BYGONE PRESTON

A Brief Study of Preston in Olden Days

The last days of Preston's old Town Hall when demolition was in progress

by GEORGE C. MILLER

(*Author of Bygone Blackburn, Hoghton Tower, Evolution of a Cotton Town, etc.*)

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ILLUSTRATED BY MANY PHOTOGRAPHS

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A Preliminary Survey

THE roots of proud Preston, a borough by charter and prescription, stretch deep into remote antiquity, yet one may pass through its busy streets without finding a single clue.

The Juggernaut of progress sweeps on implacable, irresistible, trampling all of yesterday's forgotten pomp and circumstance underfoot. So one by one the once-familiar landmarks go down; age-old links with the past are broken until only tradition remains to weave its spell about the haunts our fathers knew.

Fortunately, Preston has had many historians and their records garnered with loving care are still at hand. From them we may recapture the bygone scene with all its quaint and colourful detail.

In this series of short articles it is hoped to bring to life something of the hopes and aspirations of our forbears for upon their labours are laid the foundations of our own prosperity.

RECENTLY I retrieved from the dusty recesses of an antique dealer's shop what is probably the earliest view of Preston ever printed.

It is an engraving entitled: "The South prospect of Preston in the County of Lancaster" published by S. and N. Buck in 1728.

Taken from Penwortham, it embraces a wide vista of the township from St. Mary's Church to Hoghton Tower among the buildings depicted being the Moot-hall, the Parish Church, St. George's Church and Patten House.

The borough then extended south as far as Syke-street; north to the bottom of Friargate; east to the end of Church-street and west to the vicinity of the Theatre Royal.

Its main centre of activity comprised a confused jumble of ancient shops and tenements in the region of the old Market-place. Here stood the Town Hall adjoining the old Shambles, a narrow thoroughfare opposite Main Sprit Weind.

In 1715 Thomas Molyneux erected more Shambles at the south end of Lancaster-road. They were named the Wide Shambles, as opposed to the Strait Shambles, a narrow antiquated entry running at right angles down to the Market-place.

These last are notable for passing under part of the Mitre Inn, a meeting-place of rebel officers during the 1715 rebellion.

WINCKLEY SQUARE was a large pasture known as Town End Field, its length traversed by a meandering water-course along which snipe were occasionally shot.

The town's playhouse stood in an adjoining croft somewhat removed from the highway whilst all the area south of Fishergate consisted of enclosures bearing such names as Great and Little Avenham, School Field, Great and Little Albin Hey, Water Willows and Swill Brook Crofts.

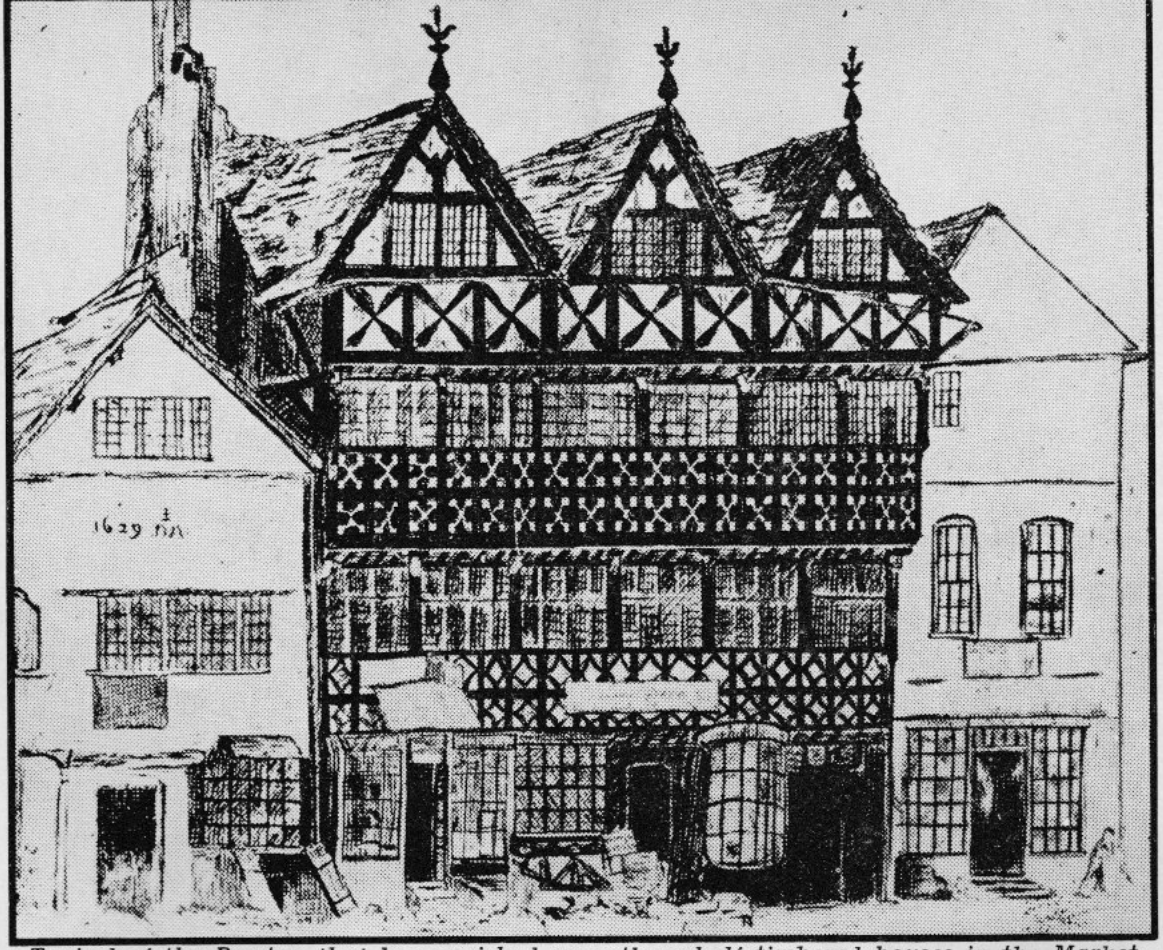
The town had three bars; the first in Churchgate near the entrance to Water-street; the second at the junction of Brewery-lane and Fishergate and the third in Friargate above Back-lane.

Opposing forces have struggled for possession of these bars on more than one occasion during the Civil Wars and the succeeding Jacobite Rebellions.

From the earliest times access to the town from the east was by Walton Bridge, cited in a deed dated June 18th, 1383, and from the west by a series of dangerous fords across the Holme, an island over against the marsh at the foot of Fishergate Hill.

Penwortham Old Bridge still standing upstream and built by subscription in 1755, collapsed the following year to be finally completed in 1759.

A VISITOR approaching his destination by a narrow winding way across the Swillbrook would find Churchgate a cobbled, unsalubrious highway lined on both sides by thatched homesteads dominated by Patten House, its imposing facade set back to accommodate a handsome garden.



Typical of the Preston that has vanished were these half-timbered houses in the Market place. They were pulled down just a century ago.

He would walk warily, for drainage was practically non-existent and every passing stage coach, rattling briskly Londonwards, would spatter him with mud from head to foot.

Occasionally he would step gingerly aside to avoid a sleeping pig stretched comfortably with her litter across the footpath.

If the weather was foul, rain would drip upon him from the gutterless eaves, or if fine the doubtful contents of a slop-bowl, heralded by the warning cry of "Heads below."

Townsfolk passing leisurely upon their lawful occasions would regard him curiously, the men attired in fantastic coats with enormous cuffs, knee breeches and buckled shoes; the women resplendent in print gowns and petticoats puffed out below the waist with silken shawls about their shoulders and clacking pattens to protect their dainty shoes.

THE eye of authority would be upon him as the town constable, idly swinging his painted staff, paused to appraise the possibility of having to deal with yet another wandering rogue.

Even the bellman, gorgeous in maroon greatcoat and three-cornered hat, would punctuate the latest proclamation of the city fathers to speculate upon his status.

Altogether he would be the object of much naive curiosity, for strangers were often precursors of startling news from the outside world.

Such then would be his first impression of the ancient borough of Preston, an aloof and somewhat genteel community, dwelling in an environment reminiscent of a large straggling village where gossip was rife and each man knew the worst of his neighbour.

Patten House

MISTRESS CELIA FIENNES, an adventurous and much-travelled young gentle-woman who passed through Preston about the year 1695, recorded in her diary:

"At the entrance to the towne was a very good house, which was a lawyer's, of good stone work, five windows in the front and high built, according to the eastern buildings neare London. The ascent to the house was 14 or 15 stone steppes large, and a handsome court with open iron pallasados in the gate, and on each side of the whole breadth of the house, which discovered the gardens . . . neatly kept flowers and greens."

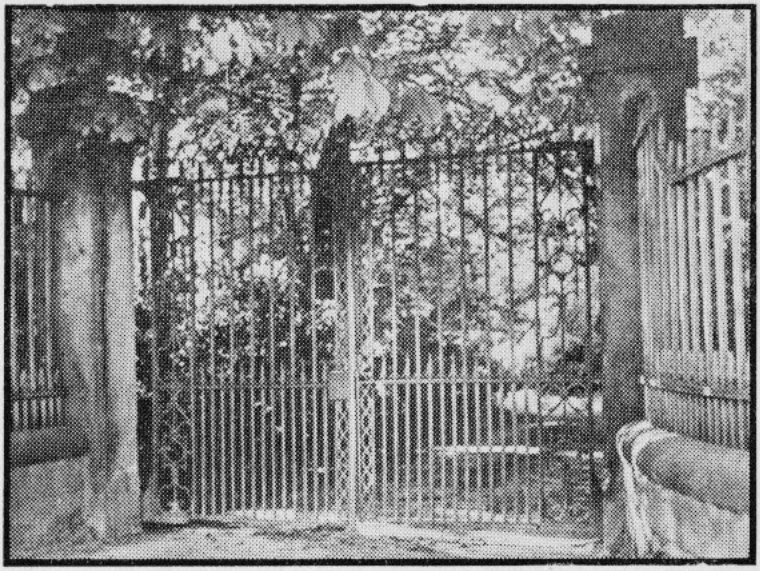
This was the ancestral home of the Patten family, its occupant, Thomas Patten, being a barrister-at-law. Heir to William Patten, he was a Member of Parliament for Preston in 1688. In the same year his daughter Elizabeth married Sir Thomas Stanley and with her the property ultimately passed to the Earls of Derby.

THE house stood on a site between Derby - street and Pole-street, facing Grimshaw-street. It was set back about 30 yards and fronted by a lawn, its massive gateway approached by steps.

In 1721 the mansion was refaced in brick, after the prevailing fashion, a conspicuous feature being the projecting pediment with the Stanley arms on a shield below. The device was that of three bucks heads cabossed, surmounted by a coronet, with the motto "Sans Changer."

In the Harris Museum is an admirable water-colour drawing of the facade, by J. Ferguson, which is worth the attention of all interested in old-time Preston. Here it may be seen as it stood in its heydey, with 24 sashed windows and a stately entrance porch supported by Corinthian pillars.

