



Chapter Seven

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS OF INCORPORATION: 1856-1906

THE BOROUGH AND THE DISTRICTS.

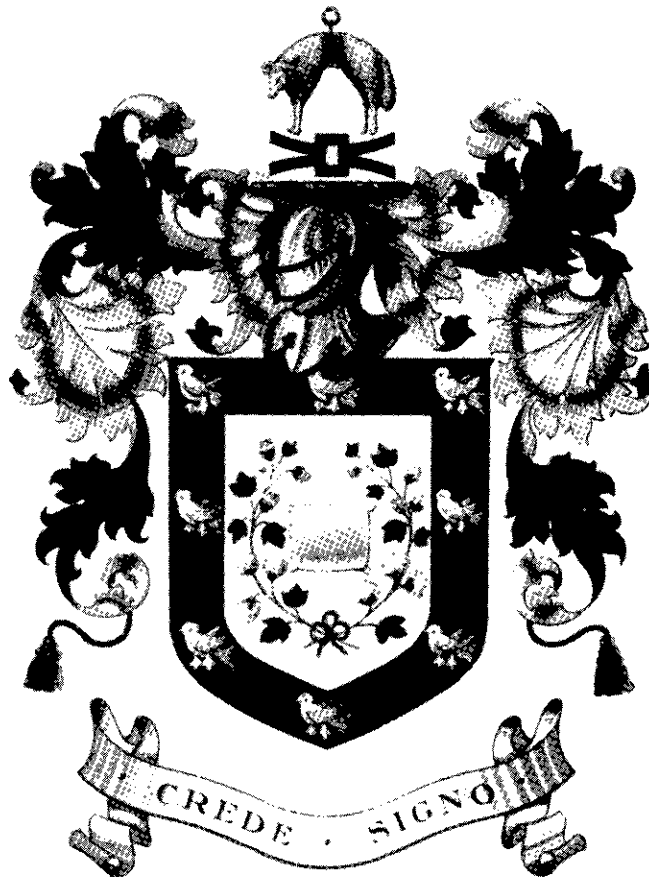
IN the half century between 1856 and 1906 the number of Corporation departments increased from a miscellaneous handful to no less than fourteen clearly defined administrative branches: namely, the Town Clerk's central and co-ordinating department and then others concerned with Police; Streets; Sewerage and Sewage; Sanitation; Health; Gas Supply; Water Supply; Electricity; Tramways; Public Libraries; the Art Gallery and Museum; Education; Finance.

The history of each of these departments is at times dramatic; in many cases there were hard fights before much needed improvements were obtained; sometimes, too, the ratepayers were asked to foot unexpectedly large bills, but these fifty years showed outstanding energy and foresight on the part of councillors and officials of whom the ratepayers were, and still are, justly proud.

Meanwhile, the chief developments which affected the Rochdale district as a whole were as follows.

In 1868 the Parliamentary boundary was extended beyond its $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile diameter; in 1870 a School Board was elected for the Borough; in 1872 the Borough boundary was extended until it was identical with the Parliamentary boundary and now encompassed 4,185 acres of land, being also administratively divided into 10 Wards, each with an Alderman and three Councillors. Under the great Local Government Act of 1888, Rochdale became a County Borough.

Of the outlying and adjacent districts, in 1888 Her Majesty's Boundary Commission decided that the 7,000 acre Parish of Todmorden and Walsden should be transferred to Yorkshire; by the Local Government Act of 1894, Milnrow, Wardle, Norden, Whitworth, Littleborough and Castleton each became modern townships, having their own Urban District Councils; Rochdale itself also became a single township or parish in this year: by a Local Government Board Order following the 1894 Act it was provided that such parts of certain ancient or comparatively recent townships " as are included within the County Borough of Rochdale, shall be united with the Township of Wardleworth, which is wholly



Arms of the Borough.

Fishwick's Rochdale Jubilee.

within the said borough, and constituted into one township, to be called the Township of Rochdale."

The object of this Order (which had been made by a committee appointed to deal with divided parishes and townships), was to ensure that the boundaries of parishes (which were at that time the basis of the Poor Law Authorities and also of the Rating Authorities) were co-terminous with the boundaries of boroughs, urban districts and rural districts.

In 1900 most of the Castleton Urban District was added to the Borough, creating the new ward of Castleton Moor, and enlarging the number of Aldermen to 11, with 33 Councillors. The area of the Borough was now 6,446 acres, and the populations of Castleton and Rochdale, respectively, in 1900, were 6,990 and 76,350, making a total population of 83,340 for the combined area.

HIGHLIGHTS OF CORPORATION HISTORY.

A short survey of the main municipal achievements during half a century will show how steadily Rochdale's Councillors laid their plans and worked towards the organisation and improvement of this newly born industrial centre, of which an unhealthily large proportion of the population was huddled near the "teacup and gutter" of its crowded centre: still sparsely lit, ill paved and scarcely sewered. The following outline of the Borough's history is condensed and taken almost entirely from the account given by Rochdale's former Town Clerk, W. H. Hickson, in *Rochdale Jubilee*, edited by Lt. Colonel Henry Fishwick in 1906. (Outlines of the separate Corporation departments have been similarly taken from the accounts, in the same work, given by the respective chief officials).

The Corporation acquired the undertaking and property of the ROCHDALE WATERWORKS Company in 1866 and the BROAD-FIELD part of the glebe-lands in 1867; the latter year also saw the start of work on the new COWM RESERVOIR. In 1868 the PUBLIC BATHS were built in Smith Street.

In 1871 the fine TOWN HALL, standing on the former site of "the Wood," was opened by the Mayor, George Leach Ashworth, rooms on the second floor, near the Tower, being used as a PUBLIC LIBRARY in 1872, the book stock having first been stored and prepared in Chadwick's old woollen warehouse in Packer Street. In the same year the Corporation acquired the rights of the MARKET, the Lord of the Manor having been granted the right to hold a Rochdale market by a Royal charter of A.D. 1251. Also in 1872, the Rochdale Council asked for and obtained a separate COMMISSION OF THE PEACE for the Borough, and, by a local Act, most of the TURNPIKE TOLLS within the Borough were abolished, the last to go being the Milnrow Turnpike in 1884. In 1873, land formerly belonging to Chadwick Hall was purchased from the trustees of the Bury Grammar School in order to make a large extension of the Bury Road ROCHDALE CEMETERY (which had been

acquired by the Commissioners twenty years before). A new POST OFFICE was completed in 1875, at the corner of Packer Street and Fleece Street (it is now the County Court Building); also a MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH for the Borough was appointed. That traditional public meeting-ground, CRONKEYSHAW COMMON, was acquired from the Lord of the Manor in 1876. In 1877 the ROCHDALE FAIR was held near Town Meadows, opposite the Esplanade, and, probably for the first time in its history, the CATTLE MARKET was transferred from Church Lane, to this site, together with the HORSE FAIR, which was formerly held in Cheetham Street.

The new building which housed the PUBLIC LIBRARY, on the Esplanade, was opened in 1884; the opening of the ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM took place nineteen years later. An application to provide a system of STEAM TRAMWAYS had been approved by the Rochdale Council in 1881; next year many companies made proposals to provide the town with electric lighting, but, in this case, the Council did not support the suggestions.

In 1890 an offer by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to provide a Church Lane site for the proposed TECHNICAL SCHOOL was accepted, and the school was opened in 1893. Five years later the Council obtained an order authorising them to supply ELECTRICITY within the Borough. In 1899 they decided to make a new approach to the RAILWAY STATION and also to acquire the TRAMWAYS within the Borough.

In 1900 the DANE STREET ELECTRICITY WORKS was opened; in 1904 the undertaking and property of the Bury, Rochdale and Oldham Tramway Company was transferred to the Corporation and the initial system of ELECTRIC TRAMWAYS was completed in 1905, two years after a tender had been accepted for covering the RIVER ROCH between the Rochdale and Wellington bridges.

Meanwhile, six more PARKS or RECREATION GROUNDS had been acquired by the Corporation. In addition to Broadfield and Cronkeyshaw, for which equipment had been given by James Duckworth, the NEWBOLD and BRIMROD grounds were presented to the town in 1898 and 1899, by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners and by Charles Whitaker, respectively; LOWERPLACE was acquired in 1902 and in this year Mount FALINGE and the 18 acres of its gardens were presented by Sir Samuel Turner; CASTLETON MOOR and SMALLBRIDGE Recreation Grounds were acquired in 1905 and 1906, respectively.

After the first fifty years of its incorporation the Borough now possessed eight public gardens, with an area of, altogether, over 100 acres. In addition, James Ogden had offered to make alterations to the westerly slopes of Broadfield Park; his offer was accepted and the work of terracing was completed in 1901.

“SAY NOT THE STRUGGLE NAUGHT AVAILETH.”

Even the outline of the main Corporation achievements is enough to provide a silhouetted illustration of a now more shapely and purposeful town with new public buildings and parks, possessing its own water supply, lighting and transport systems, zealously maintaining health, education, law and order within the Borough.

