the wages of men. These women were amongst the worst paid in Leeds.

The dress and clothing industry provided the solution to the potentially disastrous closure of giant flax mills. Clothing sweat-shops attracted younger generations of female mill workers, employing 10,000-12,000 by the late 1880s. In the last quarter of the century, Yorkshire woollen mills remained the same size but became more productive, powerful and economic to run with spinning and weaving mostly under one roof, thus integrating production processes.

Machine-making, engineering and iron works expanded rapidly with new industrial estates in Holbeck and Hunslet. Bootmaking was prominent in Bramley with 550 people working at Hallidays. Greater economy of scale, mechanisation and use of steam power meant increased productivity and higher profits.

Engineering was closely linked to machines for sewing and cutting, required for ready-made clothing, helped by an expanding rail network. This enabled Bramley to produce axles, mill machinery and steel canal boats. The population of Holbeck, "the labour side of Leeds," more than tripled in the 40 years to 1871.

The diversification of the Leeds economy from the 1840s took place at bewildering speed. Most girls worked in hat and clothing factories or small millineries, and most boys in woollen and stuff mills or machine-shops, whilst men worked as labourers, ostlers, stuff pressers, dyers, watchmen and gardeners. By the 1880s, heavy engineering had taken off as had the chemical industry, boot and shoe making and printing, in spite of a national recession.

Higher social group jobs included mechanics, weavers, shoemakers, smiths, builders, joiners, masons and bricklayers and in engineering: turners, fitters, boiler-makers, engine-makers, puddlers, moulders and furnaceman. Best paid jobs on the railways were: drivers, guards, clerks, pointsmen and signalmen. Most worked on the railway tracks as platelayers, gangers, labourers and lampmen. or in the sidings as shunters and enginemen, or as clerks. Working on the railways carried status, enhanced by uniforms and a graded system of ranks.

Unity Is Strength

Several occupations formed into craft unions from boiler-makers in 1840 to the Amalgamated Society of Engineers in 1851, covering turners and fitters. In exchange for more job flexibility and even wage cuts, some societies persuaded employers to agree to a closed shop though inter-union rivalry and blacklegs complicated disputes. In the same year, boiler-makers came out on strike. Hundreds besieged Kitson's locomotive workshop in Hunslet to jeer and catcall 'blacksheep' and 'knobsticks' from Newcastle. Half of the 12 arrests were for serious violence but Kitson stood firm. This encouraged another Leeds company, Fairbairn, to dismiss trade unionists the following year without repercussions.

A major coal dispute in 1858 was triggered by colliery owners who, in February, resolved to cut wages by 15%, Barnsley employers followed suit and within a month resistance had spread across Yorkshire. Miners began to organise into district unions with each having up to 10% of its members on strike. A strike fund was set up. Faced with falling coal prices, employers sought to lower pay by 15% in 1863, by 10% in 1868 and again in 1879 and 25% in 1874. Women played a part in the continuing struggles, often marching with men.

During the good times of rising coal prices, workers pressed their wage demands. In 10 years to 1867 coal increased in price by over 50%, in contrast to 22% in wages. West Yorkshire miners were fragmented and divided into autonomous lodges. They tended to operate as benefit societies and savings banks that impaired their ability to fight for better wages and conditions. The mining roots were deep, especially south of Leeds, and so it was with many other mining communities. William Brown of Hunslet said in 1868, "if every man in the district had been liked to the 2,000 who were in the union, there would have been no reductions." Consolidated action was hindered by employers exploiting divide and rule.

Blacklegs were used when the National Association of Ironmasters struck in early 1864, faced with a 10% wage cut. In April, employers banded together, insisting all employees sign a document renouncing the union. The ensuing lockout in some factories affected 10,000 workers between Leeds and Bradford. At its height about 1,300 union members were on strike and, of these, 500 were from Leeds. Employers wanted to break the stranglehold of the national union, formed in 1863. The NAI retaliated with mass demonstrations. Hundreds arrived by special trains to gather in the People's Hall, Holbeck. At least 22 were arrested and 13 were fined or gaoled for assault, intimidation or sabotage. With the company lockout, and continued use of blacklegs, the strike folded.

