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A History of Shevington Parish Council

by Maurice Allen

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to mark the Centenary, of the Council
1894 - 1994

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and especially to

Cllr A. Sudworth. chairman,

Mr M. Holden, clerk,

and Members of Shevington parish council

and

i

Mrs S. Ball

Mr J. Brown

Mr R. Ellwood

Mrs D. Henry

Miss G. Hilton

Mr G. Kelly

Mr R. Randall

Miss E. Richardson

Mrs M. Summers

Mrs N. White

Mr J. Winnard

CHAPTER ONE

One hundred years ago, and as it is today, the Parish of Shevington was neatly divided by the two highways which run, one from North to South, the other from East to West. In the centre of the Parish the two roads merge to form Broad o'th' Lane, around which the village of Shevington has grown. Shevington Lane leads to Shevington Moor, and the village of Almond Brook on the northern boundary, Gathurst Lane, to Gathurst, the railway station, the Leeds and Liverpool canal, and the River Douglas which marks the southern boundary. Again, from Broad o'th' Lane, Church Lane joins Wigan Road at Club House farm, and after crossing the Parish eastern boundary, gives access, by Crooke Road, to Crooke Village situated alongside the Leeds and Liverpool canal. Before the construction of the M6 motorway Miles Lane led from Broad o'th' Lane to Shevington Nook, and to Shevington Vale on the western boundary, whereas now, access is from Gathurst Lane by New Miles Lane.

The routes of the two highways are much as they were one hundred years ago. The first significant change occurred when St. Anne's Church was built in 1887, and Church Lane was constructed. Prior to this Wigan Road joined Shevington Lane, by what we now know as Old Lane, and a cart track with the evocative title of Cinnamon Lane led, by field and farm, to the village of Crooke. According to one old document the village blacksmith and his family lived and worked at number one Cinnamon Lane. Credibility is given to this account, in that the window in the first house in Church Lane is set in a bricked up archway, which was presumably the entrance to the smithy. Descendants of the blacksmith's family tell me that the village blacksmith became a colliery blacksmith on the opening up of the Prince Albert colliery in nearby Shevington Lane.

At a Parish Council meeting on the 18th July 1900, it was agreed that the Wigan Rural District Council be asked to adopt the Shevington to Crooke Road, from the executors of the George Gilroy's Crooke Estate. The road to Crooke village from Wigan Lower Road, was built by the Wigan Coal and Iron Co. in the early part of this century, to facilitate access to their coal barge loading point at Crooke. The only other re-routing of the highways occurred when the northern end of Shevington Lane was re-routed to create an M6 motorway access road.

The routes may have changed very little, but the construction, composition and maintenance of the roads since the advent of the motor vehicle, has been changed completely. The two highways, for at least the first quarter of this century were country roads, built for horse drawn traffic, often following the old pack horse routes. There is recorded evidence of a bridge over the River Douglas at Gathurst in the sixteenth century. The materials for building and maintenance were, in the first instance, stone and sand, both of which were readily available.

The Industrial Revolution, with its coal generated steam power, meant that ashes could replace the sand. At a Parish Meeting in 1881 this was agreed, and some ten years later all ashes were obtained from works within the Parish boundary. There were no footpaths, and surface water was collected in the ditches on each

side of the road. Cobblestones were used on an incline, and in front of houses and buildings which fronted the road.

One can well imagine that these roads would be dustbowls in summer and quagmires in winter. The most significant change came with the use of macadam, and the steam driven road roller. A base of two and three inch diameter hard-core was covered with molten tar and a layer of stone chippings covered the tar. The heavy steam roller completed the operation. The cobblestones on the inclines were re-laid, set in tar, before eventually being covered with macadam. Stone kerbs and footpaths were constructed, and kerbside grids collected and drained off the surface water.

Until the end of the nineteenth century the Leyland Hundred Highway District was the authority responsible for the maintenance of the highways in the Parish. Each year they notified the Overseers of the Poor in the said Parish, at their next meeting, to elect a Waywarden. The Waywarden would take charge of all necessary road works in the Parish. The Waywarden should be a person living in the Parish, or in any adjoining Parish, having an estate in houses or land in the Parish in his own right, or in right of his wife, of the yearly value of £ 10, or a personal estate of £ 100, or being an occupier or tenant of hereditaments to the yearly value of £20. Should a vote be taken for the election of a Waywarden, the allocation of votes was, to each ratepayer, one vote in respect of £50 rateable value. Upwards of £50, one additional vote in respect of every £25 rateable value, but not to exceed a total of six. The elected Waywarden was almost inevitably a local farmer, in that, in addition to the required qualification, he had the horses and carts for the cartage of road materials. In the early days of this century, responsibility for the highways passed from the Leyland Hundred District to the Lancashire County Council.

In addition to the highways a network of footpaths criss-crossed the Parish in every direction. Shank's pony being the only available way to travel for the majority of villagers, these paths through the fields were the shortest distance to your place of work, the next village, to Wigan or to wherever you chose to go. In my youth we still referred to these paths as travelling by Crooke Fields or Standish Fields. The maintenance of these footpaths was, in the early days, the responsibility of the Parish Council, which later passed to the Wigan Rural District Council. The present day Parish Council does retain powers to maintain paths, but prime responsibility is now with Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council.

The Parish boundaries are much as they were one hundred years ago, the northern and eastern boundaries being marked by the stream which runs from Robin Hill, through Mill Dam and EInupWoods, to join the canal at Crooke.

The western boundary is the stream which runs from Wrightington Hall fishponds through Shevington Vale to join the canal at Appley Bridge. The southern boundary is the River Douglas.

CHAPTER TWO

One hundred years ago, the older inhabitants of our Parish would be looking back to the events which had changed the pattern of their lives. They had been born into a land where the sundial marked the time of day, and where candlelight lit the darkness. The land on which they lived and worked belonged to the titled families, often bestowed by the Crown for services rendered, services which included the recruiting of their sons to fight the King's enemies. The Crown and the Church had governed their lives.

They had celebrated Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee, seen the ever growing red coloured parts of the world atlas which represented the British Empire, and lived through an industrial revolution. They had seen the coal generated steam power destroy their cottage industries of spinning and weaving, and the smoke rising from the chimneys of the factories and the foundries in nearby Wigan.

Their livelihood had become less dependent on the estates and on the land, and the presence of coal in the Parish, and the proximity of the River Douglas, had created a new industry. Some of the earliest coal mining in the Wigan coal field was done in the Parish. Coal mined in the Calico Wood area was carried by a tramway passing by Hullet Hole Farm and Shevington Nook to the river at Appley Bridge, and a tramway from Naylor's Farm carried coal from bell pits in that area to the river at Deane. On the Orrell side of the River Douglas, at Gathurst Bridge, a channel had been cut to create a loading point for coal from the Orrell area.

In the nineteen thirties there was still a submerged flat bottomed boat at this loading point. Two of these craft could be seen, erected on posts about four feet high, in use as 'scratching sheds' for the poultry in the hen pens, one at the rear of the 'Plough and Harrow' and the other in a hen pen which is now the Parish Hall car park. Coal from the north eastern end of the Parish was carried by a tramway passing west of Club House farm through Lawns Wood to Crooke. The raised bank at Club House farm and again at Lawns Wood are all that remain as relics of that enterprise.

Deeper shafts were being sunk, and at the Prince Albert colliery in 1861 an explosion had killed ten miners, and severely injured five. Those who died were from Broad o'th' Lane, and the Barracks on Shevington Lane. Amongst those who died were James Ashcroft, aged 47, and his two sons, aged 15 years and 13 years. A boy of 12 years also died in this explosion. The chimney of the Prince Albert colliery, twelve foot square at the base, and one hundred and forty four feet high was felled in 1927. It was felled in what was then claimed to be a record time of fifty nine and a half minutes, this from entering the site to the fall of the chimney.

Before the Ecclesiastic Commissioners created the Parish of St. Anne's, Shevington was a part of the Parish of St. Wilfred's Standish in the Diocese of Manchester, and the Standish Church vestry clerk was responsible for the collection of church taxes. The Poor Law and the Local Government Act in the early years of the century had marked the first significant change in the government of the Parish.

The locally elected Waywardens had opened up the prospect of a more democratic style of government. Piped water had replaced the wells, paraffin lamps the candles, and canal boats, the river. Though much had improved, they were, in the words of a memorial address to St. Anne's first vicar, "almost entirely of a class in whose lives hard work had left no place for education or refinement".

CHAPTER THREE

The first recorded meeting of the ratepayers of the 'Township of Shevington' took place on the 31 st March 1852, in the house of Mr Hugh Woods. at the sign of 'The Brown Cow'. The business in hand was, 'to make out a list of persons fit and proper to serve the offices of Overseers, Surveyor of the Highways and Assessors of Her Majesty's Income Tax'. The list was to be prepared and forwarded to her Majesty's Justices.

The first elected chairman was Mr. James Goben, and the Board members were, Mr. W. Stopforth, Stephen Richardson, Thos. Park, Luke Hooton, John Taylor, Ralph Orrell, James Orrell, Ellis Ambrose, and John Collier.

Thos. Hilton was appointed Highways Surveyor at a salary of £4.00 per annum, and James Goben was appointed Overseer of the Poor. Messrs Luke Hooton and Thos. Hilton were empowered to engage a mole catcher, at a salary of not more than £2-10-0d per annum.

