

# A Family Journey Through Time



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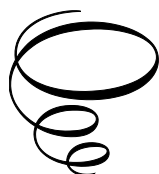
*The Ups and Downs  
of Working People*

By

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A Family Journey Through Time: The Ups and Downs of Working People

By Sue Hughes

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*For John and Cissie*



John and Cissie on their wedding day 29/8/1935

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## PREFACE

My interest in our family's history began many years ago, when, as a young child, I used to ask my mother to repeat her captivating stories of life when she was a little girl. She was 7 at the beginning of WW I so this was an Edwardian childhood she was recounting. Visits to grandma Beaumont's family home, Blackleach Farm, also gave a glimpse into the world of the past. The stone house was clearly very old with its mullion windows, low ceilings with hooks where hams had once hung to dry, a black leaded range instead of a gas or electric cooker and upstairs a gigantic carved dark oak wardrobe. Next door, at number 2 Blackleach, was an interior almost unchanged since Victorian times. Life had obviously been very different from that in the modern semi-detached house in which I was growing up.

A cursory foray into the census, via my brother-in-law, in the 1970s produced some basic knowledge of two great grandfathers and a newspaper article in the *Oldham Chronicle* had an interesting story about a possible ancestor. However, this study only really started in earnest 20 years ago when the 1901 census came online making the job of research so much easier. Retirement and then a Lockdown provided an opportunity to gather together, in a more formal way, all the material I had been collecting over the past 20 years.

My aim has been to document the lives of the ancestors of Sarah-Jane (Cissie) Halford and John Beaumont who married on 29 August 1935. I have largely confined my 'stories' to the 4 main families of their parents; Mary (nee Hartle) and James Halford and Mary Alice (nee Ripley) and Herbert Beaumont. The research was helped by the fact that all these names are fairly rare, although, as they are also localised, there can be problems. For example, I was beginning to despair of tracking down the Beaumonts as Huddersfield has thousands of them but fortunately our ancestor moved to Saddleworth in the 1670s and his descendants remained as the only Beaumonts in the parish registers for the area for the next 100 years. Both Cissie and John were born into respectable terraced housing areas in the

Oldham area so at first glance it seems that we are dealing with the upper working class of an industrial town. However, the investigation will show, that tracing these families back to their rural roots, their antecedents had had very different lives in very different locations.

Ostensibly this study has been written so that our family will know who their ancestors were but I hope its usefulness will go beyond this. Many years ago, as a young history student, I heard the great social and economic historian John Savile say that it was everyone's duty to write the history of their family for this was the only way in which ordinary people's lives would be preserved for posterity. I hope I have succeeded in achieving this for our antecedents. I also hope that it may be of use to a wider audience for similar experiences must have occurred in many families, who like ours, have been 'hidden from history'.

My source materials have been the usual ones; oral testimony, photographs, the occasional letter, maps, parish registers and the census. These are not without their problems. Not all parish registers, unsurprisingly after almost 500 years, are complete. There are missing pages and it is not always possible to follow a person through from birth to death. Even using civil registration, which began in 1837, it is not always possible to achieve a required certificate of birth, marriage or death. Sometimes census enumerators made transcription errors and may have misunderstood or misinterpreted their informant's words. People also sometimes changed their information from census to census. Vicars and registrars made mistakes, Cissie's birth certificate gave her mother's maiden name as Hartley rather than Hartle, which she knew, and this study will demonstrate, was clearly wrong. Even oral testimony is not necessarily accurate for sometimes details become confused so like all sources they must be treated with caution. We should also note that most of our family were for many centuries unable to write so we have no diaries or autobiographies and only occasional letters which would have given insight into their minds. The sources we have are, in the main, official sources, the records collected by the Church and State so we have no obvious *entree* to the views, beliefs and feelings of our ancestors. Even photographs, before the advent of the hand-held camera, give little insight into personality as the process took such a long time that everyone looks wooden. All of these problems are evident in the records pertaining to our family.

Nevertheless, we have to do what we can with the material we have and I was fortunate in that the parish registers for Almondbury, Leeds, Saddleworth, Oldham and Halifax were available in printed form, in some cases going back to their origins in the 16th century. There were also wills available, for the Beaumonts from many years ago, and more recent ones for all the families. In addition, the census is now easily accessible online. Several other contemporary primary sources were available for all the families. Samuel Bamford's autobiography was especially useful for the Halfords as he was from a nearby small town and had the same occupation as many of the Halford men. For the Hartles there were extracts from the diary of the minister of the Chinley Independent Chapel, the Reverend James Clegg. In addition to his ministry, he was also a farmer in the Chapel en le Frith area so his information is very pertinent for us. For the Ripleys, the visits of Celia Fiennes and Daniel Defoe gave excellent background on their occupations and locations. Ammon Wrigley's *Annals of Saddleworth* were useful for both the Ripleys and the Beaumonts. Finally, but actually of major importance, were the invaluable translations of the Almondbury Manor Court Rolls by Peter Hurst, the publication of which coincided with my research into the Beaumonts.