In 1866 the Engine-Drivers and Firemens United Society held its packed branch meetings in Holbeck. They were the aristocracy of the railways and demonstrated their militancy in 1867 when 1,500 drivers and stokers on the North-Eastern Railway sought 7/- for a ten hours day, with Sunday treated as overtime. Employers responded by bringing in blackleg drivers and firemen. The union executive wanted arbitration but the drivers remained resolute in their demands. The blacklegs won and the strike crumbled. Within three years the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants was formed in the People's Hall in Holbeck., gaining over 17,000 members in its first year. By 1890 this had risen to over 26,000.

In 1889 the Gas Workers and General Labourers Union was formed. A typical rota was 2 weeks of 12 hour days and then 2 weeks of 12 hour nights. Every second weekend, the end of the night shift coincided with the start of the day shift. This meant 24 hours working. Will Thorne, union organiser, commented, "when those twenty-four stretches came to an end, I used to be absolutely exhausted in body and mind." The Union campaigned for an 8 hours

day and wage increase of one penny per hour. Agitation soon spread, fuelling the Wortley Bridge strike of 1890 in south-west Leeds with up to 20,000 protestors. Friedrich Engels turned up to present Will Thorne with a copy of *Das Kapital*, addressed "to the victor of the Leeds battle." Thorne had connections as he knew the daughter of Karl Marx.

The trade depression in the last quarter of the century had taken its toll. Only one woollen mill was built in Leeds between 1875 and 1885. Of 57 cloths mills, 17 were empty and 13 partially occupied. Of 20 Leeds boilermakers, 8 had closed. Over-production, competition from the USA, Germany and France and tariffs all contributed. By 1879 some 36,000 people, mostly low skilled, were receiving relief from the Leeds distress fund.

As with coal, when trade was buoyant wage demands were made with short and successful strikes in the 40 years to 1890. In between were periods of downturn, and wage reductions,, especially in the economic depression from 1873 to 1896. One union wrote, "We were then passing through a critical period in our history; it seemed as if all the influence and power of capital was being brought to bear upon us to try and crush our existence as a society."

The system of piecework was fraught if several processes were involved. Problems would arise over new machinery and expected production yields, as well as in sub-contracting work with a dilution of skills and wages and futile attempts to negotiate a shorter working day and improvements in working conditions. By contrast, employer relations in Bramley were almost peaceful. In the 1860s there were more than 35 unions in Leeds with some 4,500 workers but by 1892 membership nearly quadrupled to 16,000, about 14% of the workforce.

An Elementary Education

The first Sunday school in Leeds opened in 1784. By 1858, 35,000 children attended Sunday schools but daily attendance in 371 schools lagged at about 22,000. In Holbeck, in the same year, about a quarter of children of school age worked. The census showed 48% of children attended school. The difference is mostly accounted by 28% being at home, or otherwise elsewhere other than at school. Even beyond 1851, Sunday schools retained their numerical importance as did private and Dame schools before the 1870 Elementary Education Act.

Marshall used school as a reward system from 1825, selecting "every Saturday morning those hands who had attended well, conducted themselves well, and tried to do their work well." Most workers were quiescent with three-quarters attending chapel. Self-help was the manta with a mill library, reading rooms and strict factory discipline with perfect punctuality and no time wasted during hours of work. "Excellent order and striking attention" noted Reverend Watkins in his report, adding "a gentle hum of many voices, learning or repeating their task." By the early 1850s grammar, history and singing augmented the grind of the 3Rs. Parents sent their children to the school to acquire the basics of signing a name, reading simple text and ability to calculate, and count wages earned to ensure they were not short-changed.

Reverend Watkins was not so impressed by a Church school for girls. "The short stay of children is quite extraordinary; 376 entered and 345 left within the year." In Hunslet, mill owners insisted on children going to Dissenter Sunday schools rather the Church day schools, "on pain of being dismissed from their work if they refused," complained Rev. Watkins. He was even more scathing about the mill owners, seen as "opulent capitalists" who "are non-resident in Holbeck, having their place of business in the latter place but residing elsewhere. Their sympathy is withheld from the cause of education and, while their thirst for gain and

gold is gratified in Holbeck, their charitable contributions in the Township are seldom heard of."

The Wesleyan Ironworks schools thrived under the drive, energy and skill of William Barnes, headmaster from 1858 to 1868. Both day and evening schools were provided. His aim for pupils was "to change their whole character" with the inclusion of history, geography and poetry. Smaller group teaching started to replace collective lessons. Children were taught with "great kindness, firmness and intelligence." Inspiring books were sought to provide a "golden mean equally remote from Goody Two Shoes and those from appalling essays on the grammivorous quadrupeds and the monocotyledonous plants which have so long bewildered little readers of the Irish books." Three out of four Wesleyan schools charged fees rising from 2p to 9p. Over a quarter of top Bramley boys examined in 1869 passed in the extra subjects, unlike a rival Church school with half as many children but no passes.