Although this is the first recorded meeting, the first few pages of the book are taken up with the Income and Expenditure account of 'The Overseers of the Poor', in a/c with 'The Township of Shevington'. 'The Overseers of the Poor', were known locally as the 'Board of Guardians', or the 'Local Board'. The first entry is dated 29 November 1838 and reads:

| Income | £ | s | d | Expenditure | £ | s | d |
|-----------|----|---|---|-----------------|----|---|----|
| Poor Rate | 81 | 6 | 0 | Guardian's Call | 14 | 1 | 0 |
| | | | | County Rate | 31 | 3 | 10 |
| | | | | Bank Commission | | 2 | 4 |
| | | | | Guardian's | | 2 | 0 |
| | | | | Postage | | | 5 |
| | | | | | 46 | 4 | 7 |
| | | | | Balance | 35 | 1 | 5 |
| | 81 | 6 | 0 | | 81 | 6 | 0 |

The last entry I 1848 shows that both income and expenditure has more than doubled. Some of the items of expenditure make interesting reading, viz. 1/- for making oath to Lunatic List, 2/- for making oath to accounts, 6/- Journey to Preston with man accused of bastardy.

The local Board along with representatives from each of the neighbouring Parishes met once a month at the Guardian's Room in Wigan. The qualifications required to become a Guardian were the ones which also governed the election of a

Waywarden.

Although the Board of Guardians were responsible for the collection and payments from the Poor Rate, and the upkeep of the Church School in Miles Lane, their powers were limited. The Church was still the dominant authority. Permission to use the school, for Parish or public meetings must first be obtained from the Rector of Standish Parish Church.

The second meeting was held at the house of Thomas Moorfield, at the sign of the 'Hesketh Arms' at Almond Brook, when Thomas Heaps was appointed 'Mole Catcher' at a salary of £3.00 per annum. Each member of the Board signed the contract. Meetings were held once a year on what was apparently a rota system. At the third meeting held at the house of Richard Stopforth, at the sign of the 'The Plow' Shevington, mention is made of Will Yates, as being the Church Rate Collector.

Three years later 'The Plow' sign has changed to become 'The Plow and Harrow'. The house of John Atherton in the first instance is at Gathurst Bridge, and later at 'The Navigation'. One other inn mentioned, is the house of Abraham Cartmel at the sign of the 'The Duncan Arms' at Crooke, and the meeting held in 1861, was at the house of George Holland, at the sign of the 'George and Dragon', at Shevington.

One local inn which does not show amongst the list of venues, is the 'Victoria Inn' in Miles Lane, now the Conservative Club. Was this perhaps 'The Brown Cow' of the first meeting place? No one to whom I have spoken could recollect any inn of that name in Shevington. The 'Victoria Inn' was for sale by auction in 1883, as 'a freehold dwelling used as a beer house'. The only bid was of £300, and the property was withdrawn. The school in Miles Lane, known then as the Church School, was first used for meetings in 1865. In 1869 a meeting was called to discuss the tithe rate. No one bothered to attend and from this point the meetings returned to their former venues, the village inns.

At a meeting held at the 'Hesketh Arms', Almond Brook in 1876, Edward Ball of Whitehall farm Shevington, was elected Waywarden. Edward Ball can truly be said to be one of the founding fathers of Shevington Parish Council. From here on the pace of events quickened. In 1877 and 1878 the minutes record large attendances of ratepayers and long meetings. There was much more competition for a seat on the Board. A fairly recent Local Government Act had increased the number allowed to hold office.

The Board had won an appeal regarding the rating of the Church School cottage, on the grounds that it lay within the school boundary, and in 1879 were chastised by the Rev. Canon Brandreth of Standish Parish Church for using the school for a public meeting without his permission. An application was made to the Postmaster for a free delivery of letters. By now the Parish account showed an income of £980-4s-6d, and expenditure of £904-14s-6d.

By 1884, the Board had begun to discuss the advisability of a piped water scheme

for the Parish. Public meetings were held at the local inns to gauge the ratepayers' reaction. Mr. G. Heaton, Civil Engineer, of King Street, Wigan, was engaged to prepare a plan and estimate, to be put before a meeting of ratepayers held at the 'Plow and Harrow' on the 7th January 1885. The motion to adopt the scheme was passed, the voting being 14 for and 13 against, the estimated cost of £1845-0-0 being the reason for the narrowest of majorities.

The first meeting of the ratepayers of the Parish of Shevington, following the Local Government Acts of 1894 was held at 6.30 p.m., on the 4th December 1894, at the Broad o'th' Lane Board School. There were approximately eighty electors present. Mr. D. Clough, Hon. Overseer, was appointed Chairman to regulate the voting for the appointment of a Chairman. It was moved by Henry Hilton of Club House Farm, and seconded by Thomas Hilton of Highfield farm, that Mr. Edward Ball, of Whitehall farm, be appointed Chairman. There were no amendments, and Mr. Ball was elected. Documents for the use of the Chairman were,

- 1) Local Government Board, Circular letter of instructions.
- 2) Copy of Register of Electors.
- 3) Parish Council Election Order.
- 4) Copy of Extracts of above order.
- 5) Supply of Nomination Papers.
- 6) Small handbook for Chairman's guidance.

The Chairman asked for nominations of Parish Councillors to be written on the slips of paper provided. These were collected, and numbered as received. There were 28 nominations, representing 17 candidates for 7 seats on the Council. The Chairman then allowed ten minutes for the consideration of withdrawals.

Each candidate or proposer was then asked if they had decided to withdraw; there were no withdrawals. The Chairman put to the vote, by show of hands, in favour of each candidate nominated. The voting was

| | | | | | |
|----|--------------------|----|-----|----------------------|----|
| 1 | William Ashton | 27 | 10. | John Gore | 33 |
| 2. | William Blackledge | 27 | 11. | James Gore | 32 |
| 3. | William Blight | 27 | 12. | John Gray | 22 |
| 4. | James Conway | 25 | 13. | Peter Liptrot | 43 |
| 5. | James Sean Clough | 27 | 14. | James Lyon | 48 |
| 6. | John Fairhurst | 27 | 15. | Alexander Richardson | 26 |
| 7. | Richard Fairhurst | 26 | 16. | Peter Tickle | 17 |
| 8. | Edward Fairhurst | 23 | 17. | John Valentine | 20 |
| 9 | James Fowler | 21 | | | |

The Chairman allowed fifteen minutes for discussion, after which it was agreed that a poll be held on the 17th December 1894. Following the result of the election, the council met on the 31 st December 1894 when James Gore was

appointed Chairman, and Mr. Lee was appointed Clerk to the Council. It was agreed that meetings be open to the public. The meeting was adjourned to the 30th January 1895 when the Parish precept was set at £20-0s-0d, the Clerk's salary at £5-0s-0d per annum, and the Treasurer's Insurance at 10/-s per annum. The cost of the Parish Seal was £1-2s-6d. Dates of future meetings were fixed for the second Wednesday of January, April, July, and October, an arrangement which was short-lived, as special meetings were called in March, to discuss the condition of Crooke Road, (Cinnamon Lane) and the Shevington Charities.

These charities known later as the Shevington United Charities, had been endowed for the poor of the Parish by, a Mr. Holt, a Mr. Aspinall, a Mr. Birchall, and a Mr. Threlfall, and were allocated by the Rector of Standish Parish Church. It was said that the poor of Shevington were not receiving any support from the charities. The Council also considered an earlier appointment of a Trustee by the Rector as illegal, in that the notice had only been posted at one church in the Parish, ignoring the Methodist Churches. The Council appointed five Trustees of the Shevington Charities, which they asked the Charity Commissioners to approve and sanction. The charity continues to this day, the Parish Council appointing three Trustees.

At the Annual General Meeting held on the 17th April 1895, the accounts presented were

Income, Rates etc., and Fines £1813-16s-6d

Expenditure £1165-19s

| The principal items of expenditure were | £ | s | d |
|---|-----|---|---|
| Guardians Call | 285 | 0 | 0 |
| School Board | 32 | 0 | 0 |
| Sanitary Expenses | 98 | 0 | 0 |
| Highways | 237 | 0 | 0 |

It is interesting to find that education has now become the major item of expenditure. Board schools had been built at Crooke and Shevington, and free education was becoming available, requiring accommodation for a huge increase of pupils. A Technical Instruction Committee of Edward Ball, A. Richardson, and W. Ashton would oversee the night school teaching of the following subjects:

- Crooke School - Mining Shevington
- School - Horse Shoeing Almond Brook
- School - Nursing

There were complaints that Crooke roads were unsanitary, that water meters had not been installed, that the road at Gathurst was littered with small boulders, and that the Rector of Standish had refused to discuss the allocation of the Shevington Charities. Crooke Post Office was now available for Money Orders, and as a Post

Office Savings Bank. There was now no Saturday afternoon collection of post, but a Sunday evening collection was in operation from Gathurst. Permission was granted to Mr. James Lyon to build six new houses in Broad o'th' Lane.

The Charity Commissioners had approved and sanctioned the appointment of three Councillors as Trustees of the Shevington Charities, and it was agreed that the home address of each recipient be printed on the annual statement of the Shevington Charities.

