

**Saltaire**  
**Overlookers**  
**1830 to 1914**

**By**  
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**in collaboration**  
**with Colin Coates**

## Acknowledgements

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I have used Jack Reynold's 'The Great Paternalist', published 1983 extensively in researching information about Saltaire in Victorian times.

## Part one

### Setting the scene

At the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the time was right for change, and for a different attitude towards work and employment. Calvin preached that hard work, thrift, and efficiency in one's worldly calling were keys to eternal salvation. Profit is an end in itself, and the pursuit of profit is virtuous.

Early capitalists needed a skilled and unskilled workforce disciplined to accept long hours and harsh conditions for as small a wage as possible to maximise profits.

The organisation of labour in textile mills was dependent on **the nature of the machinery involved**, which determined the need for huge galleries and a large workforce to service the machines.

Examples of early mills are:-

- In 1776, Richard Arkwright, built his cotton mill at **New Lanark**. There were 9 rooms in the mill for preparing the raw cotton, carding drawing and roving, bobbin winding, throstle spinning, mule spinning, warping and beaming, drawing and weaving, and each was under the control of an overlooker.
- In 1840, **Brunswick cotton spinning mill, Ancoats**, Manchester was built by David Bellhouse who employed William Fairburn to design a 7 storey block which housed 276 carding machines, 77,000 mule spindles, 20 drawing frames, 50 slubbing frames, and 81 roving frames.

### Overlookers

The typical structure of the mill was to have a department manager and an overlooker for each of the mechanised processes involved from combing to dyeing.

The following list outlines the generic role of the overlooker in all departments:-

- Middle management between workers and bosses.
- Maintenance of machines – regular oiling and checking, often before workers arrived. Undertake basic repairs, bringing in specialist mechanics if

necessary. Salts had their own specialists. Some overlookers were so good that they could tell if a machine was about to break down before it did.

- Checking attendance. Workers were only allowed in at specific times and if you missed the time you might be allowed in after paying a fine. Overlookers had to make sure they had enough workers to operate the machines in their department, which included breaks and lunchtime when the machines continued to run.
- Making sure that workers operated the machines efficiently and reliably.
- Inspected the quality of the pieces before they left the department.
- Hiring and firing. In some mills managers insisted on interviewing the overlooker's choice. Workers could appeal to management if they felt unfairly dismissed.
- Reporting accidents.
- Checking use of toilets, ensuring that only one person used them at a time to prevent time wasting and gossiping.
- The effectiveness of overlookers depended on their personalities and their ability to motivate workers as well as keeping control.
- Training on the job. Observing the overlooker, but then had to attend evening classes 3 nights a week for a year. Then had one day a week day release and one evening a week for classes. The process could take 4 to 6 years.

Bradford Mechanics Institute (between 1832 and 1882) and then Bradford Technical College offered other business classes which they could choose from. All funded by Mill. Apprentice overlookers could find that they were earning less money than mill juniors because the mill was paying for their training.

Overlookers played their greatest role in spinning and weaving.

In spinning they repaired machinery, inspected the final product and supervised both drawing and spinning room operatives. Each spinning room overlooker supervised about 40 workers.

Weaving overlookers performed similar tasks but in addition they inspected the warps for weaving and determined the quality of the completed pieces. They were in charge of 50 to 100 looms.

Overlookers were paid more than ordinary workers. They received 28/- to 30/- a week, compared with 14/- to 28/- for male workers, 9/- for female workers and 8/- to 10/- for children.

**Which raises the interesting question of how this payment was worked out for the most demanding overlooker role - in the weaving department.**

There had to be an element of technical skill here because overlookers would not only maintain the looms, they would often tune them and set up the patterns which were to be woven.

But how do you calculate, in cash terms, for their exercise of authority over the workers?

They were responsible for the flow of production and therefore controlled the distribution of work, the speed at which snags were overcome and the immediate discipline of the floor.

One way was to put a value on the product of the worker's labour i.e. the pieces of cloth produced – their length, complexity and density of the weave. In which case

their wages would vary from week to week according to piecework. Mills varied in the amount allowed for piecework and that allowed for the overlooker's contribution.

There was a ratio of 1 overlooker per 30 to 40 workers.

Overlookers were invariably male in contrast to a largely female and child workforce.

The complexity of the overlooker's role is obvious from one of the few surviving examples of an **overlooker's notebook** which can be found in the West Yorkshire Archive. It was the property of Fred Shackleton, an overlooker in Salts Mill in 1919. He was responsible for twisting, warping, winding and reeling. His notebook contains long handwritten lists of information about wages for a wide range of workers including takers-off, doffers, setters, jobbers, reelers, warpers, winders and hankers, and the prices of materials, all of which changed regularly and had to be updated.

Overlookers had to be literate and numerate which many workers were not.

### **Discipline of the workforce.**

**In supervising the workers, especially children, overlookers often resorted to physical punishment.**

- “The overlooker gave us all a bit of the alley strap. It used to knock all the bits of wool, you know all the waste, it used to send it under the frames, so when the walking boss came round it were all tidy you see. Oh it were a big alley strap and it were all leather, and if they didn't behave themselves they got a bit of this alley strap”. (From **'Textile Voices' by Tim Smith and Olive Howarth – Bradford Heritage Recording Unit. Published by Bradford Museums, Galleries and Heritage.**)
- “Newspapers carried reports of continued violence in the work place, such as the 10 year old who died in March, 1857, a week after a beating by an overlooker at Garnett's Mill. The frequency of such violence led the 'Textile Manufacturer' to remark in December, 1875, that overlookers seemed to believe that they could treat children as they pleased. It recommended that notices be posted telling overlookers that they could not strike children.”
- Evidence provided to the Factory Commissioners in 1832 stated “Discipline was the responsibility of the overlooker and was invariably maintained using a strap. In some mills it was not unknown for the overlooker to use a spindle from one of the machines to discipline children; particularly boys, who seem to have been dealt with more harshly than girls. One overlooker said that he had occasionally seen girls of 15 or 16 strapped, and on one occasion a woman of 20, although he had not strapped any girl over the age of 14. The same man said that he had sometimes seen parents of boys come to the mill to complain about excessive beatings. He also said that he thought that many parents did not complain about excessive beatings because they were afraid that it would encourage the overlooker concerned to find a reason to dismiss the child as quickly as possible. Interestingly, the majority of children giving evidence did not appear to feel aggrieved at having been beaten.”

- Sutcliffe Rhodes, frequent commentator in the local Press in the 1860s, cites “the sight of an emaciated form of a spinning girl rendered helpless by the scandalous abuse of an overlooker. And the dying spinner boy who said ‘Ellis Brook (overlooker) has pawsed me right hard”.

There are many descriptions of the **condition of children in mills in literature**, including

Disraelis ‘Sybil’ or ‘The Two Nations’ (1845)

Dickens ‘Hard Times’

Charlotte Bronte ‘Shirley’ (1849)

Frances Trollop ‘Michael Armstrong’ (1876)

Gaskell’s ‘Mary Barton’ and ‘North and South’ (1854)

Mrs Tonna ‘Helen Fleetwood’ (1839)

**I could find little evidence of extreme sexual abuse**, such as that demonstrated in the **2015 film ‘Suffragette’** starring Meryl Streep as Emmaline Pankhurst and Cory Milligan as Maud Watts a laundry worker.

A male supervisor has been sexually abusing girls in the laundry for years, including Maud and currently a friend’s young daughter.

It may be that even when sexual abuse was known about it remained covert and was not publicised - certainly not in courts or newspapers.

**For example**, between 1870 and 1914, 39 cases of sexual abuse came before Hamstead magistrates. Only a quarter were committed for trial. Three quarters were dealt with summarily. 60% of these received a conviction for common assault or indecent exposure and 40% were dismissed. As in other areas of the country, cases of sexual abuse were either acquitted or trivialised as minor public order offences.

And from the **Office of National Statistics** we have

- “In excess of 500 people were dealt with by the courts per year during the 1920s, rising incrementally to over 5,000 by the 1960s.
- Throughout, however, this represented merely the tip of an iceberg. It is likely that the ten-fold increase was a result of changes in police and criminal justice procedure (enabling more cases to be reported and recorded) rather than an increase in prevalence.
- Whilst the number of cases reported to the police increased incrementally across the period, evidence suggests there was a significant decline in the proportion that resulted in guilty verdicts.