George Jacob Holyoake had been right to forecast that the people were immensely before the town: the good judgment of the Councillors and the hard work of the Corporation departments is abundantly evident from the printed minutes of the Council, from the annual reports of departments, official handbooks and the columns of the *Rochdale Observer* and other newspapers. There is character and drama in the history of each Corporation department: progress is not to be won without a struggle, and a few accounts of problems met and overcome must serve to show how Rochdale men fought to improve their town for the benefit of the people who elected and appointed them.

THE TOWN HALL.

From 1856 until 1871 the Town Council met in the old Commissioners' Rooms, Smith Street; in 1858 a building near the Market, known as the old Town Hall, was pulled down and had, in fact, never been used for municipal purposes. The Mayor and Aldermen of the first Council were as follows: Jacob Bright; Andrew Stewart; John Tatham; Thomas Livsey; George Leach Ashworth; Joseph Brierley; Robert Taylor Heape; John Schofield; Albert Hudson Royds; James Pilling, Jnr.; George Healey. There were thirty Councillors and Zachary Mellor was the Town Clerk. Obviously, the inconvenient Smith Street rooms did not provide enough space or civic dignity for this large and imposing gathering and in 1858 the question of a new Town Hall was raised, possible sites including Mr. Kelsall's house in the Butts, the Wellington Hotel and the Orchard (Mr. Dearden's Manor House); by 1860 it was decided to buy the site of "The House in the Wood," and in 1864, after overcoming difficulties concerning the price of this land, the Council offered a prize of £100 for the best plan of a building which would cost about £20,000. W. H. Crossland, a Leeds architect,



Rochdale Central Library.
Jacob Bright, Mayor, 1856.

won the prize: the work of building to his design was soon begun and in 1866 Jacob Bright's famous brother, John Bright, laid the corner stone, which contained newspapers, coins, documents and information concerning the Town Hall. On September 27th, 1871, the then Mayor, George Leach Ashworth, opened the new Town Hall, in which he had taken an immensely great interest and pride. The ultimate price of the building, however, was well over seven times the original estimate, being, not £20,000, but over £155,000, and although Ashworth and the unfortunate architect had to face considerable criticism they had achieved a result which, to this day, resounds to the credit of Rochdale.

The completed modern Gothic building, mainly perpendicular in style, with pinnacles and spires, great buttresses and a bold design, is still one of the finest of its kind in the country, being 92 by 41 yards and facing north. The original tower and gilded spire, in the north-east corner, rose to a height of 240 feet, with an 11 foot dialled clock and with twelve bells which played a carillon of fourteen tunes: one tune per day, repeated three times every three hours, starting with the "The Easter Hymn" on the first Sunday in the month and ending with "Home, Sweet Home" on the second Saturday. Rather understandably, it was in time suggested that more tunes might be added, but in 1883 the tower and spire, topped with an ornamental figure of St. George and the Dragon, caught fire and, watched by crowds of people, crashed to the ground, being replaced in 1887 by the present plainer tower and spire, 190 feet high, with a clock and five bells, but no carillon and no St. George.

A separate booklet, available today at the Information Bureau, Tower Office, Town Hall, and based on the Rev. T. P. Spedding's *Rochdale Jubilee* account, already describes the Town Hall in detail. Briefly, main items of interest are as follows: above the PORTICO are four stone, but gilded, lions of which the outer pair bear the Arms of the Borough, and, of the inner pair, the lion nearer the Tower carries the Arms of the County of Lancaster and the remaining lion shows the ancient Arms of the Hundred of Salford—a reminder that Rochdale, or Recedham, was one of the four places to be mentioned in the Domesday Book account of the Salford Hundred. The Town Hall is faced with the Blackstone Edge and Todmorden millstone grit which was deposited in the district in the form of sand by the glaciers of the Ice Age. The high 72 by 39 foot entrance hall (although known as the EXCHANGE it was never used for this purpose), has, near the doorway, magnificent windows illustrating the Arms of the chief countries connected with the trade of the town: the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, Turkey, Russia and Portugal are included and the window tracery is suggested by the principal plants which led to commerce with these nations: wheat, flax, indigo and many others. On the landing of the massive stone STAIRCASE, and from left to right, are the marble busts of John Bright, John Fenton, Thomas Bayley Potter (M.P. for Rochdale, 1865-95), and Richard Cobden. Taken in the same clock-wise order, the principal nine-light windows, richly coloured, are emblazoned with the Arms of the County, the Arms of Great Britain and the Arms of the Borough: the red roses of Lancaster, the lions of England

and the fleece and millrind of Rochdale are best seen when morning sunlight floods through these southern windows. On the 1st Floor, the GREAT HALL, 90 by 58 feet, with its single-span hammer-beam roof, 68 feet high, has been compared with Westminster Hall and was originally floored with oak. The eastern wall displays Henry Holiday's well known fresco which illustrates the signing of Magna Carta; this painting survived the 1883 fire but still shows a scar in the form of a cracked surface, which has so far defied efforts to repair it. The northern windows contain, in a complete and unique sequence, the portraits of the English sovereigns, beginning with William the Conqueror and ending, in the western rose window, with Queen Victoria who confronts her consort, Prince Albert, across the Hall.

The ground-floor COUNCIL CHAMBER, 60 by 24 feet, is to the east of the Exchange. Its walls carry a series of subjects illustrating various inventions, including John Kay's Flying Shuttle (No. 4 along the east wall), Hargreaves' Spinning Jenny (No. 9), and Crompton's Mule (No. 10), etc. An open screen marks the space which is set apart for such members of the public as wish to hear the lively debates at the Council Meetings, which are held on the first Thursday of each month. Adjoining the Chamber, to the east, is the richly decorated MAYOR'S PARLOUR, the roof representing the Garden of Eden and windows illustrating the seasons and months of the year.



Rochdale Central Library.
The Town Hall, from a drawing by the architect, W. H. Crossland, c. 1875.

At the west of the Town Hall is the entrance to the Police Department and the Magistrates' Court; at the east is the entrance to various municipal departments on the ground floor and upper stories, including the Town Clerk's Department on the 1st Floor, near the Tower.

Between the Tower entrance and the Mayor's Parlour is a comparatively small room which contains an epitome of the Town Hall's stormy birth: beneath a gold-starred ceiling of turquoise blue, and supporting beams carved with figures representing Aesop's fables, are four grotesque likenesses. The first is of that inspired man, George Leach Ashworth, who holds the replica of a Town Hall in his hand; diagonally across the RECEPTION ROOM, an accusing Alderman, Edward Taylor, vehemently shakes his fist at Ashworth; a third caricature, near the door, is of the Councillor and newspaper proprietor, W. A. Scott, who has the impartial air of a referee; the fourth, his resigned but weary face resting against his hand, is perhaps the only existing likeness of the architect, W. H. Crossland, much of whose life remains obscure. Although efforts have been made to discover the life history of the man who planned Rochdale's magnificent Town Hall, little can be traced of him now. Meanwhile, few visitors to the town can forget the dignity of Crossland's Town Hall, and it is said that while students of ancient English stained glass should visit York Cathedral, students who wish to see the finest modern stained glass in the country will find it in the Rochdale Town Hall.

POLICE.

Since 1833, by the "Watching and Lighting Act" the Town Watch was supervised by a committee of ratepayers. By later Acts of '39 and '40 the modern County and Borough Police system was finally established, provision being made for one Chief Constable within each county. In 1841 Rochdale's police formed part of the Middleton Division of the County Police, with a local headquarters at the junction of Yorkshire Street and Cheetham Street; however, in 1842 only five of the County Police remained, under Superintendent Phenix, the rest of the force being made up by fifteen of the former watchmen who had been trained in routine police duties. It had at this time been planned to provide a police station at Church Lane "where most of the nocturnal rows take place," but this project does not seem to have materialised.

It was not until April 13th, 1857, that the new Borough Police Force was established, with a strength of seventeen men, some of whom were soon dismissed for drunkenness, absenteeism or for frequenting brothels. Firm measures were necessary to build up a strong Police Force and to control a turbulent town, an opportunity came after 1869 when the granting of Liquor Licences was transferred from the Government Department of Inland Revenues to the local Justices of the Peace, and seven licences were soon refused to houses in or near the notorious district of Church Lane. Indeed, Samuel Stevens, the Head of the Borough Police from 1869 to 1882, took such prompt and drastic action to cope with drunkenness and disorderly behaviour that he received a letter of congratulation from the Home Office: in 1857 there had been only 96 cases of drunkenness, but this figure is misleading, for in 1870, under Stevens, the number rose to 790 and by 1872 every public house in Church Lane had either been closed down or summonsed. In this year Stevens obtained a Rochdale Bye-law for the local exaction of fines up to £10.

The Police Headquarters had in 1872 been transferred from Union Street to the new Town Hall.