Anxious to ensure harmony with free elementary education, some schools transferred to the new School Boards. Added to sectarian conflict in attracting pupils, there was now the lure of free state education in inculcating Christianity and "civilization" too. Unitarians and Wesleyans continued to squabble but both denounced the 1870 Education Act as "mere humbug."

Other denominations were keen to poach "beacons of the future" but Leeds Grammar School, reopening in 1858, was barely affected. This was in spite of reforms aimed at bringing middle classes into the school. Four years earlier, The Educational Institute for the Education of Girls was founded for the children of middle class parents.

Dissenters feared the growing National schools that, by 1851, educated a larger proportion of children in Leeds than London, Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. Whilst greater in volume, the curriculum was limited. In Hunslet and Holbeck the "Penny Nashes were Aided Schools of a lower class." A penny a week was charged for reading, writing and arithmetic. From these modest fees, schools derived nearly 70% of income, with the proviso children attended. In Hunslet in 1841 only a fifth of one school attended regularly over a six months period and slightly less in Holbeck where 35% of all Church School pupils failed their basic literacy test in 1868. The 3Rs, otherwise known as remembering, recitation and regurgitation, together with religious missives, poor teaching and extensive use of monitors, ensured high absence rates.

The non-sectarian Zion School, run under the auspices of the British and Foreign Society, was a success. An Adult Mutual Improvement Class began in 1845, a reading room was added and Mechanics Institute to run an evening school. Discussion classes, concerts, drama productions, 'tea-meetings' and exhibitions were all part of the Zion social scene in the mid-Victorian era.

Many occupations of masters and parents were in social class III that embraced independent clothiers, mechanics, weavers, shoemakers and tailors. James Hole, writer and prominent activist for social reform, taught there. So did Samuel Smiles and a pupil, Edward Gaunt, who would become a future mayor of Leeds. The school's great sense of community was further illustrated by being the first to give concerts in Leeds Town Hall, the first to introduce 'Penny Readings' in Leeds and the first to organise cheap railway excursions.

In 1870, in a two hour walkabout in Leeds by a schools' inspector, 900 children of school age were counted roaming the streets. Of parents with means, one child in five went to a private school with Dame schools still highly popular; smaller, numerous and local. Some could be quite large such as one with 130 pupils with an income of 36 shillings a week.

The Quest For Self-Improvement

The elite Leeds Philosophical and Literary Society was founded in 1819 and soon gained an international reputation. It was where a promising young artist John Atkinson Grimshaw displayed his paintings, depicting nature and rural life before turning to atmospheric industrial scenes, with moonlit quaysides a particular favourite. For the Victorian gentleman who could afford the 20 guineas joining fee, and annual subscription of 5 guineas, there was always the exclusive Leeds Club in Albion Place. Fenteman's guide of 1858 says: 'This institution is found to be very convenient to the gentry of the neighbourhood who have occasion to visit Leeds, and is also much frequented by the merchants and professional gentlemen of the town.'

The West Riding was the fountain of Victorian self-help. Over 25% of mechanics institutes in England were in Yorkshire and 20% of all memberships. The 1851 census reveals that the county of Yorkshire had almost twice as many literary, scientific and mechanics institutions as any other county in England and Wales. In 1854, of the 189 Yorkshire institutions, over 80% were in the West Riding. As well as teaching at the Zion School, Samuel Smiles was President of Woodhouse Mechanics Institute, second largest in Leeds, and "free from the ruinous cost of the beer house."

Smiles contended, "They are, for the most part, institutes of the middle and respectable classes and a smaller proportion, in some cases not so much as half, of working men" but institutes were not the sole source of self-improvement. Marshall set up a book club in Holbeck. Other Lit and Phil societies were formed too, such as in Bramley in 1832 and a Discussion Society in 1846. A rival group, comprising mostly teachers, formed the Bramley Mutual Improvement Society in 1857.

