

## Ashton and Sale History Society Journal 32



**Reverend Daniel Baker – Murder Victim?  
Dr Thomas Alcock  
Turf Wars and Dung Fights  
John Stafford and Reverend Popplewell-  
Johnson**

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*Front cover: St Martin's Church, Ashton upon Mersey, as it looked in the 1880s, before the tower was built, but after the 1714 rebuilding. The watercolour was by an artist called Goodfellow. (Wikimedia Commons.)*

# CONTENTS

The Reverend Daniel Barker: A Murder Mystery? <i>Jill Groves</i>	4
Dr Thomas Alcock – Information Wanted Andrew Hancock	10
Turf Wars and Dung Fights: Sale, Ashton-on-Mersey and Altrincham sixteenth to eighteenth centuries <i>Jill Groves</i>	11
John Stafford and the Reverend Richard Poplewell-Johnson <i>Jill Groves</i>	19

# THE REVEREND DANIEL BAKER

## A Murder Mystery?

*Jill Groves*

"Anno 1632, Daniel Baker, M.A., rector of Assheton on Mercy-bank and fellow of the Colledge, having on Good Friday (as it is called) administered the Lord's supper, and being, as it is feared, somewhat over-charged with drinke, in Salford, was found dead in the morning in the water under Salford Bridge; whether he fell downe of himself, being a tall man, and the battlements then but low, or whether hee was cast downe and put over the bridge, it is not certainly known to this day."

This entry, written by Richard Hollingworth a few years after the event described in his pamphlet *Mancuniensis*, began the legend of the Reverend Daniel Baker, who was drunk when he fell off Salford Bridge on Good Friday 1632 and drowned. Mr Hollingworth went on to say that local Catholics, including Sir Edmund Trafford, conflated what happened to Daniel Baker with other untimely deaths of Protestant clergy in 1632 and said that these deaths were a sign from God that the Protestant religion was about to collapse.

The Reverend Daniel Baker has featured many times in talks given by our Chairman, Alan Morrison. The cleric's ghost haunts Barkers Lane in Sale and many people have actually seen him.

As well as saying that Daniel Baker was drunk, Mr Hollingworth hints that he may have been murdered. If so, why? Was it religious, political or a robbery gone wrong?

To try to answer these questions this article will look at Daniel Baker's background and the people around him. It will look at the religious politics of the local clergy and those of Fellows of the College.

It will also unpick Mr Hollingworth's comments and test them for what the late Professor Arthur Marwick called 'witting and unwitting testimony'. Richard Hollingworth knew Daniel Baker. Perhaps he didn't like the man and that coloured his report.

### **Daniel Baker's and Ann Baker's Family**

The Reverend Daniel Baker was born in 1588 in Warwickshire, according to The Clergy Database website, although his parentage is unknown. He may have been a cousin of the very well-to-do Strafford-on-Avon merchant, Mr Daniel Baker (d.1639). (Will of Daniel Baker of Strafford, 1641, proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, TNA, available on Ancestry.co.uk; www.theclergydatabase.org.uk.)

Daniel may have been educated first at King Edward VI's grammar school in Stratford-on-Avon. He would have needed rich parents or a rich patron to then progress on to study at Magdalen College, Oxford in 1604, when he was sixteen, and gained his MA in 1613. In 1613 he was ordained at Dorchester

cathedral as a deacon. How he got from Dorchester to Northenden in less than four years is unknown. Probably the influence of the unknown patron. ([www.theclergydatabase.org](http://www.theclergydatabase.org).)

Daniel Baker arrived in Northenden probably in about 1614/1615. He would have been a curate to the elderly rector John Barrett, but he was far more educated than his rector, who was described in 1592 amongst those who were 'no graduates nor preachers, but catechizers'.

Soon after his arrival, Daniel, now a young man in his late twenties, met Ann Leigh of Baguley, gentlewoman, daughter of Richard Leigh of Baguley Hall, esquire (died 1621). Sometime before January 1617 when their first child died soon after birth (buried at Northenden), Daniel and Ann married. In those days clergy were only just beginning to be seen as members of the local gentry. There were still too many like John Barrett, who were not well-educated and mostly only seen as 'catechizers'. So for Daniel Baker to marry the daughter of an esquire, he must have been seen as a very good catch. Unfortunately, the record of this marriage has not survived. ([www.theclergydatabase.org.uk](http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk); Northenden Parish Registers, Stockport Archives.)

The young couple probably lived in Northenden to begin with.

Daniel and Ann had at least two children who died soon after birth, one a girl buried on 24 January 1616/17 in Northenden. The other was a baby boy who was buried on 24 September 1618, also at Northenden. They also had a daughter Mary who was baptised on 26 September 1619. (Northenden Parish Registers, Book 1.)

In 1620 he was appointed to the rectorship of Ashton-on-Mersey.

Daniel leased a burgage on Marketstead Lane (Market Street) in the 1620s. It may have been one of the tenements owned by the College, to which as a fellow of the College of Christ, attached to St. Mary's church, Manchester, he may have been entitled to. (Manchester Court Leet Records CD.)