In 1878 the management of the Fire Brigade was taken over by the Police, under Stevens. The early 19th century equipment for fire fighting has already been mentioned; in 1857 there were only hand pumps, superseded later by manual engines, but in 1874 a London firm supplied the first steam fire engine within the Borough—this was capable of throwing a 220 foot jet, but in the higher parts of the town it could not produce more than a 30 foot jet, due to the uneven pressure in the water mains, and even in the lower districts, it was limited to about 100 feet. In 1893 the Fire Station (originally in the old Commissioners' Rooms at Smith Street), was moved from the south side of the Town Hall to the newly built Fire Station in Alfred Street (off Baillie Street), where, in 1906, there were housed six horses and two steam engines, the stable doors being opened by a device which at the same time released the halters from the horses' heads. This building was connected by telephone to the Town Hall, Post Office and to various fire alarms within the Borough. A Horse Ambulance had been in use for some years, and policemen were now trained in First Aid methods.

Between 1857 and 1905, the strength of the local Police Force increased from 17 to 88; cases of violence or highway robbery became rare; jails were generally much improved as prisoners were now divided into three classes, of which two were comparatively leniently treated, being kept apart from the hardened offenders in the third class. Photographs were employed for identifying criminals and this innovation was followed by identification by finger-prints.

In 1870, at the start of Stevens' vigorous campaigning, there had been a local police return of 2,023 summary offences and 790 cases of drunkenness, out of an estimated population of 48,000 people in Rochdale; in 1905 the respective numbers were 848 summary offences and 304 cases of drunkenness out of a population of 83,114 people, and committals for trial had shrunk from 43 to 10. From 1898 the versatile Leonard Barry had been head of the Borough Police and he continued in office until 1917.

Various Acts relating to Weights and Measures were consolidated in an Act of 1878: it may be remembered that the Corporation had purchased the ancient Manorial Market rights in 1872, and the present Steward of the Manor still retains a set of Weights and Measures used by the Dearden Court Leet of 1826.

The early history of the various English measurements is extraordinarily interesting and may be briefly referred to: several were based upon parts of the human form, e.g., the foot, and the inch, or thumb breadth, which in the reign of Edward I became temporarily standardised as the length of three barley corns. After changes made during the centuries, in 1854 new Imperial standards were made, copies of which were supplied to local authorities and these copies are periodically compared with the Imperial standards as a check against variation—needless to say,

extra weight in the form of polishing materials is never applied to them, but they acquire an attractive glossiness through age and constant use. By 1906 the trained Inspectors of the local authority of the Board of Trade had reached a high state of efficiency and Rochdale owned the most modern appliances, including a powerful drilling machine, also the latest type of sand-blast machinery for stamping glass and earthenware measures. The already existing Metric weights and measures were, at this time, soon to be augmented by the then recently legalised decimal weights. Although the Metric System had been made legal in England, its adoption had been left optional, and the traditional but inconvenient English measurements continued to hold their own against the easily calculated Continental metres.

STREETS.

Just before the beginning of the 19th century, that fashionable traveller, Mrs. Murray, had mentioned the dirty condition of the town, its narrow streets and the possibility of being delayed in Rochdale for an hour or two on market days. In 1849-50, the Old Market Place had been widened by setting back the east side. In 1856, the year of Rochdale Charter, the centuries' old ford across the Roch was blocked by the widening of the then New Wall (now the South Parade), and within the first fifty years of incorporation no less than 17 main streets or roads had been widened, including Yorkshire Street (beyond Cheetham Street), Lord Street and Blackwater Street. Amongst improvements to other roads, Bury Road, between Oakenrod and the Cemetery, was straightened in 1863-4 by workmen who had been rendered unemployed during the Cotton Famine.

Increasing and heavier traffic bore severely upon the stone setts quarried from Whitworth, Facit and other local districts, and in 1869 a start was made in substituting granite setts quarried near the mountain of Yr Eifl, or "The Rivals," now well known to many Rochdalian who regularly take their holidays at Nevin, in Caernarvonshire. The Yr Eifl granite provided the most lasting of the paving-stones which have been imported into Rochdale from various parts of the country, including Clee Hill, Shropshire. Remembering the boulders which had been brought from the Lake District and from Scotland, free of charge, by the glaciers of the Ice Age, it is amusing to find that local ratepayers of the 19th century had to pay for stone to be brought from such quarries as Shap, Eskdale and Dalbeattie. Over 163,000 square yards of granite setts, spread over a length of 13½ miles, had resurfaced Rochdale streets before June, 1906. The streets paved with Yr Eifl granite between 1869 and 1871 had not "cost a penny for maintenance" by 1906, but in a few places, mainly near the Town Hall, hardwood paving had been used in order to minimise the sound of heavy traffic. If Mrs. Murray could have made her visit to Rochdale one hundred years later she would no longer have been inconveniently delayed for an hour or two and she would have found that the County Borough possessed vastly improved and wider street, some of which were swept daily by rotary machines, and none of which were swept less than once a week. In 1906 approximately 9,500

tons of refuse was collected from the streets, at a cost to the ratepayers of over £4,000 a year.

Meanwhile, in 1884, an iron girder bridge had been substituted for the old foot-bridge near the Wellington Hotel and in 1894 the lower end of Yorkshire Street was still further improved when the Oldham Joint Stock Bank (now the Midland Bank) was built at the north-east corner of the Rochdale Bridge. In 1904 saw a great step forward when the river was covered over for about one hundred yards between the Rochdale Bridge and the New Wellington Bridge, thus dispensing with the Walk foot-bridge (opposite the Robin Hood Hotel) and providing a spacious centre.



Photo: Borough Surveyor's Department.

Testing the Roch covering.

Concrete, reinforced with steel, was used for this 60 foot wide covering and rows of supporting columns were taken down to the solid shale which lies some four feet below the river bed. In the same year, ferro-concrete was also used for the Mellor Street bridges over the River Spod, in view of difficulties caused by flooded colliery workings thirty to forty feet below the river level. Alterations to other bridges were made necessary by the widening of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway; the new Railway Station had been completed in 1891 and two approach roads were made, one from Richard Street and Milkstone Road, the other from Oldham Road being carried over the Rochdale Canal by girder bridges. In 1906 the Milnrow Road ferro-concrete bridge at Firgrove, 14 yards wide, was then being constructed to replace the old 4½ yard wide stone bridge.

However, it was George Leach Ashworth who had spurred on the greatest improvement to a Town Centre which, at the beginning of the 20th century, no longer recalled Holyoake's teacup and gutter of some fifty years before. When the new Town Hall was being built in the 60's

it stood surrounded by uneven ground and was flanked by, to say the least, unhealthy property built on the old glebe-lands. One fine building will make an uncomfortable contrast to dingy surroundings: obviously something had to be done to bring this prominent and unsavoury part of Rochdale into line with the Town Hall and in 1871 the 70 foot wide Esplanade was laid out between Rochdale Bridge and Manchester Road, rows of trees being planted along its length, but these "gradually died off and were removed." Between 1871 and 1906 the old property on the western side of Packer Street was entirely pulled down and, near Fleece Street and the then new Post Office, Packer Street was raised by about 9 feet, "thus affording a fine open space for the improvement of the vicinity of the Town Hall." The neighbourhood of Church Lane, The Gank (a narrow and disreputable alley off Packer Street), and Church Stile was also considerably improved, with the co-operation of the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, also, by an arrangement in 1889 with the Vicar and the Churchwardens, a wide strip was added to Church Stile from the old grave-yard attached to the Parish Church.

Improvements too numerous for description had also been made in less central parts of the Borough, but the work of establishing a dignified and spacious Centre had been courageously attacked, and, oddly enough, the Town Hall now stood in the valley, being opposite to New Gate where, according to the legends of Gamel the Thane and the Goblin Builders, the foundations of the Parish Church were laid in Saxon times.

SEWERAGE AND SEWAGE.

In 1848, Edward Taylor (the vigilant Alderman who still shakes his fist at the "extravagant" George Leach Ashworth in the Mayor's Reception Room) gave a lecture at the Baillie Street Peoples' Institute, in relation to the death rate; he spoke of drainage, paving and cleansing, ill-conditioned dwellings, scanty supplies of water, "and the first in importance is the Sewering."

Of Rochdale's 193 streets, he said, 14 streets, being $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length, were well drained; 74 streets, totalling 8 miles, had neither sewers nor drains; the rest were unsatisfactorily drained and the 166 Courts, accounting for a total of 2 miles, had only surface drains. Out of 8,000 houses, 1,300 were in these Courts, and only 2,300 houses were in well drained streets, "that is to say two-thirds of the houses are . . . exposed to pestilential effluvia."

