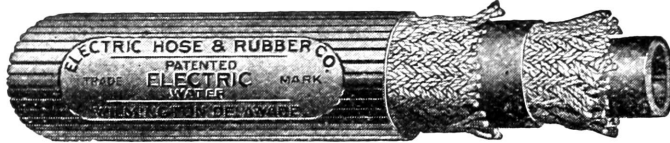


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PHONE 197 BURY

Only the naturally credulous, or the hopelessly ill-informed, could possibly accept this account of the bombardment of Bury Castle from Castle Steads. Two things militate against any claims to authenticity that may be made for it. No cannon existed in Cromwell's day that could batter Bury Castle from any part of Walmersley. The name "Redvales" was current many years before the date given for the engagement. It is mentioned in the Parish Church Registers as early as January 14th, 1597, when the burial of "two poor folkes died in Redivalles" is recorded. Altogether the place-name "Redvales" appears in the Registers about two hundred times before the date assigned to the battle, and every entry is, by itself, a sufficient refutation of the legend concerning the origin of the name.

THE CIVIL WAR AND BURY.

Bury was not remote from the field of war in 1643 and 1644, but there is no evidence of any actual battle nearer than the second battle of Bolton (May 28th, 1644). The Bolton Registers record "a verrey hott skirmish at Bolton lasting 4 howers" on February 16th, 1642/3, in which "the Rebels of Wiggan were beaten back abowte 4 of clock in the affternoone, they had shott there greyte cannons against Bolton 14 tymes, yett repulsed." On February 17th sixteen soldiers, slain in this skirmish, were buried; and five weeks later—on March 27th, probably after another affray, "23 of the Earl of Darbeyes men, all in one cave," were buried. The second pitched battle at Bolton, on May 28th, 1644, was a still more serious engagement, for 78 men of Bolton were buried in the churchyard of that parish. A reason for thinking that this battle extended into the parish of Bury, and probably to the gates of the town itself, is that in the last week of May—the actual date is not stated in the Church Register—"seven strange souldiores were buried," and on June 14th "a strange souldier, a cavallier" was interred. None of these incidents, however, accords support to the statement that Bury Castle was battered down from Walmersley in August, 1648. There would be nothing inherently improbable in a detachment of the Parliamentarian Army entering the town on August 14th, 1648—as stated in the *Jubilee Souvenir*—or even in an engagement of some magnitude occurring in the neighbourhood of the town. On the 14th Cromwell and Lambert were at Skipton, on the 15th at Gisburn, and on the 16th in Ribblesdale. On the 17th they engaged and defeated Langdale and his Scots, driving him through Wigan and Winwick to Uttoxeter and Ashbourne. There would always have been a chance of an encounter between reinforcements for the two armies at a place like Bury, where main cross roads converged, and branched off again to places that were at the moment of strategical importance. There is not, however, any evidence of such engagement, or of the dismantling of Bury Castle, in the Parish Church Registers, which, though in private custody, may at this distance of time be regarded as having the authenticity of contemporary news-sheets. As far as may be judged from the Register of

the period, Bury folk were going quietly about their daily tasks, none daring to make them afraid, in August, 1648. On the very day on which, according to the account quoted, Bury Castle was destroyed and demolished, two children—Sarah, daughter of Henry Lomax, of Bury hamlet, and Peter, son of Richard Tootell, of Bury—were quietly baptised in the Parish Church, only fifty yards away.

If we reject, as in fact we ought to reject, the story of the bombardment of Bury Castle from Castle Steads, and the demolition of the stronghold two days later, when an enemy detachment is supposed to have entered the town, we are driven to find another reason for the fact that Bury Castle no longer exists. The explanation probably lies—as undoubtedly it does in the case of many other great houses of the Middle Ages—in the decay of the great feudal families and the gradual rise of another form of aristocracy. To understand the nature of this change it would be well to consider the course of local history before the coming of the Tudors and more settled times. Bury was a part of the Royal Manor of Tottington, which itself was in the Honour of Clitheroe. The overlords of Tottington, who held Clitheroe, were the DeLacys. The mesne lords were the Montbegons. Among the fees of Roger de Montbegon in 1207 was a knight's fee held through long tenure by Adam de Buri. Early in the fourteenth century Alice de Buri married Roger Pilkington, and thus began an association which lasted until 1485. At some time—nowhere clearly stated—Bury had become a manor in itself, alienated from the Manor of Tottington. The Pilkingtons lost all their possessions in Lancashire because of the support that they gave to Richard the Third against Henry, Earl of Richmond. Thomas, Lord Stanley, supported Henry of Richmond, and as a reward of his attachment received the estates of the Pilkingtons in Lancashire, and the title of Earl of Derby.