In 1897 the council enrolled as a member of the Parish Councils Association. Attendances at Council meetings had decreased, and on one occasion only two members arrived, and the meeting was abandoned. This meeting was replaced by a Special Meeting which fixed an election date for the 14th March. The newly elected council resolved to support an amendment to the Local Government Act of 1894. A copy of the resolution was forwarded to Lord Balcarres, with a letter to enlist his support for the amendment. An application to divert a footpath was received from the Grove Chemical Co. Ltd., and this was agreed, subject to compliance with the Highway Act of 1835. In reply to a separate letter from the same company, it was pointed out that the Council had no power to authorise a certificate for the manufacture of Benzine. They would suggest writing to the Wigan Rural District Council, or Her Majesty's Justices.

A discussion on the provision of hosepipes and funnels for firefighting was adjourned. A public meeting of ratepayers was to be held regarding the adoption of the Lighting and Watching Act. Following this meeting a sub-committee was formed to examine samples and quotations of fire appliances without steam power. The school cleaner was granted an extra 5/- per annum.

An agreement was signed with Wigan Corporation for the supply of gas to Crooke village. Eight street lamps would be erected at a cost of £2-9s-6d per lamp. There were five applicants for the lamplighter's job, three aged fourteen years, and two aged sixty years, tendering from two shillings to four shillings per week. John Taylor was appointed at a salary of 2s/6d per week. His duties were, to report any escapes of gas or breakages, to inform the clerk of any abuse e.g., stone throwing, climbing of lampposts, or interference in the discharge of his duties. The fire appliances had been used on fires at the Roburite works and at a farm fire at Shevington Moor. There had been considerable damage, but no loss of life.

Mr. Edward Ball, already a Magistrate by virtue of his office as Guardian, had completed thirty years of service as a Waywarden, and as a Guardian, and in recognition of his service was appointed as a permanent Justice of the Peace. The street gas lamps at Crooke would be lit "whether the night be moonlit or not", and the parents of Thomas Darwin and Richard Thomas had been warned about their sons swinging on the gaslamp pillars. The Wigan Coal and Iron Company were to build a new access road into Crooke, from Wigan Lower Road, to facilitate their coal loading point at the canal. The Methodist Church at Crooke was disputing the Council's right to levy a water rate on the Church, which had its own source of supply.

| | | | |
|------------------------------------|------|----|---|
| The rating value of the Parish was | £ | s | d |
| Buildings | 5618 | 17 | 0 |
| Land | 1330 | 6 | 1 |
| TOTAL | 6949 | 3 | 4 |
| producing a penny rate | 24 | 10 | 0 |

The tenant farmers, who had been largely involved in the implementation of the early Local Government Acts, and the Poor Law, were in the main, the ones who had led the way in the formation of the Parish Council. The names of these farming families are mentioned in Board and Council minutes covering a period of one hundred and fifty years, the Ball's, the Hilton's, the Richardson's, the Ashton's and the Martland's.

It was only when free education became available that the composition of the Council began to change. First of all, the headmasters of the Board Schools, which they had established, became involved, and many years later, many of their pupils, having had the benefit of their teaching, were literate and articulate, and well able to represent their parishioners on the Council.

More subtle changes can be detected when reading the Council minutes. In the early part of this century when Methodism was challenging the established Church, Methodist Council members won the right to have Council notices displayed at Methodist as well as C of E churches. Again in the nineteen twenties, a political aspect is beginning to appear. As a youngster myself at that time, we would gather together at the Broad o'th' Lane School on election day, and chant 'Vote Vote Vote for Mr _____' the Labour candidate. Elections were much more exciting in those days. There were motor cars with election posters, but no loud hailer, and we didn't see many motor cars in Shevington. Rather than train spotters, we were car spotters, collecting registration numbers.

CHAPTER FOUR

The social life of the Parish was centred on the churches and the village inns. The new Board schools had added a new dimension to the range of activities. Barn dances were leaving the farms for the more spacious and comfortable schoolrooms. By far the greater part of the fund raising events were staged at the schools. Dances, Concerts, Whist Drives, the showing of lantern slides, were some of the most popular events. The village inns, many of which were open at six o'clock in the morning, and remained open all day, were still the focal point of village life. Almost all of the outdoor leisure activities were organised and run from the village inn. There were fishing clubs, picnic clubs, burial clubs, and on winter evenings, dominoes, darts, hoop la rings, and on one or more weekends in the winter the pastry feast. The new Plough and Harrow had a billiard room.

Shevington having comparatively recently acquired its own new church in 1887, it is perhaps not surprising that the local inn was replaced by the latest model of the Brewers Society. In order to maintain the continuity of the licence, the new inn was built around and over the old one, following which, the old one was demolished and taken out through the doorways of the new buildings. I recall, as a boy, I asked my dad how had they contrived to get the large stone copings on to the roof He told me that an Irishman nicknamed Ajax carried them on this shoulder. I wouldn't know if it were true, but I was given the same answer by an old resident some fifty years later. A recorded minute of the Parish Council concerns the noise created by a steam driven mortar mill on the site. This machine in itself would be a source of excitement.

In 1864 a Primitive Methodist Society with a membership of twelve, met in a cottage at Woodcock Row in Crooke inspired no doubt by the zeal of the early Methodist preachers who, posing a threat to the established church were the object of much harassment. One preacher named Bastow, was imprisoned for daring to preach in Wigan Market Place, and the bellringers at Standish Parish Church were paid two shillings and sixpence to break up a Methodist meeting, and drive the offenders from the village.

Thomas Batty, a preacher from Hull, was largely responsible for the formation of the Wigan Circuit of nine societies which included Crooke. In 1867 land had been purchased and a church built, regardless of the fact that there were only twenty four members in the Crooke society. A condition attached to the land purchase was that a day school could not be established, as there was a C of E school in the vicinity. Water from the roof of the church was collected in a tank, and this was sufficient for their requirements. When they declined to pay a water rate bill, the bailiffs made off with the Trustees fireside chair, which the elder members of the society immediately went and snatched back.

In the meantime, in 1865, Thomas Woosnam, the prosperous village storekeeper, had built twenty houses in the village, one of which he converted into a Wesleyan Chapel and which was known locally as the 'Cathedral'. Overcrowding brought about its closure in 1894-95, and its congregation joined the Primitive Methodist

Chapel. It may therefore be said that United Methodists was a fact in Crooke, forty years before the official union.

Mr. Sutherland (Sunny) Richardson, a member of the Council, had been appointed School Attendance Officer by the Board of Guardians. He would not wish to continue as a Councillor, if, in the opinion of the Council, his new post would constitute a conflict of interests. The Council decided that no conflict of interests would be involved. In reply to the Council enquiry, the Wigan Corporation Gas Company said that a gas supply for Shevington was not feasible. This would appear to have been a period when the Council were dealing only with the usual repairs to footpaths etc. The celebration of King Edward's coronation was in the hands of a voluntary committee, which the Council promised to assist, by a donation, should voluntary contributions fail to cover expenditure. The school children had celebrated the relief of Mafeking by marching around the village waving flags, and older children had helped the elderly to fill in census forms.

The Roburite works at Gathurst had outgrown the site it occupied, and had acquired land in the Parish. An iron bridge now crossed from Gathurst station to the new site, passing over the River Douglas and the Leeds and Liverpool canal. A huge boulder was blocking the footpath at Fairclough's Farm, Shevington Moor, and the fire appliances had been borrowed and used by Charnock Richard Parish Council. Mr. Marsh, the WRDC Surveyor was appointed Surveyor for footpaths, at a rate of £ 1 per survey plus 5% of the cost of repair. There was a request for a Flagman at the railway footpath at the Grove Chemical Works. The Council agreed to support the Lancashire County Council's proposal to donate the sum of £10,000 to the British Cotton Growing Association, to commemorate the King's coronation. Mr. Blight did not vote. The Council were to visit Anglesarke the source of Shevington water supply, and in reply to the Council's request for a public telephone, the Postmaster at Wigan considered that the one at Standish was quite convenient. There would be a rate increase, due to reduced coal working in the Parish. Mr. Harry Ball had been appointed Waterman. There were complaints of low gas pressure at Crooke, and the lamplighter had been insured at a cost of seven pence per week.

No mention is made in the Parish Council minutes of there being any lady Councillors, although it is recorded that in 1913, Miss Derbyshire was appointed as one of the School Managers. Signs of the impending war were appearing, in the forms and leaflets issued by the Ministry of Agriculture, informing the farmers how to treat their land, and how to feed their pigs and poultry. Of more immediate concern to the Parish however, was the death of Edward Ball. Mr. Blight the headmaster at the Broad o'th' Lane School wrote in his school log book, "The pupils and staff lined up on each side of the lane, and as the cortege passed, bowed their heads in respect, to a very worthy gentleman."

At the outbreak of war the street lamps at Crooke were lit thirty minutes later and extinguished thirty minutes earlier, and in 1916 all street lighting was banned. The Brevet Colonel, 8th Recruiting Area held numerous meetings in the Parish, and the

village lads were learning to ride bare back on the horses at Whitehall farm, hoping to enlist in the cavalry. Letters were despatched to Wm. H Gaskell of 35 Crooke pointing out the severity of the offence of putting out the gas lamp next to 37 Crooke, and to Sgt. Whyllis reporting the prompt action, and first aid rendered by Pc Gaskell to Ellis Aspinall on 15th March at 1.00 p.m. Statutory elections were postponed for a year, and applications were made for public telephones for Shevington, Crooke and Almond Brook. Gas prices rose from 2/10d to 3/7d per 1000 cu ft.

On the 15th March 1916, an explosion at the Roburite factory shook the area. Windows were blown out in Shevington and Crooke, and most of the villagers abandoned their homes, leaving everything, and made for the open fields. Two workers were killed by the explosion, and there were rumours that some of the soldiers stationed there on guard duty during the war were killed, but this was never verified. The inquest on the two employees was only held after the war had ended.