I should also record here that I am deeply indebted to Peter, not only for his excellent work mentioned above, but for providing me with the Beaumont link to Almondbury without which I would never have got back before the 1670s. He also shared freely with me his copies of primary materials on the Beaumont family in the form of wills, inventories, certificates and parish register entries. Several other people also kindly supplied me with important leads from their own researches; Peter Milne and Leonie Chester from material on the Ripleys and John Powell on the Hartles and the Lomases. Judy Bradwell's article on "The Lomases of Bradshaw Hall" was also invaluable in helping sort out the different branches of their family and finally an anonymous donor from Australia sent me information on William Hartle and his descendants.

As this is not intended to be an academic study, I have avoided copious footnotes, but I would be happy to enter into further discussion with anyone who would like more information. Similarly, I have avoided getting involved in historiographical debate, but I am of course aware that some of the detail of the works I have used has been amended by later researches.

However, they are classic texts, and as, on the whole, my findings tended to align with theirs, I feel that this is quite sufficient for a study of this type. As an historian my instincts have led me to place my findings in the social and economic background of the times in which our family were living. I hope I have succeeded in providing sufficient information for the reader to be able to do this without going into too much detail. Hopefully this material will also be of use to other family historians, some of whom have, in the past, asked me for such information in which to place their own findings.

Accessing the national background for this study was not difficult but with the exception of Edward Thompson's ground breaking work, *The Making of the English Working Class* [1963], John Foster's *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution* [1974] and Maurice Beresford's *East End, West End: The Face of Leeds During Urbanisation 1684-1842* [1988], the areas inhabited by our ancestors have not led to the publication of mainstream histories. However, some excellent local histories, several of which I refer to below, but include many more in my bibliography, made it possible to obtain the material I required. Starting in the 19th century, Charles A. Hulbert's *Annals of the Church and Parish of Almondbury* [1882] was very useful, as was E.J. Beaumont's *The Beaumonts in History A.D 850 -1850* [1929] and P. Ahier's *The History and Topography of South Crosland* [1938]. Finding out information on Chapel en le Frith was particularly difficult until I discovered William Braylesford Bunting's *Chapel en le Frith: Its History and People* [1940] available in its entirety on the internet. Coming forward in time, Winifred M. Bowman's 710 pages of detailed research *England in Ashton Under Lyne* [1960], including facsimiles of primary sources in which our ancestors and relatives appear, was packed with information about Lees and Crossbank. Oldham's well-known local historian Hartley Bateson's, *History of Oldham* [1974] gives far more information about the surrounding areas than the title suggests and Richard Beaumont's *The Beaumont Heritage A.D. 850-1972* [1972] provided a useful supplement to Edward J Beaumont's original work. Bernard Jennings' *Pennine Valley: A History of Upper Calderdale* [1992] gave information on Halifax and its region whilst Steven Burt and Kevin Grady's *Illustrated History of Leeds* [1994] was invaluable on 17th and 18th century Leeds. As with Chapel en le Frith, finding information about Chadderton was not easy but a slim volume of old photographs by Michael Lawson and Mark

Johnson, *Images of England: Chadderton* [1994] had a two page commentary which was packed with information. Brian Law's *Oldham Brave Oldham* [1999] covered a whole range of topics. Finally, but of seminal importance, were the commentaries provided by Peter Hurst to accompany his 4 volumes of translations of the *Almondbury Manor Court Rolls* written between 2011 and 2016.

I am very aware that I may be accused of ignoring the women of the family. In some respects, this is dictated by the nature of the source materials. Until relatively recently women were viewed only as appendages of their husbands. Early parish registers, for example, give the name of a child's father but not the name of the mother! Similarly, a woman's death may appear only in reference to her husband. Actually, I did begin by tracing many of the women's families but this soon got out of hand and would certainly have been outside the scope of this study. I have, therefore, largely confined myself to tracing only male family names. This does not mean, however, that the women of the family are considered of no significance. On the contrary, some stand out as indomitable characters who survived all kinds of problems. All, I feel, were heroines who spent their lives guiding their families through emotional and economic crises while carrying the burden of perpetual child bearing. In order that this does not remain merely a study of patriarchal families I have often included maiden names so that the record of maternal families is maintained.

Finally, some may detect a left-wing bias here. Although I have endeavoured to keep a sense of proportion about the changes taking place over the centuries, it will become clear from the evidence presented in the following pages that life for ordinary people was often a struggle. Personal and professional adaptation was constantly required in order to deal with the changing conditions of their lives. Many past members of our families have lived in particularly challenging times.

# CHAPTER 1

## THE HALFORD FAMILY STORY

Our connection to the Halford family comes through Sarah Jane (1907 - 1983), or Cissie as she was usually called. First recorded bearers of this name were a Thomas de Haleford who appeared in the Kent Pipe Rolls for 1200 and a Robert de Halford in the Leicestershire Subsidy Rolls for 1327.<sup>1</sup> By the time of Cissie's birth, however, the Halfords were well established in the Chadderton area where she grew up, an Ann Halford having been buried at St. Mary's Oldham on the 10th December 1636.