WHEN THE STANLEYS CAME TO BURY.

Feudalism was slowly dying in England—if indeed it was not already dead—before the result of Bosworth Field sealed the downfall of the Pilkingtons and made certain the rise of the Stanleys. Henry the Seventh would never have permitted baronial strife to disturb the peace of the Kingdom, and after Flodden Field the raids of the Scots ceased to be formidable on the southern side of the Cheviots and the Tweed. The need for fortified manor houses ceased to exist, and in all probability the end of Bury Castle came some time early in the tenure of the Earls of Derby. Colour may be lent to this theory from the circumstance that “Castle” as a place-name only appears once in the Church Registers, between 1590 and 1698. This was in 1635, when Mary, the daughter of Richard Unsworth of Casle, was buried. The word was probably used as a contraction for Castle Hill, which finds mention eighteen times in little more than a century.

After Bosworth Field the Earls of Derby became Lords of the Manor of Bury and owners of the advowson of the ecclesiastical

parish. The town itself was governed by the Court Leet of the ruling Earl, which was held three times a year—in April, at Whitsuntide, and in October. The Court probably ceased to act as an instrument of local government about the end of the seventeenth century or the beginning of the eighteenth, when the vestries appear to have recovered some of the functions alienated from them in earlier centuries, when the barons and lords of the manor were at the height of their power and exercised almost regal dominion within their several domains. The records of the Bury Vestry go back to the year 1717. Under the common law the inhabitants of the parish had the right to be summoned at Easter and at such other times as might be deemed necessary, to a vestry meeting, where they might decide upon certain ecclesiastical matters and also upon matters of civil policy. The vestries elected the parish officials, who belonged to one of four classes: Churchwardens, Overseers of the Poor, Surveyors of Highways, and Constables. The Churchwardens, as the name implies, were ecclesiastical officers; the Overseers were charged with the administration of the poor laws; and the Surveyors had the duty of keeping the King's highways in good condition. Upon the Constables devolved the work of keeping public order, arresting felons and misdemeanants, and serving writs.

GOVERNMENT BY VESTRY.

In Bury the Select Vestries governed the town for a term of about a century and a half from the beginning of the eighteenth century. They saw the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, and, it might almost be said, they saw what in a relative sense could be termed its completion. When they took over the work previously undertaken by the Courts Leet, spinning and weaving were cottage industries, and were carried on in conjunction with agriculture. When they were succeeded by a body elected upon a basis then considered popular, industry was already divorced from agriculture, and spinners, weavers, and others associated with the textile industries had become a class apart. Considerable accumulations of capital were needed for the work. Rarely was the hum of the spinning wheel, or the rattle of the loom, heard in cottage or farmhouse. These industries, and others dependent upon them, had become the concern of several water-driven mills built in the pleasant vales and denes in the neighbourhood of Bury and of mills worked by steam that were set up in the town itself. A transition period in industry—in which wars and rumours of wars, unrest and disturbance, were rife—was bound to prove a testing time for any system of local government. The vestries were undemocratic. They were without the safety valve of public discussion in the true sense of the term. It could hardly be expected that they would come through the test with credit. They did not. The Chartist movement expressed the discontent of the people; and the passing of the Reform Bill of 1832, and of the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835, were among the results which followed the tumult raised.

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ELTON

Under the Reform Act Bury became a parliamentary borough. As such it received a certain status or rank, and was directly represented for the first time in the House of Commons. The town did not, however, receive any additional civil rights, privileges, or powers of local government higher than those enjoyed by every village in the land. These did not become accessible until after the passing of the Municipal Corporations Act three years later, and no attempt was made by the inhabitants of Bury to avail themselves of the advantages of this great measure until the promotion of the Bury Improvement Act of 1846. In the meantime, however, private enterprise was not idle. In 1828 a number of the inhabitants of Bury petitioned Parliament to enable them to light the streets of the town with gas. It was stated in the petition that the town, and the townships of Elton and Heap—"all of considerable extent and population," and "lately much increased"—were wholly without public lamps with the exception of one oil lamp in the Market Place within Bury.

BURY GAS WORKS AND STREET LIGHTING.