In 1917 the Council Clerk was authorised to purchase a leather bag for carriage of the Council books, to cost no more than one pound, fifteen shillings, and a letter copying book. The Shevington Parliamentary Division was transferred from Chorley to Wigan. The audit stamp cost was reduced to five shillings as the Council's expenditure was below twenty pounds.

The war was now over, and it was agreed that Shevington soldiers who had won awards, would have the awards recognised by a gift when names came to hand. An interview with a local farmer regarding the use of a part of his land for allotments, resulted in his following assessment of compensation for the first year of its use at an allotment

| | £ | s | d |
|--------------------|----|----|---|
| Unexhausted Manure | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| Unspent Lime | 1 | 16 | 0 |
| Clover Seed | 2 | 4 | 0 |

Total 16 0 0

and a yearly rental of £2-10s-d per annum which was rejected.

For the Peace Celebrations it was suggested that all school children, and children from three to fourteen years of age, and all residents over sixty years of age, be invited to a tea and field treat. A sum of seventy pounds to be spent, which was equivalent to a two penny rate. The final account required.

| | £ | s | d |
|-------------------------|----|----|---|
| Food | 30 | 11 | 1 |
| Entertainers | 2 | 3 | 0 |
| Crooke Band | 8 | 10 | 0 |
| Fire Committee | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Printing | 1 | 4 | 0 |
| Secretary's Expenses | 2 | 18 | 6 |
| Secretary's Services | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Cleaner | | 7 | 6 |
| Total | 51 | 19 | 1 |
| Less Sale of surplus | 2 | 5 | 9 |
| | 49 | 11 | 4 |

It was said that the ratepayers could not afford to pay the increase to five shillings and eight pence per one thousand cubic feet of gas. It was decided to have the street lamps lit one hour later and extinguished at midnight. The Wigan Town Clerk accepted the decision, but the Corporation would reserve the right to withdraw the service on seven days notice. The lamplighter, Mrs Elizabeth Ann Marshall resigned, to be succeeded by Mrs Alice Ann Robinson. The Electoral Register was now changed from alphabetical to street and house numbers.

In 1920 the Rev. J.B. Hopkins, vicar of St. Anne's was elected to the Council. There was a proposal that gas from the Standish main be extended to Shevington Moor, and the three new gas lamps at Crooke were fitted with inverted mantles. This was shortly followed by a letter from the Town Clerk saying that no gas should be used during the gas workers strike.

The following year there was a call to the Lancashire County Council, the Guardians, and the Wigan Rural District Council to reduce expenditure in view of the miners strike.

The Council were to present gold watches to two residents of the Parish who had won the Military Medal in the war. The citations are contained in Parish Council minutes and read:

80449 Gunner Thomas Darwin, 3rd Res. Batt Royal Field Artillery now serving with D. Batt Artillery Brigade. On the morning of 21st March 1918, and during the first hour of the bombardment near Holnon Wood this gunner ran to the assistance of a wounded private of a Scottish regiment, and brought him on his back to the dug out, where he was dressed. He then volunteered to carry the man to the dressing station, which he did under heavy shellfire. After this, as a runner he kept up liaison with two batteries on our left flank gaining much information, which he reported in a very prompt manner.

Signed T.A. Higginbottom, Lt. Colonel

Gunner Thomas Darwin who as a boy was chastised for swinging on the gas lamp at Crooke.

The second citation is in respect of

31206 Private Richard Freeman. Stretcher
Bearer 34 Division 2nd Army.

Private Freeman was a stretcher bearer near Gheluwe on the 14th October 1918, when he behaved with the very greatest gallantry under heavy machine and artillery gunfire. On one occasion in particular he, along with another stretcher bearer, cleared wounded from a place where troops had been temporarily held up by machine gun and direct field gun fire, without regard for his personal safety.

Signed H. W. Parkin, Lieut./Colonel AA
and QMG. 34th Division.

Richard Freeman lived in Whitehall Terrace and was for many years a sidesman at St. Anne's church.

In 1922, Robert Inward Randall was elected to the Parish Council, a name that was destined to figure prominently in Parish affairs for many years to come. There were complaints that motor vehicles and steam wagons were using the Cripplegate to Shevington Moor footpath as an access road to the Cripplegate Colliery. The police were asked to investigate, and solved the problem by erecting wooden posts on the path. There was at this time another long dispute regarding the footpaths crossing Holt's Farm land, where signposts had been uprooted. A petition from electors and ratepayers had complained of harassment when using the footpath. The Council's solicitor's advice was that the signposts should be removed from the land, but the public had a right of use. The Council would ask the WRDC and the LCC to act on the public's behalf

The signpost was moved to the opposite side of Miles Lane, and the following morning the lettering on the sign had been obliterated by tar. There was one other footpath discussion at this time regarding the legality of a stile, erected by Mr. Sharp on the Gathurst Lane to Cricket Field footpath, which was only eighteen inches wide. On request, Mr. Sharp had increased its width, although a check had revealed that the definition of a footpath was that it should be eighteen to twenty inches wide, along which no wheeled vehicle should pass.

Gas was to be charged in future by Therm units, and an electricity cable was to be laid in the Douglas valley. The Treasurer's Bond now stands at one thousand pounds, and James Lyon tenders his resignation as Clerk, but returns as an elected member of the Council the following year. Mr. R.I. Randall was appointed Clerk.

A resolution reads "The Council regrets the departure of P.C. Gaskell, but offers congratulation on his promotion, and their appreciation of the efficient and courteous manner in which he has carried out his duties, and good wishes and gratitude to his wife, for her kindness, attention and skill as a nurse." Mr. Blight

had been appointed a County Magistrate, and Mr. James Lyon was Chairman, and Mr. Wm. Blight Vice Chairman of the newly elected Council.

In 1925 a motor lorry damaged a fence at Gathurst, and the Council rescinded the minute of 17th April 1923, making occupiers now responsible for rates.' The setting up of the new village libraries in the schools were in hands of a libraries committee of Miss Blight, Miss Hooton, Mrs Taylor and Mrs N. Blight. Mr. N. Blight was librarian. James Carrington was elected to the Crooke lighting committee, and the Clerk's salary breakdown was

| | £ | s | d |
|----------------------|---|----|---|
| Collecting Poor Rate | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Postage's | 2 | 10 | 0 |
| As Clerk | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | 4 | 10 | 0 |

CHAPTER FIVE

In Shevington Parish, as elsewhere, the nineteen twenties were a time of hardship, deprivation, and poverty. Being, as we were, a rural community, the effects of the depression in the cotton and coal industries, and the nineteen twenty one and nineteen twenty six miners and general strikes, were not as devastating as in the town and urban areas. We did not see the ragged and barefoot children which the newspapers of that time showed.

There were at that time, to my knowledge, eighteen working farms in the Parish, mixed, arable and dairy which helped considerably when times were hard. They could be relied upon to provide food for a destitute family, or a few extra shillings for a man at haytime or at harvest. The farms were, for the first half of this century, the mainstay of the Parish. The local shopkeepers, whose business was greatly affected at these times, were very supportive by extending credit to the limit of their ability. The public houses, as always in time of need, were used as soup kitchens, where children were provided with a bowl of pea soup at least once per week. All this helped, but there was still far from enough to fill the bellies and clothe the backs of the children of these large families. The few shillings of `relief which the womenfolk walked to Standish to collect, (often with two or three children in tow), and which, if she didn't appear to be poor enough she didn't get, had to be repaid when the strike was settled. The `relief man' and the `doctor's man' were weekly callers, for their sixpence per week, for many years following the nineteen twenty six miners strike.

Dr. Ormsby whose surgery was at Standish, held a branch surgery in the front room of a house in Broad o'th' Lane in the mornings of Monday, Wednesday and Friday and had by now changed from travelling by pony and trap to a motor car driven by Billy Ratford, groom turned chauffeur. The `waiting room' at the surgery

accommodated about six people standing inside the doorway of the house, the remainder standing outside on the pathway. In the early nineteen fifties the surgery moved to the Boys club in Church Lane, where the small committee room, each morning, became the doctor's consulting room, and where there was a dry and comfortable area for the patients awaiting their turn. Later a new surgery was built in Gathurst Lane to accommodate the rapidly increasing population, and finally a move to the present attractive and comprehensive medical centre in Houghton's Lane.

For the first quarter of this century Mrs Margaret (Maggie) Moss was the local midwife. She lived in Standish Lower Ground, and her `patch' included, Beech Hill, Marsh Green, Pemberton, Crooke, and Shevington. Her only means of travel was to walk, often at night, but always with a member of the family to accompany her. Her `case books' are still retained by the family, and give a detailed and emotive account of the appalling conditions in which her `patients' lived. The following entries (from which I have omitted the names) are typical examples.

Dec. 24th 1905. Mrs. ____ SLG Age 36. Tenth Child. Mother very weak, and suffering from severe anaemia. Mother died on January 7th. Baby doing well.

August 1909 Mrs. ____ SLG Age 44. Seventeenth child. Child deformed and delicate. Lived six hours. Mother in poor health.

June 18th 1912. Mrs ____ Crooke Age 42. Eleventh child. Child doing well, but mother suffering from dropsy and a weak heart. Later entries indicate that mother and child are both doing well.