### **A Family of Silk Hand Loom Weavers**

#### *Thomas Halford 1769-1844*

The earliest Halford from whom we can claim direct descent is Thomas, baptised 17 August 1769. His father was probably Joseph Alford of Cow Hill (Alder Root) and Joseph's wife was Jane.<sup>2</sup> We should not be concerned about spelling differences, as Halford and Alford were interchangeable at the time. When Joseph and Jane married, George III had just come to the throne. He inherited a country already rich and the envy of other nations. There was a thriving coal and iron industry, although as yet on a small scale compared to later, a very healthy domestic textile manufacturing industry, and a huge slice of the world's trade. Britain was already a colonial power with trade links all around the world.

It was against this background that Thomas was born. His father was a silk handloom weaver, as were most of the men of the Chadderton families with whom the Halfords were to become affiliated through marriage.<sup>3</sup> He would have worked in his own home, probably helped by his wife and children, like most of the handloom weavers of that time. The era of the Industrial Revolution was about to begin and the nearby towns of Manchester and Oldham were already starting their unprecedented growth.

Chadderton, however, was still only a small settlement with a series of hamlets such as Hollinwood, where the Halford clan were settled.<sup>4</sup> Apart from the 2 water-powered cotton mills, opened in 1775, and a small pit, there were few signs of industrialisation. According to Samuel Bamford, the local Middleton radical, the culture of these areas was still based on the pursuits of the old agricultural year, such as morris dancing, rushbearing, and the annual wakes<sup>5</sup>. No doubt people from Chadderton attended the unusually large wakes rush bearings in Oldham on 26 and 28 August recorded by William Rowbottom, a Chadderton handloom weaver, in 1797. Perhaps a sign of changing times, however, was the poor attendance at the Chadderton archery competition on 14 September.<sup>6</sup> The rainy weather of the day may have discouraged attendance but this once great British skill, practised regularly by all men in England, was dying out amongst ordinary people. Perhaps Lady Horton's prize of a quiver of arrows was given as an incentive to maintain 'Merry England'.

As a child growing up in the 1770s Thomas would probably have been unaware of the great changes about to take place in surrounding areas. Like most working class people of the time, Thomas would have had little formal education. The parish register entry for his marriage in 1793 demonstrates that he was, like his father, unable to sign his name. We should not assume total illiteracy however. Many people could read but were unable to write their name. As long ago as 1660 the Duke of Newcastle had warned Charles II that the Civil Wars of the 1640s had been partly caused by "the Bible under every weaver and chambermaid's arm".<sup>7</sup> There was in fact a debate running at the time of Thomas' childhood as to whether it was safe to educate the working class at all. Many educationalists were particularly against the teaching of writing and, on the whole, the Sunday schools, often the only chance for education that some children had, did not teach writing as this was considered a desecration of the Sabbath. Samuel Bamford lamented the fact that the 1841 census demonstrated that Lancashire was behind many other counties when it came to the "capability of the writing of names".<sup>8</sup>

The register also demonstrates that like his father Thomas had become a silk handloom weaver. This was, in many ways, a good time to be a silk handloom weaver. The weaving of this fabric was particularly skilled, requiring the ability to work with a delicate and expensive raw material. Silk

was also in great demand as the aristocracy and gentry became richer from their ventures in trade. Demand was further stimulated by the blockade created by the French during the Napoleonic wars which cut off an important source of silk fabric.<sup>9</sup> Thomas's wages at the time would have been quite good, facilitating a comfortable standard of living for a working man and his family.

Thomas married a Jane Taylor on the 21 April 1793; the parish register shows that Jane too was illiterate. Her baptism had taken place on the 9 July 1769 at St. Mary's Oldham. Like her new husband, Jane had been born in Chadderton, probably on Turf Lane, and her father, like Thomas' father, was a silk handloom weaver. Their marriage certificate suggests that the ceremony may have taken place at St. Mary's Prestwich<sup>10</sup> which was the mother church for St Mary's Oldham. Jane was clearly a sensitive soul for around this time she visited a public hanging in Rochdale which she found so horrific that she vowed never to go out of Hollinwood ever again.<sup>11</sup>

Jane and Thomas married the year that the Napoleonic wars started and these wars continued to rage on and off for the next 22 years. The revolution in France stimulated radicalism in England, with groups forming in London demanding a more liberal form of government, as was emerging in France. This radicalism spread to the developing industrial districts including Oldham and its surrounding areas. Working men, especially those in skilled trades like handloom weaving, recognised that the new mechanised production would depress their wages and eventually displace them. Although the silk trade was still buoyant, silk handloom weavers were notorious for their radicalism<sup>12</sup> and local Middleton radical Samuel Bamford was a member of this trade. It is not possible to ascertain whether Thomas and the Halford men were involved, but in such a small settlement they may have known of the two Chadderton men who were deported to the newly developed prison colony of Botany Bay in 1801<sup>13</sup> following trade union activities which, under the repressive government of the time, were illegal.

### ***John Halford 1796 -1860***

The parish register suggests that early in their marriage Thomas and Jane lived on Henshaw Lane which would have been near to her family home on

Turf Lane. Our direct ancestor John, who was baptised at St Mary's Oldham in 1796, was probably their first child. They may have had at least 3 other children; Richard in 1802, James in 1804, and Jacob in 1811. However, it is impossible to be certain of this as another couple Thomas and Jane Alford appear in the registers as having children at the same time. However, there is no confusion over John as he was born before the other couple started their family.