Few mechanics institutes could match the patronage of Hunslet that reopened in a blaze of publicity in 1859. At the inaugural meeting were leading industrialists Marshall, Fairbairn and Kitson. Whilst the wealthier funded most of the building costs, the aim was to straddle class. For the health of the social system, "the fusion of all classes and not their isolation is what is to be most desired." The Leeds Mercury admired societies "cemented by enlightened self-interest as well as a social spirit of the best kind, and by the sense of duty."

Several institutes were founded and managed by the working classes. The most remarkable was Holbeck Adult Mutual Improvement Society, formed in 1847 by young men from the Wesleyan Tabernacle Sunday school who met to "read a little in English history." Teaching basic literacy was the priority but cost money. Fees rose quickly from a penny a month to a penny a week in 1850, by which time there were elementary classes for women, a geological museum and a music class for men. By the 1860s tea parties, singing, recitations, dancing and games were much in evidence and, by 1870, science, geography and mathematics. The two-storey building had a large reading room and library, 5 classrooms, 800 seats lecture hall, a drawing room and committee room.

Members were "the very best of their class: sober, industrious and desirous of improvement." There was a belief that "the progress of the people" would ensure social stability. Fees were a bone of contention. The Zion Mechanics Institute charged 6p for six months on joining its reading room and library, and a penny a week thereafter with the same price charged for its classes. Self-improvement had come on leaps and bounds with its roots in local communities, helped by those giving up time and expertise.

Leisure, Pleasure and Policing

Even before 'Peelers' appeared on the Leeds streets in 1836, constables were employed by mill owners to keep order to protect blacklegs during strikes. In 1834, when the police arrived at the Hayley mill in Bramley, the huge crowd ceased breaking windows and merely "contented themselves with hissing, hooting baaing etc", but strikers might still be arrested as this was an offence. Worker solidarity increased and on release from custody or gaol, the offenders were greeted as heroes with long processions and marching bands. In the summer of 1842, Irish infantrymen, brawling with police, triggered a mass street fight that lasted three days. Even though the police service was extended to suburbs under the Police Act of 1856, Leeds had the lowest number of police of all major cities, pro-rata to population.

Relations with police in working class areas remained fraught. The next year in Hunslet a riot took place when police attempted to interfere in the Hunslet Feast. Crime statistics reached a peak in the 1860s with a doubling of drunkenness too. Reactions when police visited beer halls and lodging houses ranged from silence and clearing off sharp, to abuse, obscenities and submissive apathy. Middle class belief in a habitually criminal element escalated at rampant and conspicuous crimes of assault, burglary, theft, prostitution and gang warfare. Tactics of moving on went beyond vagrants and street hawkers, arousing fierce opposition and affected rights of assembly. A group on a street corner was deemed to be loitering for mischievous purposes. Marking a social divide, the rough and respectable lived separate lives.

Children were useful as pickpockets and as handlers of stolen goods. In 1852, a 12-year-old boy received 6 weeks in gaol and a flogging for "swindling a Hunslet linen draper of five silk handkerchiefs." A jail chaplain remarked that the duckstalls of Leeds market were a training ground for young thieves. Fagin-like stall keepers rewarded children with their own version of ducks. These were spiced meat-balls in gravy as gratitude for pilfering goods in local shops and for picking pockets. The articles collected such as hankies, tobacco boxes and watches were passed through a network of pawn shops.

Saloons sprung up where the sole amusement was dancing, preferably in clogs, to make as much noise as possible. Not a beer pot was in sight. Country-dances, quadrilles and reels were popular, accompanied by fiddles and occasional organ or band. The fusion of English, Irish, Jewish and Italian cultures ensured a variety of entertainment in these narrow streets. Music halls became big business in the 1850s whilst in districts such as Hunslet, prize fighting drew crowds, and other forms of entertainment that might encourage a flutter on the winner.

Leeds had a low ratio of pubs to people but this did not deter the temperance movement as drunkenness blighted lives. Leeds Council set an example, being almost teetotal in the 1870s. A target was children. By 1849 the Leeds Band of Hope pledged over 400. In 1867, some 20,000 people marched in 42 bands to the cloth hall yard. Through tea-meetings, lectures, magazines, coffee houses, schools and chapels, the Temperance movement made an impact but less so with rougher classes. Thrift was encouraged. So was saving a few coppers each week for a rainy day, funeral or treat. Savings clubs blossomed. Banks flourished mid-century with the opening of a Post Office Savings Bank in 1861. Building societies appeared too with 9 in Leeds by 1851, as by this time property ownership confirmed social elevation.