Jan. 5th 1913. Mrs ____ Woodcock Row Crooke Age 44. Eleventh Child. Doctor called in to treat mother who was suffering from boils and influenza.

June 1913. Mrs ____ Crooke. Age 40. Fourteenth child. Both doing well. However another entry in 1917 reads Age 45. Fifteenth child. Delicate malformed baby lived two days. Doctor called as concerned about the mother.

Sept. 1916. Mrs. ____ Crooke. Age 37. Ninth Child. Dr. Ormsby called in to mother who had temperature and convulsions. Baby described as delicate and only living for six days.

Nov. 1917. Miss. ____ Woodcock Row Crooke. Age 17. Delicate baby, died through breathing problems. Doctor called to mother who was weak, with red rash and temperature.

Mrs Moss on many occasions would send a message back home with instructions to get food from her own larder, so that she could leave the family knowing that they were assured of at least one square meal, or take a stew or broth when visiting a mother, who was often too weak to feed herself There was too, the constant fear of bringing home the vermin from some of these houses, which she countered by removing her clothes at her back door, and putting them in a tin bath full of water.

Surprisingly, the entries relating to Shevington do not paint so bleak a picture. There was however signs of panic in the village, in the nineteen twenties, when typhoid fever was diagnosed as the illness affecting two families. Two people died, others, including Mrs Gore who was the unpaid nurse and sick visitor, recovered in what was then known as the Whelley Fever Hospital. Most of the houses in Broad o'th' Lane had, during the outbreak, strung a blanket soaked in carbolic behind their front door.

CHAPTER SIX

In 1928 Mr. James Lyon was Chairman. Mr. Wm. Blight Vice Chairman, and Mr. R. Randall was Clerk of the Parish Council, when Standing Orders were changed by deleting 'To appoint the Overseers', and inserting 'Two Local Government Electors' as members of the rating authority for Wigan Rural District Council. The Clerk's salary was increased to £5-5s-0d to cover cost of the insurance premium. Mr. Blight protested at appointments of Mr. Colwell and Mr. Bullen as County School Managers, and expressed his sorrow at having to sever his connection with education after thirty five years as a schoolmaster. The Chairman Mr. Lyon said that he had just received an urgent message and would have to vacate the Chair. The Vice Chairman refused to take the chair. He said that if he was not fit to be a School Manager, he was not fit to take the chair, and left the meeting. The Council bank account was changed from the Westminster Bank to Union Bank of Manchester. Mike Hesketh, cobbler of Shevington Vale, was hired to make leather washers for standpipes, and Messrs Tennant and Co were granted permission to place bus timetables on the firebox at Broad o'th' Lane .

A new firehose box and appliances had been purchased and sited at 90 Miles Lane. The Surveyor had removed the hoses to extinguish a fire on a refuse dump at Wrightington. It was resolved that the surveyor must not use the appliances without Council permission, and that fire appliance boxes be lettered Shevington P.C.

In 1930 it was agreed that the Council would ask the WRDC to negotiate with Standish UDC, to accept and treat sewage from Almond Brook in their sewage scheme. The following year the responsibility for footpaths and Crooke gas lighting was transferred to the WRDC, and plans were in hand for the introduction of electricity. High tension cable would enter the Parish at Whitehill Farm and a low tension cable at the Gathurst boundary. A sub station would be sited at Higher Gathurst Farm. Street lamps would be erected in Broad o'th' Lane, Church Lane to the Church, Shevington Lane to Copperas Houses, and Miles Lane to Hawthorn Cottage. The cost per standard with time switch would be £10-15s-6d, and the forty lamps would be spaced at a distance of one hundred yards. The current would be supplied by the Wigan Corporation Electricity Co. The Wigan Corporation subsequently installed mains electricity throughout the Parish. The Clerk's salary was increased to £7-10s-0d per annum, plus £1-10s-0d for custody of the Parish Council books.

At a ceremony held in the Parish Room on February 3rd 1932, Mr. Bolton was presented with a cheque for twenty five pounds, and a certificate from the Carnegie Hero Trust Fund for rescuing a man from the canal at Gathurst. There was a request for a complete postal and telephone service at Broad o'th' Lane. Mr. Wm. Blight had been appointed J.P. and Messrs. Tennant's Buses were asked to consider reduced fares for schoolchildren. Messrs Tennant's replied that bus fare were regulated by North West Traffic Commission, but they would convert the one pence single fare to one pence return.

In 1934 a public telephone was finally installed at Broad o'th' Lane, and a discussion on tenders for Council work agreed that tenders must contain a fair wages clause, and that goods and materials be British or British Empire made. At a recent works fire, the fire hoses had been loaned to Thos. Witter and Co. of Appley Bridge by the Clerk; the Council approved of his action.

In 1935 Mr. James Lyon resigned as Chairman on medical advice, and a loss of hearing. Mr. Whitteron (Sec.) and Mr. Rudd (Treasurer) of the King George's Jubilee Celebration Committee reported on a successful event which had cost £62-8s-1d, mostly spent locally. The Parish Council would make no claims for children from other Parishes being entertained, unless the Council received claims from other Parishes.

The nineteen thirties Jubilee Celebration over, the Council were next preoccupied with arrangements for celebrating the coronation. Following a public meeting, a voluntary committee under the chairmanship of Mr. G. Moore, the headmaster at Broad o'th' Lane school, was formed to organise the celebrations. For some reason, not stated, this committee resigned, and the Council took over the responsibility with powers to add to its number.

On the 16th March 1937 a letter was received from Mr. Lyon tendering his resignation, due to failing health, weakened energy, and physical infirmities. At the Annual Meeting Mr. F.G. Moore and Mr. J. Carrington were the new elected members. Standing Order Para. 10, was restored, plus a new order, number 32A, 'That names of proposer and seconder be recorded in minutes', and that an application be made to Lancashire County Council, that representatives should not be elected at Parish Council meetings, but by nomination or poll if necessary.

The Council minutes for this period leave one with the impression that the meetings were less than cordial. There were complaints that the WRDC were not using the local unemployed on casual labour, that ash bins and middens were not being emptied often enough, that an application for an Employment Exchange at Broad o'th' Lane had been rejected, and that the Saturday and Sunday evening bus service was inadequate. There was little hope of a free bus pass for Councillors.

Signs of an increase in traffic in the Parish appear in the form of signposts being erected on Parish boundaries proclaiming Shevington, lowering of the high wall in Back Lane to improve visibility, and an approach to the A.A. and R.A.C. for the placing of warning signs at both ends of Well Brow. Correspondence from H.M. Government on the subject of Air Raid Precautions were still being deferred, and

there was a request for electricity to replace the Crooke gaslamps.

At a special meeting on the 11th November 1937, the Chairman informed members of the death of Mr. William Blight J.P. After an expression of sympathy, and tributes to his valuable services to the community the meeting was adjourned. The Council now appears to be composed of a younger age group, and this is shown in the increased work of the Clerk, by the number of letters he is required to write. It is not then surprising that he was allowed £1-0s-0d, to buy a second hand typewriter.

At the meeting of 5th July 1938, it was announced that the Tennant's Bus Services had been acquired by the Wigan Corporation and Ribble Bus Companies. There were complaints of sewage in the open ditches at Park Brook, the Barracks, and in Miles Lane.

The death of Mr. James Lyon was announced at the meeting of the 3rd October 1939, when a minutes silence was observed. The payment of Bimson's account was withheld as the work was unsatisfactory, and work could not proceed on repairs to Manor Road, as this was an unadopted road. Barclays Bank had replaced the Manchester Bank, and the Lancashire County Council were asked to paint the kerbs, telegraph poles, street lamps etc., white to comply with blackout regulations. The Council were offered land, to be used for allotments, at £1-10s-0d per acre . There was no request or need for allotments. The Clerk's postage allowance was increased and James Carrington was the new Chairman, and Wm. Hollingworth Vice Chairman of the Council. Much of the Council's time was now being taken up with the siting of air raid shelters and the allocation of stirrup pumps. An air raid wardens post was located in the small cottage in Broad o'th' Lane, and similar arrangements were made for Almond Brook and Crooke villages. The footpath at Hullet Hole farm had been deviated, and the farmer was ordered to reinstate it in its' original position, when the crop was gathered. The land however, was ploughed again, the Council's objection being overruled by the Lancs. War Agricultural Committee's permit to plough under Defence Regulation 62.

There was a request for bus queue posts passed to Wigan Corporation Transport, and the Medical Officers annual report was seven births, five male, two female and nine deaths, five male and four female. In September there was a serious water shortage due to Appley Bridge drawing water from the Shevington main supply, to cover a crisis situation at Wrightington Hospital. The Chairman having recently lost his son in a drowning fatality at Crooke, the Council requested that the WRDC place life saving apparatus at Crooke and Gathurst. A. total of £90,326-9s-6d had been collected for 'Warship Week'.

In 1942 The Rev. H.S. Crabtree was elected to the Council and a new water main was connected to the Ministry of Defence factory on the Shevington site of the Roburite works. The Parish had 'adopted' H.M.S. Whitethorn by their contribution to 'Warship Week'. The certificate was to be framed and hung in the Broad o'th' Lane school. There was a talk on Local Government Reform by Mr.

Harwood, and the Council appointed a deputation to meet the bus company managers, to discuss the inadequate services.

In 1944 Mr. Dixon of Shevington Hall, made a gift of land at Broad o'th' Lane, on which to accommodate a War Memorial, and Garden of Remembrance, for those parishioners who had been lost in the war. The first estimate for a boundary fence was £ 1150, and was rejected. At the Lancashire County Council's request the Parish Council's current documents were lodged, for safety reasons, with the County Records Office.