During the hard winter of 1829 its kitchens were requisitioned for the distribution of soup to families of hard-pressed handloom weavers.



The gates of Patten House, photographed after their removal to Howick House.

When, owing to the political defeat of the Hon. E. G. Stanley in 1830, the Derby family abandoned the premises, they were utilised as a barracks for some years. Other buildings had then encroached upon its flanks, partially obscuring it from view. Of these, several remain, notably the Grapes Inn (formerly known as the Bear's Paw), and the Blue Bell Inn (originally the Blue Ball) across the way. This last adjoined the stables, which occupied the area bounded by the end of Grimshaw-street.

Finally, in 1835 Patten House was demolished, its handsome iron gates being purchased by William Rawstorne and rehung at the entrance to Howick House grounds.

BEFORE its eclipse, this fine old mansion was the social centre of the local gentry. The Derbys were famous for their hospitality and here they entertained the elite with almost regal splendour.

Many a brilliant assembly gathered within its walls, thronging the narrow street with coaches and sedan chairs, the satins and pearls of the ladies irradiated by the light of flaring links and torches, whilst the subdued echoes of a dreamy waltz distilled its magic into the warm summer air.

Here the beauty and elegance of Georgian Preston found solace and romance; many a courtly bow or softly-spoken word brought colour to the powdered cheek of demure damsel and stately matron, and many a youthful pair plighted their troth beneath the lamp-spangled trees of that secluded garden.

YET the story of Patten House is not all of glamour and festivity. It has also figured in the sterner annals of war. During the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 it was the centre of a grim and bloody struggle, when the redcoats of General Wills received a sharp set-back at the hands of the Highlanders.

The rebels had erected a barricade across the highway a little below Tithebarn-street, which they protected by two guns planted in the churchyard, Patten House being then the residence of Sir Henry Hoghton.

Of this affair a rebel officer wrote in his journal: "His Lordship sent me to the top of the

steeple in order to view the enemy's disposition, where I saw a Regiment of Foot possess themselves of Sir Henry Hortoun's house . . . I saw them march through Sir Henry's garden and draw up in battalion at the foot of the broad lane . . . upon which the brave and undaunted Earl of Derwentwater wheeled his gentlemen to the right covering the head of the Back-lane, and received the enemy with a very brisk and successful fire.

"Lord Charles Murray flanked them with as close a fire, and put them to great confusion and to flight. They sheltered themselves in Sir Henry Hortoun's house. I desired the said house should be demolished by two pieces of cannon that were ready charged on the front of the churchyard. . . . I went for orders to General Forster, who would by no means allow it, saying 'that the body of the town was the security of the army.'" Vain heroism, for the rebel forces ultimately surrendered unconditionally.

STANDING beneath the shadow of Preston's stately parish church, it is hard for us of this generation to realise that in this modern thoroughfare, busy with the traffic of the 20th century, was fought a decisive battle that established the Hanoverian dynasty upon the English throne and excluded for ever the line of the Stuarts.

Yet so the fates decreed, and in that epic struggle Patten House withstood the brunt of the storm.

A strange destiny, that made this formal mansion, eloquent of peace and prosperity, "the purple testament of bleeding war."

Preston Market Place

IF any spot within the ancient borough of Preston can typify all for which it stood — its folklore and traditions, its achievements in the realms of commerce and its contributions to art and science — it is surely the old Market Place. Here, from time immemorial, men have witnessed all the pomp of civic pageantry; here enacted the stirring scenes that marked each stage in its growth.

It has reflected the life and manners of every age; it is the very heart of the township, sending its life's blood of industrial activity pulsing far and wide since the remote days of the first Guild Merchant.

On its southern flank, screened by a fine range of half-timbered tenements—whose destruction was an irreparable loss to antiquaries—stood the Moot Hall where mayors and bailiffs promulgated so many wise and salutary decrees. In its centre stood the market cross, on the steps of which friars preached, politicians harangued and huxters declaimed.

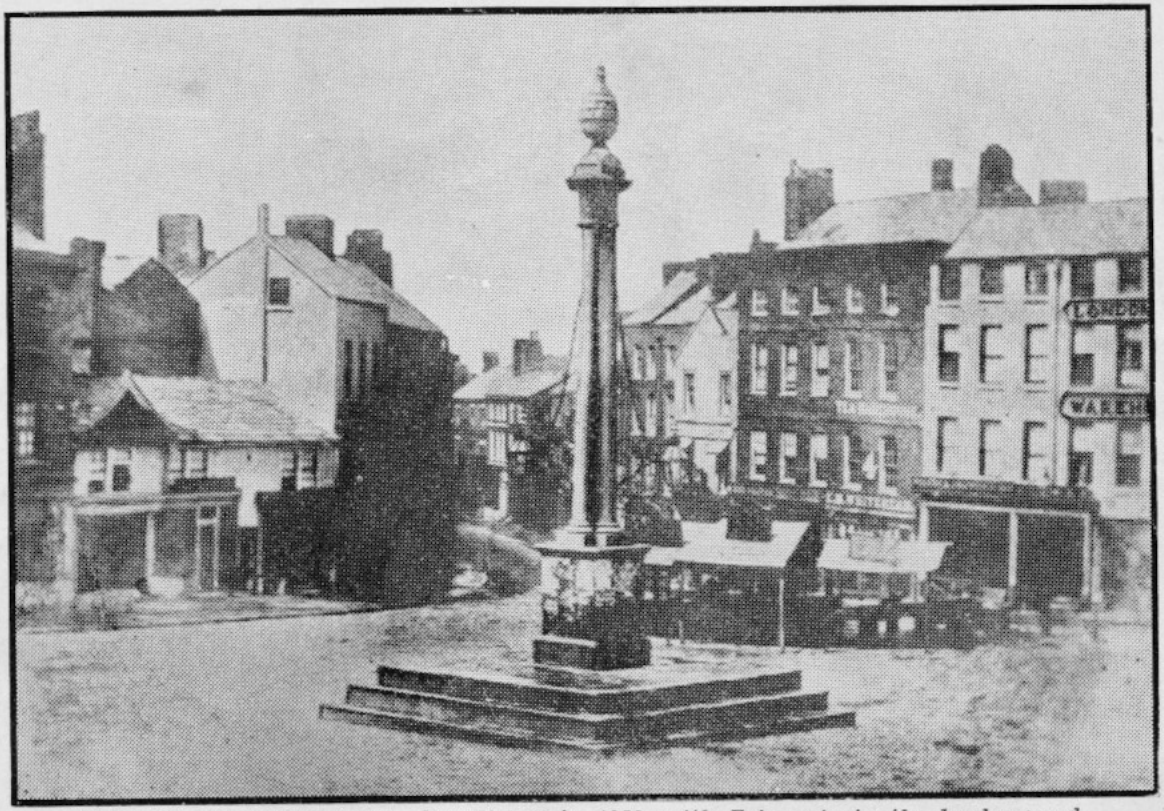
Here, too, stood the pillory, last used on January 11th, 1816. The parish pump, which, alas, also served as a whipping post, was within convenient distance, as were the fish-stones, first erected in 1605 and not finally removed until 1853.

FROM the 14th century a free market, granted by Royal charter, was held on Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Here, summoned by a bell at eight o'clock, the townsfolk had exclusive right of purchase for one hour, all strangers being debarred. Commodities included butter, cheese, eggs, crockery and hardware, textiles being displayed in adjacent cellars.

Vegetables were sold in Cheapside and the cattle market was in Church-street, with a goose and pork fair under the shelter of the churchyard wall.

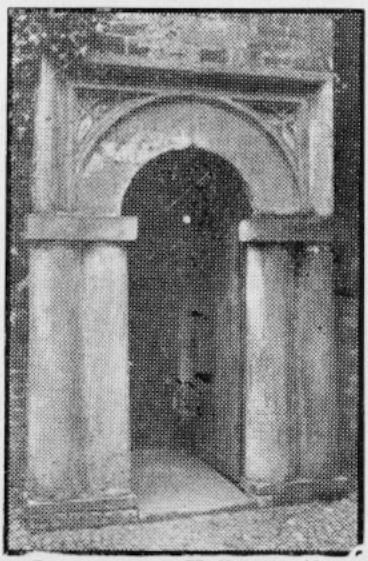
"In fact (wrote Peter Whittle in 1821) what is partially shewn in the market is only a mere sample, for great quantities of grain remain lodged in the various cornhouses, or rooms, appended to the different public market houses in the town, viz., the Castle Inn, Boar's Head, King's Head, White Horse, George Inn and other places."

At such times the bustle and confusion must have been tremendous. Here congregated farmers'



Preston's old market cross, demolished in 1853, with Friargate in the background.

Pillars from the old market cross are incorporated in this gateway at Hollowforth Hall, Woodplumpton.



Doorway at Hollowforth, Woodplumpton.

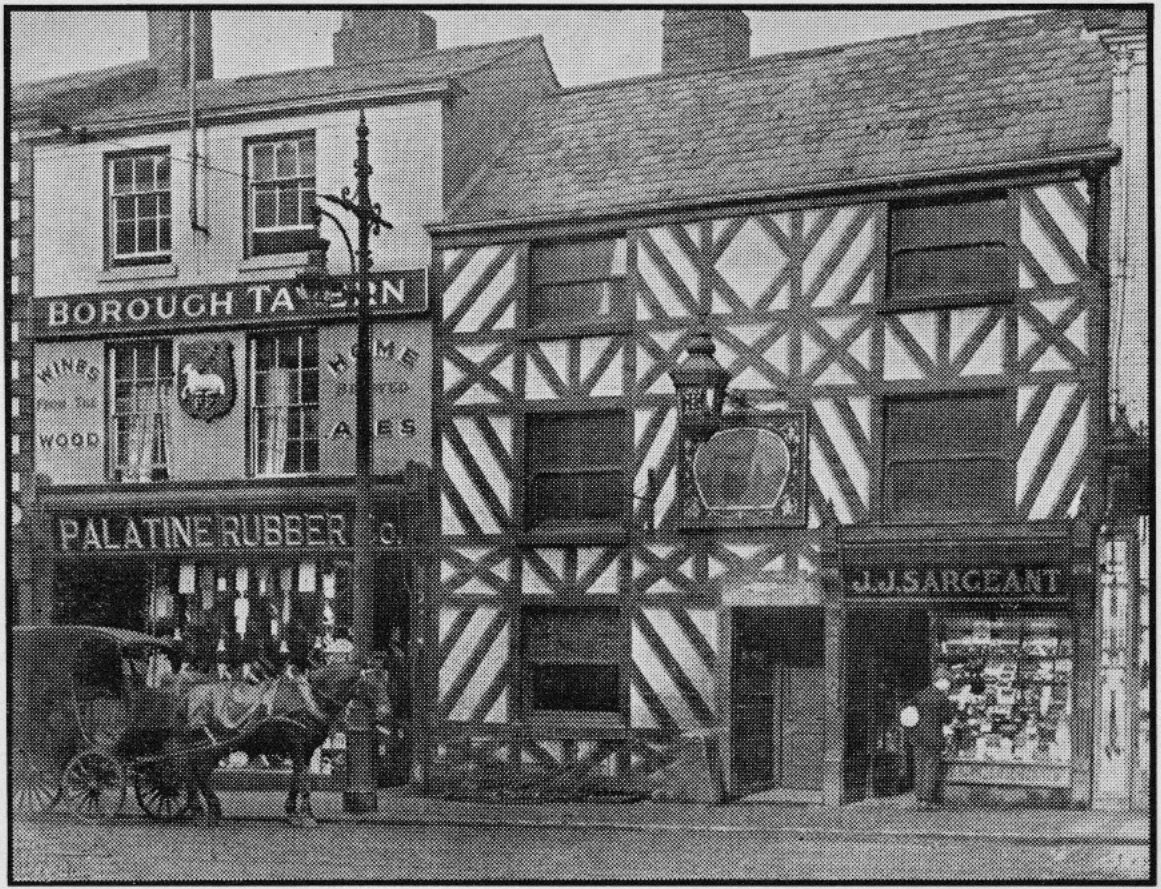
carts, pack-horses and sumpter mules; rubicund country wenches, in aprons and poke bonnets, displayed their tempting wares in wisket and pannier, heedless of the stern eye of the official market-looker. His duty it was to ensure good measure and wholesome food for the busy throng of Georgian housewives, intent upon the purchase of their week's provisions.