The promoters of this Act included some fifty or sixty of the most considerable inhabitants of Bury. They stated their willingness to effect, at their own costs and charges, the several beneficial purposes of the measure. Their joint stock was not to exceed £6,400, or their loans to go beyond £3,000. This was not, however, the first attempt to manufacture gas from coal in Bury, for in 1818 Mr. Benjamin (or Thomas) Bassett, an iron and brass founder, began to make gas at his works near the Shakespeare Inn in Rochdale Road. He lighted his own works with the new illuminant, and also supplied gas to some of his neighbours. Though the Act of 1828 was passed, and the Company formed, no attempt was made to light the streets until 1835, when the Vestry decided to inquire upon what terms the Gas Company would supply the town with gas for street lighting. Apparently the reply was satisfactory, for in the following year Inspectors were appointed to take charge of the lighting of the town, and the meeting pledged itself to guarantee a certain sum of money to ensure the contracting company against loss. The area within which the streets were lighted appears to have reached from near Bury Bridge to a point in Manchester Road not greatly distant from the present Tenterden Street; thence through the heart of The Mosses across Rochdale Road to Freetown, and what was then the northern end of Hornby Street, and thence to the river, along the township boundaries of Bury and Elton.

The gasworks were acquired by the local authority—then the Bury Improvement Commissioners—in 1858. At the time the public lamps within the borough numbered 498. In 1932 the number of gas lamps alone was 2,349. Meanwhile the capacity of the works had increased eight-fold and the number of consumers seven-fold; and, notwithstanding that consumers are supplied at one of the

lowest rates in the country, the Gas Department has in seventy-seven years contributed nearly £160,000 to the relief of the rates of the town. Long before 1932, however, most of the principal streets were lighted by electricity.

PROVIDING THE TOWN WITH WATER.

Some ten years after the passing of the Bury Gas Act, another considerable body of townspeople called in Mr. William Benson, land surveyor and civil engineer, and steward to the Earl of Derby, to act as their adviser in a waterworks scheme. Their object was to provide for the water supply of Walmersley-cum-Shuttleworth, Bury, and Elton. In a petition for an Act of Parliament empowering them to carry out their project it is stated that "for the want of a sufficient supply of water for domestic and other purposes the inhabitants are subjected to great inconvenience, and are liable to increased danger in case of accident or fire." The petition was successful, and on June 11th, 1838, the first Bury Waterworks Act became law. Under its aegis, and that of many succeeding Acts, the great undertaking now controlled by the Irwell Valley Water Board came into being. The development of the undertaking during its history of nearly a century is interesting. The promoters, who were all local residents and for the most part leaders in the town's industries, conceived a scheme to cost £7,000, with a nominal capital of £10,000. Their aim was to supply the population of the three townships named with a daily supply of five gallons per head. The outlay to the present time is little short of two million pounds, and the Board has nine large reservoirs with a holding capacity of nearly 1,200,000,000 gallons, besides several pumping stations. The Bury Improvement Commissioners acquired the rights of the Bury and Radcliffe Waterworks Company, and of the Haslingden and Rawtenstall Company, by Act of Parliament in 1872. Four years later, on the town obtaining a charter of incorporation, the Corporation succeeded the Commissioners in their rights and responsibilities, including those attached to the ownership of the waterworks. As extended, the gathering grounds embraced the watersheds of the Irwell, and the area of service includes the towns and villages in the valley south of Haslingden and Rawtenstall (together with a portion of those towns) as far as a part of Prestwich. In 1900, under an Act promoted by the Bury Corporation, after discussion with the interested authorities, the Bury and District Joint Water Board was formed. Before its formation an adjustment of finance and of representation was arranged and provided for in the Act. The new authority held sway until the present year (1935), when the Joint Board promoted yet another Act of Parliament, one of the provisions of which was a change of name to Irwell Valley Water Board. The Board owns more than 4,000 acres of land. Much of this is farmed, while other parts, in accordance with plans, are derelict. About fifty farmers are tenants of the Water Authority.

NEW SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT PROJECTED.

It was hardly to be expected that a town whose leading citizens could inaugurate works of public utility so outstanding as the Bury gasworks and waterworks—and a few years later the East Lancashire Railway Company, referred to in the section of these notes which is concerned more directly with the industrial and commercial side of Bury's history—would for long be satisfied with a system of local government which was becoming out of date even in small country villages. Slowly the conscience of England was rousing itself to face the evils and shortcomings that the new prosperity was bringing in its train. A vicious and unrestrained opportunism was in danger of taking full control of the development of the country's ever-expanding industries. Expediency was at the helm, and Lancashire towns were growing without order, beauty, or regard for the health of the workers, who, after all, formed the great majority of the population.