In 1945 elections were resumed, and there would be no victory celebrations because of the food shortage. The Parish had been a war time home for three hundred and seventy evacuees. The land gift had been conveyed, legal charges were £24-18s-6d, the land deed lodged with the WRDC, the Church Lane boundary wall would be removed but the trees left standing, and the cost of the boundary fence was £41-3 s-6d.

Two of the Councils long serving members resigned in 1946. Mr. Peter Hooton, who had served on the Council for twenty one years, and the Clerk, Mr. Robert Randall who had served twenty four years, first as a Councillor, then as a Clerk, with the remarkable record of never being absent from a meeting. There were four applicants for the Clerk's vacancy, of which two were interviewed, and Mr. Hope was appointed. There were complaints of flooding at Crooke, food parcels from Australia had been distributed throughout the Parish, the Council strongly disapproved of the WRDC's action in requiring a Bevin boy to vacate his lodgings at 234 Miles Lane, and the air raid shelters had been demolished.

Relatively speaking, for Shevington, it had been a quiet war. The inconvenience of the blackout, food rationing, home guard, and fire watching duties, was nothing compared with the devastation and death in the towns and cities. When the air raid sirens sounded, it was almost always the prelude to a raid on Liverpool, where the searchlights lit the sky, and the sounds of the anti-aircraft guns could be heard, mingled with the sound of the bombers, heading for and returning from their target. For the majority it had been a time of hard work for six days a week. The non-essential industries, quarries, brickworks etc. were if working, run by a skeleton staff, manpower and womanpower being channelled into munitions. Thos. Witter and Co. Appley Bridge Linoleum Works worked flat out manufacturing roofing felt for temporary repairs in the towns and cities, and the Grove Chemical Works produced Benzine, fertiliser, and glues, and the Roburite factory with the new Ministry of Defence factory on the Shevington site, was working round the clock producing military explosives, filling grenades, bombards etc. The end of the war was the beginning of an era which has seen a transformation of Shevington Parish. What was once a countryside Parish, largely dependant on the land, is now a dormitory Parish for its' parishioners, of whom the majority travel out with the Parish to work.

Apart from their normal business, one of the early and urgent problems facing the Parish Council after the war, was the need for a sewage disposal system. The old

ashpits and middens were still in use in many areas, but not for long. A main sewer was laid from north to south across the Parish, and this was a signal for the start of a rush to buy much of the farmland for house building. This, followed closely by the construction of the M6 motorway, opened up the area for rapid development. Highfield farm was to become a shopping area and the Council housing estate, Naylor's Farm went to house building and the Gathurst Golf Club, and the greater parts of the land of Paradise Farm, and Higham's Farm in Back Lane to private housing. All this, and more, was urgently required to re-house the many thousands of families whose homes were destroyed in the wartime bombings of Liverpool and Manchester.

Fifty years on, and the second generation of these families are now grown up, having known only the country life style, which their parents, when they first arrived in Shevington, could be forgiven if they thought they were caught in a time warp. In those fifty years the Parish Council which had, and still does have, many ex city dwellers amongst its members, has been largely successful in creating a Parish which provides all the amenities required for a quality of life far beyond the dreams of those nineteenth century inhabitants.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Although the nineteenth century is recalled for the long reign of Queen Victoria and the Industrial Revolution, the advance of education in the last ten years of that era were of greater importance, and impact, to the people of Shevington. Schooling was mostly in the hands of the Church for the privileged few, and, at the best, haphazard.

With the completion of the new 'Board' schools at Crooke and Shevington, and with the arrival of James Lyon and William Blight, both 'certified' teachers, some semblance of order and organisation began to appear, Starting with scant resources, and no trained staff, theirs was an indomitable task. Mr. Blight's log book gives a fascinating insight into schooldays of that time, and of the many problems encountered, and overcome, in the process of establishment.

Some of their brightest girl pupils they trained, by extra teaching and instruction after school hours, to become Pupil Teachers, some of whom spent the remainder of their working lives in the profession. The scarcity of resources is evident, by viz. 'children wrote a sentence from Sunlight Soap Wrapper', and the school costs for 1905 were estimated at

| | £ | s | d |
|---------------------------------|----|---|---|
| Books, Stationery and Apparatus | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Furniture and Repair thereto | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Fuel, Light and Cleaning | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Wear and Tear | 5 | 0 | 0 |
| New Piano | 17 | 0 | 0 |
| | 83 | 0 | 0 |

Regarding the piano, the schools inspectors report had said "Singing from note might be brighter with advantage", to which Mr. Blight observed "How one sings to note without a piano I fail to see".

Teachers' pay was £20 per annum, and Pupil Teachers received a grant of £2. The children of three Catholic families left on the priests insistence, but returned the following year. James Robinson, nearly thirteen years of age and in Standard One, was punished for truancy. The poems set for recitation were for

Class Four The Children's Hour

Class Three `Village Blacksmiths' and `Slaves Dreams'

Class One and Two `Psalm of Life'. Excelsior., `Something left undone',
 `The Builders' and `Ladder of St. Augustine'.

The schools passed from the `Local Board' to the Lancs. County Council in 1903, and in 1927 I was one of the pupils who moved into the new school. The original school of `Pious study and learning', now had a new role. One week it was the woodwork centre, shared with the other schools in the area, the following week it was given over to `Domestic Science' for the girls.

Mr. Blight, who had been headmaster at Broad o'th' Lane School for thirty five years, and who had been largely instrumental in raising the standard of education, retired in 1927, prior to the opening of the new school. Mr. Moore was the new headmaster, a strict disciplinarian, as befits an ex army Captain of the `Great War'. He was popular in that he introduced sport in the curriculum, and that by virtue of the fund raising schemes he plotted, we were able to purchase a wireless set for the school. Mr. Moore was a Chairman and member of the Parish Council for many years.

With the vastly increased population of the post war years, came a desperate need for new schools. The first step was the County Secondary School on Shevington Lane, which opened its doors to its first pupils on the fifth of January 1959. Its' first headmaster, Mr. F.N. Lewis faced a formidable task in organising and instituting a procedure which would ensure a successful beginning to a new era of education in the Parish. This was accomplished despite the inconvenience and distractions of the building work in, progress for the provision of a yet larger intake of scholars. The school is now well established as Shevington High School.

As well as the High School, new schools have been built for infants and juniors at Shevington Vale, Church Lane, and Millbrook. The curriculum of these schools are, broadly speaking, much the same, and if I take St. Bernadette's in Church Lane, it is because I am better informed of its progress. For very many years the Catholic children of Shevington had to travel to St. Marie's school at Standish. In the late sixties, the Lancashire Education Authority, the Ministry of Education, and Father Brady, the Parish priest, agreed that a Catholic school was needed in Shevington to accommodate the increasing population.

Whilst the first phase of the new school was being built, thirty six children were

taught in St. Bernadette's Church in Wigan Road. Miss Lawson was the teacher in charge. The school in Church Lane was opened in January 1971, and was built in three phases, (the last phase in 1976) and is a one form entry infant and junior school. There are at the present time approximately one hundred and fifty children on roll. There are six classes, three infant and three junior. There are six full time teachers, including the Head, and one part time teacher. The school hall is used for assemblies, P.E., and also as a dining room, and the school has its' own playing field at the side and at the rear.

At the time of writing, Miss D. Radcliffe is, and has been the Headteacher, from the day of its opening. From the early days many of the residents of the Parish have been members of the Roman Catholic Church, at times living through its periods of persecution Clandestine meetings were held in some of the older houses in the Parish, but more especially at nearby Standish Hall Chapel. St. Marie's Church was built in 1884, and from that date Shevington Catholics walked, either by Standish `fields' footpaths, or along the country roads to attend mass. The children would take the same route to the Roman Catholic school on Almond Brook Road, known and remembered as the `Cat i'th' Window', now, just the boundary hedges indicate the site of this seat of learning.

It was Canon C. Campion, parish priest of St. Marie's from 1928-1959, who foresaw that Shevington's growing population, and later, the new motorway, would very soon require a church and a separate Parish. St. Bernadette's was built in 1961, first as a chapel of ease, serviced by the priests from St. Marie's Standish. In 1965, Archbishop Beck decided that St. Bernadette's should become a Parish on its own, and Father Ness was appointed its first Parish priest. After one year or so, Father Ness was succeeded by Father Brady, and it was Father Brady, who in 1970 decided that a Catholic school was needed in Shevington. After four years in the Parish he was followed by Father Harvey who was parish priest when the school was built. Next came Father Dunn who during his ten years at St. Bernadette's made several improvements in the church, in keeping with the changes in the liturgy. Father Casey continued this work, and along with Father Greaves, his replacement in 1988, carried out major alterations to the fabric, lay-out, furnishings, and grounds of the church.

(Miss D. Ratcliffe is now retired and is succeeded by Mr L.F. O'Brien)

CHAPTER EIGHT

I am now, myself, one of the older generation of this twentieth century, who, in terms of the technical revolution, press the REWIND button of their mind, and on DISPLAY, in technicolour, come the sights and sounds that have formed the backdrop of their lives. Growing up in Broad o'th' Lane, in the centre of an agricultural area, we were awakened each morning to the country sounds. The early morning cockerel crowing, the farm dog snapping at the heels of the cows, or

the skylark soaring blithely every summer morning in the field behind the house. The clatter of a mowing machine in the meadows, and the farmers shouts of 'Whoa' and 'Haw'. We would be there to join him in the meadows, when the field was almost mown, to be in time to chase the corncrake, which would come running out before the last few swathes were cut. Always chasing, but never catching that fleet footed bird with the morning's most strident call.