ALONG Cheapside a few original buildings still survive, refronted and modernised, but in the main they have been swept away and their place taken by imposing public offices.

On the east the Harris Museum occupies the site of a row of quaint tenements, with Harris-street and Jacson-street replacing Gin Bow Entry and the Straight Shambles.

Northwards, the imposing facade of the General Post Office straddles the line of New-street., with much adjacent old property.

There remains one curious survival of the old order.



Where the "Guardian" office is to-day the Borough Tavern and the Grey Horse and Seven Stars used to stand.

Formerly the cruel pastime of bull-baiting was indulged in whenever occasion served, the favourite arena being the south-west corner of the market-place. Here a large rounded stone inset with lead may still be seen, to which the bull-ring was once affixed.

This practice persisted as late as 1808, despite the disapproval of the authorities, who censured it as "dangerous to the publick peace and inconvenient and pernicious to Civil Society."

A TRADITION lingers that the timber framework of the Tudor dwellings on the south side was made in Holland. They were pulled down in 1855 and one of the carved wooden lintels, bearing the inscription "1629, I.I.A.," is now preserved in the museum, presented by H. C. Walton.

Here also their memory is preserved in a water-colour drawing by J. Ferguson, dated 1833, which well illustrates their overhanging gables and ornate fronts, picked out with an intricate pattern, the contemporary "magpie" ornament of trefoils and lozenges.

According to Nichols, a cross was erected in the market place by William FitzPaul in 1274, although the print of it, subsequently published by Whittle, is wholly conjectural and not particularly convincing.

After some vicissitudes, its final manifestation took the form of a clustered column 31ft. high, on a square basement approached by three steps and latterly surmounted by a lamp.

PRESTON Market cross was finally demolished in 1853. During its lifetime it had witnessed many stirring scenes.

Here James I was welcomed by the Mayor and Corporation during his Royal progress in 1617. "Cots splutters," quoth King Jamie, "what a set of liege men have come to see Jemmy."

Here the Stuart Pretender was twice proclaimed King — by the Earl of Derwentwater in 1715 and by Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1745. Here, also the Guild Merchant was formally opened with appropriate fanfares and ceremonial.

Indeed, it may be said that upon these few yards of earth the shape of Preston's destiny has been hammered out on the anvil of time.

Some Ancient Hostelries

AS became its reputation for hospitality and good living, bygone Preston was essentially a town of well-conducted inns. The warmth and cheer of a superior hostelry was the haven to which each traveller, bruised and shaken after rattling along the abominable roads of 18th century Lancashire on the swaying roof of a springless stage coach, looked forward with keenest anticipation.

It was none other than Samuel Johnson who declared that nothing contrived by man produced so much happiness as a good tavern, a sentiment endorsed by the poet Shenstone when he wrote:

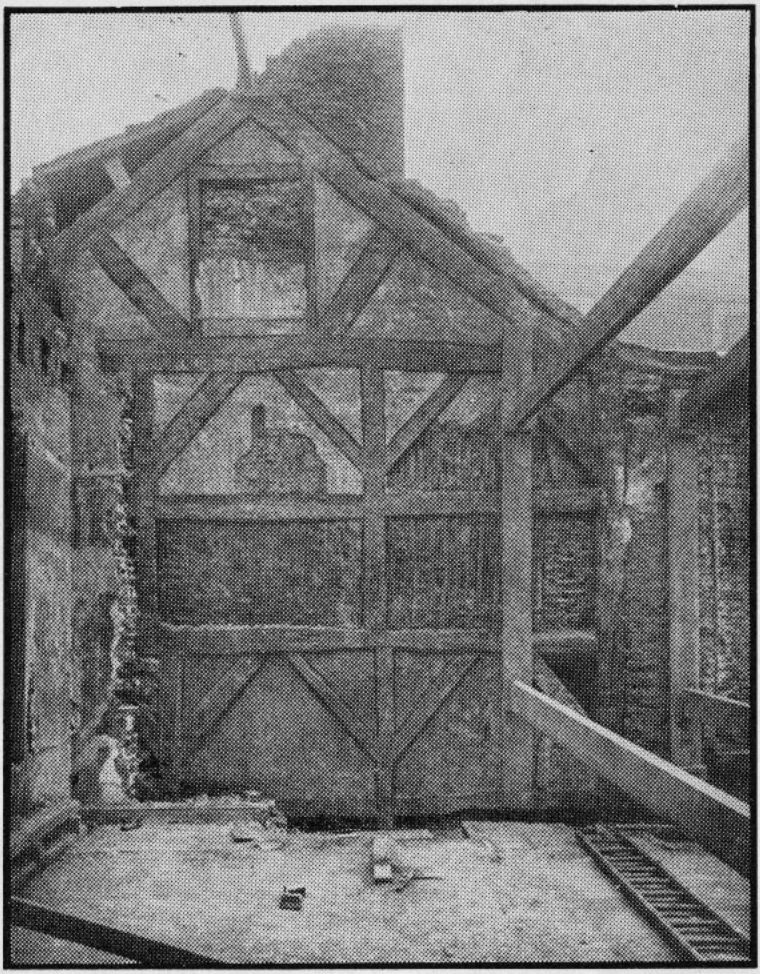
"Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome at an inn."

In 1821, according to Baines, Preston, with a population of some 27,000, had no fewer than 81. But we should be wrong in assuming that our forebears were necessarily hard drinkers.

THESE old hostelries played a far greater part in the life of the community than that of mere drinking dens.

They were largely self-contained units, brewing their own ale, then the national beverage; making their own bread, butter and cheese and even butchering their own cattle.

From his well-filled stable mine host lent out post-horses, post-chaises and postillions to travellers.



Alterations some years ago exposed this old timbered gable at the Mitre Hotel, Fishergate—inheritor of an inn-name famous in local history.

hired draught animals to his neighbours and often drove a market coach of his own.

The inn was also a clearing-house for all manner of merchandise; here letters were collected and delivered, messages forwarded and news circulated. Here itinerant herbalists and strolling players congregated for the benefit and enlightenment of the populace and every form of social and commercial activity found its outlet.

In an inn one waited the arrival of the post-coach, with its tidings from the outside world, and here one discussed urgent political questions or whispered details of the latest domestic scandal.

IT would be possible to compile a whole volume of history and anecdote concerning Preston's old inns: here I can only touch briefly upon the associations of a few.

In the Preston Court Leet records for October 20th, 1685, several burgesses are presented for "watering theire horses at the well in Fryergate, by the Red Lyon."

Its site, long forgotten, was at the south end of the thoroughfare, although in later years the name was transferred to a Jacobean tenement which stood on the north side of Church-street, on ground now occupied by the Miller Arcade.

This was the favourite haunt of cattle-drovers, and many a keen bargain has been struck in its comfortable "snug."

Another well-known public-house in Friargate was the White Horse, kept by the parents of Richard Palmer, town clerk of Preston for 51 years. Subsequently it was transformed into a shop and restaurant.

Other inns in the vicinity of the Market-place included the Boar's Head, the Castle Inn (mine host in 1821 being James Towers), the George Inn, the Black Bull, the Black Horse and the Britannia Tavern.

IN Molyneux-square, now absorbed by the Ribble 'bus station, we note the Bull and Butcher (thus quaintly adapted from the original "Boleyn Butchered," in allusion to the fate of Henry the eighth's second queen), the Roebuck, and the Waggon and Horses, which last is still in being.

In the Strait Shambles we had the Swan with Two Necks and the Shakespeare Tavern.

The title of the former is reminiscent of the days of "swan-upping" and read correctly should have been the Swan with Two Nicks, these being the marks cut on the bird's beak by its owner.

Gin Bow Entry boasted no fewer than three hostelries, the Legs of Man, the Wheatsheaf and the White Hart.

Fishergate had quite a cluster of old inns, such as the Theatre Tavern, the New Cock, the Grey Horse, the Shovel and Broom and yet another Legs of Man, this being the Derby cognisance and very popular in a town where the Stanley family was pre-eminent.

Finally, in Church-street could be found the Bear's Paw, the Old Dog, the Blue Bell, two Red Lions and the White Bull, which subsequently absorbed the adjoining Royal Hotel and became the Bull and Royal.

FOR the origin of the White Bull we have to go back almost to the middle ages, for it was a place of considerable repute in the 16th century.

Here the high court judges halted for refreshment on their way to Lancaster Assizes, and here, in its assembly-room, bonnie Prince Charlie entertained the gentry and their ladies in 1745, when he presented a locket containing his portrait to Miss Pedder, a happy interlude in the disastrous tale of his final bid for a kingdom.

The pathetic souvenir, mute reminder of an auspicious occasion, is now preserved in the Harris Museum.

Perhaps the greatest historical interest attaches to the Mitre Inn, which straddled the Market-place entrance to the Strait Shambles, on a site now occupied by the massive and imposing front of the Harris building.

HERE the Young Pretender slept on the night of December 12th, 1745 on the occasion of his drumless retreat from Derby.

The old inn was also the headquarters and meeting-place of the rebel Scottish officers in 1715; here they discussed the burning question of surrender to the king's troops, and here, when all was lost, they finally delivered up their swords.

The inn buildings stood on either side of the entry, which passed under one of the bedrooms. Prior to its demolition in 1882, it was occupied for some time as the office of the Journal and Chronicle newspapers.

Its licence was transferred to other premises on the south side of Fishergate about the middle of last century.

In this hasty survey, it is impossible to re-capture more than a breath of the romance which clings to these fine old inns.