By the time of John's birth, nearby Oldham had already grown dramatically, from a small township of about 600 people to almost 12,000.<sup>14</sup> Chadderton, as suggested earlier, was relatively slow to develop but it was not entirely stagnant. New people were moving into the area, including John's future parents in law, Ann and William Thornley, who moved into Chadderton after 1792<sup>15</sup> but before 1796 when their daughter was born. The parish register confirms that she was baptised locally. William was also a silk handloom weaver so possibly they had moved to Chadderton for work. Bolton le-Moors where they were from also had a handloom weaving industry so William may have been already in the trade. There were also new transport links developing. As a young child John may have been taken to see the new canal, which was being 'cut' at the time and he certainly could not have failed to notice it when it opened in 1804 as it ran close to Henshaw Lane where he was living with his parents. By the time he was 13, the turnpike road through Chadderton to Oldham had opened. The 'chainbar' for the toll was quite near his home.<sup>16</sup>

Given the *mores* of the time, John would almost certainly have been at work by now. As sons usually followed their father's trade, he may well have been helping his father at the loom.<sup>17</sup>

## **Responses to Changing Times**

Depending on personality and inclination, these would have been exciting or frightening times for a growing boy. Even if John and his family were not directly involved, he could not have failed to notice the turbulence going on around him when, in 1812, the growing resistance amongst working people bubbled up into a huge outpouring of Luddism. There were serious riots throughout the area. Power-driven machinery, particularly looms, were smashed and the mythical Ned Ludd sent messages to factory owners

threatening to burn their factories and homes. In nearby Middleton, this was translated into action when a mill owner's house was burnt to the ground.<sup>18</sup>

However, the agitation was about more than wages and machinery as it began to take a more overt political stance. Samuel Bamford became secretary of his local Hampden Club that year with the aim of extending political representation to the growing industrial towns and the franchise to working men. The government set up an extensive spy network, and men were imprisoned and transported to Australia, but resistance continued.

Shortages of food and dislocation of trade when the Napoleonic wars came to an end in 1815 only exacerbated the situation as the economy took a serious downturn. Local radicals like Bamford toured the district encouraging people to raise their hopes about future political involvement for working men. As we saw earlier, Bamford was a silk weaver and understood the particular situation of this trade, and some Chadderton people were clearly attracted to these ideas. Several instances in his *Passages in the Life of a Radical* testify to Chadderton involvement, including a pub, The Red Rose, where meetings were held, and a police search for a Hollinwood radical took place whilst Bamford and other prisoners were waiting in the coach to take them to prison in Manchester.<sup>19</sup>

All this culminated on 16 August 1819 in a great meeting at St. Peter's Field Manchester when thousands of people, many of them handloom weavers<sup>20</sup> like the Halfords, converged on the site to hear local agitator John Knight and the great national orator Henry Hunt. The aim of the meeting was to secure support for changes to the political system, amongst them the vote for the working man. Thomas and John and even Jane and the younger children may have gone to the meeting, which would be an easy walk for the people of Chadderton. The recent film *Peterloo* gives a good impression of the lead up to the demonstration. It was intended to be a peaceable, joyous occasion and a good outcome was expected. However, instead, the end result was disaster. The local administration and military completely lost control, and hundreds of people were injured, whilst at least 15 people died at the scene and presumably others died of their wounds later. The Relief Fund Committee reported 6 months after the event that it had given financial assistance to 420 wounded, 11 of whom had since died, and 140 people were still waiting to be assessed.<sup>21</sup> Many people of course would not have reported their injuries for fear of reprisals from employers and the

Establishment. The Halfords may possibly have known the 2 men from Chadderton who were killed, one of whom, John Ashton, was from Cow Hill.<sup>22</sup>

Moving on to a happier occasion John married on the 6 January 1820 at St. Margaret's Hollinwood, a new church which had opened in 1768 to cater for the growing population. His bride was Sarah Jane (Sally) Thornley, the daughter of William and Ann Thornley, who as mentioned earlier, were new to the Chadderton area when she was born in 1796. She and John were both aged 24. Like John's parents the couple were unable to sign their names.

John's occupation was given as labourer so for some reason he had left behind the silk weaving *coterie* of Chadderton. There is no indication of what kind of labourer he was so he may have been working in construction, at the pit, or on one of Chadderton's several farms. Possibly his move away from the silk weaving of his family's past was occasioned by the economic problems of the post war situation or simply by a desire for a different way of life.

In the first year of their marriage, George III died, bringing an end to his 60 year reign. His son George IV, whilst Regent, had shown liberal sympathies, choosing his companions from the radical wing of the liberal Whig party. This had fuelled working class expectations, encouraging the radical agitation we have already seen. However, no change came and as a result working class agitation continued throughout the 1820s. So did Establishment repression. Despite the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1824, trade union activities were actively discouraged with employers setting up blacklists of workers who took part.