The sound of a trap, and a high stepping horse, usually heralded the arrival of the 'travellers' for Ruston's or Potemkin's, or Latimer's, on their weekly collection of orders for delivery later in the week. Our village shop, Aspin all's, could be relied upon for most needs, but some items of hardware they would order from Romero's in Wigan. There was one other dealer in hardware, who, with his horse and box van, was to be seen in the village in the late evening of Friday or Saturday. Hugh Crooks had fitted a tank at the rear end of his van from which he supplied his customers with paraffin oil for their lamps. He would take from his pocket a handful of biscuits, about the size of a two pence piece and decorated with a dolly mixture. He would hand out one to each of the children, and though they reeked strongly and tasted of paraffin, they were very welcome. The other suppliers to outlying shops were the wholesale grocers. Their 'lorries' had a high tailboard, and a metal framework over which a tarpaulin was draped. These vehicles were heavier and slower moving, Martlety's of Orrell drawn by one horse, whereas E.H. Monk's of Wigan had an extra chainhorse.

These methods of transport were slowly being overtaken by first of all the steam wagons, carting stone etc. from Appley Bridge, then the ex-army motor lorries with their open cabs and solid tyres, and their motifs of Deakin's Jams, or the vans of Crawford's Biscuits, which had a rail around the roof of the van on which the empty biscuit tins were stored. By late autumn we would follow the threshing machine from farm to farm. This was the most exciting sight, the huge traction engine belching out black smoke, and in tow, the threshing machine, the baling machine with the 'horses head' which pushed down the straw into the baler, followed by the 'bottler' which would replace the baler to 'bottle' the straw into sheaves for thatching the 'stacks' or 'ricks'. On pushbikes were the insurance man, the doctor's man, the relief man, the credit draper or 'scotchman', and Joe Dawber from Alstead's the well known Wigan clothiers, who collected the weekly credit payment, took your measurements, and your order, for the suit he would deliver the following week.

As country boys, you knew what kind of crop a field would be carrying that year, for the rotation was normally, first year, potatoes or turnips, (heavily manured) followed by wheat, followed by oats and clover seed, and finally as meadows, with a crop of hay and clover for the cattle's winter feeding. The fields, with their varied crops in various colours, which often changed from green to gold, the hedgerows, with an abundance of wild flowers, and the woodlands and streams were our summer playgrounds. The fragrant scents of the honeysuckle in the hedgerow, and the bluebells in the woodland were the scents of summertime, but other, far less fragrant scents would assail our noses all year round.

The west wind carried from the Grove Chemical Works, known locally as the 'Bone Hole', the acrid smell created in the process of changing animal bones into glue fertilisers and other by-products. The Grove Chemical Works was a major source of employment, for both men and women, since the very early days of this century. The very nature of the operation meant that in its' earlier years it was a rat infested site. In later years, under successive managers, Mr. Brooms, Mr. Parsons, and Mr. Thompson, pest control, and improved working conditions eliminated much of the nuisance. Although the work was hard and the working conditions unpleasant, the 'bone hole' lasses were a bonny bunch. I know of four of that bunch, living in and around Shevington village, three of whom are in the eighties, and one lady who is in her nineties. I am indebted to a hale and hearty gentleman, who is in his eighties, also a former employee, for his assistance in this enterprise. The Grove Chemical Works closed in the nineteen seventies. The site was occupied for a number of years by the Park Pallet Co. but is now derelict.

The west wind also carried another unpleasant odour, which emanated from the linoleum works of Thos. Witter and Co. in Appley Bridge. The manufacture of the varnish used in the production of linoleum carried a smell which was of a more penetrating and acidic nature. This too has now been eliminated.

Although the smell of cordite was seldom evident from the 'Roburite' factory, the sound of blasting explosives under test, was to the uninitiated, somewhat disconcerting. For periods of perhaps an hour each morning, repeated in the afternoon, these controlled explosions shattered the silence. Here, once again, modern methods of testing have eliminated the problem. Although I no longer hear the explosions, I am assured that they are still very much in business, and perhaps, the only remaining employer of a substantial workforce in the Parish. The 'Roburite' works opened in 1888, to produce an explosive for use in the prospering Wigan Coalfield, has since played an important part in two wars, has an enviable safety record, and by virtue of an enlightened and progressive management, and a dedicated workforce, is still competing with the best in the industry.

Seventy years ago, Broad o'th' Lane was our football pitch, where a game could be played with only an occasional stoppage for traffic, or abandoned at the sight of P.C. Gaskell approaching from Church Lane, at which we scattered, even though I don't recall him giving chase.

Our longest delays were caused by the various hawkers, who, when selling their wares, always appeared to have the time to gossip, and share a joke with the housewives. There was Fish Tommy, who made the Plough and Harrow his last call of the day, and relied heavily on his horse to see him home. There was the fishman who, in his flat top cart, had set out from Banks near Southport early that morning and whose call of 'Cockles and Mussels,' was made with a yodelling sound, which we lads reckoned was because he had a 'glass alley' in his throat, like those in 'pop' battles. There was also Emma from Wigan with her white horse, probably the most popular one of all.

On most Fridays the farmers from the Dalton Lees area would be returning from Wigan market, having sold their load of cabbages or potatoes. They would pull onto the iron weighbridge in front of the Plough and Harrow, which was inscribed 'To weigh five tons', to weigh the load of horse manure collected from the Wigan stables. Less frequently there came from the Orrell area, Jane Green, with her donkey and cart, who sold blocks of salt approximately twelve inches long by six inches squared, which the housewives grated, and the farmers and pig keepers used for curing hams and bacon. Another donkey and cart, this one from the Billinge area, brought the 'Staple Woman', who sold hand made nails, staples etc. Other visitors of that era were the cooper with iron strips hung over his shoulder, and his cry of 'Tubs to Mend' hoping that the housewives 'dolly' tub was leaking, and the knife grinder, whose grindstone was mounted on a frame on his handcart, and who announced his presence with the call, 'Scissors to Grind'. The last one of these, I seem to remember, had become mechanical. His bicycle had been adapted to drive his grindstone by pedal power.

The internal combustion engine was gradually replacing these familiar sights, and one of these was a motor cycle owned by Mr. Sutherland (Sunny) Richardson, the school attendance officer, or as we knew him, the 'School Board' man. If you were absent from school, you had ample time to hide, for the noise gave fair warning of his approach. He was, later, one of the early motorists, and also the one to whom we are indebted for most of the old photographs of Shevington, for he was also a keen and enthusiastic amateur photographer.

The Ford's and Morris Oxford's and Cowley's were now commonplace and now Messrs H. Tennant and Co. had introduced a bus service. Originally the terminus was the Plough and Harrow, and the service hourly, but the route was later extended to Dangerous Corner. This proved to be a very popular amenity, even if timetables were not strictly adhered to. Should the last bus from Wigan on Saturday night be inadequate, the driver would make a second journey to collect the over spill. The service was eventually taken over by Wigan Corporation and Ribble Bus services and run as a joint operation,, with a timetable very similar to the one in use today.

CHAPTER NINE

A population consisting almost entirely of a class in whose lives, hard work had left no place for education and refinement'. This was the description applied to the people of Shevington by the writer of a memorial to the first vicar of St. Anne's Shevington, the Rev. Alexander Richardson, who died on the 28th December 1899. In the same address, the implied criticism of the new 'Board Schools', gives one the impression that education was seen as a challenge to Church authority. The Board Schools however were the birthplace, and the nursery, of the education system as we know it today, and the education they began has been largely responsible for the progress made in the twentieth century, the century of the technical revolution.

A population consisting almost entirely of a class in whose lives, education and refinement had left no place for hard work'. Will this be the description applied to Shevington at the dawn of the twenty first century, where the tractor has replaced the horse, the combine harvester the reaper, the Hoover the broom, the 'automatic' the 'dolly tubs' and the electric blanket the oven shelf or 'duckstone'?

Although many of the former green pastures of Shevington lie buried under the homes and gardens of the various housing estates, the Shevington of old lies undisturbed in many places. In Mill Dam and Elnup Woods you may find the pleasures you seek in the old mill waterfall, or in the quiet pathways through the age old woodlands, and visit the places where nature has transformed the remains of an industry in her own determined manner. From Crooke to the western boundary you will find the Douglas valley more peaceful than it was half a century ago, and now the habitat of the mallard, the kingfisher, and the heron, all now returned to grace the valley. These and the village areas, which over the last few years the Parish Council have done much to improve, along with all the amenities available, have made the Parish of Shevington a very desirable residential area. The following census returns illustrate the post-war development of the Parish of Shevington.

| | 1991 | 1981 | 1971 | 1961 | 1951 |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| POPULATION | 10702 | 10122 | 8100 | 4887 | 3057 |
| HOUSEHOLDS | 3841 | | 2620 | 1554 | |
| TENURE | | | | | |
| Owner Occupiers | 3497 | | | | |
| Local Authority | 211 | | | | |
| Housing Association | 26 | | | | |
| Other | 111 | | | | |
| TYPE OF DWELLING | | | | | |
| Detached | 1231 | | | | |
| Semi-detached | 2121 | | | | |
| Terraced | 522 | | | | |
| Other | 70 | | | | |

Mr. James Lyon

Amongst his many other accomplishments James Lyon was one of the longest serving Chairman of Shevington Parish Council. Born at Bickerstaffe, on the 16th August 1860, he was first a pupil teacher, and after two years attendance at Chester Training College, became a qualified or 'Certificated' teacher. He was appointed Headmaster of Shevington Board School in 1882, and came to live in the Manor House in Gathurst Lane.