Here is material for a hundred legends, for their story is an epitome of the lives of many generations of Preston folk, long since gone to their rest in the old parish churchyard.

The last days of Preston's old Town Hall when demolition was in progress.

The Moot Hall

ARISTOCRATIC Preston, as the seat of legislature for the Duchy and County Palatine of Lancaster, was inevitably dominated by its ancient Moot Hall. We have no record of the first structure of this nature, beyond the fact that it probably existed in the 13th century.

In the "Custumal," the earliest code of local laws, there is a reference to "port motes," implying a town's meeting-place, whilst in the charter of 1565 mention is made of "a certain house within the said borough vulgarly called the Toll-booth, otherwise the Moot-hall."

Round about 1680 the historian, Kuerden, speaks of "an ample, antient and yet well beautyfied gylde or town hall' doubtless in allusion to the same edifice. It probably stood on pillars, its basement thus acting as a covered market, for the same writer adds, "Under this hall are ranged two rows of butchers' shopps on either side and a row at either end, where victuals are exposed dayly for the use of man."

This tradition is perpetuated by the pillared arcade erected by Sir Gilbert Scott on the south side of its Gothic successo.

A GUILD HALL was attached to this Moot Hall in time for the Guild celebrations of 1762 and plans were in being for other structural alterations when, on June 3rd, 1780, the roof and some of the walls gave way.

Unperturbed by this disaster, the city fathers decided to rebuild the whole fabric, ordering that "the Chimney-piece, with the town's Arms upon the same," together with "The old Cupola which stood upon the old Town Hall," should be repaired and set up again on the new building.

The reconstruction a plain brick edifice quoined with stone with shops in the basement, was completed in 1782. The Guild Hall stood on its south-western side and the cupola housing a clock, embellisned the eastern corner.

In 1813 the woodwork of this quaint adornment was found to have decayed and it was replaced by another, resembling that which still exists upon the Corn Exchange in Lune-street.

The whole building however, was still unsatisfactory, and in 1857 was described by Hardwick as "a mean edifice for so populous and wealthy a borough. It was finally demolished in 1860 to make way for Scott's unlucky masterpiece.

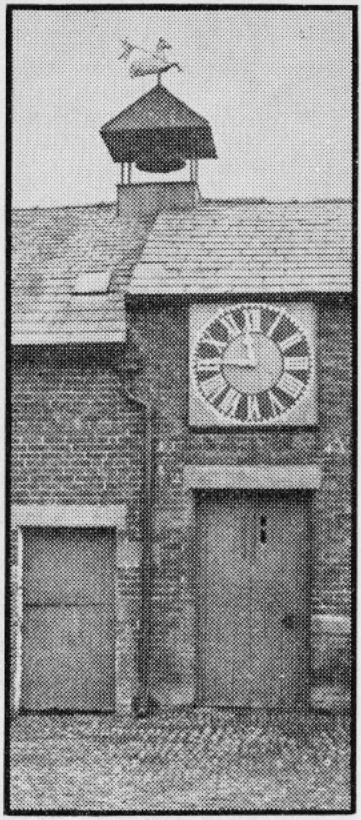
BUT, even if inadequate, there are few provincial halls that have witnessed so much of the fantastic pageantry of mediæval times. For upwards of six centuries Preston Moot Hall was the focus of all the civic ceremonial attached to the age-old Guilds Merchant.

Five times in each century, with hardly a break the proud burgesses of this ancient borough have filed in solemn procession past its venerable portals, their several guilds vying with each other in the splendour of their tableaux, their banners and their costumes.

Here, all the opulent companies of tradesmen, with their high stewards, their seneschals, their marshals, ushers and groom porters, have borne witness to the importance of their craft and have lavished wealth and ingenuity in displaying the products of their labours.

At the Guild of 1397 it is recorded that a gargantuan repast, consisting of eight fat oxen, six bullocks and a score of sheep, and corresponding amounts of beer and bread was prepared in the Moot Hall and served to all comers.

In 1782 "plays, oratorios, masquerades, assembles and races" were the order of the day, while in 1802 "more than 200 gentlemen's carriages were daily parading the streets" and some 400 county ladies walked in couples, each adorned with a fine plume of feathers, "some of them wearing dresses said to be worth upwards of £10,000." A feature of this Guild was the exhibition of a steam engine in motion probably the first ever seen in Preston.



The clock from the old Town Hall, pulled down nearly a century ago, installed over a stable door at Beech Grove Farm, Greenhalgh, near Kirkham.

HERE, on a warm August day in 1617, the loyal citizens presented King James I with the town's mace, a key and a purse of gold prior to entertaining his sapient Majesty with a grand banquet, of which he partook in excellent humour. Beyond doubt, the old hall was a place of proud memories.

Nor was it exempt from the vicissitudes of war. According to Holinshed, Preston was razed by Bruce in 1323, and there is a tradition that among the buildings destroyed was the town hall.

Again in 1643, the town was stormed by Parliament forces and within five years, during the decisive battle of Preston, there was a running fight in the town centre between Cromwell's Roundheads and the invading forces of the Duke of Hamilton.

The year 1715 witnessed yet another skirmish little more than a stones throw from its doors, and 30 years later, bonnie Prince Charlie marshalled his Highlanders in the market place

Since then there have been other episodes, other landmarks in local and national history and so the never-ending pageant goes on.

THIS continuity is its true significance for the essential spirit of ordered progress is timeless, reaching out into both past and future

The story began with the men of Neolithic times who paddled their dug-out canoes upon the tidal marshes of its ancient river, the Belisama of Roman chroniclers.

Then followed the legionaries of imperial Rome itself who built their fort in Walton at the junction of Ribble and Darwen, to be succeeded in turn by the stubborn Saxon churls, who first developed the arts of husbandry; by the haughty Normans in hauberks of chain-mail, who erected their castle at Penwortham; by the burghers of the Middle Ages, who created the foundations of its trade and commerce; by the grey-cowled monks of St Francis who erected here their friary to the glory of God; by the gallant cavaliers of the first Charles in plumed hats and beribboned cloaks who taught men the lesson of loyalty by shedding their blood for a lost cause, by the Georgian artisans, in knee breeches and buckled shoes, who heralded the dawn of the industrial revolution

And so down to the present day and on into the future.

A majestic panorama a vivid, pulsing drama of ceaseless endeavour, colourful, diverse yet with each heroic scene merged by common purpose into one composite whole, made up of Preston's pride in the high achievements of the past and faith in the glowing promise of the future.

The Corn Exchange

GEORGIAN architecture, stiff and formal in the main, is classical in origin, and has a grace peculiarly its own. The designer sought to express his art in beauty of proportion and mass rather than elaborate ornamentation, and he succeeded admirably.

The buildings of this period conform to a rigid pattern, typified by a plain brick facade quoined with stone and surmounted by a pediment. Austere sashed windows in orderly rows illuminate each storey and only the elaborate entrance porch, supported by graceful pillars, gives relief and variety.

Preston possesses an excellent example of this style in the old Corn Exchange in Lune-street. Erected in 1822 it bears the

Two Guild years, 1822 and 1882, are commemorated in these inscriptions.

following inscription: "Corn Exchange. Erected by the Corporation MDCCCXXII Nicholas Grimshaw Esq Mayor." Over this, a later insertion reads: "Enlarged and Restored MDCCCLXXXII. Edmund Birley Esq., Mayor."

SINCE its completion, at a cost of £11 000, the Corn Exchange has served many purposes and seen many changes. By 1842 it had been converted into a ballroom, where public ceremonies in connection with the Guild festivities were held, and six years later part of the frontage was redesigned as an assembly room. The central arena, originally open to the sky, was subsequently covered over with glass.

Besides serving its proper purpose, the hall provided accommodation for clothiers and dealers in woollen goods a market for butter, eggs and poultry being held in the east basement or under a covered causeway in Fleet-street

In 1853 when the fish-stones were removed from the market place, a fish market was held here for some years and up to the end of 1881 there was also a pork market at the west end.

In that year, the whole interior was reconstructed galleries being erected on three sides and its ceremonial opening formed part of the Guild proceedings in 1882. It was then said to contain the largest public hall in Lancashire, with accommodation for 3,500 people.

TO-DAY, surmounted by its curious old-fashioned cupola, copied from that on the Moot Hall (which had four bulbous protuberances strangely reminiscent of the head of some monstrous insect), it is one of the few surviving landmarks of bygone Preston. Incidentally, its general resemblance to the old Moot Hall is by no means fortuitous, as the latter was completed only 10 years before with pediment and entrance almost identical.

Many a busy and picturesque crowd must have assembled on market days beneath the shelter of the Corn Exchange, when the footpath to south and east was cumbered with the booths of farmers and market gardeners, displaying the produce of their labours in the form of luscious fruits and juicy vegetables, baskets of eggs and serried rows of naked roosters, hanging head-downwards from impromptu gallows.

Until a few years ago the Georgian dignity of Preston Public Hall was concealed by the hideous glass canopies shown in the picture.

Both appetising and tantalising such a show must have been to many a starving weaver during the Hungry Forties, and it is not without significance that the worst clash between rioters and the forces of law and order occurred in its vicinity. This was in 1842, when the influence of Chartism was rousing the working population of the cotton towns to seek some redress for their grievances.

ON the morning of Saturday, August 13th (writes Hewitson), there was a great disturbance in the town — the worst, in its personal consequences which ever took place here. In Lune-street the military — a portion of the 72nd Highlanders — charged the mob; eight men were struck by bullets, and five of them received such injuries that they died.

What a tragic story lies behind that terse statement. The Riot Act had been read in the vicinity of the Shelley Arms, and the police thereupon tried to disperse the crowd, only to be driven back by a shower of stones. Some repairs were in progress at the Corn Exchange, and from the scaffolding men began to throw down bricks and stones for the use of their comrades below.

It was then that the soldiers, forming a line opposite the old Savings Bank, were ordered to fire. Most of the shots were aimed over the heads of the assembled rioters, and such casualties as resulted were probably due to stray bullets ricochetting from adjacent buildings. They served their grim purpose, for in five minutes the street was cleared of all but dead and wounded.

During the alterations to the Corn Exchange in 1882, one of these bullets was extracted from the brickwork at the south east corner of the main entrance, while until the very recent renovation to the front of the Corporation Arms, distinct bullet marks were visible over its round-headed doorway and above the basement window on the left.

THE Corporation Arms must be considerably older than the Exchange, although not mentioned by Whittle in 1821.

When the parish pinfold on Preston marsh was discontinued in 1870, the duties of the pinder were taken over by mine host at the Corporation Arms, his task being to house stray cattle and horses in its commodious stables and courtyard.

Not very long ago this presented him with a pretty problem, when, in the small hours of the night, he was roused from his slumbers by a harassed police constable sandwiched between two stray elephants, which he had found loitering with intent in the marketplace.

After a heated argument the landlord decided that his stable was not a menagerie and slammed down his bedroom window, leaving the unfortunate officer to pursue his quest unaided. How he solved this knotty problem we shall never know.