The law had been constructed as a reaction to Victorian moral anxieties – including concerns about homosexuality - rather than the need to protect and safeguard children. This means that children (as those against whom offences were committed) were only partially visible within the criminal justice statistics. In sum, the British state did not effectively monitor abuse of children. Ultimately it is only possible to conclude that the law and criminal justice system were woefully inadequate in dealing with child sexual abuse.”

**However, there are examples of sexual harassment such as:-**

“There were one fellow, and we used to call him ‘Touchy’ because every time he come reckoning to look at the box he’d touch your behind. I remember one time I were on the box, and we used to warn each other when he was coming. They all used to say ‘watch him with Hilda’. And of course this day I didn’t know he were on and I was doing something with my machine and he come and put his hand right across my bottom. So I turned round, picked up a bobbin and hit him with it. So they took me to the office for it. The gentleman that was over the overlookers asked me what I hit him for. I said, ‘when he stops touching my arse I’ll stop hitting him with bobbins.’ (Textile Voices)

**Women’s rights were very limited in the Nineteenth Century.** The following is a reminder of what they were:-

“1857 Matrimonial Causes Act – a man could divorce his wife for adultery, but she had to prove his adultery and also an additional ‘matrimonial offence’ such as cruelty, desertion, bigamy or incest. The reason was that a wife’s adultery ‘might introduce a spurious child into the family whereas a man’s promiscuity would have no such deleterious effects’.

Under common law a married woman’s independent identity was totally subsumed in that of her husband under the doctrine of ‘coverture’. She was not able to enter into legal contacts and had no rights in her own property. All she had earned or inherited belonged to her husband. The 1870 Married Women’s Property Act was passed but inadequately gave women further rights. Husbands could gamble or drink away their wife’s earnings. Wives could not even have custody of their own children since the father was deemed to be the ‘natural’ guardian regardless of his faults.

In 1878 the Matrimonial Causes Act enabled brutalised wives to obtain a Protection Order with the force of a judicial separation in the Magistrates Court to receive custody of their children and be awarded maintenance. However this did not constitute divorce and the woman could not remarry.” (**From Sex, Gender and Social Change In Britain since 1880 by Lesley A Hall**)

**Fortunately there are also examples of overlookers motivating their workers using more easy going methods.** For example:-

“We made a parcel up. We put orange peel, mucky bobbins, sweepings up, and made a lovely parcel and wrote on it ‘To our beloved overlooker from his doffers’. Well he got hold of it and looked at it you know, he’s looking right slyly around him, and he crept out and went into the men’s toilet. When he came out he shied the bobbins at us, orange peel, apple cores, banana skins. Anyhow he were a lovely overlooker and we loved him.” (Textile Voices)

### **But there are other ideas about discipline and control in mills**

When Robert Owen took over control of the New Lanark Mill in the early 1800s he devised a new way for overlookers to control his workers in the workplace. He introduced the **silent monitor**. This was a four-sided piece of wood 2 inches long and one inch wide, each side coloured – one side black, one blue, one yellow and

one white, with a hook on top to hang it near to every person employed. The colour to the front told of the conduct of the person on the preceding day. Books of character were provided for each Department with the names of employees listed and monitor readings were noted in the book. The books were changed six times a year and were preserved.

This system was similar to Jeremy Bentham's **Panopticon**, a model prison featuring a central tower with several wings radiating out from it.

The prisoner can always see the tower but never knows when or from where he is being observed. Prisoners self police their own behaviour because the guard may be watching, Each individual is seen but cannot communicate with the warders or other prisoners. The panopticon induces a sense of permanent visibility that ensures the functioning of power. Surveillance is permanent in its effects even if it is discontinuous in its action.

**Michelle Foucault** was a French philosopher who had well formulated ideas about the nature of power in various social settings. He looked at diamond mines, prisons, schools, hospitals and the military, and saw common features in the way in which they impose disciplinary power in order to create 'docile, obedient bodies'. That is, discipline must come about without excessive force through careful observation. Individual personal differences are not acknowledged unless they are related to skill, promotion or production. The Mill is divided into discrete departments and workers are classified in this way. The disciplinary power of the Mill is that it controls this system, and individuals become workers (or 'operatives'). In Saltaire, this system of discipline is extended because the houses which the workers rented are owned by the Mill and linked with their employment .

There are **two local examples** of this form of disciplinary surveillance.

**Saltaire Primary School** has a balcony extending all the way around a central hall below which classrooms are situated, each with glass windows which enable a headteacher to observe the classroom from above without being seen.

**Salts Mill** has huge open galleries (especially 'The Lobby') within which the textile machines were situated, enabling overlookers to observe a number of machines without actually approaching them.

**In a Bradford Mill** Rachel Bellerby ('**Chasing the Sixpence – the lives of Bradford Mill Folk**' published by **Fort Publishing Ltd**) describes an overlooker who "had his own small office at the end of the weaving shed, which had glass sides so that he could always see what was happening on the floor".

## Part Two

### The local scene in Saltaire

Titus Salt had mills in Bradford before starting to build Saltaire in 1851. Between 1851 and 1853 Salts Mill was built, and in 1853 house building began.

Jack Reynolds notes that Saltaire had a selected population – key workers from Salt’s Bradford mills. Overlookers were amongst the first to go to Saltaire. Groups of workers were influenced by overlooker choices and followed them to the village. Warp dressers whose work was crucial at an early stage in the textile process were treated in the same way. Other groups moved more slowly. Overlookers and other senior workers formed an element in the so called workers committee which was responsible for allocating tenancies in the village.

Titus Salt had seen Saltaire as being a place where the mistakes of Bradford could be rectified and a model industrial community could be created meeting his workers spiritual, moral, educational, housing, environmental and social needs – very different to the Bradford which his workers had left behind.

The original plans for Saltaire specified two types of housing – workers and overlookers houses. This distinction has never narrowly determined their actual occupancy. The overlookers houses were larger and more expensive to rent and therefore more likely to be occupied by people in Jack Reynold’s ‘executive’ group of employees which includes wool buyers, designers, engineers, chief cashiers, managers, foremen and overlookers. Their size also means that they are more suitable for large families or for use of two families which wanted to live together and share the rent whatever their social position. These houses were initially on William Henry St, and George St, followed by ‘improved’ overlooker houses on Victoria Rd, Albert Rd and on Gordon Terrace and Myrtle Place.

House building continued uphill towards Bradford Rd, with the improved housing of later build appealing to overlooker choices and there was a lot of tenant mobility. Reynolds says “Removals within the village were a persistent feature of village life. Of those who stayed between 1861 and 1871, over 50% moved to better or newer houses as they were completed and left older property to newcomers”.

The following table shows overlooker choices over time according to Census returns.

**Overlookers Choice of Houses by street**

Street	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Ada St	6	4	1		1	2
Albert Rd		6	4	3	4	5
Albert Ter	1	1		3		
Almshouses				4		
Amelia St	5	2	2			
Bath Buildings						1
Caroline St		2	4	1	6	2
Constance St	1		2	5	2	2
Daisy Place			1			

Dove St		1	2	4	2	7
Edward St	2	1	1	1	2	1
Fanny St		4		1	1	
Fern Place		1			1	
Garden Cottage	1	1	1	1		
George St	11	10	10	9	7	11
Gordon Ter		4	4	2	3	
Harold Place		1	1	1	1	1
Helen St	4	2	1	3	3	1
Herbert St	4	4	3	1	2	3
Higher School St					1	1
Jane St			2	1	6	3
Katherine St		1	1			
Lockwood St		1	1	2	2	3
Lower School St		1	5	2		2
Mary St	6	3	1	1	1	3
Mawson St		3	4	4	2	2
Myrtle Place		1	1			
Shirley St	2	1	8	1	1	3
Titus St	8	13	12	7	6	3
Victoria Rd	1	7	7	4	4	4
Whitlam St	4	3	4	2	1	
William Henry St	3	2	3	1	2	2

This table shows one thing very clearly – that in the Mill the overlookers were part of the management structure but at home they lived on the same streets as fellow workers and were regarded as working men. I looked in detail at both overlooker and ordinary worker's families and found very little difference in terms of number of children or lifestyle.

One difference is that overlookers tended to be better educated than the ordinary workers. They had to have a better level of literacy to embark on an apprenticeship, and to follow their overlooker training. They also arranged for their children to remain in education for as long as possible, recognising that this was necessary to enter a skilled trade on leaving school. However, education was expensive at secondary level, and it is suggested that a foreman earning less than £100 per year could not afford to send their children to school beyond 13 or 14 years. The children of ordinary workers left school earlier, as soon as possible to begin work in the mill and earn a wage. Many were half-timers.