After Edward Taylor's clear and plain speaking, the 1853 Rochdale Improvement Act was obtained, enabling the construction of new sewers and prohibiting them from draining into the Roch above Town Mill Weir or into the Lort Burn (or Lord's Burn). From 1854 and for years afterwards a scheme for discharging sewage into the Roch below Oakenrod Weir was under consideration and in the meantime a few trunk sewers were laid which could be connected to such a system. Between 1873 and 1879 about £28,000 was spent on laying main sewers, but the vexed question of sewage disposal remained unanswered until in 1878 the then

Mayor, Mr. James Tweedale of Roch Mills, instituted legal proceedings against the Corporation for breach of the Rivers Pollution Prevention Act of 1876. This is an outstanding example of the way in which one determined townsman could invoke the power of the law against the passive resistance of indecision. The result was not without humour: the Corporation, having been forced by Mr. Tweedale into applying for sanction for a sewage disposal scheme costing £112,000, first bought ground at Half Acre and later bought from Mr. Tweedale himself the adjoining land which formed the Roch Mills estate. In 1885 a system of "intermittent downward filtration" was chosen and in 1888 tanks were constructed for the preliminary treatment of the sewage. Only six years afterwards it was found impossible to cope satisfactorily with the volume of sewage flowing to Roch Mills. Mr. S. S. Platt (a particularly talented Borough Surveyor), prepared a scheme which included converting the solid sewage into sludge which would be convenient for use by farmers; more land was bought at Oakenrod and in 1896 this scheme was already being operated. By 1906 there were over 70 miles of sewers in Rochdale, the sizes varying from 9 feet in diameter (constructed of brick), to 9 inch diameter earthenware pipes, the cost to the ratepayers having swollen from £10,500 (before 1872) to a total expenditure reaching £130,000 by 1906. In 1896 the then Urban District Council of Castleton installed a sewage works which in 1900 came under the control of the Rochdale Borough sewage system.

In 1906 five-sixths of the sewage flow was treated at Roch Mills, and the remainder at Castleton, the total dryweather flow at the Roch Mills and Sudden Outfalls making a total of over two million gallons daily. Due to trade liquid refuse (from woollen mills, fell-mongering and rubber factories, etc.,) a small quantity of sulphuric acid (or brown oil of vitriol) was added to counteract alkaline contents. During the year ending March 31st, 1906, over 4,000 tons of pressed sludge were disposed of, some to farmers within Rochdale and some to farmers scattered 40 miles around the town. Crops of rye-grass, cabbage and root-crops were grown at Roch Mills, and about 12 head of cattle were fed upon such of the crops as were not readily saleable.

After a slow start, it is a matter for satisfaction that at the beginning of the 20th century, the Rochdale sewage disposal system, which included tanks, agitators, filters and sprinklers, achieved a 95% standard of purification, being inspected by members of the 1906 Royal Commission on Sewage Disposal, who requested and were granted permission to conduct experiments at Roch Mills.

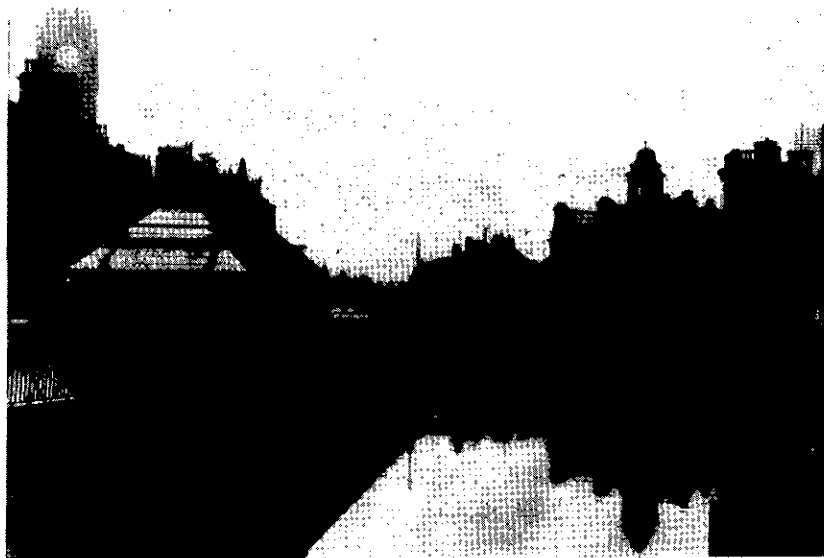
SANITATION.

In 1853 an attempt was made to abolish the haphazardly scattered middens and nightsoil which, in Rochdale as in other towns, were a menace to the public health, and it was now ordered that all middens were to be removed and contracts were to be made for the removal of nightsoil. In 1854 the cost of this work seems to have been about £420, but by 1858 the cost had risen to £950. Some ten years after there were still 4,000

middens in the town and in 1869 a satisfactory new trial was made by using 100 pails for the removal of middens in Church Lane, School Lane and, later, other districts; the cost of removal in this year being £1,300. Owing to difficulties in obtaining contractors the Scavenging Committee undertook responsibility for seeing that the work was done, the Rhodes Estate being purchased, first for a tip and then as a site for the Works. Several methods of drying the nightsoil were tried, and the first method, employing fine ashes and sulphuric acid, resulted in a manure which sold at about £1 per ton. In 1882 a hot-air drying machine proved satisfactory but was later replaced by the steam jacketed plant which was still in use in 1906; the manure now sold at over £5 per ton, and in 1905 the nett cost of running the Sanitary Works, then administered by Mr. F. W. Brookman, was over £12,000.

HEALTH.

In 1856 the death rate in Rochdale was 23.4 per 1,000 of a population which was distributed in buildings containing, on an average, five people per house. Fortunately, Rochdale's hills, valleys and natural drainage made it one of the healthiest of the larger Lancashire towns, but it was considered that in the spring, east winds caused lung diseases, of which some 3.8 per thousand inhabitants died in 1858. Of the total number of deaths at this time some 46% were of children under 5 years of age. Medical knowledge was limited and medical supervision was slight: following the days of the Police Commissioners a solitary Inspector of Nuisances, appointed to look after the sanitation of the Borough, was



By permission of A. T. Handley.

The River Roch, from Wellington Bridge, 1903.

under the diversified control of the Lighting, Scavenging, Hackney Coach and Fire Engine Committee, but in 1866 a local butcher was employed to assist this lone official to inspect meat—a very necessary appointment, it seems, since in 1869 there were 54 deaths from typhoid.

Not until 1875, three years after the Public Health Act of 1872, was a Medical Officer of Health, Dr. J. Mitchell Wilson, appointed for the Borough, and in 1878 there was also appointed a Public Analyst. Dr. Wilson was in 1879 succeeded by Dr. J. Henry who, two years later, was confronted by an outbreak of small pox. There were, at this time, only six available spare beds in Marland Workhouse, part of which had been rented by the Corporation for hospital purposes; however, Spotland Workhouse was now rented and temporarily fitted up as a hospital where 177 out of the 906 cases of smallpox were treated, but, even after this sharp lesson, it was not until 1886 that the Marland Workhouse was bought and reconstructed to provide 56 beds, with a laundry and a mortuary. Indeed, until the 80's, the deadly diphtheria was diagnosed as croup, and no serum existed to combat it. In 1890 the then new disease of influenza made an appearance in Rochdale.

Medical science was now making rapid strides, however; various Public Health and other Acts led to increased watchfulness on the part of the authorities, and by 1906 the municipal medical staff had been augmented to eleven: the Medical Officer of Health, the Inspector of Nuisances, two Assistant Inspectors, a Meat Inspector, two Disinfection and Removal Officers, two Lady Inspectors and two Clerks. The number of visits to cases of infectious diseases, etc., totalled over 11,000 in one year; there were over 8,000 various inspections of premises and markets, and over 2,000 lbs. of beef and other foods were seized or surrendered for destruction.

Although the population of the enlarged Borough had more than doubled, from over 33,000 in 1856 to about 87,000 in 1906, the death rate had shrunk from 23.4 to 16.1 per thousand of the population. Instead of children under 5 years of age accounting for 46% of the total deaths there was now a much lower proportion of 27%. Typhus, a disease caused by filth, was now unheard of, and in 1905 there were only 3 cases of typhoid. Diseases spread by germs had shrunk to less than a third of the 1856 percentage, with much the same rate of reduction in the case of deaths from phthisis, or "pulmonary consumption."

GAS SUPPLY.

As early as 1844 the Rochdale Police Commissioners had bought that private undertaking, the Rochdale Gas Light and Coke Company, for £26,000. At this time not more than twenty private houses were lit by gas, locally, which then cost 7s. per 1,000 cubic feet. On October 3rd, 1844, the minutes of the Lighting and Hackney Coach Committee record that five men would be needed "to light the town," one for the oil lamps, and four for the gas lamps. By 1853 the price of gas had been reduced to 4s. per 1,000 cubic feet, and, five years later, while the price remained the same, the number of consumers was now 7,227, or eight times the number in 1846.

According to the 1858 report of the Gas Committee, since 1844 over £15,800 of profits had been paid to the Finance Committee and spent on public improvements to the town. Between 1860 and 1862 a sixth gasholder was built, but the supply of gas could not meet the demand of the numerous applications from such districts as Blue Pits (Castleton), Wardle, Firgrove, Healey, etc., and some of these requests had to be refused. In 1865, public resentment at the charge to each consumer of one shilling per annum for visits by Gas Inspectors led eventually to the substitution of a scale of discounts in place of this " unjust and arbitrary " charge.

