RECOLLECTIONS AND HISTORY OF PENKETH

by

Benjamin Hobson

“As the sun of my life lingers in its setting I have thought that it might be of interest, especially to those who value the past, to put on record something of the history of the village in which the greater part of my life has been spent. A good deal of the following is from my own recollections, but I have been indebted to several friends for material which has enabled me to go back far beyond my own remembrance.

The old order ever changeth, giving place to new, but the present is the offspring of the past. There will always be those who will love to wander amongst bygone scenes.”

Benjamin Hobson. c. 1907

These reminiscences appear to have been compiled over several years before being collected together by the author, known as The Penketh Historian, in the following document published in 1907. They offer a fascinating insight to village life in a long-gone age.

The author, Benjamin Hobson, appears to have been a very able, well-educated and altruistic man – a pillar of village society. He was the local Registrar of Births Marriages and Deaths and a member of the Wesleyan Methodist Church with whom he was deeply involved in several worthy causes notably the Penny Bank and the Temperance Movement. He came, probably from Leeds, in 1848, to work as an improver*, for Messrs R Garnett & Sons, Cabinet Makers of Penketh at the age of 19. He was a contributor to the Warrington Guardian, and probably other newspapers, and although the narrative herein is, at times, difficult to read he will occasionally delight the reader with a wonderful turn of phrase which makes the effort more than worthwhile.

*A tradesman having finished his apprenticeship but not considered a fully skilled man until he had completed another 2 years at the trade.

The transcript from which this account was originally taken leaves a lot to be desired both in the quality of its reproduction and the ability of the typist. Subsequent checks against Benjamin Hobson’s handwritten manuscript have been made to ensure the greatest possible degree of accuracy.

Pictures, captions, and “*notes” by P. Rutherford.
AN ACCOUNT OF PENKETH PAST AND PRESENT

Years ago the little village of Penketh was very like any ordinary English village of that time, quiet and peaceful: a place where life seemed to pause and rest in a calm atmosphere of seclusion, tall poplars, and sturdy elms and oaks grew here and there in great beauty, green meadows, sloping upwards from the little ravine, which gently rippled into the small brook, where the school lads waded, catching trout minnows and gudgeons.

The River Mersey, and its marshes its shady walks, along the Canal side from Sankey Bridge to Penketh Hall 'ere the London and North Western Railway was made.

The little School house named the "Day Star" and the old Wesleyan Chapel built in 1818 where, Sunday after Sunday, those people now gone home used to worship.

Penketh boasted of one principal street called "Top Lane" in which stood a row of white-washed cottages with thatched roofs, moss covered and small ancient windows almost hidden by climbing roses, and honey-suckles with gardens in front adorned with Sweet Williams, Tulips, ten week Stocks, and Pinks, etc.

At each end of the Street stood an Inn, or more commonly called a Public House, viz the Crown and Cushion, and Red Lion built in 1777 which seemed to mark the beginning and ending of the heart of the village life.

There was also the village Smithy and the smith, strange to say his name was "Sampson", a tall strong man was he, banging away all day at the iron on the anvil with sturdy strokes.

The Red Lion
Built 1777

The innkeeper's name, George Davies, is on the board above the front door. The sign on the wall to the right looks like perhaps a public notice or a bus timetable. The building is the old smithy where Mr Pusill kept his first bus after it became vacant. Note the bollards with handrails in front of the windows. These were later removed.

The Smithy

The original smithy was next door to the Red Lion on Top Lane (see the picture above) but it was moved to a site between Bank House - later the village’s third post office - and the Methodist Chapel in Chapel Road, some time around 1920. The site, pictured left, now serves the Methodist Chapel as a car park.

The 1818 date stone on the wall came from the first Methodist Chapel built that year in Stocks Lane. It opened for worship in 1819.
That Penketh has an history there is no doubt. What Township has not?

At the time of the Inclosure Commissioners' visit to the Ferry Inn, or in more dignified parlance "The Ferry Hotel", for the enquiry into the proposed enclosure of the Common or waste lands, known by the name of Greystone Heath and Doe Green, the solicitor for the Lord of the Manor, Michael Hughes Esquire of Sherdley Hall, St Helens, Lancashire, said in reply to some present (who not only attempted to deny the right of the claimant, but wished to abrogate the title to themselves on account of the property they owned at that time) that they could produce on behalf of Michael Hughes, their client, deeds dating so far as "William the conqueror" respecting their Manorial rights.