ANOTHER old inn involved during the rioting of 1842 was the Spread Eagle across the way. This hostelry formerly stood near the site of St. George's Church in Chapel Walks, in premises still existing, when it was known as the Duke of Cumberland.

The fifth son of George II, the Duke was a determined opponent of Catholic emancipation, for which reason old " Matty " Whiteside, hostess of the inn, caused the name to be painted out.

The change aroused some local curiosity, which her husband " Jemmy " invariably answered by saying, " It's eawr Matty's whim." For this reason, until the day its licence was transferred, the old hostelry was known to its habitues as " Matty's Whim."

The Shambles in Lancaster-road. On the right, besides Cottam's Shoulder of Mutton inn, is the Gin Bow Entry.

The Shambles

OUR fathers, whatever their failings, were great trenchermen, fully endorsing the words of Fielding when he wrote:—

"When mighty roast beef was the Englishman's food,
It ennobled our hearts and enriched our blood,
Our soldiers were brave and our courtiers were good,
Oh, the roast beef of old England."

I have already spoken of one mighty repast set for all comers at the Guild of 1397, and visitors to Hoghton Tower will recall the existing copy of a menu served to King James in 1617, the first course of which consisted of 30 different meat dishes.

For many years beef seems to have been a staple diet; even for breakfast the citizen of yesterday helped himself to a majestic cut from a cold joint, washed down by copious draughts of home-brewed ale.

Like Doctor Johnson, he regarded oats as a food suitable only for Scotsmen and horses, and although porridge was seen only too often on the table of the humble weaver, it was poverty that dictated this insipid alternative. Even a weaver would have baulked at the modern cereal.

PRESTON seems to have been particularly addicted to flesh meat, for in the 18th century the town boasted no fewer than three distinct rows of shambles, all within easy reach of the market-place.

They were sufficiently quaint and old-fashioned, and had long outlived their usefulness when they were finally demolished. Peter Whittle probably had them in mind in 1821 when he wrote:

"The houses present, in some parts, a very motley appearance; pride and meanness jostle each other, and sometimes range side by side.

The new streets and edifices are sufficiently elegant and commodious; and the old, as may be expected, are almost out of countenance by gay dressed upstarts, which are annually springing from the earth."

From time immemorial two rows of butchers' shops were located under the old guild or town hall, but when this ancient building collapsed in 1780 they were not incorporated with the new structure.

THE earliest, or Old Shambles, were located in a narrow thoroughfare at the east end of the town hall, opposite Main Sprit Weind, but in 1715 another row was built at the south end of what is now Lancaster-road.

In those early days a continuous line of shops and houses blocked the end of the street, the only access to Church-street being through an arch-way intended for pedestrians only, a wooden post being fixed in the pavement to prevent its use by carts or other vehicles.

Overhead was a stone bearing the arms of the Molyneux family, with the inscription: "These shambles were built Anno Dom. 1715, by Thos. Molyneux Esqr., second son of Sir Jno. Molyneux Bart. of Teversal, in the County of Nottingham."

Whittle describes them as built in the form of a street, having "a rude sort of piazza, standing upon stone maintainers, and are two storeys high; the rooms over them are occupied by various persons; the shops have the names of the respective occupiers painted over the doorways. The Strait Shambles

branch out into the market-place, and are very narrow and incommoding."

IN later years the new shambles became known as the Wide Shambles, to distinguish them from the Strait Shambles. They were somewhat elevated and stood a step higher than the level of the cobbled road, their line extending northwards as far as Gin Bow Entry.

This winding passage seems to have received its curious name because it formed a wide arc around a horse gin, this being a primitive winding gear devised to draw water from an adjoining well. It was a continuation of Ward's End (formerly termed World's End), a passage still in existence across the way, now leading to the Ribble 'bus station.

Pedestrians on the Museum side of Harris-street still tread upon the ground once traversed by the old entry.

We have no knowledge concerning the erection of the Strait Shambles, which, according to Hewitson, had "a very narrow, dim, antiquated appearance." They were closed at night time by means of a locked gate near the Swan with Two Necks Tavern, and were pulled down in 1882.

FOR many years there was a sort of lean-to extension on the south end of the Wide Shambles which housed the old Post Office.

As may be seen from E. Beattie's drawing in the Harris Museum, it was a somewhat crude arrangement. Letters pushed through a hole in the wall fell into a sort of box squeezed in between the door and an old stone sink.

There was one arrival and one departure of mails each day, and although a penny post operated to all parts of the Fylde, letters to Blackburn cost 4d., to Wigan 7d., and to London 11d.

The town had one letter carrier, who wore a red coat, a tall napless hat, and was paid a wage of 14s. per week.

This office fell into disuse some time before 1825, when we find it located at 134, Church-sreet, the postmistress being Rachel Hardman.

PETER WALKDEN, a Nonconformist minister whose diary covers the years 1725 to 1727, has a reference to the Shambles, where he chose a piece of beef. He weighed it himself, shrewd man, found it turned the scale at 9½lb. and gave the butcher 1s. 7d. for it. On another occasion he writes:—

"Came to James Corner's shop and paid for welting and soling my shoes 1s 6d. but he having bought veal of me as much as came to 6d., I have since bought mutton of him that came to 5d. He owes me a penny on the flesh account, which is referred to a further reckoning."

Clearly there was some shrewd bargaining at the Shambles in the 18th century. But, however old-world and picturesque in appearance they must long have been an eyesore to the thriving burghers of proud Preston and there would be few sighs of regret when they disappeared.

In exchange, the town gained a palatial public library and museum, and a skyline which has few equals in the County Palatine.

The Old Friary

PRESTON has been associated with the Christian faith from the earliest times. Indeed, its very name indicates that this was the home of a resident priest in Saxon days. The first parish church of which we have any record was dedicated to St. Wilfrid, who died at York in 709, but the site was almost certainly occupied at a much earlier period.

Bede, in his "Ecclesiastical History," states that churches were founded in Amounderness at the request of King Oswald in 635, probably at Preston and Lytham. These primitive sanctuaries were constructed (to use his own words) "after the manner of the Scots, not of stone, but of hewn oak covered with reeds."

In addition, the town possessed two monastic establishments, the first a Franciscan convent of Greyfriars, founded by Edmund, Earl of Lancaster, in 1221, and an ancient hospital, dedicated to St. Mary Magdalene, which was in existence by 1291.

THE Friary was situated a little to the west of Friargate, and the Hospital stood in the Maudlands on a site later occupied by Tulketh Hall. This last is of peculiar interest from the fact that it was used as a lodging for the Cistercian monks during the erection of their magnificent abbey at Furness.

But it is the former foundation that looms largest in the annals of Preston. Unfortunately, we have little information as to the beneficent activities of its grey-cowled tenants. Concerning it, Peter Whittle, without stating his authority, writes that it was "built in a style of richest Gothic magnificence, enclosing within its walls apartments for upwards of 500 monks," a number incredibly large for such a foundation.

"The demolition in 1539 (he goes on) was so complete that little remains, excepting some outward walls, pointed window mouldings and Gothic arched doors. One end of this building may still be seen facing southwards, which is supported by strong stone buttresses, of a reddish hue . . . The extent, number and intricacy of the subterranean vaults, were such as to afford retreat for lawless banditti."

Why peaceful, law - abiding Preston should have tolerated such kittle cattle the chronicler saith not.

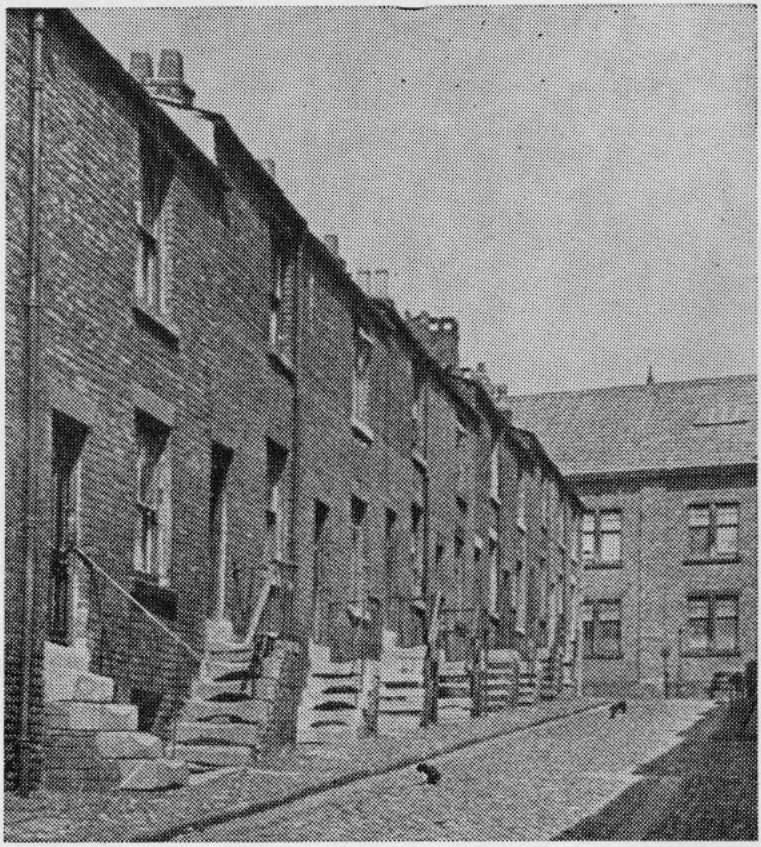
According to Leland, the land on which it stood belonged to the Preston family, many of whom, together with Sherburns and Daltons, were laid to rest within its venerable walls.

ON the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII, the deserted shell was granted to one Thomas Holcroft. It then consisted of a small collegiate building, with a chapel adjoining the cloisters. Later it was occupied as a residence by Oliver Breres, Recorder of Preston, who was also one of the council named in that charter of Queen Elizabeth happily styled Preston's Magna Carta.

During his tenancy he was disturbed by a number of assailants, armed with "swords, bylls and long pyked staves," who broke into the premises and proceeded to dismantle the very walls, under the orders of Sir Thomas Langton, who claimed the use of its stone for repairs at Walton Hall.

In 1617 12 justices, including Sir Richard Hoghton, purchased from Roger Langton for £250 "all that messuage and dwellinge house with the appurtenances commonlye called and known by the name of the Freares" to use as a House of Correction, this being, in effect, a combined workhouse and gaol.

As such it is shown on Buck's View of Preston in 1728, and such it remained until 1785, when the county justices decided to erect new premises adjoining the bottom of Church-street, the old house being then "crowded with great numbers of unhappy wretches, many of whom were sick of a putrid fever."



This picture from the Preston Scientific Society collection shows old property in Mount Pleasant, near the site of the "Lady Well."

BUT fate had still other metamorphoses in store for this time-worn relic of the past. Whittle says it was next transformed into a factory, whilst Baines, writing in 1836, adds yet another chapter to its poignant story:

"It is now divided into habitations for cottages, but the shell of the chapel, as well as some remains of three arched windows, pointed, may still be traced. At a short distance from this ruin there was formerly a well, called 'Lady Well,' frequented in living memory by the devout."