There is no record of Daniel Baker's religious and political affiliations, but we do know something about the political affiliations of his wife's relations.

Ann Baker's brother Henry, heir to his father Richard (d.1621) died in 1635. He was succeeded by his eldest son Richard who died in 1641. Richard junior was married to Brigit Harrington, who came from a staunch Parliamentarian family. In the late 1640s and early 1650s Brigit and her family claimed the Baguley estate as Richard's widow and because they were Parliamentarian, not Royalists. Whether Richard Leigh had the same political affiliation as his wife is not known. However, Richard's brother Edward and the next heir to the Baguley estate was certainly a Royalist. He married the sister of a Royalist neighbour – Frances, sister of Robert Tatton of Wythenshawe – and was part of the Royalist garrison of Wythenshawe Hall when it was under siege by the Parliamentarian forces of Colonel Robert Duckenfield, November 1643-February 1644. Edward later went with his family to the Royalist city of Chester where he finally surrendered to the Parliamentarian forces of General Sir William Brereton in 1646. After that he returned home and began the long fight against the Harringtons to keep his family's inheritance.

Does this mean Daniel supported the policies of Charles I and Archbishop Laud? That depends on how much of a pragmatist he was and if his career mattered more than his beliefs.

### **Who were the local clergy?**

Thomas Paget, curate of Bowdon – Puritan. Educated at Cambridge. Ordained 1609.

Robert Janney, vicar of Bowdon – educated at Jesus College, Oxford

Edward Woolmer, curate of Flixton – Puritan. Educated at All Souls, Oxford. Signed 'Harmonious Consent' in 1648. In 1647 he was accused of performing 'clandestine marriages'. Described as 'able and godly' in 1650 Commonwealth Church Survey. Died in 1660. ([www.theclergydatabase.org.uk](http://www.theclergydatabase.org.uk).)

Richard Murray of St. Mary's, Stockport – probably an absentee rector. Seventh son of Sir Charles Murray of Cockpool, and brother of the Earl of Annandale. Doctorate of Divinity from Peterhouse, chaplain to James I, baronet in 1619, estates in Scotland. Warden of St. Mary's, Manchester. Dean of St Bruan, Cornwall.

Thomas Normansell – curate of St. Mary's, Stockport, who did most of Richard Murray's work.

Wilmus Shenton – vicar of Rostherne. Ordained by Bishop Bridgeman in 1628.

### **The College of Christ, Manchester**

It was originally founded in the early fifteenth century by Thomas de la Warre, both rector of Manchester and lord of the manor. He granted his manor house to the college for accommodation for the warden, eight fellows, six clerks, and six choristers. The college was closed by the Chantry Act of 1547 and the manor house sold to the Earl of Derby. It was refounded by Mary I and disbanded by Elizabeth I. However, the college was refounded as Christ's College in 1578, when it was realised that the government needed a moderate Protestant institution in South Lancashire both as a bulwark against the growing Puritanism around Manchester and against the entrenched Catholicism in the rest of Lancashire.

The college building remained in the ownership of the Earl of Derby, even though the warden and fellows had taken repossession of it. In the 1650s it became an arsenal and a prison (some of the prisoners being the old fellows of the college). In 1653 it was sold to the cloth merchant Humphrey Chetham and his heir George Chetham for Chetham's Library and Blue Coat School charity (now Chetham's School of Music).

### **Fellows of the College of Christ, Manchester**

Richard Heyricke – warden of the College. He swayed with the times.

William Burne – vicar of Whalley, Lancashire

Samuel Boardman – educated at Brasenose College, Oxford.

Peter Shaw – rector of Radcliffe, educated Magdalene and Trinity Hall. He was ejected during the English Civil Wars from his parish.

Richard Johnson – son of William, gentleman pensioner to James I (sort-of bodyguard), educated Brasenose College. He was ejected during the English Civil Wars. According to *Walker Revised*, he was humiliated when ejected and his wife was imprisoned because she wouldn't show the searchers her husband's papers.

## Richard Hollingworth

Richard Hollingworth was a puritan and a staunch Parliamentarian. He was not a Fellow at the same time as Daniel, but they would have known each other. Hollingworth was appointed when Mr Bourne died at a time when the College and Chapter was suspended during the late 1640s-1650s. Hollingworth fought hard to get his share of the tythes and leases of the suspended Chapter, even harder than the old Fellows. Richard Johnson queried his appointment, according to Henry Newcome.

Hollingworth was known for his 'party bitterness in his deposition'. Would he have had it in for poor Daniel because of his gentry relations? Perhaps.

However, after his death he was honoured by his fellow clergy in Manchester by a day of fasting in his memory.

He wrote a caustic and unfair biography of the Wardens 'which had much more credit attached to it than it deserves'. 'His little work entitled *Mancuniensis*, of which the MS exists in the Chetham Library, which has furnished many hints towards the history of Manchester' – including the character assassination of Daniel Baker. (From footnotes to *The Life of Adam Martindale* written by himself edited by Reverend Richard Parkinson, Vol.IV, Chetham Society.)