Overlookers wives and families were closely involved in village life, living alongside the families of ordinary workers. Married women and their children, whatever their husband's occupation, shared the everyday life of the village. It might not be

possible to know all 4,300 inhabitants of the village in 1906, but gossip was a common commodity, and Edward Stanners remarked at a later date that the women on the factory floor would often get to work half an hour early in order to 'cal' and catch up with the latest events in the village.

The fact that Saltaire village had clear boundaries and was widely publicised as a model village gave workers of all kinds a sense of pride, belonging and a shared commitment to each other. Many employees and their families had known each other for many years working for the same firm even before moving to Saltaire and there were often kinship links. Some overlookers had worked as ordinary workers in the past.

### **My hypothesis**

**Overlookers were in a position to take the lead in contributing to community initiatives**

**“Skilled men played a greater part than others in the administration of village facilities” (Reynolds)**

**The following is a look at the evidence that this was the case.**

### **In Parliament**

**The Nine Hours Movement.** “Began with engineers and craft unions nationally, and only became a real issue when taken up by textile workers, **led by overlookers**. It was headed by Mundella, MP for Sheffield who consulted with the Overlookers’ Short Time Committees in Bradford and Leeds and brought a Bill before the House in 1872 to limit the working hours of women and children in factories to nine hours a day. A group of employers opposed the Bill, suggesting that although they worked longer hours than most craftsmen they did not work as hard in ten hours as the men did in nine. A deputation including Edward Salt presented their views to the Home Office. They claimed that there was no widespread desire among workers for a reduction of hours, for many textile workers were on piece rates and the prospect only faced them with diminished earnings. They claimed that the overlookers who had brought the agitation did so to bring their own hours into line with mill craftsmen who had obtained the reduction through their unions.

Mundella’s Bill did not pass the House but a less generous Bill, the Ten Hour Bill was passed by the Disraeli administration.” (Reynolds)

**and**

“Working men were beginning to demand a more real political authority, either through a Radical/Labour wing of the Liberal Party or in a new Independent Labour Movement. In 1892, Saltaire men joined with Shipley working men to indicate that they were no longer willing to accept the political leadership of the local mill owners, and in particular the special authority of Salts. **They produced their own Liberal/Labour candidate for the general election of 1892 – WP Byles** had backed the strikers at Manningham Mills in 1890/91. He won the seat, leading to the resignation of Charles Stead as chairman of the Shipley Liberal Executive. **Seth**

**Bentley**, manager of Saltaire Baths, and a regular critic of the Salt authority, took Stead's place. Among the men who supported him on the Executive were vice presidents **Alex George, J Cryer, and Isaac Sanctuary**. **Isaac Sanctuary** later joined the Bradford Independent Labour Party in 1893 when a branch was formed in Shipley, and his place on the Liberal Executive was taken by his brother **Jacob**." (Reynolds)

### There were two political organisations in Shipley

**Shipley Liberal Club**. Charles St, off Briggate, Shipley. Opened 1887. 400 members.

**Shipley Conservative Club**. Atkinson St, off Westgate, Shipley with 300 members.

### Plus

#### **Saltaire Manhood Suffrage Association.**

"By 1866 there was a powerful branch of the National Reform League in Saltaire with secretary **Robert Power**, 'an uncompromising radical', son of Edward Power who had been imprisoned in 1848 in Bradford for Chartist activity. In 1866 and Easter Tuesday in 1887 the Manhood Suffrage Association turned out in force with the blessing of the firm which closed for the 1866 occasion since it was not a public holiday. The Saltaire Brass Band played the accompaniment to the march from Saltaire to Leeds.

The National Reform League was a working class movement which asserted the intrinsic dignity and worth of working men as individuals and as members of a class. Unlike Chartism it did not demand social reform – it was a franchise for men who were properly 'residential and registered'. (Jack Reynolds)

### In Saltaire

**Let's begin by looking at organisations which provided safeguards against death and sickness.**

#### **Saltaire Funeral Brief Society**

Open to anyone over 7 years old living in Saltaire and in good health pay 1.5d under 21, and over 21 they pay 3d as an entrance fee. Then a levy of 2d is made on those over 21 and 1d under that age. They receive £5 on death if over 21 and £4 under that age.

The Society was formed in 1857 and by 1879 it had nearly 3,000 members.

Originally **Thomas Greenwood** of 22, George St, an overlooker, was the secretary. Like the savings bank it was run by senior workers. In 1879, **James Rushton** was President, **James Paley**, (spinning overlooker) secretary, and the committee of 15 was made up of overlookers, specialist mechanics and warehouse men with only one ordinary 'millhand'. Among the committee were men who were constantly active in the affairs of the village – **Sharp Varley** (weaving overlooker), **Samuel Baldwin** (overlooker), Edwin Cox and John Lambert.

#### **Saltaire Men's Society**

For relief of the sick. John Wood of 9. Mawson St, Secretary. Members above 18 and under 25 pay 6d per month, and above 25 but under 50 pay 8d per month. During sickness they are entitled to 8s per week for the first six months, 4s for the next six weeks and 2s per week after that. In addition to payments from members, Sir Titus Salt pays the Society 4d per month for each member enrolled.

### **Saltaire Women's Society**

For relief of the sick. **Thomas Greenwood** (overlooker), 22, George St, Secretary. Members over 16 pay 4d per month. They are then entitled to 5s for the first six months of sickness, and 3s per week afterwards. Sir Titus Salt pays the Society 6d per month for every member enrolled.

### **Other organisations which encouraged saving to meet times of need included:-**

**Saltaire Penny Savings Bank**. Formed in 1857 by a number of senior workmen with **Joseph Dawson**, foreman of the wool warehouse as secretary.

**Post Office Savings Bank** Opened in 1861 enabling the GPO to provide a simple savings scheme for ordinary wage earners. By 1914 it had more than 8.5 million accounts, almost 80% of which were under £25.

**Bingley, Shipley and Keighley Building Society**. Established 1851. Opens in Shipley at Yorkshire Bank Chambers, Otley Rd twice a week to collect subscriptions.

**Branch of Bradford Old Bank**. Open daily on Market Place, Shipley.

### **Friendly Societies**

#### **To ward off the effect of sickness, injury or death amongst working men.**

The three largest Friendly Societies were the Oddfellows, the Foresters and the Royal and Ancient Order of Buffaloes. 8% of the population in 1815 were in Friendly Societies.

Legislation to encourage the formation of Friendly Societies came as early as 1793. This was consolidated in 1850 with an Act of Parliament and a government department was established to administer the Act.

By the early 1830s the **Oddfellows** had 30,000 members and 561 lodges, increasing to 90,000 members and 3,500 lodges by 1842. There were lodges in every county of England. By 1874 there were 489,237 members and 1908 there were 868,190. The Bradford branch of the Manchester Unity of Odd Fellows was the richest in the West Riding and had 27 lodges, 3,382 members and paid out over £3,000 a year in death, sickness and medical benefits in 1850.'

**Royal Antedeluvian Order of Buffaloes (The Buffs)**. Formed in 1822 as a Fraternal organisation who's mission was Justice, Truth and Philanthropy. They aided members and their families in times of need and supported local charities. Branches were called Lodges, in imitation of Freemasons.

Overlookers in Bradford had the **Power Loom Overlookers Society and the Amalgamated Overlookers**. They had a motto of 'United to help, not combined to injure'. They had no connection with strikes or trade unions. Their object was to benefit each other in employment and to assist each other in sickness and death.

They were originally Friendly Societies. The first was in 1827, Bradford No 1 Overlookers Provident Society; the second in 1833, Bradford No 2 Managers and Overlookers Society; the third in 1862, Bradford No 3 Overlookers Provident Society. All three merged in 1911 to become Bradford and District Managers and Overlookers Society. Some Mills required apprentices to join them.

**But help still came mainly from relatives or the pawnshop.** The peak year for pawn shops came in 1914 when there were 5087 shops operating under licence in Britain. The number declined after this point.

### Co-ops

In the 1830s/40s chandler's shops were popular. They advanced goods on credit but often the goods were adulterated, over priced and of poor quality – and the same with firms operating the truck system.