There had already been several extensions to the existing plant before, in 1871, under the new Manager, Mr. Samuel Hunter, a start was made in the task of enlarging and entirely remodelling the Gas Works at a cost of some £70,000. When Dane Street was made, in 1878, further expenses were necessary, as the level of the approach had been altered. The present entrance to the Gas Works was now constructed, and offices were built; another entrance, from Manchester Road, was made in 1893 so that haulage was minimised and coal could be tipped down. A gasometer with a capacity of 2½ million cubic feet was also built.

The local production of gas was now about 385 million cubic feet per annum. By March, 1906, the price of the gas supplied to Rochdale consumers had shrunk to 2s. 8d. per 1,000 cubic feet, and a differential rate of from 2s. to 1s. 6d. was applied when gas was required other than for lighting purposes, varying according to the quantity consumed per quarter.

There is a note of justifiable pride in the 1906 account given by the then Manager, Mr. T. B. Ball, who mentions the conspicuous ability of Alderman William James Petrie, Chairman of the Gas Committee for over a quarter of a century. Apart from a rather costly accident during the 80's, when there was a burst in pipes carrying tar pumped up from the Works to the Canal Wharf, the Borough Gas Works had enormously increased the supply of gas, while lowering its price, with a minimum of outlay and little to report apart from a steady and very satisfactory progress.

WATER SUPPLY.

Until 1866 the town depended upon the privately owned Waterworks Company for a water supply which was insufficient to meet the demands; during the summer months the supply was often shut off for half the daylight hours. In 1866 an Act of Parliament was obtained and provided that from October 1st of that year the Waterworks and its properties should be transferred to the Rochdale Corporation, the former shareholders being recompensed by annuities. The Waterworks Committee in 1867 issued from their office at Toad Lane a report stating that the existing reservoirs at Buckley Wood, Hamer Pasture and Wham, supplied from the catchment area of Wardle Common, contained 147 million gallons of water and provided nearly 12,000 houses, or about 60,000 persons, daily with 750,000 gallons, or some 13 gallons a day per person, the storage being equal to nearly 200 days' supply at this rate.

This report, signed by the Chairman, J. H. Moore, makes an attempt to estimate the needs of the increasing population: "Within the district proposed to be supplied there are now about 75,000 persons—the population is increasing rapidly, and it is estimated that one half more, making altogether 112,500 people, will be settled there certainly within the next twelve or fourteen years. It is proposed to give twenty gallons per head daily to the district." The 1867 Waterworks Committee therefore proposed the making of Spring Mill Reservoir (to be fed by Prickshaw Brook and its tributaries), Cowm Reservoir (fed by Cowm and Tonge End Brooks), also Knott Hill Reservoir, and these new undertakings were to hold a further 160 days supply of water, for an outlay of about £90,000 and a further £11,500 for the main pipes. The consultant engineer, Mr. Thomas Hawksley, estimated that an income of £8,000 per annum ought to be received for a daily supply throughout the year of a million gallons of water.

In the following year the town was so short of water that old pumps were restored, all available supplies of water were used and barrels were carted about the streets to eke out a meagre supply for the people who crowded round the water-carts. Mr. Hawksley was again called in and reported that the flooded colliery at Dearnley, near Yea Bridge, Wardle, would yield, with storage, enough for 50,000 people "exclusive of large manufacturing demands, and a general system of water closets, if such should ever be introduced into Rochdale." However, though the Dearnley water was clear and wholesome it was four times as hard as the existing supply and was less suitable for manufacturers, "and particularly in the dressing of wool and woollen cloths, in which waters free from lime are very important because of the peculiar silkiness they communicate to the fibre and fabric."

Water was leased from the Dearnley Colliery until 1874, by which time it was expected that the large Cowm Reservoir would be ready, but "enormous and unforeseen difficulties" forestalled these hopes and a supply from the Butterworth Hall Colliery had to be temporarily obtained.

The difficult work at Cowm had been begun in 1867; after many anxious years, in 1876 the valve was closed and the reservoir was almost full when a leakage was noticed. A 42 foot length of brickwork lining had to be built to reinforce the reservoir trench, but in 1877, after overflowing in July, the Cowm Reservoir soon had to be completely emptied to discover that there were large cracks in the rock at the base of the bank. In this case, disaster was prevented, for the reservoir would have been washed away if the cracked rock had not been discovered. After attempts at reinforcement, which included borings filled with Portland cement, the trouble appeared to be cured, the reservoir having been used and nearly completed in 1877, but in 1886 there was a further subsidence. Nearly twenty years had passed since a start had been made at Cowm, but now additional borings conquered Rochdale's largest and most troublesome 19th century reservoir.

At Spring Mill, begun in 1871, there were also difficulties, owing to the nature of the ground, and ten years later a special meeting of the Council was called in order to decide whether the heavy excavations there should be stopped, but the costly work was continued and by 1884 Spring Mill Reservoir had been completed. It was brought into use in 1887, when a year of drought had severely tested the resources at Cowm but had also brought a measure of relief to members of the waterworks Committee, for in the previous year there had been a deficiency of £16,653 in their accounts. This deficit was now gradually reduced by the income from water rentals.

In 1897 the consumption of water now nearly equalled the estimated total yield of the Corporation Reservoirs; nevertheless a poll was necessary before the Corporation could proceed with their scheme to purchase the Todmorden Waterworks and its Ramsden Reservoir which had a capacity of over 100 million gallons. In spite of strong opposition from the Todmorden authorities the purchase was made in 1898 and in 1901 a shortage of water led to anxiety, since the new connecting main to Ramsden had not then been laid.

Mr. William Tomlinson (Waterworks Manager from 1884) in 1906 stated that the local consumption of water was estimated to be over $2\frac{1}{4}$ million gallons a day. Although supplies from Ramsden were available, they had not yet been used, but the demands were greater than the works (excluding Ramsden) could have supplied, given an average rainfall of three successive dry years.

Of Rochdale's seven reservoirs, Cowm now had the greatest capacity, of over 227 million gallons; the newly acquired Ramsden Reservoir was the highest, being 968 feet above sea level, or 40 feet higher than the purely service reservoir, Knott Mill. The total cost of the works up to 1906 had been nearly £850,000, but the revenue for the year ending March, 1906 was over £42,000.

ELECTRICITY.

After taking over the Rochdale Gas Light and Coke Company in 1844, the local authority, possibly lulled by the success of this venture, had launched itself into acquiring the Waterworks Company in 1866, and in the 70's, flooded with trouble and with the expense of the Town Hall, was little likely to do other than watch from a safe distance the financial disasters of the privately owned steam cars. By 1896, however, the Corporation was cautiously experimenting with electricity.

Shortly after the passing of the 1882 Electric Lighting Act, the Hammond Electric Light and Power Supply Company applied for the Council's sanction to their intention of supplying electricity to the town, and at about the same time five other companies notified the Corporation that they meant to apply for Provisional Orders concerning the supply of electricity. At a special meeting of the Council in October it was decided to make application to the Board of Trade to authorise that the Corporation should supply electricity for public and private purposes within the Borough, but in December this resolution was rescinded, and,

apart from refusals to the applications of private companies, little action was taken by the Corporation in this matter until, in 1896, (when several private plants already existed) a generating plant was obtained to light the Sewage Works, and a month later permission was given to the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers to lay a cable from their St. Mary's Gate stores to their Toad Lane premises.

In May it was decided to light the Public Library (on the Esplanade) with a small gas engine-driven plant, and during the next year a Gas Sub-Committee unanimously decided that a municipal supply of electricity should be provided, with a view to its application to the tramway system. The site of the disused Bridge Mill, on the north side of the bridge opposite the Gas Works, Dane Street, was chosen for the Generating Station and by October, 1900 the scheme had been completed, the outer wall of the engine house being on the Roch river wall. The generating plant included



Electricity Department.
Electricity Department.

two 200 H.P. engines (named "John Bright" and "W. J. Petrie," respectively) coupled to two continuous current dynamos, and the boiler house was equipped with two 30 by 8 foot Lancashire boilers. During the next six years there were only two failures in the supply of electricity, the first being caused by a fencing stake which was driven into a cable at the corner of Tweedale Street and Manchester Road, and the second, which cut the supply during ten to ninety minutes in various parts of the town, was due to an accident connected with the generating plant. The Town Hall was first lit by electricity on October 26th, 1900, for the annual soir e of the Rochdale Literary and Scientific Society.

It was soon found necessary to add two 500 H.P. steam dynamos and three Lancashire boilers, also, due to the shallowness of the river at the side of the works, to build a settling tank which would provide a minimum depth of 7 feet of water throughout the year, for condensing purposes.

After one or two variations, the price of electricity was fixed at 6d. per unit for the first 100 hours per quarter, and 2d. for all further units. The firm of Messrs. T. Robinson, of Fishwick Street, was the first large consumer of the Corporation electricity, and whereas the number of consumers was 57 in the first full year up to April, 1902, the number had risen to 258 by April, 1906. The total number of units generated had increased from over 50,000 in 1901 to over 2½ millions in 1906, and the staff of the department had correspondingly risen from a handful to about 50 in 1906—not surprisingly since over 40 miles of cables had been laid in connection with the tramways and in 1906 the Electricity Department had been responsible for erecting and installing plant at a cost of over £71,000 on its own behalf and also plant costing over £85,000 for the Tramways Department, which was at first managed by the Borough Electrical Engineer, Mr. C. C. Atchison.