Richard Hollingworth was born in 1607 and educated at Manchester Grammar School. He was ordained in 1627 and was at first the curate at Middleton. In 1636 he became the curate at the new Trinity Chapel (founded in 1634 by Humphrey Booth). He was a member of the Presbyterian Manchester Classis in 1648.

On 11 September 1656 Richard Hollingworth noted that Richard Heyricke (the ex-warden of the College) was a prisoner in London and Mr Herber, Mr John Angier, Richard Johnson, Mr Harrison, Mr Ger, Mr Lathom, Mr Taylor and Richard Hollingworth himself were also prisoners. Why? The Penruddock Rising of 1655?

## *Mancuniensis*

The digitised version of Richard Hollingworth's handwritten mss is available online at the Chetham Library website.

The mss is entitled '*Mancuniensis or an history of the towne of Manchester and which is most memorable*'. It starts with the Roman invasion and ends on 11 September 1656, a couple of months before Hollingworth's sudden death.

It was a work in progress, with some additions on spare sheets added in by Hollingworth, and some entries in a later eighteenth century hand. There are

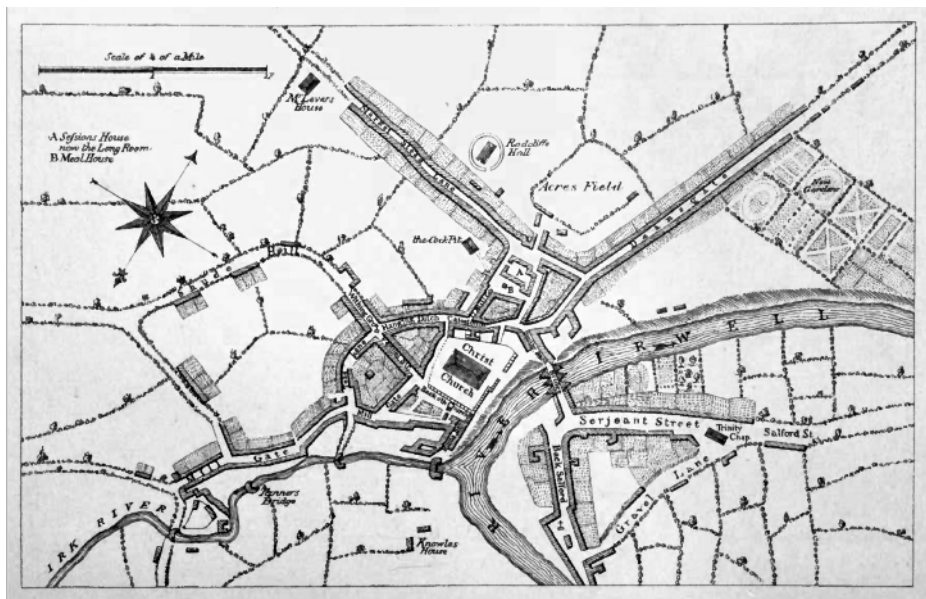
also great spaces between entries on pages, especially in the 1640s and 1650s, as if the entries were made contemporaneously like a diary, and as soon as he had more information, Hollingworth would add more entries or more information.

It has been described as being totally unlike most of Hollingworth's other work, which was mostly on local church politics. (He hated Roman Catholics, Independents and Quakers, and other sectarians.)

A later version of Richard Hollingworth's piece quoted in *History of the foundations in Manchester of Christ's College* Vol.1 by Samuel Hibbert, John Palmer, William Robert added 'But it's since said a man cast him down and confessed it.' Not in the original. Possibly this was added to soften Hollingworth's caustic tone. The wording was a paraphrase of Hollingworth even though it was surrounded by quotes. It could have been added because of additional information. Unfortunately, there is no extant mention of this case in Quarter Sessions records for either Lancashire or Cheshire.

Richard Hollingworth's attitude to Daniel Baker – the same as to the rest of his fellow wardens – and the fact that his account was written between eight and twenty-three years after the event, does not mean that there isn't a kernel of truth in it.

## The Death of Daniel Baker – Murder or Accident?



Map of Manchester and Salford in 1650, showing Salford Bridge over the Irwell, the site of Daniel Baker's death, the Salford streets he might have walked, the College and Marketstead Lane, the site of his Manchester house.



The first question is what was Daniel Baker doing on Salford Bridge? Richard Hollingworth said he had been celebrating the Good Friday service (which was on 9 April in 1632). Daniel probably celebrated the Good Friday Last Supper mass or communion in the chapel at Ordsall Hall, along with the Radcliffe family and others. (Trinity Chapel/Church, endowed and built by Humphrey Booth the elder, Manchester merchant, wasn't built until two years after Daniel's death.) Daniel probably then dined with the family and guests at Ordsall and, according to Hollingworth, drunk too much. The distance between Ordsall Hall and either the College on Long Millgate or his leased house on Marketstead Lane was over a mile, probably nearer two. A man of Daniel Baker's social standing might have ridden that distance. On the other hand, seventeenth century gentlemen were quite capable of walking that distance. But if he rode what happened to the horse?