Occasional treats were provided by many large firms such as special teas, dancing and music. By the 1850s this had progressed to a seaside excursion. In 1853 Joseph Butler treated all his 250 Stanningley foundry employees to a day trip by rail to Hull and steamer to Grimsby, complete with a company band. By the 1880s trips to Blackpool, Southport, Morecombe and

Scarborough were common with most employers paying the fares, even contributing pocket money. In 1889, in the space of only a few weeks, seven Bramley firms had their annual summer excursion. One enterprising mill owner, the wealthy A.W.Hainsworth, took several workers to Glasgow and Paris to view industrial exhibitions.

Literacy was improved by access to newspapers and libraries too thanks to the 1850 Act. The Leeds Mercury, formed in 1718, began as a four-page Saturday newspaper. Published daily from 1861, it increased in size, frequency and popularity. By 1900 week-day editions had 10 pages. On Saturday the paper had 12 pages and additional supplement, all priced at only 1d. Circulation expanded to over 5,000 copies per week by 1820. In the edition of 4th January 1840, The Mercury claimed to have eight times the 'average circulation of Provincial Papers'.

Diversity of articles in the Mercury was crucial to its popularity. As a local paper, it included unusually extensive coverage of parliamentary and national affairs. This flourished under the editorship of Thomas Wemyss Reid who, on establishing a London Office in 1870, gained the confidence of Prime Minister, William Gladstone. Local news remained the core with detailed articles on government and civic events in Leeds and its neighbouring towns. The Saturday paper became a self-styled 'first class general and family newspaper.' Articles catered for specialist interests as well as family entertainment and other topics of appeal to readers.

In 1890, County cricket came to Headingley that hosted a test match against the Australians in 1899. The game was drawn. Rugby was rather more prominent than soccer. Formed in 1883, the Hunslet club was part of the cricket club. The next year Hunslet beat Leeds St Johns in the 3rd round of the Yorkshire Cup but a shared ground restricted progress. Low Moor was ideal, though not before clearing 2,000 tons of rubbish, levelling and seeding a pitch and re-erecting the old stand. Parkside hosted its first game in 1888. The next year Hunslet repeated their victory over Leeds St Johns but this time in the final. In 1895, a near riot erupted after defeat against Brighouse Rangers. A match official had to be rescued by 21 police officers, following which the club faced a six months ban.

Even more than sport, and especially cricket, music attracted the masses. The Leeds Rational Recreation Society sponsored concerts between 1852 and 1859 and the Leeds Musical Union held 'People's Concerts' during the winter season. The first Leeds music festival was held in 1858, with concerts in the town hall from the following year. Many districts had a band as did large factories, such as the 'operatic band' of Fairbairn and Company which gave a music and literacy concert at the Zion School.

Opened in 1848, the rather blandly named New Theatre was changed to the Princess Concert Hall to give it an air of respectability, at least externally though competition wasn't far away. A notice appeared on 12th March 1865. It advertised a Grand New Music Hall, "One of the handsomest and commodious in the Province, Open every Evening, with a powerful and talented Company. On Monday 13th inst., the celebrated HERR SCHALKENBACH (Member de l'Academie Nationale, Paris) with his extraordinary PIANO ORCHESTRA ELECTRO MOTEUR!, Astounding Array of Novelties on the occasion of the GRAND OPENING." The sole proprietor was Mr Charles Thornton. Soon this popular venue was known as Thornton's Music Hall.

A group of middle class patrons visited only to find the audience, "gazing up with zest on scenes, and listening with delight to sounds which to us, at least, were both humiliating and appalling." The show was distasteful and bawdy, not helped by a rather seedy atmosphere and louche audience. Clearly, this was not to their taste, but the theatre not only survived

but prospered. Better known as City Varieties Music Hall, its modern heyday was the 30 years to 1983, featuring master of ceremonies, and master of alliteration, Leonard Sachs.

On 29th August 1898, the 1,700 seats Empire Palace Theatre opened. Topping the bill was Lydia Adams - the Original Aunt Sally in Our Alley. Other artistes were duettists, dancers, soloists, an acrobat, comedienne, ventriloquist, mimic, and not least Professor John Higgins, 'the human kangaroo,' together with the Empire Grand Orchestra consisting of 25 musicians. The theatre boasted Electric Light, a Sliding Roof, and a Fireproof Curtain.