The township is said to have derived its name from one "Friar Penketh", connected with the Priory of St. Austins in Friars Green, Warrington, and it will be in the memory of other persons as well as the writer that a number of interesting relics were found, and still more interesting discoveries were made, during the demolition of the old Bridge Street property in Warrington, certain relics now being deposited in the Warrington Museum, an account of the same being prepared and read at Manchester by the late deceased and venerable townsman William Beamont Esquire of Orford Hall.

But to return to Penketh it may be noted that there runs through a portion of Penketh one of the first Canals ever cut in England, namely the St. Helens and Sankey Canal, which was in operation before the Bridgewater Canal or as it is better known perhaps as the "Dukes Canal" was finished.

The Sankey Brooke which emptied itself into the River Mersey at Sankey Bridges, up the same brook the tidal water used to flow, and it had then been made and utilized as the Sankey Canal.

The river and Canal traffic being for a many years, very considerable the Bargemen or Flatmen were very numerous, and it was no uncommon sight to see the sides of the Canal lined with Flats for more than a mile in length "waiting for the tide".

Tradition tells of some of the old Lock Tenters, one especially by name "old Robert Naylor" whose stentorian voice, and loud shouting of "Flood Tide" on a calm quiet summer's night, could be heard a very long way off. One hundred years ago the River Mersey at Penketh was a clear tidal stream abounding with fish. Fishing being followed as an occupation, numerous quantities of Salmon and Sparling being caught in abundance, the first named were so plentiful, that youths bound as apprentices in the vicinity of Penketh and Warrington had a clause inserted in the indentures of apprenticeship that they should only be supplied with Salmon as a food a certain number of times during the week.

But those times are past, and it might perhaps be hailed with satisfaction to many of us, if we could today have the opportunity of catching a few good sized, well flavoured fish, instead of catching so many disagreeable odours from the great Manchester sewer which goes by the name of the River Mersey.

The Sankey Canal also abounded with fish in those days, and dozens of the disciples of Izaac Walton used to ply the gentle art of angling with satisfactory results. Thirty four or thirty five years ago the nearest railway station to Penketh for Liverpool way was Rainhill, and at Warrington for the direction of Manchester. But previous to the line of Railway being opened from Liverpool to Manchester, by the London & North Western Railway Company, the London stage coaches ran regularly between Liverpool, Manchester and London, passing on the highway through Penketh and Sankey. The best portion of the road being that lying between Liverpool and Warrington.

Part of the old original highway being the one called Back Lane, Penketh and coming out near where the Friends School now stands, it was then only what was called a Pack Horse Road, or more generally speaking a paved pathway about two feet wide, formed by cobble
stones, and running in the centre of the roadway, this method being first instituted by the Romans.

Of late years most of these old-time marks have become obliterated, and abandoned, and in their places better and wider roads are now substituted. The high road through Cuerdley, lying adjacent to Penketh on the South Westerly side, was perhaps the most crooked road that ever crooked man ever made consisting of the paved pathway in the centre and the other parts filled in with cinders and unbroken stones picked from the fields and placed in the ruts and even in this was reckoned a good road then, good for the Farmer who came home at night at a jog trot pace in his shandry or market wagon, and perhaps a little the better or worse for the market glass, the tramp of the horses hoofs on the cobble stones at night being the only guide as to his whereabouts, though the sure footed steed knew where he was without doubt.