To reach any of these places Daniel would have crossed over Salford Bridge, whether on foot or on horseback.

So was it an accident or murder as a result of a robbery gone wrong, as Richard Hollingworth hinted in *Manucuniensis*? The latter is not improbable – the early seventeenth century was a very violent time. The records of the Mayor's Court and the Recorder's Court in Chester make the city look like the murder capital of the North-west. Small market towns like Altrincham witnessed quite a few fights and assaults in the 1620s, 1630s and 1640s, including a company of Parliamentary soldiers fighting amongst themselves. There was a fight at Bolton market in 1633 and in Reddish the watchmen fought each other in 1636. This was a time when men went about their daily business armed with daggers or even swords. The knife carried to cut food could become a weapon. (Papers of the Grey Family, Earls of Stamford, EGR2/6/1/2, EGR2/6/1/4, EGR14/77/4, EGR2/6/1/5, EGR2/6/1/6, EGR2/6/1/7, Altrincham Court Leet; Quarter Sessions, QSB/1/119/73, QSB/1/79/45, 1633, Lancashire Record Office.)

If Daniel Baker was pushed over the bridge into the Irwell it could equally have been as a result of an argument over religion and politics, both very hot topics in Manchester as in the rest of the country. But no one came forward to confess and no one was accused, despite the claims of Messrs Hibbert, Palmer and Robert in *History of the foundations in Manchester of Christ's College*.

The 1630s were violent times for clergymen as well as others. In the same year as Daniel Baker's death, Mr Brooke, the preacher at Worsley was attacked. This was witnessed by two brothers from Ashton-on-Mersey, William and Richard Cooke. (QSB/1/111/42, 1632, Lancashire Record Office.)

By the time Daniel Baker's body was found the next morning in the Irwell it would have been difficult to say how he died and whether he had been drunk or not. That comment by Hollingworth could just be one of his typical caustic character assassinations. On the other hand, being drunk was not unknown for a clergyman in the seventeenth century. Henry Prescott, Deputy Registrar for the diocese of Chester in the 1690s, thought nothing of drinking two bottles of wine a night (smaller bottles than the modern 75cl). Others were noted woman-

isers, not to say rapists – John Cook, rector of Northenden in the 1670s, for example. (Consistory Court Records, EDC5, 1674, Northenden.)

Daniel Baker was a rising star in the 1620s. He probably aspired to greater office in the 1630s, perhaps even Warden of the College. He worked under John Bridgeman, Bishop of Chester, who was doing his best to stop the Chester diocese becoming a hotbed of Puritanism. Was Daniel Baker his protégé?

What was Daniel Baker's relationship with Ralph Stirrup? The latter had been an occasional preacher at Ashton-on-Mersey before he took over the living just five days after Daniel's death. Was it friendly? Stirrup managed to enrage the local gentry in the person of James Massey and his wife Mary over the positioning of their family pew during a 'unification' of the church, something which Daniel Baker hadn't done in twelve years.

Now for the real burning mystery. Why does Daniel Baker haunt Barkers Lane? After all, it wasn't where he died. Perhaps it was a favourite walk.

## **DR THOMAS ALCOCK**

### **Information Wanted**

***Andrew Hancock***

Would any person interested in Dr Thomas Alcock (or having knowledge of the Alcock family) of Essendine, 49 Oakfield, Ashton on Mersey please contact Andrew Hancock at [andrew.hancock@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:andrew.hancock@hotmail.co.uk) or on 07887 776881.

Anyone researching people or addresses in Oakfield in the 1860s to 1880s is welcome to contact me."

# **TURF WARS AND DUNG FIGHTS**

## **Sale, Ashton-on-Mersey and Altrincham**

### **Sixteenth to Eighteenth Century**

*Jill Groves*

IN THE EARLY sixteenth century, two cases involving rights to turbarry and manure in Sale came before the court of Star Chamber. This is how they are indexed in The National Archives online Discovery Catalogue.

PLAINTIFF: Thomas Voudray

DEFENDANT: James Massie.

SUBJECT: Riot about Turbarry at Sale COUNTY: Chester [STAC 2/27/121]

PLAINTIFF: James Massye

DEFENDANT: Richard Barlowe, James Barlowe, Richard Spence, Thomas Harrall, Thomas Robertson and others

SUBJECT: Seizure of 200 loads of dung at Sale COUNTY: Chester. [STAC 2/28/29]

(Records date from 1509 to 1547)

There was also a case turf theft in the 1580s in Cheshire, which came before the justices at Chester:

At request of William Lyversage, of writ of certiorari issued 18 Apr. 1589 and returned by Richard Shuttleworth, kt. and Henry Towneshend, esq., justices; and of plea of trespass at Chester, 18 Apr. 1586, when William Lyversage, esq., through his attorney Richard Clutton, accused Thomas Vernon of Haslington, esq. of taking away 20 cartloads of turf to the value of 40s. from White moss and other lands in Haslington on 4 May 1585.