Ladywell-street, off Marsh-lane, still perpetuates the memory of this ancient place of pilgrimage.

The ultimate stage of the Priory's degradation came in 1883, when it was used as a storeroom by Messrs. J. C. Stevenson and Co., Canal Foundry, being then known to the workpeople as the old Barracks.

It was finally expunged from the map nine years later, when the site was taken over by the London and North-Western Railway.

To-day an intricate network of railway sidings covers its foundations, and the clank and rumble of shunting engines and trucks awakes the echoes that once replied to the chants and orisons of the brethren.

A SOBERING thought, that all the hopes and devotion once centred in this holy place have vanished for ever from the earth; that all the labours of this ancient Franciscan sanctuary, its works of charity and culture, the knowledge acquired and transcribed with loving care upon countless manuscripts, tinctured and illuminated with meticulous skill in gold leaf and brilliant pigments, are now forgotten of men.

"For the stateliest building man can raise
Is the ivy's food at last."

During the cutting of the Lancaster canal several remains were unearthed, including a leaden conduit pipe branching from the Lady Well, a number of coins and some bones, "sad remnants of mortality."

Whittle also refers to a crucifix, 13 inches long, and another of bone, as well as an oval medal inscribed with the figure of St. John Climachus, picked up on the site at various times.

But beyond these few reminders of its past glories nothing else remains. The scene is one of utter desolation, and all but its memory is buried in the silence of the grave.

The Assembly Room

THE old saying that Englishmen take their pleasures sadly has no foundation in fact. Indeed, our fathers had a zest in life such as we — our palates jaded by synthetic entertainments, conjured up at the pressing of a switch — can hardly appreciate.

They made their own amusements, in Falstaffian fashion, perhaps, but the ring of their Homeric laughter still echoes down the years in the pages of Shakespeare and his contemporaries In the pursuit of happiness they were not oversqueamish, but what they lacked in subtlety they made up for by sheer good humour.

At Hoghton Tower in 1617, a petition was presented to King James asking that lawful recreations might be enjoyed upon Sundays after evening prayers and upon holidays. So, in the following year by royal command, vaulting, May-games Whitsun-ales and maypoles were sanctioned and "Merrie England" came into its own again.

FOR some time bull-baiting was a popular recreation in Preston borough, and when that cruel sport was discontinued, the "fancy" turned to cock-fighting instead. Prior to 1650 there was a public cock-pit in Preston and Lang's map shows an enclosure named Cock-pit Field near the southern end of Adelphi-street.

The building last used for this purpose, however survived until very recent times at the south end of Graystocks-yard behind the Bull and Royal Hotel It is shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1847, when in use as a Temperance Hall and its design clearly indicates its original purpose.

In the centre was a circular pit, surrounded by rows of seats rising in tiers to enable the spectators to enjoy an uninterrupted view of the proceedings At weekends it also served the incongruous purpose of a Sunday school, until taken over by Joseph Livesey as a Teetotal meeting-place He finally vacated it when he erected his new hall (recently demolished) in North-road A circle of bricks set in concrete now marks the site of Preston's last cock-pit

It is said to have been erected by Edward 12th Earl of Derby at the beginning of last century. This nobleman was an enthusiastic patron of the sport and old John Lister a native of Weeton, speaks of seeing him come away daubled with blood and feathers to join the ladies on the grandstand at Preston races, carrying a piece of silver plate, the award for the winning horse.

OF politer amusements, theatre-going exercised its sway about the beginning of the 18th century. The first theatre was situated at the south end of Woodcock's Court. It is mentioned in a pamphlet published in 1762 by J. Moon who terms it the old theatre. On Lang's map printed twelve years later, it is called the Play-house and here in 1771, General Burgoyne, famous for the part he took in the American War of Independence witnessed a performance in aid of local charities.

The place was probably little better than a barn and owing to its many inconveniences was not popular with the fickle public. It was finally abandoned in 1802, when a body of shareholders erected a new play-house on the site of the present Theatre Royal (which is now to be completely rebuilt).

Of this Temple to the Muses, it need only be said the

". . . . poor player
That struts and frets his hour
upon the stage"

found it little better than its predecessor. Its likeness has been preserved in a water-colour drawing by J. Ferguson dated 1859, which depicts a plain brick frontage resembling that of a stable, pierced by three doors, for gallery, boxes and pit respectively and surmounted by a semi-circular window.

Its only hint of luxury lay in the fact that shareholders were possessed of silver tickets, which gave them free admission to all performances. In 1869 it was improved by the addition of a new front with shops in the basement.

After being closed for some time, it was re-opened for the 1882 Guild, when its accommodation was stated to be sufficient for 1,700 of an audience.

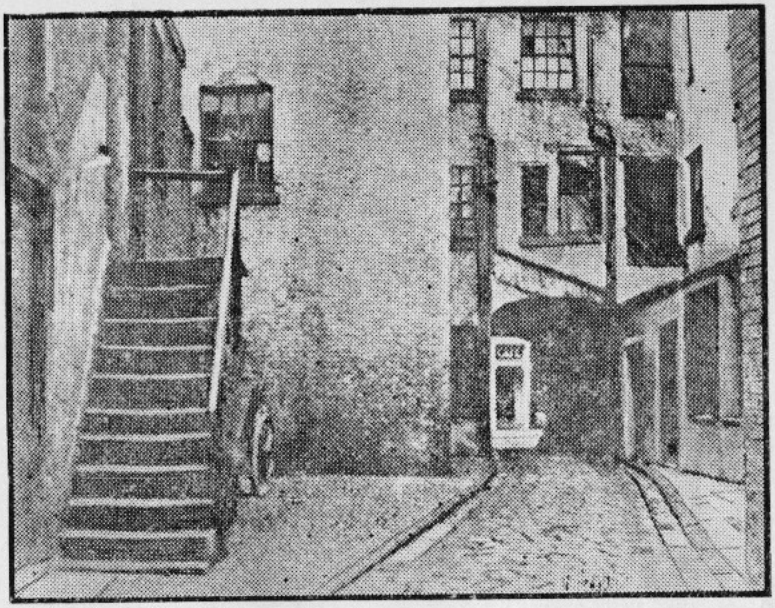
BUT beyond doubt, the one institution that reflected the true spirit of bygone Preston, with all its gaiety, was the Assembly-room. Built by that same cock-fighting Lord Derby whose activities have already been recorded, its amenities described by Peter Whittle in glowing terms, included four fluted Ionic pillars. He adds:

"It is embellished with three grand glass chandeliers, the middle one considerably larger than the other two, which have a glittering appearance when lighted up and dazzle the eyes of the beholder."

Here, during the winter season, were held innumerable balls and "card assemblies," under the benign authority of the Queen of the Assembly, who also had the immediate patronage of the town's sedan chairs. These fashionable conveyances were said to have been introduced by R. Langton, one of the bailiffs, at the Guild of 1662, and they remained in vogue for about two centuries.

"I remember (writes E.S.N.) going in a sedan chair, one snowy night in the winter of 1846-7, to a ball given in Winckley Square. There used to be two sedan chairs in Preston one Whig and the other Tory, and no Tory lady would have been seen in a Whig chair for anything. One used to wait in an archway in Winckley Square and the other was often standing by Huffman's the cloggers, in Fishergate, opposite the top of Cannon-street."

Some records of the old assemblies are to be found in a contemporary account book, beginning in 1785, when Mrs. Hesketh is named as the Queen, and among the items of expenditure are charges for music, £1.4s.; candles, £1.3s.11d.; tea, 19s.6d.; wax and tickets, 2s.



This photograph, from the Preston Scientific Society collection, shows a corner of old Preston—Woodcock's Court, off Fishergate. Here, Preston's first theatre was situated.

LET us intrude upon one of these select and brilliant occasions. The ladies, flounced and furbelowed, are in shimmering satins and stiff brocades Stepping daintily from caleche and chair, they are escorted by their respective gallants, standing erect and stately in velvet coats and breeches.

Like gorgeous moths they flutter out of the night towards the portals of the ancient inn, which is ablaze with the mellow light of a hundred candles, whilst from within sounds of mirth and music salute the ear The air is heavy with the perfume of hot - house flowers. They are greeted by a master of ceremony and soon are facing their partners in the stately evolutions of some old-time dance, a languid gavotte or a lively polka.

Here are gathered the scions of many a noble and wealthy line, while captains and ensigns of line and militia regiments, in uniforms of scarlet and gold with pipe-clayed belts and glittering epaulettes, add a vivid splash of colour to the festive scene. In the gallery musicians are busy with fiddle and flute, whilst the rythmic steps of the dancers wake tinkling echoes among the translucent droppers of the crystal chandeliers.

The spirit of harmony and well-being is weaving filaments of light and colour into an ever-changing pattern that will live in the memory of each participant in after-years when all the candles have been puffed out, when the laughter and music have died away and all the romantic dreams of youth are as a tale that has been told.

The House of Correction

AS might be expected in so ancient a borough, the question of law and order exercised the minds of the Preston authorities from the very earliest times. The first recorded laws, reputed to have been in force at the beginning of the 12th century, are contained in the "Custumal," a venerable parchment 20½ inches long by 13½ inches wide, now preserved in the archives of the Corporation.

From it we may learn how jealously the burghers and freemen guarded their rights and privileges. After enumerating their many "liberties," including the right to a Guild Mercatory, with "soc and sac, tol and them and infangthef" and quittance of "toll, lastage, passage, pontage and stallage," it lays down the conditions in which a burgess shall hold his burgage, embodying an exact code of pains and penalties for any infringement

In many ways it anticipates the operations of the old Court Leet, held in the Moot Hall before the mayor, bailiffs and town clerk. The record book of this remarkable body begins on October 21st, 1653, its opening presentment being that "the Exercise of Artillerie" that is, shooting with the long bow, "is not used within this towne". To remedy which, the jury ordered the bailiffs to repair the Butts "and sett Rayles about them that the beasts doe not throw them down."

IN this court delinquents were not tried; they were presented and punished either by fine, confinement in the stocks exposure in the pillory or imprisonment. Persistent offenders received even more drastic treatment women going to the cuck-stool and men to the whipping-post. The line of Park-road passes an enclosure formerly known as Cuck-stool Meadows, containing the pond where scolding house-wives were ceremoniously ducked for the good of their souls. In Preston cheating tradesmen were sometimes accorded this treatment, too.

The Court Leet, however, had no jurisdiction over felony which was a matter for the Assizes. Here, at the opening of the 19th century, no fewer than 200 offences, ranging from forgery to sheep-stealing, were punishable by death.

Among other activities, the Leet jury appointed constables, overseers, ale-tasters and scavengers.