The Rochdale Pioneers bought good quality food at wholesale prices, cutting out the middle man and avoiding adulteration. Then in 1862 the **Co-operative Wholesale Society** was formed with similar ideas. This also provided a dividend (a payment Society profits once a year in proportion to the buyers expenditure). It had 400,000 members in 1883, reaching 2.3 million in 1913, 3.2 million in 1923 and 6 million in 1937.

**Saltaire Industrial Coal Society** – Formed in 1864 when **W Tiffany** (wool sorter) was Secretary. Offices were at 13, Victoria Rd. Members received dividends and bonuses dependant on the amount of coal sold and profits made. In 1871 it had 600 to 800 members.

In 1876 and 1877 there were newspaper advertisements under the heading 'Coal! Coal! Coal!!!' listing all the types of coal stocked and profits made. Orders received by **W Tiffany** of 30, Albert Rd. **Jabez Copley** of 20 George St was then Secretary. With **Isaac Constantine** they were the organisers of the Society.

**Independent Co-operative and Industrial Society Ltd** – 6, Victoria Rd. **Michael Holdsworth** of 4, Gordon Terrace (overlooker and later weft room manager) was secretary. Closed in Saltaire in 1881.

**Leeds Co-operative Society**. 8, Victoria Rd. James Wilkinson, storekeeper – **Isaac Constantine, President** of 33, Victoria Rd. Closed in Saltaire in September, 1885.

**Windhill Co-operative Society** opened a branch at 30/31 Caroline St in May, 1881. **Abraham Barras** was a director.

### Religion

#### **Saltaire Congregational Church.**

Opened for divine worship in 1859, and by 1860 had a regular weekly congregation of 400, plus a Sunday School with 110 on register. It was the elite church in Saltaire with Titus Junior as a member and principal benefactor and George Morrell and Frederick Wood, Chief Cashier, among the deacons. A number of well-to-do Shipley people also formed part of the communicant membership.

**Saltaire Wesleyan Methodist Chapel** drew its leaders from a wider social circle than the Congregational Church, and included the manager of the wool warehouse,

the mill engineer, several of the overlookers and woolsorters and four or five woolcombers.

**Low Lane Primitive Methodist Church**, off Saltaire Rd, Shipley. Opened in 1840 and closed in 1960 when it was demolished.

**St Paul's Parish Church**, Kirkgate, Shipley Built in 1826

**St Walburger's Catholic Church (Parish of St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross)**. Built 1878.

**Saltaire Society of the New Church (Swedenborgians)** In his history of this Church, Bernard Leather describes that in 1870 a group of men (many of whom were Salts Mill workers), looking for rooms to rent where religious services could be held. They first used 13, Victoria Rd but in 1882/3 they "took the tenancy of two small rooms in Saltaire Rd, Saltaire which were part of the group of almshouses". This was also known as Chapel House which held Sunday services for the Congregational Church. It was No 6, Alexandra Square (later renumbered as 29, Victoria Rd). Services were held there until 1924 and Leather describes the rooms in detail. **Isaac and Jacob Sanctuary, Albert Cawthra, Robert Power, John Preston (an artist), Ben Preston (writer and poet), Abraham Holroyd (bookseller and stationer), Jonathan Mitchell (warp twister), Richard Barker (warp twister), Seth Bentley (manager Saltaire Bath-house), and James Mattack of Baildon (shopkeeper of various wares and street trader)** were the founders. They were articulate, strong minded men with firm political and religious ideas. I understand that Swedenborgianism is an interpretation of the Bible which can be incorporated into other religious beliefs and so the members came from a number of religious backgrounds. In 1901, the group bought land in Park St from the Trustees of Sir Titus' will and Sir Titus Salt Bart. Sons and Co Ltd, but never built a church there. In 1924 the Saltaire group amalgamated with the Bradford Society of the New Church and opened a New Church at Ashfield Avenue, Frizinghall.

**Apart from all these formal organisations, there were many societies for Saltarians to join in their leisure time.**

**Fire Brigade** – S Shackleton, Foreman, 29, Victoria Rd.

**Floral and Horticultural Society** – Founded 1861. Renamed the Horticultural, Pig and Dog Society in 1873 and then the Horticultural, Pig, Dog, Poultry and Pigeon Society in 1876. W Tiffany, 30 Albert Rd, Secretary.

"It had about 100 members, most prominent among them were long serving and skilled employees such as **Eli Lambert, Isaac Constantine, John Hanson, James Ellis, Sam Baldwin and James Rushton**. Men of this type were most likely to be allocated and to keep the allotments which the firm provided, though they could not establish a total monopoly since there were 100 allotments and 38 piggeries along the canal-side. It had an annual show and exhibition which was a highlight of the village social life. In addition to a produce competition (judged by the Head

Gardener from Methley Park) there were athletic events attracting a nationwide field and games were arranged for the children”.

(Reynolds)

In 1869 there were also horses jumping hurdles and a velocipede race.

From 1867 to 1876 it was “held in a field owned by Mr Titus Salt situated on the Baildon side of the River Aire – the entrance to which was rather difficult and inconvenient owing to the fact that the construction of a new bridge is going on just now” (Bradford Observer). This presumably was what, since 1871, was Saltaire Park (later Roberts Park). There were no shows between 1877 and 1881, but in 1882 it was held on a recreation ground on Albert Rd.

**Cricket Club** – William Parker, Secretary.

It was destined, like the gymnastics club and the brass band, to achieve national fame. It was founded in 1865 with 140 members and promise by Salt to provide a playing area. It was reorganised in 1871 when the firm began to take a more positive interest in its affairs. The managing director, Charles Stead became President and Titus Salt was on the committee. The firm (under Sir James Roberts) provided a ground in the new park and generous financial help. The Half Moon Café was built for the Club.

*(There is a book by Patsy Quinn called ‘Run of the Mill’ which describes the history of the Club but which unfortunately concentrates on professional players like Sidney Banks and doesn’t mention the ordinary members at all. It does however have a photo of the Veterans team which is worth looking at).*

**String and Reed Band** – Anthony Hill of Caroline St was bandmaster.

**Saltaire Brass band.**

Challenged the already famous Black Dyke Mills band for pre-eminence in national competitions.

It was originally founded in 1855 and called the Saltaire Brass Band, supported financially by Titus with £1,000 per year. There were two bands originally – a drum and fife band for the boys and a brass band for the men of the village, all of whom worked in the Mill. It began to enter national competitions, gaining first prize at the Crystal Palace in London in 1861, and second prize at the Belle Vue September Contest in 1872. There were numerous prizes at more local contests, but from the early 1870’s it was no longer entering national competitions. In 1894 it was disbanded, and the instruments were called in by the Company.

Then there was a time gap until 1932 when it reformed as Salts Silver under the tuition of Mr HB Hawley, and they used to practice in the Royal Café (Salt’s old dining hall on Victoria Road). It changed its name to Salts (Saltaire) Band and was very successful on the national scene.

Mr Hawley continued as its sponsor, but in 1946 he decided to form a new junior band and link this with his thriving business – he was managing director of Hammond’s Sauce Company. Some of the original senior band members transferred to this new band and Hammond’s Sauce Works Band was born, to go on to national fame and recognition. Hawley died in 1981, leading to changes in the management at Hammonds, and sponsorship was finally withdrawn in the early 1990s.

Fortunately Yorkshire Building Society came in with a new offer to sponsor, and the name changed to the Yorkshire Building Society Band, and then to the YBS Band.

In January, 2009, the band was renamed the Hammond's Saltaire Band.

**Gymnastics Club.** Housed at the Institute it became a leading club in the north of England.

**Glee and Madrigal Society** – John Johnson, Secretary. In 1869 J Giles of 47, George St was secretary.

### **Saltaire Prize Choir**

Formed in 1877 as the Saltaire Wesleyan Choir, this choral group went on to achieve huge successes on the national musical scene.

All over Britain, competitions were held with cash prizes, encouraging groups to form in order to win substantial rewards.