Vernon, through his attorney claimed that the action should not have been brought as the land was his and Lyversage had taken away turves before that date. Lyversage claimed that he was seised of Wheelock Hall with common of turbarry on the lands involved and had right of taking turf enough to burn in the house, and had before that date taken 10 cartloads. The parties were ordered to appear 3 Oct. 1586 when John Stringer of Crewe, John Crewe of Hassall, Thomas Hanley of Boughton, Randle Rode of Walehith, Robert Pickmere of Hulse, John Witter of Tarporley, James Piggott of Somerford, Richard Hulse of Crewe, John Ashton of Moston, Alexander Hulme of Strethill, William Vernon of Middlewich, John Wrenche of Shurlach attested the truth of Lyversage's statement.

(Exemplification (Letters Patent) DDX 222/1 18 August 1589, Cheshire Archives and Local Studies.)

The court of Star Chamber had been originally instituted in the late fifteenth century to allow the fair enforcement of law against people who were so powerful that ordinary courts would not convict them. Made up of Privy Counsellors and judges, it sat in secret. Evidence was presented in writing, with no indictments or witnesses called. Star Chamber acted as a court of appeal and as a court of equity, imposing punishments for immoral, but not quite illegal, actions. This meant that Star Chamber judgements could, and were, sometimes arbitrary, subjective, and political, but it was also the court in which to seek redress against the powerful. It was the court which developed crimes such as attempt, conspiracy, criminal libel and perjury. And it was the court that tried cases of riot and sedition.

In the 1630s, after dismissing Parliament Charles I used Star Chamber as a proxy parliament. The Long Parliament abolished the Star Chamber Court in 1641, as the beginning of the First English Civil War loomed.

## **Turf Wars**

Rights to turbarry were very important in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries before the coming of the Bridgewater Canal and cheap coal from Worsley, before central heating and artificial fertilizer. 200 cart loads of dung would be very important to people who mainly had to grow their own food.

'Turbarry' was the term for the right to cut 'turves' or peat. 'Turves' were the main fuel in this area. There were coal pits not far away on Carrington Moss, Timperley Moss, Northen Moor and Shadow Moss. But they were very small bell-pits. There may have even been a small bell-pit on Sale Moor. Leases from the sixteenth to the early eighteenth centuries mention a tenant's right to turbarry.

Turves would have been cut from 'moss rooms' on Sale Moor in the early summer and stacked in heaps to slowly dry throughout the summer and into the autumn. Then each tenant and freeholder would take home his/her stack of turves to make fires throughout the winter.

Wood was also used for fuel, but only really rotten wood or small branches that were no use otherwise. Wood was becoming more scarce and far too valuable to waste as fuel.

The cutting and gathering of turves was so important it was strictly regulated, as the following items from Northenden and Etchells Court Leet Records show.

Wee pr[e]sent Joane Davenport for carrying away and Getting one load of turves more than the Ancient custome of the Townshipp will allow of [fine] 3s 4d (Tatton of Wythenshawe Muniments, John Rylands Library, TW/339, Northenden Court Leet/Court Baron Records 1667-1700, 1677.)

Wee find that Thomas Simpson hath gotten Turves on Northerden Moore liveing att a Cottage of George Bradshawe dec[eas]ed and hath noe right to have anie there 4d (Tatton of Wythenshawe Muniments, John Rylands Library, TW/339, Northenden Court Leet/Court Baron Records 1667-1700, 1688.)

Wee find that Henry Royle Richard Dean Henry Goodier and William Whitelegg James Rowson and Ralph Burges have abused the Comon by getting Turves and have not gotten them of and wee fine them for Soe doeing in 6d (Tatton of Wythenshawe Muniments, John Rylands Library, TW/339, Northenden Court Leet/Court Baron Records 1667-1700, 1695.)

There was even theft.

Wee Find That Joane Baylie of the mosside hath carried turves forth of Roger Worthington Roome therefore shee hat[h] lost her americiament. 6s. 8d. (Manchester Central Library Archives, M10/20/2b, Etechells Court Leet/Court Baron Records 1660-1730, 1662]

Turves were cut on the mosses and moors in spring – most likely late May – stacked and left to dry over the summer. Because of these stacks of turves, animals were supposed to be kept off the mosses and moors during the summer. The consequences of not following this rule are shown in this item from Etechells Court Leet Records.

Henry Bayley of Harwood Gate to keep his cows from pulling down turves on Shadow Moss until 1st September or 13s 4d. (Manchester Central Library Archives, M10/20/2b, Etechells Court Leet/Court Baron Records 1660-1730, 1664]

The right to cut turves were even left as legacies in wills. Randle Holt of Sale in 1683 left his right to turves to his youngest children.

'Furthermore it is my mind and will That after the death or marriage of my wife such of my younger Children as shall keep themselves sole chaste and unmarried shall have and enjoy ... Lib[er]ty to get load and carry away yearly six load of Turves From Sale Moore and six load of Turves From my Mossroom in Ashton Woodhouse' (*Ashton and Sale Wills* – revised version not yet published.)