TRAMWAYS.

Horse omnibuses conveyed travellers within Rochdale and the surrounding districts before 1883, but in 1881, eleven years after the passing of the Tramways Act, a company later known as the Bury, Rochdale and Oldham Tramway Company, Ltd., was authorised to construct a steam tramway system, having a gauge of 3ft. 6in., and on July 27th, 1882, Alderman William Baron (made Mayor in 1880 and 1881) and the Chairman of the Paving and Sewering Committee, Alderman Samuel Tweedale (made Mayor in 1874), started off the construction work by removing paving stones from the junction of Oldham Road and Drake Street. The first length of the Rochdale tramways was opened on May 7th, 1883, between Littleborough and Buersill and by 1885 it was possible to travel by steam trams from Rochdale and through Heywood to Bury, also past Buersill to Royton.

However, the Steam Tramways Company gradually lost money and went into liquidation in 1888, but after reducing capital and issuing £42,000 Ordinary Shares, it was eventually able to pay dividends of about 5%. After 21 years, the Company's legal powers expired and the Corporation decided to take up their option to purchase the concern, and to change over from steam to electricity. In 1899 it was decided to widen the tramway gauge to 4 ft. 8½ in. in conformity with neighbouring towns and eventually with all the towns between Manchester and Liverpool.

A Tramways Committee was first appointed in November, 1900 and by May 22nd, 1902 the new electric trams were running from Dane Street and along Bury Road to the Borough boundary. Three years later the electrification of the old steam system was complete, and on August 12th, 1905 the track through Littleborough and to the Summit terminus was opened.

The Mellor Street car shed, 216 by 100 ft. was first used on July 15th, 1904, the General Manager, Mr. J. S. D. Moffet, taking up his duties on July 18th, a few days before the route along Mellor Street was opened, giving access to the Car Shed. The offices, however, were not in use until June 23rd, 1905.



Photo: Borough Surveyor's Department.

Steam tram and electric tram.

By 1906 the total length of routes owned by the Rochdale Corporation, within the Borough and in the Urban Districts of Norden, Whitworth and Wardle, was over 16 miles, exclusive of over 2 miles leased in Littleborough and over 1 mile operated by them in Heywood. The number of passengers carried increased from about 925,000 in 1902-3 to over 7½ millions in 1905-6. The receipts had also increased from over £5,000 to £42,000, and the annual mileage from over 128,000 to over 985,000 miles. The original 49 tramcars were, after 1904, increased to 59, and the staff of the Department in 1906 consisted of 210 men, of whom about 40 were employed in servicing and cleaning a fleet of electrical cars which had proved an almost startling success in comparison with the dismal struggles of the slow and sooty steam trams.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES.

In April, 1856, the Commissioners had discussed a proposed Government gift of Patent Specifications which would form a nucleus of a free library towards which various Rochdale gentlemen had offered to contribute. W. A. Scott and Edward Taylor were both in favour of a free library, which might have materialised in 1856, but that born champion of the workingman, Thomas Livsey, insisted that such a library should be kept open on Sundays and the result seems to have been a stale-mate.

The subject was kept alive during years of intermittent correspondence in the local press: in 1870 one thousand Rochdaliens signed a request to the Mayor to call a public meeting concerning the adoption of the Free Libraries' Acts, and after two large meetings the Acts were adopted, this course having been proposed by Councillor James Booth and seconded by the author of *Strange Tales*, John Ashworth. There had, however, been strong opposition from the Rochdale Equitable Pioneers,

who, in the year after their inauguration, had started to order regular copies of the *Manchester Guardian*, and in 1848 had sold periodicals from a stall in order to make money for the foundation of their own library.

The first Public Library Committee acted rapidly, and, with James Booth as Chairman, and the then Major Fishwick as Vice-Chairman, books were prepared for issue and stored in Chadwick's woollen warehouse in Packer Street during 1871; by March 1872 the first Report showed that over 10,500 volumes had been purchased for some £1,750, but only about 300 volumes had been given. These books, and the Patent Specifications, were transferred to the Tower side of the Town Hall's second storey, where the library was first opened on September 18th, 1872. For some months, John Hill of Manchester had been the first Librarian, but in April, 1871, George Hanson was appointed, and was still in office in 1906. The first catalogue of the Lending Department was printed in 1872, followed by the Reference Library catalogue in 1873. During 1874, over 85,000 volumes were issued, and, two years later, the 18th century Rochdale Subscription Library (known as "Hartley's Library") was affiliated but almost all its book stock was destroyed when, during the Town Hall fire of April, 1883, tons of debris fell into the fiercely burning Tower Room which housed the Subscription Library; damage was also done to the roof of the Reference Reading Room, where most of the books were saturated with water. By June, 1883 work had begun on a new building near Willow Bank, on the south side of the river, the estimated cost being £4,500, and in October, 1884, the new Public Library was opened, being of one storey (with a basement), 87 feet in length, but to a Gothic design by Jesse Horsfall, of Yorkshire stone with green Buttermere slates and red Staffordshire ridging, the windows of cathedral glass having been given by James Ogden, a member of the Committee who had also helped to prepare the first stock of books at Packer Street. Oak was used for the entrance doors and pitch-pine for most of the fittings, but the tops of the counters were of American walnut. A low pressure heating system was installed and the total cost of the building and fittings came to £5,900. It is pleasant to record that W. A. Scott attended the opening ceremony and that Edwin Waugh was also present. A Boys' Library and Ladies' Reading Room was opened in 1885 and, by 1906, some 700 ladies attended this room weekly, which was kept supplied with 51 regular periodicals. In 1886, after a long debate, Lt. Colonel Fishwick proposed, and John Albert Bright seconded, that the Reference Library should be kept open on Sundays. This resolution was carried by one vote, and so, thirty years after Thomas Livsey's dogmatic insistence, and over twenty years after his death, the Reference Library and the Boy's Library remained open on Sunday, February 14th, 1886. By 1906 the Sunday attendance was about 800 persons weekly, and the Sunday issues of books accounted for a yearly total of some 20,000 volumes.

In 1896 electric light was fitted to the Library under the direction of S. S. Platt, the Borough Surveyor, and it was he who suggested that Jesse Horsfall, a member of his staff, should plan a Library extension.

This building, roofed with Westmorland slate, was set back 25 feet from the front of Horsfall's original Library so that it should not interfere with the light of the existing windows. A 34 by 27 ft. room in the basement was now used as the Boys' Library.

A small branch library had been opened at a house in Emma Street, Castleton, in 1901, but, four years afterwards, the then Chairman of the Library Committee, Lt. Colonel Fishwick, had approached that well known public benefactor, the millionaire Andrew Carnegie, who gave £2,500 towards the building of the present Castleton Library which was opened by the then Mayor, Colonel Fishwick, in 1905, having been built to Jesse Horsfall's design, this time of Accrington bricks, with Staffordshire roof-tiles. This building was supplied with gas brackets, and provision was made for a stock of about 10,000 volumes. At the opening ceremony a gold key was presented to the Mayor by Mr. Horsfall.

In 1902 over 9,500 volumes were issued from this branch library, and in 1906 the yearly issues had reached over 18,000.

Figures concerning the Rochdale Public Library issues are a little misleading. In 1874 over 60,000 volumes had been issued by the Lending Department; in 1906 the number had risen to 142,000 and would have been considerably larger, except for a change of fashion in publishing the new one-volumed novel instead of the old-style three-volumed work. The bookstock in the Lending Department had risen from 10,000 volumes in 1874 to 42,000 in 1906; and in the Reference Department from nearly 5,000 to over 17,000 volumes,—the total book stock in 1906 being nearly 60,000 volumes, while 21 daily papers and 306 periodicals were available in the reading rooms.

The fine collection of "Tim Bobbin's" works has already been mentioned: in 1906 there were 74 editions of John Collier's *View of the Lancashire Dialect* and other works by the same author, including the very rare edition published in 1746. Also within the Reference Department was a collection of books on the wool trade whose publication dates ranged from 1610 and upwards.

Special mention must be made of the "unrivalled collection" of books and pamphlets connected with Rochdale, also those written or printed by persons connected with the town, while the collection of books relating to Lancashire was thought to be the completest of its kind in England.

THE ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM.

An Act for "the establishing of Museums in large towns" had been passed as early as 1845; nevertheless, during the 19th century the progress of libraries, art galleries and museums was retarded by the limitations of the $\frac{1}{2}$ d. rate, eventually, and inadequately, raised to 1d.