"In 1810 (writes Hewitson) there were only three policemen in Preston and their total weekly wages amounted to £3. At this time the streets were guarded at night by watchmen who used to shout out the hours and half-hours, and announce the state of the weather. At intervals they ensconsed themselves in wooden sentry boxes, which stood on small wheels These boxes were stationed in different parts of the town to suit the beats of the watchmen."

ACCORDING to Samuel Norris, an aged pensioner who was living in 1883, the first police station was in Turk's Head Yard, off Church-street, approached by a narrow lobby and "as dark as a bellows". The force consisted of a superintendent, an inspector and five constables.

On week days they wore plain clothes, distinguished only by a red cord embroidered on the edges of their collars, with a small, heart-shaped badge on the lapel On Sundays they wore blue trousers with a red stripe They were armed with a staff and a "sounding-stick," this last being of log wood with a steel ferrule, which they rattled upon the flag-stones when they wished to raise an alarm.

In 1832 their quarters were transferred to the east side of Avenham-street, and it was not until 1857 that the foundations of the present Police Station were laid. By that time their strength had been increased to 48.

Such was Preston's first essay in the intricate art of crime detection.

BEHIND it, however, loomed the shadow of a greater deterrant —the grim House of Correction. It stood to the west of Friargate, and first opened its sinister doors in 1619. Francis Barker being appointed master and governor.

Its purpose has been well described by Dr. Kuerden, in his manuscript description of Preston, written shortly after 1681: ". . . . upon that side of the town was formerly a large and sumptuous building, formerly belonging to the Fryers Minors or Gray Fryers, but now onely reserved for the reforming of vagabonds, sturdy beggars and petty larceny thieves, and other people wanting good behaviour. it is now the country prison to entertain such persons with hard work, spare dyet and whipping, and it is cal'd the House of Correction."

The governor, out of his salary of £60, was to provide shirts, hose and cassocks of sacking or canvas for his wretched charges, and regale them with such food "as in discreation shalbe thought fitt they deserve."

When visited by John Howard, the prison reformer, in 1777, the accommodation consisted of a large room on the ground floor, "in which are eleven Closets, called Boxes, to sleep in" and another room called the Dungeon.

On the first floor were two workrooms for prisoners of both sexes, all in a dreadful state of dirt and dilapidation. The prison yard was in front of the house, and in the rear was a garden "for the use of the governor."

IT is said that the great philanthropist commented so severly upon this disgraceful state of affairs that to him was mainly owing the erection in 1789 of the present prison at the eastern end of Church-street.

This "elegant but massive pile" —to borrow the stilted phrase of Peter Whittle—was visited by Mrs. Fry and her brother John Gurney, in 1818 and was subsequently described as the best conducted prison they had inspected, a welcome change from the earlier strictures of John Howard.

Here, in 1832, four Martello towers were built "to protect the prison from threatened attacks by mobs of machinery-breaking operatives," while two years later the governor's residence was reconstructed in its existing castellated form.

Many interesting details concerning the old House of Correction may be found in an excellent paper by Miss Sylvia S. Tollit, printed in volume 105 of the Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire. It makes enthralling reading.

IN these latter days of scientific crime-detection with its finger-printing, wireless communication and laboratory tests we realise the incredible difficulties confronting the old-time constable in the performance of his arduous duties.

But the amazing fact emerges that, despite its many drawbacks, its crudities and incongruities the old system had a rough and ready efficiency which gave the habitual criminal a wholesome respect for the top-hatted guardian of the peace. He would hardly have concurred with the poet when he wrote:

"Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage."

There is something to be said for the stocks, the cuck-stool and the scolds-bridle in the evolution of law and order.

The Parish Church

A VISITOR in search of the oldest memorial in Preston Parish Church must turn to the west end of the north aisle. Here is a curious monumental brass, obviously the work of some 'prentice hand, inscribed "Seath Bushell, woollen draper, baylife and a brother of Preston, dying XV of Sepr., 1623, aged 53."

It was found during the rebuilding of 1854, and sold by workmen to a local metal dealer

for a few coppers. Only a happy chance saved it from the melting pot.

Strange that a church reputed to have been founded by King Oswald in 635 should contain so few reminders of its antiquity. Originally dedicated to St. Wilfrid, Whittle states, without quoting his authority, that "during the reign of Elizabeth A.D 1581 the church at Preston was dedicated to St. John the Divine by order of Dr Chadderton, Bishop of Chester."

ACCORDING to Bede, the original edifice was of hewn timber thatched with reeds, which primitive structure would almost certainly be superseded in Norman times by a fabric of stone

It is said to have been re-built in 1581 and during the Civil War must have suffered considerable damage, for in 1646 it is spoken of as being "in great decay" while two years later the windows and other parts were so much dilapidated that 'the repaires thereof will admitte noe delaye in this could season of winter".

An interesting interior plan of this period shows a double row of box-pews in the nave divided by alleys from single rows in the aisles The pulpit a typical "three-decker," is half-way down the body of the church on the south side, whilst each corner is supported by a great rectangular pillar

In 1680 four pinnacles were reared on the tower which also had a curious turret in its north western corner as may be seen from W. Orme's well-known drawing, published in 1796

THE church furnishings suffered again during the 1715 Rebellion, when the captured Highlanders were imprisoned in the nave for about a month, and says the chronicler:

"They took what care of themselves they could unripping all the linings from the seats or pews and making thereof breeches and hose to defend themselves from the extremities of the weather."

In 1770 the roof of the church, with all the pillars in the north side fell down, a disaster giving point to a complaint by Sir Henry Hoghton, its lay rector, to Henry Barnes the parish clerk some 12 years before the event

"I'm told the sexton makes graves in the churchyard and chancell close to the foundations, the paving stones tumble down and are carried away and I hear either you or the sexton have sould them: by this practice the church and my chancel are undermin'd."

The tower was completely rebuilt in 1813 and four years later Sir H. P. Hoghton intimated his intention to take down and re-construct the chancel. Finally, in 1853 the whole structure was demolished and the existing church erected as nearly as possible on the old foundations

IT looks peaceful enough to-day, with its tall, gilded weathercock dominating the busy town centre, but what a fantastic sequence of events this tiny spot of hallowed ground has witnessed.

Here for many generations Christians have congregated in prayer for succour against war, famine and pestilence; here God's Acre has echoed to the iron tread of the invader; it has been a place of refuge for the fugitive in times of civil strife and a shrine of comfort for the bereaved when the horror of plague lay heavy on the land.

During that dreadful visitation known as the "Black Death", in 1349, it is recorded that "within the Parish of Preston there died 3.000 men and women" whilst in the year 1630, we read in the Parish register these terrible words: "Heare beginneth the Visitation of Allmighty God the Plague" and the Guild Order Book holds this sombre record: "The great sickness of the plague of Pestilence, wherein the number of eleven hundred p'sons and upwards dyed within the Towne and Parish of Preston."

Between whiles we see it the subject of dispute on account of its tythes, as when in 1524 Sir Richard Hoghton was ordered to pay £75 to Sir Alexander Osbaldeston, "within Lowe Churche in the towne of Walton in the Dale at the feaste of St Martyn in winter."

A little later, in 1574 we share the troubles of Vicar Nicholas Daniels when he found his people still inclined towards the old faith.

"I dygged of late in myne own grounds (he writes) and found a grate number of alabaster images which I destroyde, as this bearer can declare, and for such cause wee lose the love of Idolatrers."

A CENTURY passes, and by the light of flaring torches we find the devout Isaac Ambrose preaching at the nocturnal burial of his patroness, Lady Margaret Hoghton, amid a scene of indescribable confusion:

"After the body was laid in the dust, such was the noise raised by the multitude that I plainly perceived I could not be heard. At last I began with prayer, and I found my voice too low and my spirits too distracted with the noise about me. In this confusion, some standing on the seats, I saw the necessity of raising my voice to the highest pitch, and though I did so, yet many who desired to hear could not hear."

A few more years and Sir Richard Hoghton is asserting his authority with the Corporation of Preston, when in 1664 he locked the chancel door "and kept the mayor not onely from going throug it but entirely out of it till such time as he got the clerk fix'd."

Again the scene changes. It is 1715 and the church is thronged with rebel officers. But Vicar Samuel Peploe, regardless of Jacobite feelings thunders his denunciations against the enemies of George I. and the House of Hanover. Threatened by a Highlander's bayonet, he paused only to say, "Soldier do your duty: I shall do mine."

"Peep-low", cried the blunt monarch in his broken English, when appraised of the event: "By God, he shall peep high—he shall be a bishop". And a bishop he became, without further qualification.

LASTLY, beneath a plain altar-tombstone still visible to the west of the churchyard gate, we have a reminder of the tragedy which overshadowed the Guild of 1822, when two sons of the Guild Mayor, Nicholas Grimshaw, were drowned whilst boating on the Ribble.

Here, re-united, the tragic family sleeps, within a few yards of that great civic centre they loved and served so well.

But the story is not yet complete. The loom of destiny still turns, and even now is fashioning the warp and woof of yet another episode in the Church's struggle with the forces of paganism, that shall only assume shape and coherence when we, who are of its essence, have become one with

"Yesterday's sev'n thousand years."

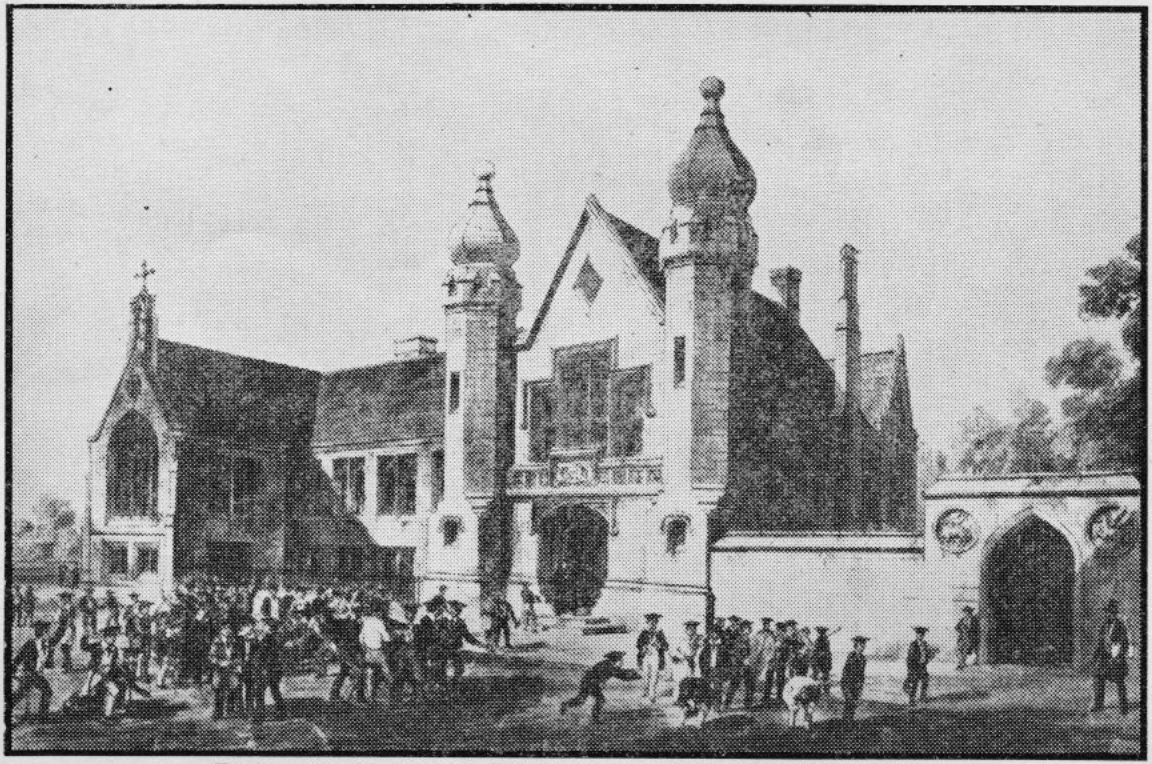
The Grammar School

ARKWRIGHT HOUSE, known to an earlier generation as the Arkwright Arms, stands at the bottom of Stoneygate. Its newly stuccoed facade gives it a prim, almost modern air, strangely at variance with its interior.