Altrincham Court Leet mentioned, on numerous occasions, the offence of 'Fleeing' or 'Flead' the commons. 'Fleeing' or 'Flead' the common was the taking of turves, gorse or furze off the common, either too much or what they had no right to take. 'Fleeing' implies that the Commonlookers who brought the cases to the court leet were running around the commons after the miscreants, which could have been true with Ralph Thomas's children in 1690. (*Managing Altrincham, 1600-1760: How a manor court worked in a small Cheshire market town* by Jill Groves, Altrincham History Society Occasional Paper 44, 2017.)

The commons in Altrincham had once been large areas of moss and heath around Bowdon Hill and Oldfield Brow, but by the seventeenth century the commons were much smaller and more scattered. The largest was Hale Moss,

but even it was very much reduced. Altrincham Interchange, the railway line to Chester, Tesco's and Sainsbury's, and Altrincham Football Club's ground sit on Hale Moss. Other mosses and heaths included Thorley Moor and Charlmoor (Ashley Road and Springbank Park), Blakeley Heath (Navigation Road) and Broadheath (Atlantic Street, ASDA, Altrincham Retail Park, Waitrose and the Linotype estate off Sinderland Road). (*Managing Altrincham.*)

Even though they were reduced in size, the commons and mosses were still very important to local people for turves, for gorse or furze to fuel ovens, and dung to manure the fields. 'Flead' the common was one of the commonest reasons for people to be fined by Altrincham Court Leet. The average for forty-five individual years was 4.5, although in 1707 eleven people were presented. But between 1725 and 1749 the average doubled to 8.5. In 1742 twenty-two people were presented.

The following table shows the value and the extent of the use of turves and other fuels in Ashton and Sale as shown in wills and inventories 1600-1760

	<b>No. of Inventories</b>	<b>Total value</b>	<b>Average per inventory</b>
1600-1640	7	£1 18s 8d	5s 6d
1641-1680	12	£4 9s	7s 5d
1681-1720	13	£6 14s 5d	10s 4d
1721-1760	7	£4 19s	14s

In most seventeenth century wills and inventories, both turves and coals are simply listed as 'fuel'. It is not until the early eighteenth century that distinctions are made between turves, coal and cannel.

Cannel was a type of coal, now classified as 'terrestrial type oil shale'. It was often found in shallow seams closer to the surface than ordinary coal. It could be cannel coal which was mined locally. It burnt longer than wood and had a bright yellow flame.

The 1701 Rental Surveys for the Dunham Massey estate shows that the leases of two tenements in Sale, owned then by George Booth, Earl of Warrington, had to supply Dunham Massey Hall with a cartload of coal a year each. A cartload was 2 cwt (Cheshire Measure – 120 pounds). The coal was notionally valued at 2s 3d a cwt. However, no coal was required from Lord Warrington's fifteen Ashton tenants.

Four cwt was a very small amount of coal to be demanded by the earl from one township of fifteen tenants. He got 16 cwt from the first fifteen tenants in Dunham Massey, and 8 cwt from all thirteen tenants in Timperley. In 1648 the Tattons of Wythenshawe demanded 10 loads of coal from their Northenden tenants and 51 from their Etchells tenants. (Tatton of Wythenshawe Muniments, John Rylands Library, TW/195, 1648 Rental Survey of Northenden and Etchells.)

The coal demanded either by the Earl of Warrington or by the Tattons would have come from local bell-pits. So the 4 cwt of coal would have been dug out

from a small bell-pit on Sale Moor in the summer months (when there was no water at the bottom of the pit). The tenants would also have the right to dig out coal from the pit for themselves. The pit may have been mainly owned by the lords of the manor of Sale, or there may have been a second larger bell-pit for them and their tenants.

## **Dung Fights**

Dung or muck or manure was so important that dung heaps were often valued in inventories. Hamnet Barlow of Ashton-on-Mersey in 1608 had his dung heap valued at 8s (£69 – [measuringworth.com](http://measuringworth.com)). If dung was equal to turves in monetary value, then Hamnet Barlow had four cart loads of dung. Therefore Hamnet Barlow would have had 8 cwt of muck to spread on his land. People often had special carts for muck.

Dung, muck or manure not only had a monetary value in inventories, but also in the world at large. To such an extent that many local short term leases stipulated that all the manure created on a farm should be used on that farm and not sold off it. When Mrs Mary Parker leased High Aveley Hey farm in Etchells in 1753 to Thomas Leigh of Sale, husbandman, for eleven years, she made sure that he used all the hay, straw, compost and manure on High Aveley Hey land. (Tatton of Wythenshawe, John Rylands Library, TW/Lease No.703.)

The 200 loads (200 cwt) of dung stolen from James Massey, lord of the manor of Sale, were worth about £5 (£2,600 today – [measuringworth.com](http://measuringworth.com)). So the matter was important enough to concern a court in London.

The following table shows the value of dung or manure in Ashton and Sale 1600-1760.

	<b>No. of inventories</b>	<b>Total value</b>	<b>Average per inventory</b>
1600-1640	10	£1 19s 6d	3s 11d
1641-1680	9	£2 5s	5s
1681-1720	6	£3 3s 6d	10s 7d
1721-1760	1	£2 10s	£2 10s

The largest amount of manure in the early seventeenth century belonged to Edward Alcock of Ashton-on-Mersey in 1621 and was valued at 10s (£90 today – [measuringworth.com](http://measuringworth.com)). Edward was originally from Wilmslow and had moved to Ashton-on-Mersey only a short time before his death in 1621, possibly to be nearer to his heir and nephew Robert Alcock. He was a well-to-do man.