The Wesleyan Choir became the Saltaire Prize Choir in 1889, and here are a few of their most notable achievements:-

- Held at Hawes, the Hardraw Scar Brass Band and Choral Contest was set in a natural outdoor amphitheatre. Saltaire Prize Choir won first prize in 1890, and went on to compete here with the same success for many years.
- In 1891, they performed at the Welsh National Eisteddfod in Swansea and picked up a second prize. They endured a 10 hour train ride to get there, performing before 30,000 people in a canvas tent in the rain.
- At Tanfield, near Newcastle, they were invited to the mansion of Sir Frederick Milbank, Bart, there they sang and were given the freedom to explore the house and gardens.
- After winning first prize at Morecambe in 1896, they returned home by train at 1-30am on Sunday morning to be greeted on the station by hundreds of supporters to welcome them back. In the pouring rain the crowd demanded a short concert on the railway bridge where the choir sang "The Sea Hath its Pearls" by Pinsuti and "Great God of Love" a madrigal in 8 parts by Pearsall – all without copies and under umbrella canopies.

But perhaps the best know of their achievements was their performance at the Second Annual International Music Traders' Exhibition, Royal Agricultural Hall, London in July, 1896, where they were awarded first prize of a Gebruder Knake white grand piano, worth 100 guineas.

**Angling Association** – GH Bayley of 12 Victoria Rd and J Hall of Market St, Bradford were agents.

Jack Reynolds notes that "There was a fishing club with one of there woollsorters as secretary which provided sport for about 100 men. It was supported by Titus Junior who established a trout farm at Milner Field and kept a stretch of the River Aire inside the Park stocked with fish".

**Thirty-ninth West Riding Rifle Volunteers** – J Crowther, Captain. Established in summer 1859. Edward Salt, George Salt and Titus Junior Salt held commissions in it for short periods and 90 young men in the village joined the ranks. Its armoury was located in Victoria Hall. Sir Titus provided beer for the men on manoeuvres.

**Shipley Musical Union Club.** Wainman St. Established 1880. Gentlemen only.

**Shipleigh Temperance Union.** General Committee meets at Rosse St School. Established 1892, for the promotion of temperance and general moral well-being of the community, by efforts of an educational, remedial and preventative character. In 1906 the Shipleigh Temperance Union was located at The People's Hall, Otley Road, between Dale Street and Cross Banks. (thanks to David King for this information). President Mr George Morrell.

**There follows extracts from overlooker biographies, with their involvement in local organisations highlighted**

**Baldwin, Samuel**

1815 – 25 July 1888

Samuel Baldwin was born c1814 in Guiseley. He married Sarah Greenbough 2 February 1840 at Christ Church Bradford. They had five children. By 1861 they were living at 34 (renumbered 60) George Street in Saltaire with Samuel working as an **overlooker**.

In August 1864 Samuel won a prize at the Saltaire Horticultural Show for his roses. By 1871 Samuel and his family had moved to 28 Victoria Road (renumbered 45 in 1880 then renumbered 71 in 1898) in Saltaire.

In March 1879 Samuel was elected as an **officer of the Saltaire Funeral Brief Society**.

Samuel died 25 July 1888 at 6 Mawson Street in Saltaire

**Barras, Abraham**

c1846 – 20 January 1925

Abraham married Sarah Horne 1 June 1868 at St Wilfrid's Calverley. They had six children, with one dying as an infant. They lived all their lives in Windhill.

In March 1885 Abraham was appointed **to represent Windhill on the Central Committee of the Shipleigh Liberal Party**.

**In February 1895 he was elected onto the Shipleigh School Board.**

He began work as a boy at Saltaire Mills in the spinning department and was a spinning overlooker for many years. On leaving Saltaire Mill he took up the insurance business for upwards of 20 years.

In his early manhood was a prominent member of the **Windhill Young Men's Institute**. Later he became associated with the **Windhill Wesleyan Mission**, and for nearly 60 years was a **well-known local preacher**. He was also actively identified with the local cooperative movement and was a **director of the Windhill Co-operative Society for 23 years**. He was for many years a **member of the Shipleigh Veterans Association**, and during the absence of Mr. Hulme (chaplain) conducted the weekly services.

**Boddy, John**

1843 – January 1915

John worked at Saltaire Mill for fifty four years in various jobs; warehouseman, weft man, worsted overlooker and clerk. He was an active member of the **Saltaire Wesleyan Church** and at one time or another held practically all the offices open to a layman.

**Amos Brear**

Amos died 14 March 1919. Report from the Shipley Times 21 March 1919 as follows: -

Originally a worker in Saltaire Mills, at which he became a spinning overlooker, he commenced in 1866, along with his brother, the drapery business in Saltaire Road. Mr. Brear was held in great respect and esteem by the tradesmen of Shipley, and this feeling found expression in 1906 when he was elected **President the Tradesmen's Association**. His connection with the Association dated from its formation.

At the time of his death Mr. Brear was the **senior deacon of the Saltaire Congregational Church, and he had served on the deaconate for 37 years**. For over 20 years he was **also treasurer** of the church. With the church and Sunday school at Saltaire he had indeed been closely connected for over 65 years, Mr. Brear was a **director for the last 15 years of the Bingley Building Society**, a meeting of which he attended a fortnight before his death.

**A lifelong Liberal, and a member of the West Ward Liberal Club, he unsuccessfully contested two Urban Council elections in 1899 and 1913.**

After he was 50 years of age, he became a keen and enthusiastic **cyclist**, and rode many thousands of miles,

### **Carr, John Francis**

1896 – 26 October 1917

John was born c1896 in Saltaire. In 1911 he was living with his parents at 60 George Street in Saltaire. John Francis was employed as a worsted piece overlooker in Saltaire Mill. He was well known as the **scorer for the Saltaire Cricket Club Second X1**. He was also connected with **Saltaire's Men Own** and the **Saltaire Horticultural Society**.

### **Carr, Henry**

1855 – 1924

During WW1 Henry served as secretary of the Shipley & District Ambulance Corps. Mr. Carr was one of the founders and **the first secretary of the Shipley Gala Committee** when it was formed in 1885, and up to these last few years had always taken an active part in the annual gala. He was also for several years' **secretary of the Yorkshire Voluntary Charitable Association**, having to resign owing ill-health. As an **ambulance worker**. Mr. Carr had gained several honours for long and valued service.

### **Constantine, Isaac**

15 November 1827 – 5 November 1898

Isaac was a wool sorter, which was his occupation throughout his life.

Isaac was a **keen gardener**. Living in Saltaire he won first prize for his potatoes at the Airedale Floral & Poultry Show 19 August 1856. This was the first of numerous awards he won for his vegetables.

In the 1861 census Isaac and his family were living at 5 (renumbered 10) Edward Street in Saltaire.

Isaac was **active in politics and in local affairs**.

In April, 1866 he chaired a meeting to consider the Government's Franchise Bill as part of the **National Reform League**

In March, 1871 he chaired a meeting celebrating the Saltaire Branch of the Leeds Industrial Co-operative Society Limited and the Saltaire Industrial Coal Society

Limited. Isaac was **director of the Saltaire branch of the Leeds Co-Operative Society.**

By 1871 Isaac and his family had moved to 33 (renumbered 76) Victoria Road in Saltaire, where they remained the rest of their lives.

In April 1874 at the annual meeting of **the Saltaire Club and Institute** Isaac was elected as one of sixteen **committee members.**

At the funeral of Sir Titus Salt (5 January 1877) **Isaac was one of twelve foremen of the works invited to officiate as a bearer, to carry the coffin** into the Saltaire Congregational Church from the hearse.

In July 1882 Isaac was reported as presiding at a meeting of the Saltaire Coal Society.

In January 1886 Isaac was elected to and appointed auditor for the **Shipley Liberal Hundred.** Throughout his life Isaac was involved with **Saltaire Cricket Club** and in 1893 was **vice chairman.**

### **Frank Dickinson**

Report from the Shipley Times 3 June 1953 as follows: -

**The award of the O.B.E.** to Mr Dickinson, of 58 Marlborough Road, Shipley in the birthday honours announced on Monday will be welcome news to many of Mr. Dickinson's friends and business associates.

He became the first full-time **secretary of the Bradford and District Power-Loom Overlookers' Society** in 1915. and in 1949 he was appointed a **director of U.K. Wool Disposals, Ltd.** Mr. Dickinson has been secretary of the Yorkshire Association of Power-Loom Overlookers ever since its inception in 1921. He was one of the **founder members of the National Association of Unions in the Textile Trade** 1916, was its chairman from 1943-46 and is still an Executive member. Mr. Dickinson served the **Wool Control Board** in both world wars; He was connected with the formation of the **Wool Textile Industrial Council** and has been a member of the management committee of the **General Federation of Trade Unions** since 1936. He has been a member of **Bradford Employment Committee** since 1920 and a member the **Appellant Tribunal**, for conscientious objectors' appeals since 1940.