In Rochdale, as in many other towns, it had been considered impossible to stretch the proceeds from the 1d. rate into maintaining an art gallery or museum as well as the so-called "Free" Library, although the possibilities were from time to time discussed by the Council and in the

local newspapers. In 1898, when the Council took steps towards a Bill for acquiring the Tramways, a clause was inserted to allow the rate for the Library to be increased from 1d. to 2d., and in 1900 Jesse Horsfall was once again asked to prepare plans, this time for the further extension of the Library to include an Art Gallery and a Museum.

In 1901 James Ogden made a generous gesture, whose effects still powerfully aid the culture of the town, in giving a lump sum of over £3,000 to be invested until 1911, after which at least £1,000 were to be spent every five years in buying works of art; later he added a sum of £1,000 so that the annual amount which could be spent rose to £260. By 1906 the Ogden Bequest amounted to over £5,000.

Horsfall's new extension was of two storeys and a basement, and again he used Yorkshire stone, with a roof of Cumberland slate, but with a frontage ornamented by three handsome panels of figures representing Science, Art and Literature. Designed by C. J. Allan of Liverpool, the panels were given by the Aldermen Miles Ashworth and W. T. Heap and by the then Councillor James E. Jones, (later knighted). The total cost of the building was over £6,500, leaving the Committee with an adverse balance of over £1,700. F. Williamson, a member of the library staff, was appointed as the Secretary.

On April 3rd, 1903, the Art Gallery and Museum were opened by Lt. Colonel Henry Fishwick, and were already supplied with exhibits.



"A Special Pleader,"

C. Burton Barber

As early as 1874 gifts had been received in the hope that a museum would be built; in 1896 Dr. H. C. March had presented a valuable collection of local flints, and the Rochdale Literary and Scientific Society, of which he was the President, had presented two glass showcases. Other notable donors of fossils and flints were Messrs. S. S. Platt, W. H. Sutcliffe, W. A. Parker and W. Baldwin, who, together with Mr. J. H. Brittain, were responsible for arranging the specimens, which were augmented in 1902 by James Horsfall's collection of fossils and flint implements. It may be remembered from an earlier chapter that the Rochdale moors form part of one of the richest Mesolithic flint areas in Europe, and the work and generosity of these local archaeologists has greatly added to the knowledge of our district, many of the middle coal measure fossils, also, being unique within this country.

The first, and indeed the greatest, donor of pictures to the Art Gallery was Robert Taylor Heape, of Healey Hall; by 1906 he had given 27 oil paintings and a marble statue and was later to increase the number of his gifts to over 100 works of art. Other donors were the two Misses Kemp, Richard Heape, R. D. Holt, Colonel Sir Clement M. Royds, W. H. Sutcliffe, W. Wiles and Councillors Wilson Dunning and James E. Jones.

During the first three years the Art Gallery showed no less than thirteen exhibitions of pictures. The first was a Loan Exhibition of 192 oil paintings which were insured for over £50,000. H. B. Carpenter, Master of the School of Art, gave lectures on the various exhibitions; the Rochdale Education Guild gave several series of "popular talks," and a special "Wild Flower Table" was kept supplied by the Field Naturalist Society in spring and summer—a charming and spontaneous public service which might well be revived by the enlightened school-children of today.

It may not be out of place to mention here an exhibition which was recently shown, in 1953, partly to commemorate the opening of the Art Gallery in 1903 and partly to illustrate an exhibition given in 1911, when two more picture galleries had been added. In the early 20th century, three to six tiers of large canvases were ingeniously packed into every available foot of wall space, and in 1911 the choice of paintings showed the sentimental and moral spirit of the age: "The End of her journey" by Alice Hayers, depicts an old lady dying at a country wayside; this and the huge canvas "Mustering for the Lifeboat" by A. H. Marsh, were donated in 1901. 1902 donations included "The Story of Ruth and Boaz" by F. W. W. Topham, and "The Princes in the Tower" by E. M. Ward; in 1903 were presented "An Unfinished Masterpiece" by Sir Philip Burne-Jones, and "The First Sense of Sorrow," by James Sant. The recent Jubilee Exhibition, arranged by the present Librarian and Curator, Mr. E. Taylor included two notable 1908 gifts: K. M. Skeaping's "Portrait of the Poet, Byron" and William Percy's "Portrait of Edwin Waugh"; it was reviewed by Norman Shrapnel who summarised: "One reason for holding this exhibition, no doubt, was to show how much better

we order things nowadays" . . . "Rochdale's artistic maturity is gently smiling, it seems, at its own callow youth. Yet may not the revived taste for Victoriana direct something more than a reciprocal smile upon the town—a pilgrimage, even?"

The 1953 exhibition was itself a pilgrimage into the past, but, callow or not, the Rochdaliens of 1906 knew what they liked and were ready to show their appreciation with typical energy: between 1903 and 1906, 187,344 persons passed through the turnstiles, and on one Saturday alone, 1,672 persons were admitted.

It is good to think that, "fifty years on," a generous Rochdalian family was perpetuated in the print of the *Manchester Guardian*, and in the issue of August 15th, 1953, a large illustration shows a regimental "Robert Taylor Heape," painted by Skeaping: there is a reference, also, to a picture of Benjamin Heape, who as Honorary Chief Constable or Reeve of Rochdale, in the days of the old Commissioners proclaimed Queen Victoria's accession to the throne.

EDUCATION.

Rochdale taxpayers made a national payment towards education when in 1833 the Government made its first annual grant of £20,000 towards elementary schooling,—an amount which was increased fivefold by 1846. After 1853 direct payments were made to schools for each scholar who achieved more than the stated minimum of attendances. By 1860 the Government grant had reached nearly £800,000. -

Local authorities had, at this time, no power to provide school buildings or to aid education. The existing schools in Rochdale had all been provided voluntarily and the chief public elementary schools were St. Mary's National (Redcross Street), the Baillie Street British, the Parish Church (for boys), St. John's (Roman Catholic) and Healey School. Of the several private, and some endowed schools, the chief were the Toad Lane Endowed School, the Moss School and the Nuttall Street Infant School. The first two of these dated from about 1740 and 1759, respectively, the first being founded by Samuel Taylor, of Hundersfield, and the second by John Hardman, whose widow enclosed a piece of the Glebe known as Vicar's Moss, which became the site of the school. Between 1860 and 1870 five more elementary schools were established: St. Mary's, Balderstone; St. Patrick's (Roman Catholic); St. Edmund's, Falinge; the Trinity Wesleyan and All Saints, Hamer. Over £3,000 of grants to managers of schools had now been received in Rochdale, in partial aid towards new buildings. Since 1861 teachers in Government-aided schools had been allowed to teach in night schools as well, and in 1866 Science and Art classes began at Baillie Street, under a voluntary committee. The Rochdale Pioneers started similar classes in 1873. Many Rochdaliens of today may remember that their grandfathers walked many miles over moorland tracks and by unlit country roads to attend these classes after a hard day's work.

In 1870 came a great step forward when the Elementary Education Act made suitable day school accommodation compulsory, either through

voluntary efforts or by means of a School Board. The Rochdale Council took such prompt action that their application was said to be the fourth that was granted in this country: the local School Board was duly elected on November 26th, 1870—a date which marks the time when Rochdale's education was first directly supported by the town's ratepayers who, however, were already paying national taxes towards this purpose. Edmund Ashworth was appointed Chairman, and of the other members, Henry Fishwick and the Clerk, George H. Wheeler (who was appointed within a few months' time), were to serve throughout the existence of the Board.

In 1872 the Rochdale School Board estimated that over 9,000 scholars could be expected and that nearly 11,000 could be accommodated. The buildings, however, generally had only one large room (although one or two had extra class-rooms), the reason for this being that most schools had only one adult teacher, who might be helped by monitors, candidates and pupil teachers, all of whom would be under 18 years of age. Two years before this, 26% of the teachers engaged were heads of schools, the remainder being pupil teachers. The resulting picture of a school in the early 70's is of one large and draughty room in which one responsible adult and two or three youngsters are facing over 300 children, most of whom would be shuffling and stamping their clog-shod feet on the bare wooden boards of the floor. In 1871 Bye-laws were adopted which made it compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 13 years to attend school. However, in 1874, more than half of these children were "half-timers," and teachers still living will remember that such children would often fall asleep at their desks; in the same year, there was an attendance of only 75% in many schools in the poorer districts, partly because parents were unwilling to pay the weekly school fees of 2d. for infants, 3d. for half-timers and 4d. for day scholars, also partly because they did not want to send their already useful children to school at all.

During the first six years of the Rochdale School Board, a total of £47 14s. 6d. was spent in making up for the unpaid fees of 456 children, of whom 200 were orphans or had been deserted by their parents. In another six years the Board was to adopt a "poverty scale" to excuse fees when, in the case of a family of two, for instance, the weekly income did not exceed 4s. a head. Meanwhile, by the Education Act of 1876, no child under 10 years of age could be employed, nor might any child under 14 years be employed unless he had reached a certain standard of education.

In 1878 the first Board School was built at Halifax Road, and the building of others at Cronkeyshaw, Derby Street and Newbold followed within the next ten years. Baillie Street School was enlarged in 1884 to take three departments, for half-timers at 3d. a week, day scholars at 4d., and higher grade scholars, of Standard Five and over, at 9d. a week. In 1893 a new building was completed at Fleece Street, as a "Science School" for higher grade scholars.