John Brereton of Ashton-on-Mersey, clerk, had 15s worth of manure (£96 today, deflation due to the English Civil Wars) when he died in 1661, a substantial amount. The largest amount of manure in the late seventeenth/early eighteenth centuries belonged to the Reverend Thomas Ellison of Ashton-on-Mersey in 1717. It was valued at £1 5s (£171.50 today – [measuringworth.com](http://measuringworth.com)) and was spread around his whole estate – i.e. mostly the glebelands.

In the mid-eighteenth century surprisingly only one inventory recorded manure. Worth £2 10s (£372.50 today – measuringworth.com), the largest amount for the whole period, it belonged to the ferryman, George Jackson in 1738. It might be because for the mid-eighteenth century there were far fewer inventories. Or was it because manure was of less value then? The 1701 Rental Surveys for the Dunham Massey estate of the Ashton and Sale tenements owned by the Earl of Warrington shows this was not so. Or at least not in Sale.

### **1701 Rental Survey Dunham Massey estate Ashton-on-Mersey and Sale**

	Days Mucking with team	Days Mucking without team
Sale tenements 2 (out of 15) Total value of 'mucking' boons per year – 3s 6d*		8
Ashton-on-Mersey tenements 0 (out of 15) Total value of 'mucking' boons per year – 1s		3

\* The notional value of each day mucking with a team was worth 6d. The notional value of each day mucking without a team was 5d. In practice, the cost of paying someone to spread the muck was about 1s a day in the early eighteenth century, so the Earl of Warrington got a good deal.

Sale supplied over three times as many days of mucking as Ashton. This could very well be because Sale, with its pastures on Sale Moor, had much more livestock to supply the manure. And Ashton had a larger corn-growing area which needed the manure. But the truth is that while Ashton grew more corn than Sale, by 1701 livestock numbers had drastically reduced in Sale. (*Ashton and Sale Lives 1600-1760* by Jill Groves, NWA Publications.)

### **Altrincham and 'Fleeing' and 'Gathering Dung'**

Most people charged with 'fleeing the Commons' were women or children tasked with getting some fuel, any fuel for the family cooking fire. Most were poor. In 1648 the fine was 3s 4d. In 1678 this was reduced to 1s. In 1687 for Ralph Thomas, his son and brother it was back up to 3s 4d each. Two years later it was 1s for Ralph Thomas's children. In 1690 it was 2s for the same family. From then 1s was the most common fine, but once or twice going back up to 3s 4d if the Court Leet wished to make a point or there was too much damage. Just occasionally the servant of a well-to-do family would take turves off Hale Moss without right. William Johnson, servant to the Coroner Mr Davenport, did this in 1704 and was fined. (EGR2/6/1/5/311.)



In 1725 Greer Gleave took gorse to fuel the family bakery oven.

The number of people who 'fled the common' could be quite high. In 1645 eight people 'fled the common' – George Ashton, Robert Ashton and his wife, John Brook, Thomas Hardy, Mrs Hardy (widow of John Hardy), Peter Holt and Ellis Turner. In 1707 and 1711 seven people 'fled the common' – 1707 Hugh Gartside, Elizabeth Hooley, Ellen Robinson (daughter of Edward), Martha Whittingham (wife of John), Ann Leigh, Ann Parker (two who often 'fled the common') and Ellen Hollingworth. (Papers of the Grey Family, Earls of Stamford, John Rylands Library, EGR2/6/1/5/323, 30 April 1707; EGR2/6/1/5/324, 1 October 1707.)

The largest number in the presented in the early eighteenth century was eight in 1714, including Peter Holt (twice), the usual suspects Ann Robinson and Ann Leigh (both twice), a servant of an Altrincham apothecary and gentleman. (EGR2/6/1/5/342, 31 March 1714.)

The largest number in the mid-eighteenth was twenty-two in 1742, followed by seventeen in 1743 and sixteen in 1725. In fact, half the number of incidents of people presented for 'fleeing the common' occurred in the twenty-five years between 1725 and 1749. The average was 8.5, double the average for the whole period. After that the number of presentments declined sharply. (EGR2/6/1/6/30, 5 May 1742 and /31 and /31a, 31 October 1742.)

The 'popularity' of the practice in these years may have been because of the quickly rising population. This was even though the fine had risen from 6d in the seventeenth century to 1s in the eighteenth. The money was no deterrent, even though a shilling in the mid-eighteenth century is the equivalent of about £90 in wages in today's money. (Measuringworth.com.)