In Shipley Mr. Dickinson is a **vice - president of Northcliffe Amateur Bowling Association and a member of Shipley Musical Union.** He was born in Saltaire and commenced work at Saltaire Mills when he was 10 years of age.

Frank died in 1962.

### **Doyle, Thomas Francis**

c1855 – 6 March 1933

Mr Doyle lived in Shipley for well over thirty years and was a **departmental manager** at the firm of Messrs. Salt's (Saltaire) Ltd.

He was perhaps best known for his political activities. In 1913 he **contested the West Ward as a Labour candidate** and was **elected a member of the Shipley Urban Council**, but on **four subsequent occasions he was returned unopposed as an Independent candidate for the same ward.**

In all he **served on the Council for 14 years**, and rendered valuable service as **chairman of the Baths, Public Health, and Promenade Concert Committees, and vice-chairman of the Education Committee.** During the war he was a member of the **Military Service Tribunal.**

A very keen musician. Mr. Doyle was a **past president of the Shipley Musical Festival**, with which he was associated for many years. He was also a member of the committee of the **old Saltaire Institute Society**, and a past president of the **Mills Male Voice Choir**.

Mr. Doyle was also a former **chairman the Shipley I.L.P.**, a **past president of the Saltaire Mills Bowling Club**; **member of Laycock's Debating Society, Bradford**; **a speaker on political economy**; **a member of the Astronomical Society**; and **a member of the old Shipley Operatic Society**.

As a young man he was an enthusiastic **Rugby Union player** and played wing three-quarter for the Buttershaw Club. His brother, Eddie Doyle, was the famous Bradford and Yorkshire full back.

### **Ellis, Fred**

19 Mar 1853 – 1947

He began work at eight in the Saltaire Mills and became a combing overlooker ten years later. He retired on a pension in 1927, after 66 years' service without a break. In his younger days he was a **notable cricketer**. He assisted in the formation of the Saltaire Cricket Club and played with the first team as batsman and wicketkeeper until he retired from the game in 1887. In those days the club consisted largely of employees of the Saltaire Mills, and the team was known as the "Millboys in white." In 1877 he played with the Saltaire and district "XV.," which defeated the full Notts County team, and he scored nearly 100 runs against the bowling of Billy Barnes, Morley, and Flowers.

Two years later he was selected by the **M.C.C.** to play with a team of All-England colts at Lord's and scored an outstanding success.

### **Ellis, Edwin**

27 April 1855 – 19 September 1940

Edwin Ellis was the son of Joseph Ellis a wool warehouseman.

In 1871 & 1881 they were living at 21 Victoria Road with Edwin working as a piece hooker then a weaving overlooker.

In 1891 they lived at 14 Almshouses (renumbered 37 Victoria Road). In 1901 & 1911 Edwin was a weaving manager living with his family at 34 Albert Road (renumbered 67).

Around 1914 they moved to 29 Avondale Road in Shipley where Edwin would spend the rest of his life.

#### **Report from the Shipley Times 28 May 1920 as follows: -**

"In the year 1864, before he was nine years of age, young "Ted" came to work in the mills as a half-timer and attended the school for half-timers held by the firm in the building now known as the Royal Café in Victoria Road.

At this tender age he worked in the drawing room of the spinning department, but after a few months, and before he attained the solemnity of ten years, he became a jobber, which occupation he followed for some four years.

At thirteen he was transferred to the weft room of the weaving department and was employed there in pegging bobbins. From the weft room he advanced to piece-hooking and weavers wages clerk, and at sixteen years of age, some 49 years ago, he took up the practical side of weaving.

At that time the workers were employed on the noted Donskoi wool, when three pieces per day were turned off the loom. This employment lasted some six months,

and in 1873 his future was definitely decided, when, on Sir Titus Salt's 70th birthday, young Ted became an apprentice weaving overlooker.

For nine years, including his apprenticeship, he worked on ladies' goods in the Dresses Department, and subsequently for eleven years was employed on men's wear in the Coatings Department. A further period was spent in charge of the Pattern Weaving, and on December 13th, 1894, a few months after the advent of Mr. James Roberts and his co-directors, Ellis was promoted to be the manager of the whole of the Weaving Departments, which position he has held up to the present time, making a total length of service of 55 years.

Natural capacity and determination resulted in a very wide and thorough technical knowledge, and this was recognised by the local authorities when, at the inception of the **Shipleigh Technical School** in 1887, Mr Ellis was placed in charge of the textile Department, and he held this position for five years.

He is a well-known character in old Saltaire, and in his younger days played in the **first eleven with the Saltaire Cricket Club**. He was in the team on the memorable occasion when they put out Scarborough for eleven runs.

Mr. Edwin Ellis is leaving with the tale of fifty-five years to his credit, and his brother, He was presented with a gold watch.

### **Excell, John (Jack)**

1 May 1879 – 6 March 1959

Mr John Excell, of 10 Springcliffe Street, Green Lane, Baildon, who died on Friday at the age of 79, retired last July after **69 years unbroken service at Saltaire Mills**.

He came of a family with a remarkable record of service, even at a firm where there is a tradition for generation to follow generation. His father, who lived to be 95, actually helped to build houses in Saltaire. and worked at the mill for more than 73 years. Mr. Excell's sister worked there for 47 years, and his son, Mr. Harold Excell, has been at the mill for 50 years.

Mr. John Excell was at Delph Hill, Baildon, and started working in the drawing department at the mill when only ten years old. For more than 40 years he was a carding overlooker. In his youth, Mr. Excell played **cricket with Baildon Green**. He was a **member of the New Prosperity Lodge of the Shipleigh District**.

**Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Manchester Unity, and of the Wood bottom Veterans' Association.**

### **Ferrand, William**

c1821 – 27 February 1903

In 1861 William was a spinning overlooker living with his family at 46 George Street (renumbered 72) in Saltaire. From 1881 they lived at The Green in Baildon where William was a wool buyer and merchant.

William died 27 February 1903. Report in the Shipleigh Times 6 March 1903 as follows: -

Mr Ferrand was well known and respected among all classes in the village, having held various public offices. He was throughout his life a **sterling Liberal**, and his death awakens memories of political struggles in the days before the household franchise was given to the counties, in which he took an active part.

Born at Cottingley, he had early in life to begin to earn his own livelihood, which he did first in a humble way as weaver, then as hand comber in Bradford. He was

employed at Messrs Forster Fison's when that firm removed from Bradford to Greenholme, Burley in Wharfedale. He graduated from one position of trust to another until about the year 1860, when he obtained the appointment of wool buyer at Saltaire Mills, a position which he held for many years, ultimately retiring from the firm to commence a business as a woolstapler on his own account in Bradford. Mr Ferrand was a member of the **Baildon Local Board** for about twelve years and was a district representative on the **Wharfedale Board of Guardians** over nine years. He was also on the executive committee of the old **East Division of the West Riding Liberal Association and of the Otley Division Liberal Executive Committee, and for many years a prominent member of the Otley and Baildon Liberal Clubs.**

### **George, Alexander**

c1840 – 28 March 1910

Alexander was a clothier with a shop on Commercial St, Shipley.

By 1874 Alexander and his family were living in Saltaire.

He was **very active politically** and felt strongly about a number of issues. He was a staunch **Liberal**

He was prosecuted and fined for refusing to have his children **vaccinated against smallpox**. In August, 1903, he presided at a mass meeting of 7,000 people welcoming home two men who had been imprisoned for refusing to have their children vaccinated.

He was president of **Saltaire Industrial Co-operative Society**

He objected to half-timer children being compelled to attend Albert Rd Board School.

He presided at the Sunday Lectures held at the Temperance Hall

He spoke at the meeting held at Wellcroft Field involving 2,000 attendees objecting to the House of Lords refusal to pass the **Franchise Bill**.

He presided at a meeting of the **Shipley Liberal Association** to elect members of the Liberal Hundred.

In January 1900 Alexander was elected **President of the Shipley Tradesmen Association** at their annual meeting.

He supported the candidature of Tom Townsend for re-election as the Liberal representative for the West Shipley Division on the County Council.

### **Gilbert, George**

24 March 1857 – 24 August 1927

Report from Shipley Times 6 December 1901 as follows: -

Employees of Saltaire Mills met at the Victoria Hotel to bid farewell to two of their older overlookers, Mr. Arthur Nutter and Mr George Gilbert who had been employed at the mill forty and thirty-six years respectively. Mr Nutter left to take charge of the weaving department at Buttershaw Mills and Mr Gilbert to an appointment at Yorkshire College.