Making a Statement

Leeds Town Hall was built in 1858; a municipal palace rivalling Manchester, and an expression of civic pride. Reflecting the importance of Leeds as a centre of trade, the opening ceremony was performed by Queen Victoria, accompanied by Prince Albert and Princesses Helena and Alice. The Times described the jubilant occasion. The royal party arrived at Leeds station to a welcoming military band and artillery salute. A cheering crowd of thousands lined the route.

In 1889 Leeds became a county borough and a few years later sought city status, jolted into action by an application by Sheffield to celebrate the golden jubilee of its incorporation. Soon petitions from both boroughs were forwarded to the Queen on 7 February 1893. Approval was recommended as both towns "appear to be well fitted by their loyalty, public spirit and industrial progress." Four days later the county borough became the City of Leeds. In a smart marketing move of formal recognition and celebration, Thornton's Music Hall became the City Varieties Theatre. Four years later, in tandem with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations of 1897, the title of Lord Mayor, was bestowed on the mayor by Letters Patent, in keeping with the acquired status of this proud city. Leeds had come of age.

As proprietor of the Varieties Music Hall, in 1873 Charles Thornton seized the opportunity to create Thornton's Buildings, a suite of shops and offices. He then added Thornton's Arcade that opened in May 1878. The most impressive feature of the Arcade, built on three storeys, is a clock by William Potts. It has four life-size figures from the historical novel Ivanhoe by Sir Walter Scott. Richard the Lion-heart and Friar Tuck strike the hours whilst Robin Hood and Gurth the swineherd strike the minutes.

The Queen's Arcade followed, opening in 1889. Improvements were made in 1896, knowing full well two other arcades were planned by rival developers. The arcade, with its sweeping staircase, has two floors complete with a balcony. Promenading was the fashion, enticing eager shoppers into well-appointed stores with displays and arrays of unimagined delights.

Befitting its economic growth and vibrancy, the Grand Arcade was completed in 1900. Taking its name from the nearby Grand Theatre, the design really was grand with its stunning glass roof, arched windows and wooden floors. An alluring appearance was enhanced two years later with the installation of an animated clock by William Potts and Sons. Rather than view the one in Thornton's Arcade, come and see ours was the message. Impressive as it was, the Grand Arcade was much less ornate than Thornton's Arcade and the Queen's Arcade.

Work started on the County Arcade in 1898. Opened fully in 1903, it was designed by Frank Matcham, famed for the London Hippodrome and later Hackney Empire theatre. A central dome represents the industrial growth and prominence of Leeds. With its marble columns, coloured mosaic frescoes, rich interiors and mahogany shop fronts, with the Mecca Locarno Ballroom and Dolls' Hospital, the County Arcade exuded class and style.

Leeds had become a mecca for exclusive shopping on par with the best London or Manchester could offer, helped too by the department store Schofields that opened its doors in May 1901. Founded in 1837 the more exclusive Oxford Street based Marshall and Snelgrove opened in Leeds in 1870 at the corner of Bond Street and Park Row. What a transition in fortunes by the end of century for middle classes with money to spend, and time to spare to browse and buy.

Bibliography

Baker, Robert, *Report to the Leeds Board of Health*, 1833.

Baker, Robert, *Report on the State and Condition of the Town of Leeds*, 1842.

Baker, Robert, *On the Industrial and Sanitary Economy of the Borough of Leeds*, 1858.

Beresford, M.W. and Jones G.R.J. (Eds.) *Leeds and its Region*, 1967.

Fraser, D. (Ed.) *A History of Modern Leeds*, 1980.'

Grady, K. *The Illustrated History of Leeds*, 2002.

Heap, Ann, and Brears, Peter, *Leeds Described: Eyewitness Accounts of Leeds, 1534-1905*.

Hole, James, *Homes of the Working Classes*. A chapter on Leeds, pages 123-144, 1868.

Leeds City Council, *Discovering Leeds: Local Studies*, 2003.

Lloyd Arthur, *The Music Hall and Theatre History*, a website dedicated to Arthur Lloyd.

Pearson, R, *The Industrial Suburbs of Leeds in the Nineteenth Century: Community Consciousness Among the Social Classes*, (PhD submission) 1986.

The Thorseby Society: *The Historical Society for Leeds and District*.

Thornton, D. *Leeds: The Story of a City*, 2002.

Workers in Marshall's Mills from: *A Day at a Leeds Flax Mill*. The Penny Magazine, Dec. 1843.