## **Fled the Common**

1645	3	1711	7	1734	1
1646	8	1712	1	1736	1
1687	3	1713	5	1737	3
1689	1	1714	11	1738	3
1690	3*	1716	2	1742	22
1693	1	1717	2	1743	17
1695	2	1718	2	1746	10
1700	4	1720	5	1749	11
1701	4	1721	1	1750	3
1703	3	1722	8	1754	1
1704	2	1723	3	1755	1
1705	6	1725	16	1756	4
1707	7	1726	5	1757	3
1709	1	1727	1	1758	2
1710	4	1733	12		

1759	1	* Twice for Ralph Thomas's children
[total 203]		
[Average		

In 1742 the perpetrators included Robert Newall twice (the disreputable cousin of the man running the Unicorn pub in Altrincham), Jonathan Brundrett twice. Some were carrying on a fine old family tradition; some were the 'usual suspects'.

Until the early eighteenth Altrincham Court Leet was mostly concerned about the dunghill on the streets, the result of livestock being stalled overnight on the highways or people moving the contents of their stables and privvies out onto the streets. The fine was as high as 10s each, but it didn't seem to deter some people. Nineteen people were fined 3s 4d each for not removing dung from the streets in 1675. The figure was twenty-five in 1683. The problem was such that Altrincham Court Leet added two extra officers to its list of officials. They were called Scavengers. By 1760 the fine had increased to 13s 4d. (EGR2/6/1/5.)

In 1712 Altrincham Court Leet became aware of a problem of dunghills being left on Hale Moss. In 1729 they began fining people for stealing dung off the Moss. The fine was 3s 4d. Again it was the Commonlookers' job to chae people around the Moss and other commons again. (EGR2/6/1/6.)

Gathering dung off the common without the right was a popular pastime in the mid-eighteenth century and growing problem for the Commonlookers, rising to fifteen people in 1758. Some very familiar surnames from those who also 'flead the commons', joined by other familiar local surnames. In order to stop such activities the Court Leet tried fining people who didn't remove their dunghills from the commons. A court order was given that anyone with muck heaps on the waste had to remove it by 24 June 1713. No note of what the fine would be if anyone defaulted. (EGR2/6/1/7/12, 5 October 1749; EGR2/6/1/7/29, 13 April 1758; EGR2/6/1/5/339, 22 April 1713.)

### Not Removing Dung Off the Commons

1712	12
1713	1

### Getting Dung Off the Commons without Right

1722	1	1750	1
1729	1	1751	1
1731	1	1753	2
1733	2	1757	9
1749	11	1758	17

# JOHN STAFFORD AND REVEREND RICHARD POPPLEWELL-JOHNSON

*Jill Groves*

The Reverend Richard Popplewell-Johnson, rector of Ashton-on-Mersey (1749-1835) was also a magistrate or Justice of the Peace. He was the JP who read out the Riot Act at Peterloo to the people gathered on St Peter's Field, Manchester in 1819. When they didn't disperse as ordered, he was the one who authorised the mounted Yeomanry charge into the crowd.

Popplewell-Johnson was related through his wife Penelope Margaret (née Stafford) to the Tatton family of Wythenshawe Hall, the Egerton-Tattons of Tatton Hall, Knutsford and had a connection to the Earl of Derby.

Penelope's father, John Stafford of Macclesfield is a very interesting character. He was descended from the Staffords of Eyam, Derbyshire. He was steward to the Tattons of Wythenshawe, town clerk of Macclesfield, agent for the Earl of Derby and also acted as adviser to Sir Peter Warburton of Arley Hall.

As a very young man, aged sixteen, he was apprenticed as a clerk to George Clayton of Altrincham, bailiff and attorney. George Clayton had a number of young men apprenticed to him as clerks in the 1720s and 1730s, many of whom went on to be attorneys themselves.

John Stafford was a very ambitious young man. In 1731, when he would only have been twenty-one, he was appointed deputy clerk and then clerk to the manor and forest court of Macclesfield. This would have brought him into contact with the Earl of Derby, whose agent in the North-west he became, travelling often to the Isle of Man and Lancashire. Soon afterwards he became deputy clerk and then town clerk of Macclesfield. In the early 1730s he was the agent to the River Weaver Trustees when they were planning an extension to the Weaver Navigation.

John Stafford became a major landowner in Macclesfield, buying the Pearle Walls estate and Greaves House in Jordangate in 1731. The latter became the grandest house in the town. In 1745, John Stafford was one of those charged with keeping Macclesfield people safe when Bonnie Prince Charlie and his army invaded the town. He managed to get his wife and children out of the town to a friend's house in Pott Shrigley just in time. Rumour has it that he was forced to entertain the Prince for some days in Greaves House.

Later he invested in a silk mill at Bollington, but after the war with France ended in 1763 and French silk started to come into the country the mill was in difficulties. It went bankrupt in 1773. John Stafford suffered financially, owing a lot of money to his brother-in-law, Thomas Tatton-Egerton. It affected his health badly. He died on 29 August 1775. The rumour the next day in Macclesfield was that he had committed suicide.

One of these days I will write a much larger piece on John Stafford of Macclesfield. He was a man with fingers in a large number of pies in the North-west.

## **Ashton and Sale History Society**

promotes the study of local and family history in the towns of Ashton-on-Mersey and Sale. Many of its members are involved in local family history research projects.