Here, in 1768, Richard Arkwright, barber, and John Kay, watchmaker, obtained the use of a back room as a workshop, the house being then occupied by the headmaster of the old Grammar School. The dominie had more than a mere monetary interest in their work, for he permitted them to assemble their first spinning frame in his own parlour, a handsome panelled room on the first floor.

According to Hewitson, writing in 1882, this chamber had then been restored to resemble, as nearly as possible, its original appearance, and there is a drawing by C. E. Shaw depicting it duly set out with period furniture. This has now disappeared, and the quaint oak panelling is painted a dull brown, obliterating a number of inscribed names, dated 1715, formerly visible on the south wall.

"The prominence given to the year 1715 (says the historian) in the panels referred to is suggestive of either Jacobite meetings having been held here or of sympathisers with the cause of Jacobitism having made this room some kind of a resort during the Rebellion of that year."



From an old print: Scholars in mortar-boards playing outside the Grammar School in Cross-street.

BUT its scholastic associations go back much further than the days of Bonnie Prince Charlie. The site of the original Grammar School is not known, but Helen Hoghton, who died in 1479, endowed a chantry at Preston for a priest sufficiently learned to hold a free Grammar School.

Such foundations were usually sited in a corner of the churchyard, and there is no reason to doubt that Preston's first school stood beneath the shadow of its venerable church.

About the year 1547 there is a charge on the revenues of the Duchy for "a clerk and schoolmaster" at Preston, whilst an entry in the Corporation White Book, dated 1612, orders the bailiffs to pay the "schole maister of the towne of Preston or to his use" twenty marks each Easter by way of salary.

The school house in Stoneygate was erected in 1666 and in 1721 a residence adjoining was built for the master. This is the present Arkwright House but the date of its foundation is hard to reconcile with the 1715 inscriptions cited by Hewitson, unless part of the structure was already standing, as is not unlikely. Here, in 1821, the headmaster was "passing rich" on a salary of £45 per annum.

TWENTY years later, "the neighbourhood having altered in character," a handsome new school building in the Tudor style of architecture was erected in Cross-street. Externally, this later seat of learning remains much the same to-day, although it is many years since its quiet purlieus echoed to the shouts and laughter of high-spirited urchins clad in short jackets and "mortar-boards."

In 1854 the average attendance was 100 scholars of whom nine upon the Foundation paid two guineas and the remainder eight guineas.

But long before this latter date the schoolmaster had been abroad in good earnest. In 1702 Roger Sudell bequeathed a tenement, comprising a "stable and hay-loft" in Main Sprit Weind, for conversion into a schoolhouse. It was known as the "Blue Coat School," but was so woefully inadequate that in 1830, after it had been incorporated with the newly established National Schools, a new fabric was erected on the original site. The first National School at Syke Hill came into being after a meeting in Dr. Shepherd's Library, adjoining the Grammar School, when it was resolved: "That it is expedient to found, without delay, a school for the instruction of boys and girls upon Dr. Bell's system and . . . unite the new institution with the Blue Schools already founded in this town."

THIS new establishment was a neat brick building, lighted by 18 round-topped windows, three of which formed the base of a pediment, with a dated stone upon its front. It is well illustrated in Whittle's History of Preston, published in 1821, and although it has since been enlarged it retains most of its original features, including the characteristic windows divided by buttresses.

Here, upon the Madras system invented by Dr. Andrew Bell, one teacher could (in theory) control and impart instruction to any number of scholars. All concerned with modern education will doubtless be interested to learn how this miracle was performed. This is the learned doctor's own exposition:

"In a school, it gives the master the hundred eyes of Argus, the hundred hands of Briareus and the wings of Mercury. In other words, by multiplying his ministers at pleasure, it gives him indefinite powers and enables him to instruct as many pupils as any school will contain."

In less lyrical language, the system may be termed a triumph of organisation, its cardinal virtue being a division of the master's authority among a number of youthful monitors each responsible for a limited number of fellow-pupils.

THE teacher sat on a raised platform overlooking the whole school and each monitor, after examining the slates of his several charges, signalled to his chief by means of a sort of sign-board attached to the end of his desk. Each lesson proceeded by easy stages, any advance being dependent upon how soon a unanimous all-clear signal denoted complete assimilation of the preceding item.

In Whittle's time the school held 600 children, with seating round the walls and semi-octagonal desks in the centre of the room. There was accommodation for girls in an upper storey to which access was gained by means of an outside staircase.

Such were the first beginnings of education in Preston, a town now justly proud of its many public and private centres of learning and thronged with children wearing a colourful diversity of school uniforms far removed from the antique caps and gowns of early Blue Coat days. But it is well that we should give credit to those hardy pioneers whose labours have brought about such a consumation

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Preston's Roads and Railways

ONE of the primary reasons for Preston's existence is the fact that for time out of mind it has bestraddled the great highway to the north. When the Roman engineers laid down their magnificent military road from Chester to the Wall, in the days of Agricola, it is probable that the line had already been indicated by some ancient British trackway

It was carried across the Ribble by a ford just at the precise point where the estuary ceases to be tidal and to guard this vulnerable spot they erected a small fort at the junction of the river with its tributary, the Darwen

On Walton 'flats" some very interesting Roman remains were unearthed by Hardwick in 1855. They included coins, fragments of Samian ware, fibulas and fragments of stone querns for grinding flour.

Here, almost surrounded by water, this lonely outpost of the legions controlled the march of reinforcements or regulated the transport of supplies.

The road, following the precise pattern laid down for camps of this nature, entered the east gate, passed the Principia or headquarters building, and left by the west gate, where the line of the ford crossed the water a little below the site of the old bridge. The wide, flagged causeway then wound in zigzag fashion to the crest of the adjoining ridge, where it followed the direction of the present Manchester-road.

THE sight of these seemingly endless columns of marching legionaries must have filled the semi - barbaric natives, whose stockaded village crowned the hill with awe.

A fully-equipped foot-soldier of the Antonine period wore a serviceable field uniform consisting of woollen shorts and tunic beneath a cuirass of scales. His head was protected by a round metal helmet, he had a woollen neckcloth and cloak and stout hobnailed sandals. His shield was rectangular and concave, inscribed with his regimental badge, and besides his javelin he was armed with Iberic sword on right thigh and dagger on left. He also carried entrenching tools and a pack.

Altogether he was a hardy and business-like figure, and his traditions and training go far towards explaining why the Roman empire extended across all the known world.

It is a solemn thought that when A6 ultimately by-passes the ancient borough of Preston on its way to Lancaster and Carlisle, a link will be broken that has endured for more than 2,000 years. The constantly-increasing volume of road traffic has made such an improvement inevitable. It is, in fact, the latest of many.

AT the beginning of last century the lower portion of London-road, from Walton Brow to the bridge, was constructed to take the place of the narrow, winding and sunken lane which may still be traced to the west of it.

About the same time, Fishergate Hill had its gradient reduced and its width increased, whilst the way

north was greatly improved by the construction of Garstang-road as a substitute for Old Lancaster-lane. Then, in 1824, the Blackburn New-road was made, with the object of improving the communication between Preston and East Lancashire.

These improvements were effective in greatly increasing the number of coaches on the highways. In 1830 no fewer than 81 stage and market coaches were entering and leaving Preston during the day.

But the prosperity of the coach proprietors was short-lived. Already canal packet boats were journeying on the canal between the town and Lancaster, providing a pleasant and restful alternative to the dust and jolting of the highways.

A published notice by the Canal Company stated that "for safety, economy and comfort no other mode of conveyance could be so eligible as the Packet Boats; for there the timid might be at ease, and the most delicate mind without fear."

As a result, the number of coaches decreased from 81 to 12 in a space of seven years, and by 1842 the last north mail had made its final exit. The railway era had dawned.

THE first railway, connecting Preston with Wigan, was opened in 1838, and by 1846 the borough had become a busy centre, with connections to Bolton, Blackburn, Liverpool, Manchester and Lancaster.

Writing in 1883, Hewitson paints an amusing picture of the early days of the "iron horse." The carriages were covered but without windows, many being painted yellow and each bore a particular name outside, as the old horse-drawn coaches used to do.

"The engines (he continues) were very small, only about half the size of the ones now running, and the drivers and firemen had neither 'bull's eyes' to look through nor coverings overhead; indeed, the latter are of quite modern adoption.

"As showing the weak character of the old engines we may observe that often, when a heavy train was leaving Preston for the north, porters had to push at the side by way of giving them assistance."

In the early railway days the metals were laid on stone sleepers, and it is interesting to recall that the lower portion of the tower of St. Walburge's Church was constructed almost entirely of limestone sleepers from the Preston and Lancaster Railway.

ON the Longridge branch motive power was provided by horses on the outward journey but on the return, owing to the gradient, the carriages ran to Grimsargh under their own momentum.

On the opening day there was an amusing incident when one of the male passengers lost his cap. The train was stopped to enable him to recover his recalcitrant headgear, but refused to start again until a relay of horses was sent for to provide the necessary impetus.

At that time Preston boasted of no fewer than four railway stations. In addition to the central station in Fishergate — where originally, for lack of a footbridge, passengers were escorted across the metals in relays by railroad employees — there were two in connection with the Longridge line, one at Deepdale and the other in Maudland-road, the latter consisting of nothing more than a single platform and a wooden sentry box from which tickets were issued.

Finally, the West Lancashire railway had a station, now converted into a warehouse, at the foot of Fishergate Hill.

AND with the coming of the railway we must end this series of articles on Bygone Preston.

It is a subject which is inexhaustible, for with each passing year the vivid and active present merges with the past; to-day's news becomes to-morrow's history and that which to us is the essence of modernity will seem quaint and old-fashioned to our children.

If I have succeeded in showing something of the labours and aspirations of our fathers, even in this brief and fragmentary fashion, I shall rest content.

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