Whether John and Sarah Jane had any children early in their married life I have not discovered, but in 1827 they had a son, William, presumably named after Sarah Jane's father. He was followed in 1831 by a daughter Jane, called Jenny in the 1851 census, a diminutive also given to her grandmother in the parish registers. Jane had probably been named after her as was common in the naming culture of the time.<sup>23</sup>

By the time of Jane's birth, the political agitation had reached a crescendo throughout the country, and working people joined with the middle class to demand political representation for the developing towns of the North and Midlands and an extension to the franchise. Under the old political system there were many anomalies. The population of the now

empty town of Old Sarum had moved to Salisbury, Dunwich had been washed away by the sea but both returned MPs! Oldham with a population of 22,000 and growing at the 1821 census had none! Chapel en le Frith with a population of 2,000 had 2. Very few working people had the vote and neither did many of the middle class. In the main, the vote was the preserve

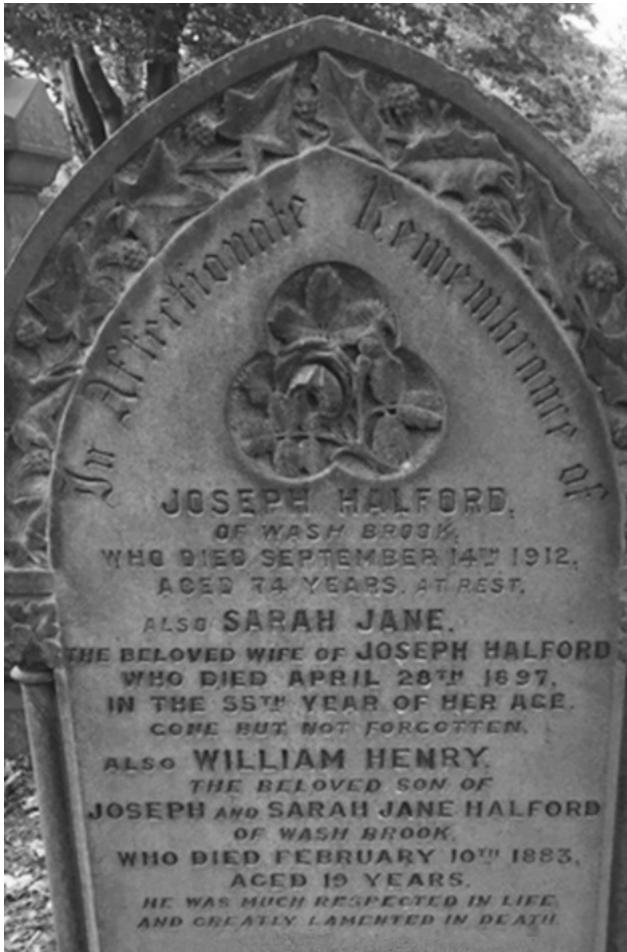


Fig. 1-1 The Halford Grave  
North Chadderton Cemetery

of the aristocracy and gentry. The rapidly growing Oldham and surrounding area, including Chadderton, as we saw earlier, had already established a reputation for radicalism.<sup>24</sup> The Establishment did not give in easily but eventually in 1832 the Reform Act changed the system significantly. Oldham and its district, for the first time, was awarded 2 MPs, and when the election came the voters chose 2 of the country's leading Radicals, William Cobbett, the Tory paternalist and John Fielden, a benevolent factory owner from Todmorden. The area now had its MPs but so many people had been left out of the franchise, including no doubt Thomas and John, that further trouble was to ensue.

### *Joseph Halford 1838 -1912*

Despite this turbulent background, family life of course went on. Sarah and John produced another son, in 1835, who they named John. The parish register shows that on 26 August 1838 their final child Joseph was baptised at St Margaret's Hollinwood. He was to become our direct ancestor. Joseph may have been born on Old Lane where the family were living at the 1851 census. Even though 1838 seems a long time ago, in Joseph we are lucky to have a family member who comes to us through living memory. His granddaughter Cissie remembered him well and passed him on to us via oral testimony. He was born into what was to become a new era. The young Victoria had become queen in 1837 and the old pre-industrial age was passing away. Although growth for Chadderton was still slow compared to Oldham and Manchester, changes were coming. In 1839 the Manchester to Leeds railway came through Chadderton.<sup>24</sup> Joseph would never know a time without it but for his parents this must have seemed revolutionary.

Unfortunately, Joseph's birth coincided with the first great depression of the new industrial era and its 5 year duration was catastrophic. It led to near starvation for some whilst widespread unemployment and an increasingly punitive approach to the poor made life very hard for many. This was probably a difficult time for Joseph's family, with a new baby to provide for and 3 other children not yet of working age.

The discontent engendered by these difficult times<sup>25</sup> coupled with the disappointment emanating from the exclusion of the working class from the Reform Act of 1832 led to a new massive movement for reform, known as

Chartism. There was a variety of opinions and approaches within it, and naturally there were disagreements, but all were united in their aim to gain the 6 points of the Charter, one of which was universal suffrage.<sup>26</sup> To us these represent the basis of a democratic society but to many of the ruling order of the day they were anathema.