### **Hanson, John**

1833 – 21 January 1919

John Hanson born in 1833 in Keighley. Aged just eight he worked for Daniel Salt (father of Sir Titus) in Bradford and subsequently he worked for Sir Titus too. When Saltaire Mills opened in 1853, John was the first overlooker in the spinning department. Later he would become an overlooker in drawing and combing.

In 1861 they were living at 6 Titus Street in Saltaire, in 1871 at 6 George Street. John was the **oldest member of the Overlookers' Union** in the Bradford when he died 21 January 1919.

### **Edwin Holdsworth**

c1839 – 8 April 1920

Report from the Shipley Times 16 April 1920 as follows: -

Death of a Shipley Veteran.

At the advanced age of 81 years, Mr. Edwin Holdsworth, 40 Victoria Road, Saltaire, died at his residence on Thursday in last week.

For 46 years he was employed as a weaving overlooker at Saltaire Mills. Mr. Holdsworth was connected with the **Rosse Street Baptist Church**, Shipley, ever since its erection in 1866, and he was a life deacon of the church and one of the first trustees. When the Sunday School was opened, he took charge of the infants' class, with which he kept up his connection for the long period of a quarter of a century. For some years he was teacher and superintendent. In November 1878, he was appointed superintendent of the Sunday School, a position which he held until November 1906.

The deceased was one of the oldest members of the **Shipley Veterans' Association**, **member of the Tree of Life Lodge**, **of the Shipley District 1.0.0. F. (M.U.)**, and of the **Saltire Liberal Club**.

### **Holdsworth, Michael**

c1822 – 1896

In 1871 Michael was living with his family at 4 Gordon Terrace (renumbered 57 Bingley Road), Saltaire. In 1871 he was an overlooker; 1881 a weft room manager, and by 1891 he had retired.

Chaired a public meeting of the Liberation Society in March, 1864

**President of the Saltaire Band of Hope** in May, 1866

**President of the Saltaire Branch of National Reform League** in February, 1867 which advocated residential registered manhood suffrage protected by ballot, and that the position taken by the government was vague, indefinite and unsatisfactory. Gave a lecture to the **British Temperance League** in February 1867.

Chaired a meeting of the Shipley and District Temperance Society in July, 1868

Addressed a meeting of the **Shipley and District Temperance Society** which set up a Band of Hope at a tea meeting in September 1868

Was secretary of the **Saltire Independent Co-Operative and Industrial Society Limited – 6 Victoria Road; Michael Holdsworth, 4 Gordon Terrace**

Michael & Martha lost their son, Alfred aged 24, in May 1878. His body was found in a canal in Birmingham. He was a cabinet maker and he had found employment. At the inquest into his death an "open verdict" was recorded.

### **Ince, John**

19 December 1862 – 18 May 1926

In 1891 John was a spinning overlooker, in 1901 a worsted foreman spinner, and 1911 was spinning manager.

He is active in **Saltire Wesleyan Church**.

### **Lamb, Joseph**

27 August 1877 – 1939

His father, John, played cricket for Baildon Green, then he was a “pro” for Manningham, and he was subsequently coach to Oxford University. John died in 1918 and Harriet in 1929.

In 1911 they were living at 48 George Street in Saltaire. By 1914 they had moved to 3 Myrtle Place in Saltaire, where they remained until 1934. From 1935 they lived at 13 Albert Road.

Joseph worked at Salt’s Mill for over 50 years. He started as a doffer aged just 10 in 1883. He was a spinner overlooker for over 40 years.

Like his father Joseph was a **keen cricketer. He played for Saltaire when Sydney Barnes was captain of the club.**

### **Mansfield, Alfred**

c1839 – 11 September 1915

In 1871 the family were living at 19 Amelia Street in Saltaire with Alfred working as a worsted spinning overlooker. By 1881 they had moved to 4 Lockwood Street where they remained the rest of their lives.

Alfred was a faithful member of the **Rosse Street Baptist Chapel** for many years and he was **secretary of the Shipley Veterans Association.**

### **Minakin, Fred**

1860 – 21 March 1903

Fred died 21 March 1903.

He was a twisting overlooker at Salts Mill.

As a sportsman he was on several occasions well to the front and was at one time first in the averages of the **Saltaire cricket team**, that being during the time of the membership of Harry Mosley and other well-known cracks. He was also owner of several prizes and medals which he had won in the sports at Saltaire Park, but his supremacy in any branch sport was only short-lived, though when he was at his best in any particular branch of athletics he was looked upon as a hero at Saltaire.

At the formation the **Saltaire Football Club** he was installed as secretary and held that position throughout the whole career of that now defunct club, and although he did not take any part in the working of the affairs the club, he was **referee in the Yorkshire Rugby Union.**

Joining the **Shipley & District Working Men's Club** as assistant secretary, which he held for 3 or years, afterwards taking over the office of secretary, which he held at the time of his death, having been 7 years in that office. He was also a member of the **Shipley Brass Band Social Club** and was for many years’ auditor for the **Baildon Working Men’s Club.** He leaves a widow and two children.

### **Mosley, Henry (Harry)**

8 March 1850 – 1 June 1922

Local cricketers who can recall the Saltaire Club in the eighties will learn with regret of the death of Mr. Harry Mosley, who about 30 years ago was a professional for Saltaire, and was regarded one of the best left-arm bowlers that time, he being associated with Dickie Barlow, who also was one of Saltaire’s professionals.

Mr. Mosley was a native of Shipley, and was employed as a drawing overlooker at Saltaire Mills, and about 30 years ago he emigrated to Sanford, Maine, U.S.A.,

where was employed a similar capacity for an American firm, where eventually he became manager over the drawing department, and retired pension some time ago. He was succeeded as manager by his son.

Regarding his **cricketing career**, a local enthusiast informs that Mosley played as a professional for 17 seasons—from 1874 to 1890 inclusive. He was considered the most destructive left arm bowler in the whole of the Aire Valley. In 1881 he was tried for Yorkshire County, for his bowling.

### **Pearson, Robert Crowther Wilkinson**

5 April 1841 – 15 November 1897

Mr Pearson, who was 58 years of age, had followed the employment of spinning overlooker at Saltaire Mills for about twenty years. About three or four years ago he went to Manningham Mills as a sweeper out.

The deceased only arrived back on Wednesday last from London, where he had been spending a month with his son. In his younger days Mr Pearson was a **vigorous Radical**, the interests of which party he consistently advocated and promoted up to the time of his death. **He was member of the Working Men's Club**

### **Redman, Ogden**

1847 – 12 October 1890

Ogden was not an overlooker. He was employed as a wool sorter at Salts Mill. His only involvement in village life was in the **Saltaire Industrial Co-operative Society**. He was appointed a compounder (along with Holdsworth and Stell) when a motion was put forward to wind up the Society in August 1876 he moved to Dalry in Scotland, where he was involved in the Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society in 1888.

### **Rushton, James Wilkinson**

15 August 1825 – 22 September 1893

James married Sarah Whiteoak 18 January 1846 at St Wilfrid's Calverley. They had a daughter, Ellen Elizabeth, born 23 September 1847. In 1851 they were living at One Street in Bradford with James working as an alpaca sorter. In 1861 they were living at 28 (re-numbered 54) George Street in Saltaire.

Sarah, James's wife, died in 1869. She was buried 1 September. In 1871 widowed James was a **wool sorting manager** living at 19 Victoria Road, Saltaire.

James married widow Amelia Smith (nee Ellison) 28 March 1872 in Bradford Cathedral. They had a son, Charles, born in 1875. Amelia died in 1877.

In 1881 & 1891 James was living at 74 Victoria Road in Saltaire.

James married Sarah Drake 11 January 1882 at St Paul's Shipley.

Report from the Wharfedale & Airedale Observer - Friday 30 September 1887: - Presentation of a portrait on the occasion of his **retirement after 53 years service** in Salts Mill as **foreman woolsorter**. He had joined the firm before Sir Titus created Saltaire - in fact he was the oldest employer about the premises.

James died 22 September 1893 aged 68 years. He lived at 32 Moorhead Crescent, Shipley (formerly of George Street, Saltaire),

### **Sanctuary, George**

1857 – 12 October 1932

Spinning overlooker with 60 years employment at Salts Mill. **Secretary of the Prize Choir and member of Congregational Church choir.** He was a staunch **Liberal** and his wife was one of the founder members of Shipley Women's Liberal Association.