Bury, coupled with Salford, was mentioned in a Report on the Health of Towns issued in 1840. It was stated that the town had rapidly increased in population and wealth lately. The situation of the labouring classes appeared to have been much neglected. There was no law to prevent the construction of houses in any form that the builders might choose, and no means of preventing them being so constructed as to be very injurious to health. Want of ventilation and difficulties of cleansing were noted in the alleys and narrow lanes where the poorer classes dwelt. There was neglect of decency, comfort, and cleanliness. The Report recommended a general Building Act, a general Sewage Act, and the creation of a Board of Health in every town.

In 1934 the *Bury Times* published a series of articles by Mrs. M. Whittaker, M.A., of Bury, on the work of the Improvement Commissioners in the town. This lady cites the good work started by Lord Normanby, the Home Secretary, in Lord Melbourne's Government, but nullified afterwards by the lukewarmness of Sir James Graham, who went to the Home Office after the fall of the Whig Administration. In 1843, however, Sir Robert Peel (Bury's greatest son) set up a Commission to continue the work. Reports were issued in 1844 and 1845, and several societies were started which pursued further investigations. These societies sent out questionnaires to local authorities. One of these circulars was received in Bury. It was addressed to "the Chairman and Commissioners of Improvement in Bury." As there was no such body it was taken to the Board of Guardians formed under the Poor Law Act of 1834. Mr. Edmund Grundy, the chairman, was a keen reformer, and took up the matter with enthusiasm. He despatched the following letter to the two Churchwardens of Bury, Mr. Richard Calrow and Mr. Jonathan Openshaw :—

27th August, 1845.

GENTLEMEN,

A communication having been laid before the Board of Guardians of the Bury Union, addressed to the Chairman and Commissioners of Improvement in Bury, calling attention to Act 7 and 8 Vict. for regulating the construction and use of buildings in the Metropolis and its neighbourhood, and asking for information and for an opinion on the general applicability of the said Act to populous towns, and for other information to be furnished to the Health of Towns Commission, the Guardians of the Poor of the Union of Bury desire that you will call a public meeting to take into consideration the propriety of forming such a body as that addressed by the communication referred to.

EDMUND GRUNDY, Chairman.

THE END OF VESTRY RULE.

This letter marked the beginning of the end of Vestry rule, and the preliminary steps taken to establish a more representative administrative body. The meeting asked for by Mr. Grundy was called, and a strong Committee was formed and charged with the duty of obtaining and supplying information to the Health of Towns Commission. The conclusions of this Committee were a grave indictment of the town. Bury was found to be lacking, says Mrs. Whittaker, in "almost everything that constitutes the comfort and well-being of a well-appointed and well-regulated town." Among the improvements found to be needed were a proper system of drainage and sewerage, better ventilation and scavenging, the opening up of back streets and alleys, more bedroom accommodation in cottages, a public water supply, a proper system of lighting, better and more adequate sanitary accommodations, and an enlarged burial ground. The crowded state of the Parish Churchyard was described as being shocking to decency and propriety, and injurious to health.

There is no doubt that in the hungry forties "Bury had many fine men among its residents. The Grundys, Walkers, Openshaws; the Rector of Bury (the Rev. Geoffrey Hornby, who years before had taken a leading part in the establishment of a Bank for Small Savings, and a Dispensary for the sick poor), the Rev. Franklin Howorth (a Free Church minister of saintly character and enlightened views), Dr. Matthew Fletcher (who was always to the fore when reform of any sort was the objective), Thomas Wrigley and John Robinson Kay (who were chiefly responsible for bringing its first railway to the town). The Committee was composed of men of wide and clear vision, who were not likely to acquiesce quietly in a continuance of the evils discovered in the course of their investigations. It was recommended that, as there was no municipal organisation in the town to work the General Act, a Local Act

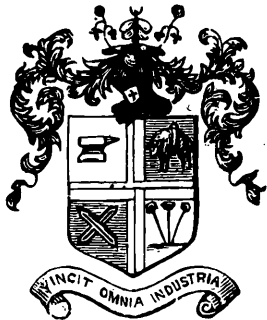
should be sought under which such a body could be formed, and given compulsory powers for the improvement and regulation of the town, and for providing for its further development on satisfactory lines. A section of the Committee, with Mr. Edmund Grundy at the head, considered that the most effective way of dealing with the situation would be by obtaining a Charter of Incorporation as well as a Local Act. To another and larger section, however, this proposal appeared too drastic. Had Mr. Grundy's party carried their scheme the actual date of incorporation would have been anticipated by thirty years. The compromise was the Bury Improvement Act of 1846, under which a body known as the Bury Improvement Commissioners was set up. This body ruled the town until the year 1876.