As the capital of the country, with a large population of skilled men, London was a centre for Chartist agitation but it was also very popular in the growing industrial heartlands. In the north, Manchester and Oldham and the surrounding districts played a leading role. Sandwiched between the two, with a reputation for radicalism, it is highly likely that Chadderton people would be taking part. Again, there is no evidence to prove any Halford involvement but as before they would not have been able to ignore the activity around them. In 1842, for example, in the nearby town of Ashton-under-Lyne, one of the most notorious incidents of the period took place, the Plug Riots. These were led by the Chartists' impassioned speaker, the Reverend Raynor Stephens. A massive crowd toured the district removing the plugs from the steam engine boilers which ran the factories. This caused a complete stoppage of the cotton industry in the town. Despite this and other similar action, plus a last ditch attempt by the Chartists in the year of European revolution, 1848, it proved impossible to get the government to agree to any of the points of the Charter.

For the Halford family, there was personal loss. Joseph's grandfather Thomas died in 1844, at the age of about 75. Fortunately, his grandmother Jane lived on. She was to outlive her husband by 21 years, dying in 1865 at the advanced age of 94. According to her great grandchildren, Joseph and Clara, she was "the oldest woman in Hollinwood when she died".<sup>27</sup> This isn't surprising; everyone else on her page of the burial register is far younger. It is good to see that her earlier traumatic experience at the public hanging had not affected her physical health.

## **Economic Recovery**

In contrast to the previous period, by the time we meet Joseph, aged 12, in the 1851 census, the economy was beginning to pick up significantly and the country was about to enter what historians have called the Mid-Victorian Boom. Moving into the second phase of industrialisation, the country was

becoming a mature, developed economy. In fact, 1851 was the year Britain showcased itself as ‘the workshop of the world’ at the innovative, all-glass building, the Crystal Palace. Platts, the local engineering firm, were amongst the participants with their textile machinery.

Chadderton was to share in this upsurge of industry and was now entering a period of significant change. The census shows that the population of Chadderton doubled in 50 years from 3452 in 1801 to 6188 in 1851.<sup>28</sup> The silk industry employed about 1500 people<sup>29</sup> but the expanding job opportunities can be seen from the occupation of Joseph’s family and neighbours. John was still a labourer. Sarah, with no occupation given, was presumably on household duties. They still had 4 children living at home, 3 of whom had moved into new kinds of employment. The eldest son William, now 25, was a “blacksmith”. He might have been shoeing horses for the local pit, or perhaps working, like his 16 year old brother John, an engineer, at Platt’s, whose huge New Hartford Works had opened at Werneth in 1843, to take advantage of the new railway line. Started by Elijah Hibbert in the 1820s at Bottom of the Moor, Oldham, making the machinery for the growing textile trade, the company soon became Hibbert & Platt. By 1851 they employed about 2000 men on 2 sites at a time when most engineering businesses were very small. Eventually they were to supply most of the world’s textile machinery. The works attracted labour from outside the area - men like Thomas Wood, who left an account of his “tramp” from Leeds to Oldham, and his time working at Platts in the 1840s.<sup>30</sup>

Jenny (Jane) Halford was working in what must have been one of the new factories as a “steam loom weaver” in cotton. Her position demonstrates that job opportunities for young women were opening up in the area. We may question whether long hours working in noisy, hot factories was an opportunity but it did mean that girls and young women were no longer dependent on their parents for sustenance. Also significant is that Joseph was a scholar. To be still at school at almost thirteen was rather unusual.<sup>31</sup> If the family had been desperate for money he would have had to go to work so this perhaps also suggests that John and Sarah wanted their children to improve themselves rather than being illiterate as they had been. The Halford’s immediate neighbours in Old Lane suggest similar trends: there were three blacksmiths, the rest were cotton mill workers and there was also a coal miner. Their origins vary too. Unlike the Chadderton

Halfords, their neighbours had come, like Thomas Wood, above, from further afield. In their case, Ashton, Oldham and Altrincham: still quite local but following the classic pattern of the immigration of the time.<sup>32</sup> Chadderton was definitely changing. The semi-agricultural, proto-industrial small township of Joseph's grandfather Thomas was now giving way to the 'modern' world.

Personal tragedy came to the family again though, when in 1860, Joseph's father John died. The census of that year, however, demonstrates that his widow, Sarah Jane, must have been an enterprising woman for she had now opened a shop at their home in Old Lane.<sup>33</sup> This was a way in which widows and single women could earn their own living without taking up outside employment. The shop would have been in her 'front room'. There is evidence of this in the literature of the time. In Mrs Gaskell's *Cranford*, Miss Matty opens a shop in her front parlour when her investments fail. Joseph and James were still living with her, and Jane, now 30, still working as a power loom weaver, was still at home too. Joseph, now 22, was an engine stoker at the local pit. His role would have been to load up the steam engine boiler with coal at regular intervals. He was probably working at the New Engine pit which had opened on Old Lane in 1803.<sup>34</sup> Coal from the pit was transported further afield by the canal extension, the Werneth Branch Canal, at nearby Wash Brook.