He was appointed Clerk and Rate Collector of Shevington Parish Council on the 18th May 1904 and held the position until the 22nd January 1924. On the 21st April 1926, he was again elected to the Council, and appointed Chairman. At a meeting held on the 16th March 1937 his letter of resignation was included in the minutes, and stated that he was unable to continue due to failing health. The council expressed their appreciation of this long and tireless work for the community, and their high regard for the painstaking and courteous manner in which he had always carried out his duties.

Long service was an attribute James Lyon gave to any duty he undertook. When this highly esteemed headmaster, (having reached the age limit), retired from Crooke Council School in 1925, he had completed thirty nine years service. The Crooke school room was crowded with the attendance of past and present scholars, past and present teachers, parents and friends, all gathered to show their appreciation of one who had worked for them, and among them, for many years. Mr. William Blight J.P., spoke of the sterling worth of Mr. Lyon as a colleague working under the same body of Managers as himself for over thirty years. Mr. Edmund, Chairman of Area 18 Education Sub Committee, presented Mr. Lyon with a silver tea service, on a beautiful oak tray surrounded by a silver rail. The inscription on the tray reads 'Presented to Mr. James Lyon, as a token of the affection and esteem in which he is held, by the present and old scholars, teachers, parents and friends, on his retirement, after forty three years as headmaster.'

James Lyon resigned from his position of Vicar's Warden at St. Anne's Church in 1925, a position he had occupied for twenty two years. More than three hundred people had contributed to his testimonial fund, the treasurer of which was Mr. Robert Smallshaw. A beautiful gold watch and chain with the inscription "Presented to James Lyon by the parishioners of Shevington Church, after 22 years service as warden in July 1925," was presented by Mr. R. B. Harrison.

When, in the early nineteen twenties the land shown on the map as Great and Little Bushey Field was up for sale, Mr. Lyon bought it, and promptly offered it to the village to be used as a recreation ground. Donations and fund raising efforts covered the cost of £50, and in addition, the building of a village hall. A disagreement arose concerning the title and administration of the project. Mr. Lyons was at that time Chairman of the Parish Council, and was also the Vicars Warden at St. Anne's church. The Rev. G. Blagden Hopkins, who was vicar at the time, insisted that the title and the administration should be in the hands of the church. Mr. Lyons believed this to be wrong, in that members of all

denominations had contributed to the cause, and were entitled to be represented in its' administration. The dispute went to law and the judge ruled in favour of the Church. Many years later as a Trustee I was to see the Trust Deed, which stated that a Trustee must be a member of the Church of England, and must reside within five miles radius of St. Anne's church. Restrictive Covenants governed the use of the Recreation Ground in relation to St. Anne's Church. The official title of St. Anne's Church recreation ground and Parish Room, divided the community, with the result that the Parish Room became a millstone round the neck of the trustees.

Other aspects of the busy life of James Lyon, were that he was active in the affairs of the Independent Order of Oddfellows, the Freemasons, the Economic Building Society, and a member of Parochial and Sanitary committees. He was a keen cricketer, having topped the batting averages for his local team, of which, almost needless to say, he was the secretary,

Mr. Edward Ball

The first Chairman of Shevington Parish Council was Mr. Edward Ball. Born at Wood Fold Standish, the young Edward Ball married Miss Sarah Read, and settled in at the Whitehall Farm in Miles Lane, where he raised a family of nine sons and one daughter. Without the help of his grown up family it would have been impossible to fulfil the many duties he undertook. His public offices included, Overseer for the Township of Shevington, thirty years, Guardian of the Poor Law, twenty seven years, Chairman of the Wigan Board of Guardians, twice, Chairman of Wigan Rural District Council, ten years, a member of the Wigan Assessment Committee and the Shevington School Board, and a Justice of the Peace. He is described by a writer of that time as, 'one of the sturdy ones engaged in agriculture, who at the same time, have devoted their leisure hours and energies for the common good'. He can surely be regarded as one of the founding fathers of Shevington Parish Council.

Mr. William Blight

William Blight was the son of a Cornish tin miner who had left his native Cornwall, to find work in the Wigan coalfield. His family had settled in Ince, and young William, now a 'Certificated' teacher had courted and married a Shropshire lass, whose family had also settled in Wigan. Shortly after the birth of their first child, Helen, he obtained the position of Headmaster of the Broad o'th' Lane Infant and Mixed School, in Miles Lane. This was in 1892, and he completed his teaching career in 1927 having held the position for 35 years.

He was a member of the Parish Council formed in 1894 and remained a member for more than thirty years. He served on numerous committees, was a lay

preacher on the Methodist Circuit, and a Justice of the Peace.

He, with James Lyon, played a major part in the introduction and progress of education in the Parish, and in the affairs of the Parish Council.

Mr. Robert Inward Randall

Robert Inward Randall began his working life training to be a cobbler for Mike Hesketh at Appley Bridge, but left in 1908 to join the Liverpool police. The Liverpool Police strike of 1919 was responsible for his leaving the force, and returning to his former trade. He was elected to the Parish Council in 1922 and to the position of Clerk in 1924, and resigned in 1946 after serving a period of twenty four years. Robert (Bob) Randall was, in addition, the Parish representative on the Wigan Rural District Council, and many time its' Chairman, for twenty one years. When Shevington Hall was for sale following the death of the owner Mr. Dixon, he worked passionately to retain the land for the community, but with limited success. The area the Council did acquire, is now one of our most pleasing amenities, having been purchased in 1974 from Wigan Rural District Council, by Shevington Parish Council, the residue becoming the site for the building of St. Bernadette's School.

In memoriam

ALEXANDER RICHARDSON, VICAR OF SHEVINGTON,
DIED DECEMBER 28TH, 1899.

The closing days of 1899 brought to an end the earthly career of your Vicar, and it is fitted that there should be recorded upon this page some Memorial of his long connection with the Parish.

He was the first Vicar of Shevington, and when, about 32 years ago, he took charge of the Parish, his task was one calculated to dismay and dishearten a much more experienced minister than he could, at that time, claim to be. At the extreme boundary of a wide and scattered district, a long distance from the Parent Church, with no adequate provision for public worship or for the education of the children, with no possible residence in the Parish, and a population consisting almost entirely of a class in whose lives hard work had left no place for education or refinement-under such circumstances, it will be admitted that the task before the young Vicar was formidable indeed. The Education Act of 1870, beneficent though it may have proved to be in its ultimate results, was at the outset a source of great anxiety to him. Without resources, he was unable to prevent the establishment of a School Board in the District, and, as a consequence of its poverty, Shevington had the doubtful honour of being the only township in the Wigan Union under the control of a School Board. Mr. Richardson, thoroughly versed in all matters appertaining to education, used his extensive knowledge and experience to render the Board useful and efficient; and, first as honorary Clerk and afterwards as Chairman, he did his utmost to place the Elementary Schools in such a satisfactory position as would make them a benefit and a blessing to the whole community.

Not only in the dry details of school life did he interest himself. He used his great talents as an artist for the amusement and delight of old and young ; and many a pleasant entertainment has owe much of its success to the scenes he has painted and to the songs he has taught.

These, however (important as they were, and essential, it may be, to the happiness and prosperity of his parishioners), were not the work upon which his heart was set. His people had no place into which they could assemble together to worship God, except two utterly unsuitable schoolrooms, two miles apart. For many years the Vicar laboured in these two rooms ; but during the whole time, little by little, he was gathering together the means by which to erect a building worthy of its purpose, wherein all his people could join together to worship God, with the rites and ceremonies appointed by the Church, 'decently and in order.' A very successful Bazaar, held at Standish, on the 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th of May, 1881, greatly forwarded the good cause, and on September 18th, 1886, the foundation stone of the new Church was laid. It was a day of thankfulness and joy to Mr. Richardson when, on the 22nd July, 1887, our good Bishop Moorhouse consecrated the Church of St. Anne. Much has been done since then, and all without debt or encumbrance to the parishioners, for the Vicar made it a rule never to embark upon any enterprise until he could see the certainty of its being paid for.

But this great end had not been lightly achieved. Those who knew him best realised that the worries, difficulties, and disappointments which he had to face during the long continuance of his arduous task, had told heavily on a constitution never robust, and of late years his periods of suffering have been frequent and long.

He is gone; but his place will be filled. There is much still for the new Vicar of Shevington to do ; but the ground has been cleared, the House is built and furnished. Work there is, work there will ever be, hard and toilsome ; but the first, the great, difficulties are past, they have been overcome. The Church of St. Anne stands, in its modest beauty, to-day, a landmark for the time-worn wanderer, an emblem of Faith, Hope, and Charity. Around its walls are gathering fast those who rest after their day's work is done; from its portals come forth the sweet sounds of prayer and praise, as the years roll by many voices will proclaim the glad tidings of the Gospel within its walls ; but, while it stands, the Church will remain a memorial to him who laboured so long for its erection-its first Vicar, ALEXANDER RICHARDSON

R. R. D.