BURY IMPROVEMENT COMMISSIONERS.

The work undertaken during the administrative period of the Improvement Commissioners was almost entirely utilitarian in character. The Commissioners aimed at giving the town necessary public services rather than amenities. They acquired the Gasworks, the Waterworks, and the Markets and Market rights. Under their rule Public Baths were started and a Fire Brigade was instituted. In the founding of the Baths public subscriptions played a leading part, but when acquired the administration and further development became matters for the Commissioners.

In the promotion of the Bury Improvement Act the root-and-branch reformers met with considerable opposition. As long as support of progress meant simply giving adhesion to fine sounding platitudes all was well, but when, on getting down to brass tacks, it was found to mean giving compulsory powers to the proposed new authority enabling them to condemn and close certain household property, many of the theoretical reformers became anxious to discover whether the schedule would affect their own pockets. A storm of opposition arose when they found that it did, and as a result the schedule was withdrawn and the demand for compulsory powers was given up. Though shorn by these concessions of much of its capacity for effecting improvements rapidly, the Bill still remained in many ways an effective instrument. The new authority that it called into existence, though not fully democratic as the word is understood to-day, was in some degree an advance towards the democratic ideal, and left the Select Vestry and the Court Leet far behind.

The dropping of the schedule meant the postponement for many years of the demolition of closed-in courts and alleys, and the slowing down of the general rate of betterment ; but the measure as passed gave the local authority the power to bring about better lighting, paving, cleansing, draining, and other work for promoting the health and convenience of the inhabitants. In the main the Commissioners exercised their powers wisely, and their Act, whittled down though its benefits were, was still in advance of the General



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Act (7 and 8 Victoria) and of the legislation passed by other Lancashire towns, whether incorporated or not. To test a new type of sewer the Commissioners experimented with South Back King Street, and were so successful that the Board of Health at Whitehall applied for the plans, which were recommended for consideration by the local authorities of towns as far distant as Dover, Sunderland, and Carlisle.

In 1863, the Cotton Famine being then a source of widespread want and unemployment, the Commissioners decided to apply for a loan under the Public Works Act, with a view to starting relief schemes. A letter from the Rector (Canon Hornby) was the immediate occasion for their decision. The letter is interesting to-day because it contains an early recommendation to the local authority to make a move (as an alternative suggestion) in providing the town with a Recreation Ground. A few of the older people can still remember the Canon as a first-rate business man, and his letter confirms this, for he urges the Commissioners to act at once, "for they would never again have the opportunity of borrowing money on such easy terms." As paving and sewerage would require skilled labour, and as the work of the Commissioners in these respects caused Bury to compare very favourably with neighbouring towns, he advised that the work to be done should be the laying out of a Cemetery or a place of public recreation, both of which were badly needed. The Commissioners took their clerical friend's advice only in part. They borrowed money and carried out a considerable scheme of draining and sewerage, in which nearly two hundred men were at one time employed. They accepted his suggestion so far as the Cemetery was concerned, and in 1864 they reported that they had over sixty men employed upon this work. It was more than twenty years before the Rector's hint that a Recreation Ground was needed in the town resulted in the handing over, for use and enjoyment of the people of the town, of the Whitehead Recreation Ground. When this beginning was made (on May 29th, 1886) the Commissioners had been succeeded by the Town Council and the Canon himself was a very old man. The Cemetery was opened in 1869.

INCORPORATION OF THE TOWN.

Bury's Charter of Incorporation was received in September, 1876 ; and at the end of the following month the Commissioners went out of office and were succeeded by the Town Council. Their work, as has been seen, was largely confined to what are known as the essential public services. In the main that work had been well done, for when the old order gave place to the new Bury, according to the standards prevailing at the time, could be regarded as a well-conditioned and well-appointed town. That standard, however, judged by the progress of thought and practice since made in local government, cannot to-day be regarded as high. The town was without Art Gallery, Museum, and Public Library. It lacked Parks