## **A Fruitful Marriage and Expansion for Chadderton**

Two years later Joseph was to marry. The marriage certificate of 22 September 1863 shows that Joseph was 25 and his bride was Sarah Jane Glossop, who was 5 years younger than him. Both were literate, reflecting an improvement in schooling for the working class of Chadderton. Both gave their address as Hollinwood; Joseph living at the family home on Old Lane and Sarah Jane on Denton Lane. Although the certificate does not specify, they probably married at St Margaret's, Hollinwood, where Joseph had been baptised. Joseph now had a more skilled job; he is described as an engine driver. Most likely not on trains, but probably the engine at the local pit where he had been stoker in 1861. This was a responsible job as the engine operated all the activities of the shaft, including the drainage and the ventilation. Sarah Jane is described as a weaver. By this time, she may have

been working in a cotton mill like many of the young women of the area, but as her father was a silk hand loom weaver, it is possible that she had been helping him. The 1851 census demonstrated that more women than men were working in this trade.

Although Sarah's surname suggests that the family were originally from Derbyshire, by the time of her marriage to Joseph, the Glossops, the parish registers confirm, were a well-established Chadderton family. Sarah had been born on Christmas Eve 1842, at her parent's home, like most babies at the time, which in her case, was on Denton Lane. Her birth certificate shows that her father James Glossop was a silk hand loom weaver, as were both her



Fig. 1-2 Jubilee Terrace  
Joseph's building project and Cissie's birthplace

grandfathers.<sup>35</sup> The year after their marriage, as was usual in Victorian marriages, their first child, named William Henry, was born. He was followed in 1868 by their next child John.

The late 1860s brought turbulent times in politics again. Growing radical activity amongst the working class led to renewed demands for the vote amongst working men. After violent demonstrations, including the besieging of Hyde Park by hundreds of people, this time there was to be success. In 1867 a new Reform Act was passed which extended the franchise to all householders who occupied and/or owned a property worth £10 in rateable value. Chadderton's electoral roll for 1873 shows that this Act brought the vote to Joseph although not as yet to his wife. There were 5 other Halford heads of household on the list and they were probably his relations as Halford was not a common surname in the area. There is no way of knowing how Joseph voted as there is no extant poll book for the area for earlier elections and the secret ballot was introduced in 1872. However, Cissie used to say that the Halfords always voted Liberal, and in both the election of 1868 and 1872 Chadderton returned a large Liberal majority. Hibbert and Platt, as large employers of labour in Chadderton, and Liberals themselves, exerted considerable influence over voting habits in the area<sup>36</sup>. Liberal politics were also popular with shopkeepers<sup>37</sup> so it is probably safe to assume Joseph voted Liberal.

Joseph was moving up in the world. Both the electoral register and the census of 1871 showed that he owned not one property but two; a house and, following his mother's example, a shop. They were now living at 306/308 Washbrook where Joseph was to remain for the next 41 years. This area was actually an extension of Old Lane so he had not moved very far from his childhood home. The census suggests that at this point Joseph retained a paid job because his occupation was given as an iron moulder and grocer. Iron moulder was a skilled job and he may have been working at Platt's which employed large numbers of them. Yet again Joseph demonstrated adaptability; this is the third job we have seen so far and of course, the shop suggests an enterprising individual. His wife Sarah's occupation is given as grocer's wife so we can probably assume that she served in the shop as well as looking after the two children. Although there is no evidence of this in the documents, Cissie used to say that they had a nurse, so maybe they employed someone daily to look after the children, and this enabled Sarah to run the shop whilst Joseph was out at work.