### **Stell, John**

c1850 – November 1917

John's father George had been a spinning overlooker, and John was a spinner in 1861. He had a varied career. He then worked as a merchant's clerk, before becoming cashier in a worsted factory in 1891; in 1901 he was a manager in a braid factory and in 1911, he was an electrical cable manufacturer.

In 1878 he was involved in **Saltaire Industrial Co-op**, and was appointed one of the auditors when it was decided not to close the Society.

For many years he was **churchwarden** at St Paul's Church in Shipley and a teacher in the Sunday School.

At the annual vestry meeting of St Paul's Shipley in April 1885, John was nominated as one of twelve sidesmen.

At the annual meeting of the **Shipley Conservative Association** in January 1889 Edward Salt was elected as President and John Stell was elected as one of two **auditors**.

By 1897 John was living with his family at Wellington Crescent, Shipley.

At a special meeting of the Shipley District Council in May 1897 John was part of a three-man deputation who addressed the council about the condition of the back street of Wellington Crescent.

In 1914 he was elected as **secretary of South Ward Unionist Polling District Association**

### **William Tiffany**

(3<sup>rd</sup> October, 1835 to 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1899)

Secretary of **Saltaire Floral and Horticultural Society** and **Saltaire Industrial Coal Society**.

1851 William was a spinner aged 16.

1861 he was a wool sorter aged 26.

1869 he lived at 31, Helen St

1871 Census he was working as a wool sorter and living at 30, Albert Rd (renumbered 59). He was the eldest of 3 children who were employed as factory operatives.

He marries Susannah Airey and they had 10 children – Joseph (1858); Susannah (1859); Emily (1862); Fred (1864); Martha (1866); George (1868); Mary Ann (1870); William Arthur (1872); Elizabeth (1874); Lavinia (1877); Edith (1879 died Dec 1879).

Wife died 1884 and he remarried Sarah Locker

1881 census William still a wool sorter and living at 68, George St.

### **Varley, Sharp**

c1836 – 1881

Sharp Varley was born c1836 in Bingley as Sharp Cowgill, son of Mary Cowgill, father unknown. Mary married William Varley 2 October 1836 at St Michael's Haworth. Sharp then took the Varley name.

In 1851 they lived in Wilsden with William working as a labourer and Sharp as a power loom weaver. By 1861 they had moved to 1 (re-numbered 27) George Street in Saltaire with William working as a farm labourer and Sharp as a weaver. Sharp married Elizabeth Illingworth in 1866. They had four children. In 1871 & 1881 they lived at 57 Titus Street with Sharp working as a weaving overlooker. In May 1875 Sharp was reported as being a past **provincial grand master of the Bingley branch of the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows**. In March 1879 Sharp was elected as an **officer of the Saltaire Funeral Brief Society**. Sharp was associated with **Saltaire Cricket Club** in a non-playing capacity. Sharp died 4<sup>th</sup> Qtr. 1881.

### Others

#### **Bentley, Seth**

28 October 1833 – 23 June 1897

Seth Bentley was the son of James Bentley.

James was born c1793 in Baildon. He married Sarah Robinson 19 May 1912.

Seth, the youngest of 10 children, was born 28 October 1833 in Baildon. He was baptised 10 November 1833 in Otley.

Seth married Hannah Pollard in 1862. They had two children: Fred born c1864 and Sarah b c1869. In 1871 & 1881 they lived at 26 Caroline Street in Saltaire. By 1891 they had moved to 5 Bingley Road in Shipley.

By 1897 the family has moved to 29 Bradford in Shipley. Seth died 23 June 1897. He was buried in Nab Wood Cemetery in Shipley.

The following article was published in the Shipley Times 26 June 1897: -

'For some years he was a worker in the Saltaire Mills, under the late Sir Titus Salt, who had a high regard for him, and who selected him for post of manager of the public baths and wash house built by the late firm. For over twenty year Mr Bentley filled this position, which brought him in contact (often friend and helper) with nearly every family in the place.

Seven or eight years ago, when the baths were closed, he went into business on his own account as a laundry proprietor.

Mr Bentley was man of strong religious convictions. Many years ago, he became follower of Swedenborg, and was **one of the founders of the New Jerusalem Church at Saltaire**. He remained an active supporter of that church to the end, and he will be much missed by the community which meets there.

**In politics he was a staunch Radical, a strong anti-vaccination, and land reformer.** Early in 1891 he headed an important deputation of influential working men from Shipley and district to invite Mr Byles to become a candidate for the Shipley Division, on the retirement of Joseph Craven. He was at the same time, and for the express purpose of advocating this candidate, elected a **member of the Executive of the Shipley Division Liberal Association**, of which he was afterwards for several year **the president**. Mr Bentley, who enjoyed good health during the whole his life until his last illness, left behind him widow and one daughter. His only son was killed in America in 1891'.

## **Rhodes, Sutcliffe**

26 March 1837 – 19 September 1916

Sutcliffe married Alicia Ann Wallace 13 January 1862 at St Paul's Shipley. They had five children. In 1851 he was a woolcomber.

Letter in the Bradford Observer Thursday 04 April 1867: -

Sutcliffe makes a plea for woollsorters who are laid off when demand is poor and re-employed when it picks up again.

He was living at Ada St.

Letter in the Bradford Observer Thursday 25 July 1867: -

Sutcliffe wants investigation into **anthrax** – 'clouds of dust and keenly penetrating hairs' which cause woollsorter deaths.

And on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 1868, he reports that a philanthropic gentleman and an eminent physician are interesting themselves in the problem.

Then on 12 March, 1868, he writes to praise the discussion taking place to look for solutions to this problem, albeit with the rejection of a mask.

Report in the Leeds Times Saturday 26 December 1874 of a meeting at the Temperance Hall devoted to discussion of the woollsorter's disease, at which detailed medical evidence was advanced. Sutcliffe was one of the main speakers.

Letter in the Bradford Observer Thursday 05 March 1868: -

A plea for the creation of a place in Shipley for young men to meet for self improvement, similar to the Saltaire Literary Institute. Writing from Baildon.

In 1871 Sutcliffe was a **wool sorter** living with his family at 14 Wycliffe Place in Shipley.

Letter in the Bradford Observer Thursday 25 November 1875 entitled 'Slavery in the Spinning room'. Sutcliffe deploras the practice of overworking child spinners and physically abusing them. He cites the sight of an emaciated form of a spinning girl rendered helpless by the scandalous abuse of an overlooker. And the dying spinner boy who said the 'Ellis Brook has pawsed me right hard'.

Sutcliffe is living at Mildred St, Bradford in 1875.

In 1881 Sutcliffe was a commercial traveller living at 10 Orchard Street in Bradford.

Alicia, Sutcliffe's wife, died 3<sup>rd</sup> Qtr. 1890.

In 1891 Sutcliffe was living alone at 130 Mildred Street, Bradford.

He married Harriet Lord 9 May 1891 at All Saints, Bingley.

Report from the Bradford Daily Telegraph Saturday 19 March 1892, that Sutcliffe was before the Bankruptcy Court for public examination and was allowed to pass.

He admitted having appropriated money belonging to the Liverpool, Yorkshire and Lancashire Tea Company but was re-engaged by them at less salary, the difference going to pay off his defalcations.

In 1901 Sutcliffe was living alone at 19 Moorhead Lane in Shipley.

Sutcliffe married his third wife, Charlotte Squires, in 1910. In 1911 he was living with her family at Sibsey in Lincolnshire.

(Sibsey is a village 4m north of Boston. In 1911 it had a population of 1,004).

Sutcliffe died 19 September 1916 aged 79 years

## **In conclusion**

There is ample evidence that overlookers performed essential management roles in Salts Mill.

Without their innovative and organisational skills in the community, life for Saltaire residents would have been much less rich and rewarding. They are the unsung heroes of the Saltaire story.

We shouldn't forget the broader picture too. Bringing large numbers of workers together in factories stimulated an awareness of their shared condition. It encouraged their involvement in the political process, in the growth of trade unions, in manhood suffrage and the National Reform League, and ultimately in the Independent Labour Party in 1893. The more radical and active Saltaire overlookers played a role in this journey, as their biographies reveal.

Roger Clarke  
February, 2020