The first Medical Officer for Schools, Dr. Arthur Jefferson, was appointed in 1899. The duties of this part-time doctor included inspecting sick children at the Education Office every Tuesday morning, also making periodical visits to every school, with careful examinations of children "who are dull, backward, short sighted or otherwise defective." A few years later, some private person supplied free spectacles for the children of poor parents.

The Rochdale Council had assumed authority for Technical Education in 1889, after the Technical Instruction Act. Rates for this purpose were soon levied and a Committee was appointed. Four years later the cherished project of Mr. J. R. Heape and many other ratepayers, a Rochdale Technical School, was achieved. Over £7,000 had been subscribed by generous Rochdadians, and it was hoped, also, that the money now received by the Council under the Local Taxation (Customs and Excise) Act, 1890, known as the "Whisky Money," would be used towards the building of the new Technical School, but only £230 of "Whisky Money" was, at this stage, diverted towards this cause, whilst a further £1,000 was put towards reducing the rates. Nevertheless the disappointed subscribers manfully offered the School to the Council, which accepted it, and in 1893 the Rochdale Technical School, built at a cost of over £12,000 and on land given by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners, was duly opened, after which the then Mayor, James Duckworth, (later knighted), entertained the Council, subscribers and others at a banquet. The leading townsmen of the 19th century had a strongly sporting spirit: five months later, in September, the same Mayor competed at the Baths in a swimming race with Councillor Diggle, but lost.

Scholarships towards technical education had already been provided from various sources, including those from several local firms, who, also, had contributed machinery and other practical help. In 1892 the Baillie Street Science and Art classes had been transferred to the control of the Technical School Committee and other such classes in the town were similarly transferred within two or three years. By 1896 the Technical School was already proving too small, with an attendance of over 2,000 students at classes which varied from chemistry and physics to weaving, cotton manufacturing, engineering and plumbing; two years later, evening classes were allowed to overflow into the adjacent Central School in Fleece Street.

In 1906 work had begun on an extension of the Technical School; the plans included an engineering laboratory and physical laboratories, woodworking, cookery and laundry rooms, provision for the School of Art (which was originally housed in the Town Hall), and class rooms for a Secondary School.

Educational conditions were now rapidly improving. In 1899 the minimum age at which children could be employed as half-timers was raised to 12 years. By the Education Act of 1902, the Town Council became the local authority for all forms of education, with power to supply or aid secondary schools. An Education Committee was appointed and, although the Clerk of the old School Board did not now accept

office, Lt. Colonel Henry Fishwick (now an Alderman) became the Chairman, with J. R. Heape as Vice-Chairman, of a Committee of 35 members including the Mayor (Samuel Turner), and also the faithful ex-clerk, George Wheeler. The number of members was in 1906 reduced to 25.

In 1903 the average school attendance was 12,380: a 43% increase since 1881, compared with a population increase which was estimated to be about 20% during the same period. In 1904 there were only 11 prosecutions for non-attendance: "No clogs" had been one of the reasons often given, but private funds had donated many pairs of clogs, as well as spectacles, and sometimes meals, also. By 1906 the number of half-timers was 876, compared with over 4,000 thirty years before. In addition to half-timers, some 400 children, most of them boys, worked an average number of 13½ hours weekly; the largest number of these "casual workers" were errand-boys, another large group being newsboys, while some worked for barbers, butchers or as milk-boys.

School buildings were now being much improved, with separate class rooms per 50 children, desks of varied sizes, instead of the old long desks, and wood-block floors to minimise noise. Ventilated cloakrooms and lavatories were now provided, as well as asphalted playgrounds. In 1903, 14% of the school staffs were adult head teachers, 63% were adult assistant teachers, and only 23% were pupil teachers of under 18 years.

In 1905 over 3,800 students attended evening classes in the Rochdale area, the majority being young working-class men and youths between the ages of 15 and 25, the trades and technology classes being now much larger than those of the once popular geology and botany sections of science: "the desire for fern and fossil hunting" being not so widespread in 1906 as it was in 1886.

Board of Education statistics in the early 20th century show that education in Rochdale was more than satisfactory: a considerable number of children now attended school beyond the compulsory period, and in the percentage of boys over Standard Four, Rochdale came fourth out of 67 County Boroughs and first amongst comparable Lancashire towns: the school life of the girls showed a percentage of 26.3 compared with an average of 21.8 amongst County Boroughs, Rochdale in this case ranking seventh.

An appendix to the account of Rochdale education, given by Mr. J. E. Holden, Secretary to the Committee in 1906, shows that there were then 16 Elementary Schools in buildings provided by the local authority, and out of 15 Church of England and National Schools, the Gank School was closed in 1884, St. James's, Wardleworth, in 1901, while St. Clement's, Spotland, had been closed by 1903. There were three Roman Catholic and two Wesleyan Schools, of which the Union Street School was closed in 1900. Of the 10 British, or Nonconformist, Schools, the Small-bridge Congregational and the Lowerplace, Clover Street and Brimrod British Schools had been closed between 1877 and 1902; the Nuttall Street latterly private school was closed in 1905.

For over 300 years the old Rochdale Grammar School had existed to teach "true piety and the knowledge of the Latin Tongue," but with the spread of more general education its scholars had shrunk to 16 in 1826, and although, under its last headmaster, Mr. R. R. Grey, there were 67 scholars actually in the school, with 130 more in a preparatory department, its days were over. In 1902, after it had been pulled down, the red brick Nurses' Home was built on the site where the Grammar School had stood during the last half century of its existence.

COUNTING THE COST.

Needless to say, every item of expenditure by the local authority is submitted to the Finance Committee, and however desirable and necessary progress may be in matters of health, education and the efficient running of the town's affairs, it is the Borough Treasurer who counts the contents of the town's purse, reports on how the ratepayers' money has been spent and estimates how much will be needed to meet the town's requirements.

The Corporation's first Finance Committee was appointed on January 14th, 1857. The liabilities of the Commissioners, at the date of incorporation, amounted to over £71,000, and their assets were over £75,000, including the Gas Works (about £43,500) and the Cemetery (over £11,600).

The Rochdale Improvement Act of 1853 (which itself cost some £3,000 to obtain) had increased the borrowing powers of the Commissioners from £48,000 to £80,000. The expenses of the Charter of Incorporation, plus the preparation of Burgess Rolls and elections, came to £1,000, and other expenses, including salaries and payments towards the Police Force brought the total to £3,000: improvements were not to be obtained cheaply. At this time, the population and the rateable value of the Borough were about 33,000 and £90,000, respectively.

From 1853 to 1866 the Corporation borrowed a little over £73,000 towards the Gas Works, Cemetery, Paving and Sewering and various other improvements. After this the borrowing powers were several times increased and between 1866 and 1886 the capital expenditure amounted to well over 1¼ million pounds, more than half of which was spent on the water supply, the Town Hall accounting for £155,000, the Gas Works for £130,000, while the Baths cost £8,500. Other improvements, including the Parks and Recreation Grounds, came to over £76,000 and the Sewage scheme cost over £61,000. The amount of money raised during this very active period was far greater than at any other time during the first fifty years of incorporation.

Between 1886 and 1906 more than one million pounds was raised, the number of Corporation officials had risen to 1,700 and their weekly wage bill was over £2,300.

A statement of moneys borrowed between 1856 and 1906 shows that by far the largest sum was expended on the water supply, which accounted for over £978,000. Other heavy expenses, all over £200,000, were for

tramways, gas supply and for sewerage and sewage disposal. Within fifty years over 2½ million pounds had been borrowed, but since 1856, while the Rochdale population had more than doubled, to 86,390, the rateable value of the Borough had increased fourfold, to over £393,000.

Capable and generous municipal service had been given by the committee members of many Corporation Departments, nor did the Finance Committee lack such service: Alderman William Baron (thrice Mayor of Rochdale) for thirty years presided over this Committee, and was succeeded as Chairman by James E. Jones, who was made Mayor in 1905 and 1906 and was later knighted. The Borough Treasurer in 1906 was Seth Boothman, formerly of Nelson, who had been appointed in 1895.

THE HONORARY FREEMEN OF THE BOROUGH.

The Freedom of the Borough of Rochdale is not obtained easily: only outstanding townsmen have so been honoured. After a study of Rochdale's municipal history from 1856 to 1906 it is obvious that the following Honorary Freemen had well deserved the highest mark of respect and gratitude that the people of Rochdale can offer: Alderman Edward Taylor, made Freeman in 1893; Alderman William Baron: 1899; Alderman William James Petrie: 1905; Alderman Lt. Colonel Fishwick: 1906; ex-Councillor James Ogden: 1906; Colonel Sir Clement M. Royds (High Sheriff of Lancashire, 1889, M.P. for Rochdale, 1895-1905): 1906; Alderman Samuel Turner: 1906.



Photo: Rochdale Central Library.

The Rochdale Jubilee Procession, 1906.