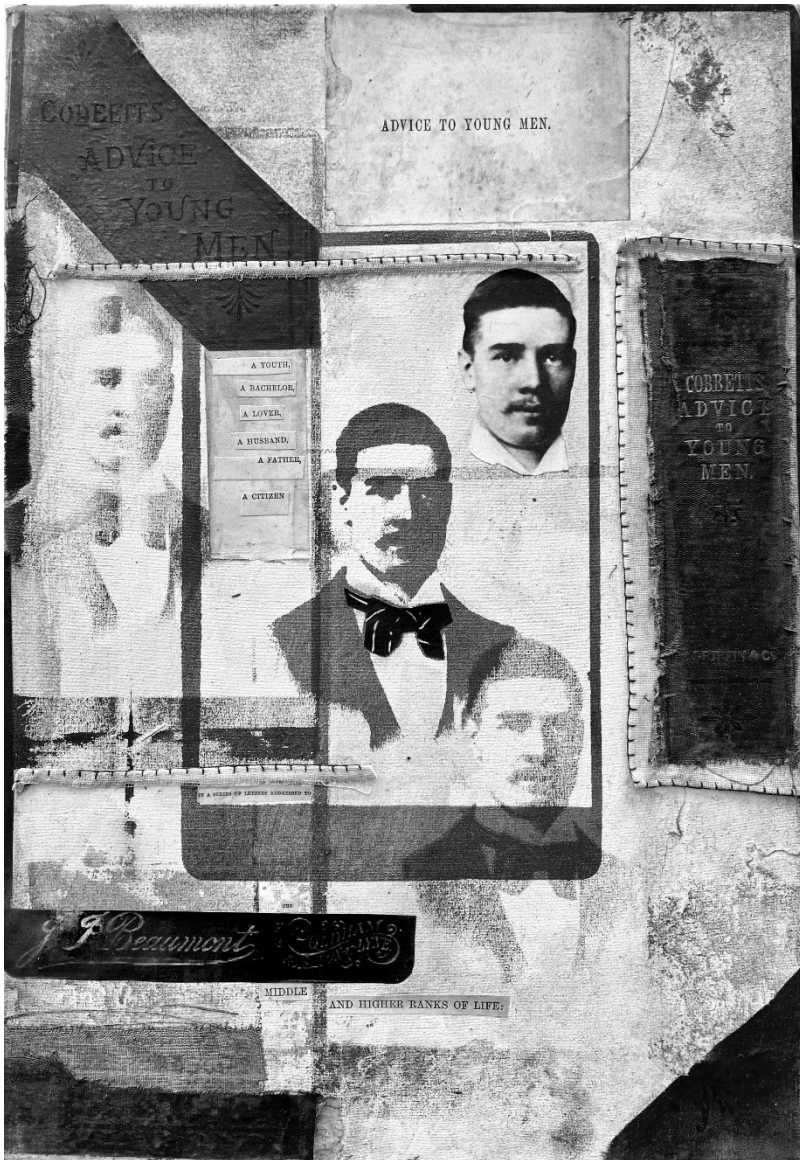


Fig. 1-3 James Herbert Halford 1875-1936 © Mark Whyatt

Their page of the census demonstrates the changes taking place in the now rapidly developing Chadderton. All Joseph and Sarah's neighbours were cotton operatives and some of the family heads of households had not been born in Chadderton. Most were from nearby Oldham but one was a family from Cheshire. These were all customers for the shop, working long hours and needing to buy their provisions locally. Sometime around the late 1860s and early 1870s, Sarah's father, perhaps inspired by Joseph's shopkeeping success, must have given up silk hand loom weaving, as the 1881 census describes him as a grocer and beer seller, living just around the corner from Joseph and Sarah at 23, Butler Green.

### ***James Herbert Halford 1875-1936***

From the next census in 1881 it can be seen that Joseph, now 42, and Sarah, 38, had almost completed their family, with several other children having been born, including our direct ancestor James Herbert born in 1875.<sup>38</sup> Two years before James' birth the period known as the Great Depression had begun and was to continue until 1896. Not all sectors were affected equally; the cotton industry, now one of the 'old' industries, felt its effects but despite this Chadderton continued to grow. The 1851 population of 7,486 had now grown to 16,899 and mill building took off with the advent of the Oldham Limiteds. This new way of investing in mill building, which limited the investor's risk to the value of the share they owned, was a great incentive to small investors and led to a huge expansion of mill building.<sup>39</sup>

### **Shopkeeping and Methodism**

It might seem paradoxical, given there was a severe economic downturn, but the standard of living rose for all social classes in this period due largely to the importing of cheap food from around the world.<sup>40</sup> For those still in work there was more disposable income. More money meant that the retail sector began to grow rapidly. In nearby Manchester, for example, department stores were opening, such as Lewis's, which opened in the early 1880s.<sup>41</sup> Large scale provision chains began to open, like The Meadow Dairy Co Ltd., and the Co-op began to grow rapidly after 1880.<sup>42</sup> In his own small way, Joseph was contributing to this trend. As the once open spaces of Chadderton became filled with terraced houses, the growth in population

meant more customers for Joseph's shop.

The census shows that at 6 James Herbert was at school, as was his sister Sarah Ann, who was a year older. The late Victorian period was one in which the state became more active in people's lives and the 1870 Education Act had made school attendance for all children possible. There were now at least two schools in the area; another National School had opened in 1838 and there was now a Church of England school on Denton Lane. Which one James Herbert attended is not clear but Denton Lane would have been his nearest. His brother John, aged 13 at the census, must have been showing some intellectual promise as he was a bookkeeper in a cotton mill. His older brother William Henry at 17 was a piecer. This was a mill apprenticeship which could lead to the position of mule spinner, a skilled occupation where a man would be in charge of several machines and other staff. Unfortunately, William Henry was destined never to achieve this status. He died, aged 19, in February 1883, from typhoid fever. His gravestone records that "He was much respected in life and much lamented in death". This would seem to confirm Cissie's testimony that "100 people walked at his funeral" which incidentally demonstrates the strength of community feeling in late 19th century Chadderton.

Joseph's occupation was given as grocer, and Sarah had no occupation so presumably she was looking after the children and the household. It is quite likely though that she also served in the shop when necessary. By now the shop would be able to supply a wider variety of goods. Canned goods were now imported from the Empire, so tinned fruit and corned beef supplemented the once monotonous diet of the working class. As part of the expansion of the service sector, new confectionery factories sprang up, producing jam, syrup and chocolate which would all be available in a shop of Joseph's type.

Not only was the 1880s a good time to be in retail, it was also a good time to be in property development and with Chadderton's growing population more homes were needed. By the year of Queen Victoria's 50th Jubilee in 1887, Joseph had built a row of houses which he named Jubilee Terrace in her honour. These houses he was to let out for the rest of his life. Cissie used to help him collect the rents and she said that the houses were built to the highest standard. A close examination of the photograph demonstrates this as they have a dental frieze below the gutter and small