*Shandry or shanderydan = A two-wheeled Irish cart, a rickety old cart.*

Toll Bars where then in existence and full trade one being situate on the Penketh side of Sankey Bridges. The deceased Mr Thomas Polton, who, the writer remembers well, nearly lived on the highway in his trap or glazed conveyance, entered most zealously into the views of the Rebeccaites who at that time entered into a crusade and demolished in Wales many of the existing Toll Bars. Some six and forty years ago the then population of Penketh would not have reached four hundred, and one of the old inhabitants of Cobblers Square used to tell very often that he remembered the time when every parent and child living between Boltons and Haltons Bridge to Halls Bridge on the Farnworth Road Penketh was known to him by name. Not so today. The population of the township will be considerably more than trebled. A record says on September 16th 1803 there were a body of soldiers raised in Cuerdley, and they went to Chester on July 1st 1805, and were again called to Chester Castle on July 18th 1805. Further that the Soldiers from Bold dined on Halton Marsh on June 17th 1804, and tradition says that Oliver Cromwell placed his canon on Cuerdley Marsh to demolish and destroy Halton Castle.

On the 20th of January 1864 an advertisement was published in the Warrington Guardian respecting the enclosure of certain waste lands in Penketh then known as Greystone Heath, and Doe Green. This land which was principally covered with gorse bushes and heather consisted of about 100 acres, some portions of the Heath being cleared several years before both by subscription and voluntary labour given by the farmers and the day labourers.

**Greystone Heath**

Although now only a fraction of its original size in the form of Greystone Rec, the old heath still affords a place of recreation for the villagers of Penketh.

Here Morris Dancers perform to a large crowd on a hot summer day during a Penketh Gala Day in the 1980’s.

One farmer, whose zeal over-ran his discretion, ruined himself though there were others who could better afford by giving donations in money for the purpose of laying out and constructing a race course, the cost of such work and wages expended would be considerable. Alas these good folks reckoned without their host. Penketh racecourse never became destined to be the scene of anything better than donkey races held by the village schoolboys who could manage to catch the stray “Balaams”* turned out to graze on the heath. At that time there were a number of Friends or Quakers as they were more often called, resided in the township, and collectively they were a power in themselves, and it is
thought that one worthy member of the Society of Friends was deputed by that body to oppose the innovation. At all events whether such were the facts or not, he determined and most strenuously carried on a hearty opposition, which was finally successful, and amidst much chagrin and ill feeling the would-be turfties abandoned the idea of a racecourse and Penketh races were never held.

*Balaam was an Old Testament prophet who turned against the Israelites and whose donkey was made to preach to him about the error of his ways. There seems to be some misunderstanding here.

A little later on there were huge trenches cut across the course, but whether it was done by the aforesaid Friends, or whether it was done by some gentlemen hunters, who were accustomed to exercise their horses, by jumping them over the trenches and the embankments for steeple chase practice, tradition sayeth not. However the Heath or Common was the scene of many Bloody Prize Fights. One Boscoe, a Cheshire champion, fought Jarvis Cross, a Warrington tradesman, which resulted in both men being heavily fined, the money accruing from the penalty being spent in *linsey woolsey petticoats for the aged and infirm women of Penketh. Another large Prize Fight was also fought near the Friends Meeting House on June 3rd 1805. Magee and Dolaman were the combatants there being a vast concourse of people gathered together to witness it, from Cheshire, Liverpool and Manchester. The ring on this occasion was surrounded by Irish harvesters who were armed with pitch-forks, potato forks, and sickles, ready for any emergency. The outer circule being blocked by the various coaches, carriages, and other vehicles of the people from a distance.

* Linsey-woolsey = a coarse linen and wool fabric, flannel.

Meeting Lane takes its name from the Friends Meeting House being there, and an old inhabitant, Mr H. Hughes of The Mount, Chapel Road, Penketh remembers three large boulder stones, being in the ditch close to the Meeting House in 1849, when he was a lad. There was an eerie tale told to the youths, and which at the time were believed by them, that the devil had thrown them in spite at the Quaker Meeting House but they had rolled harmlessly into the ditch where they remained for a many years, but he distinctly saw them there at the date named above.

*Could these have been the Grey Stones whence came the name?

They were remarkably large stones, and were doubtless washed somewhere near there and stranded during the "Ice Age" and rolled into the ditch by some persons who wanted them out of their way. When the Common was really decided to be enclosed, they were soon removed by parties who wished to have them placed in their gardens or grounds. It is believed that one of them is now just inside Penketh House gardens, to the lawn in front of the house of Mr G H Bolton. There are also one or two of these stones in the grounds of Mr Robert Garnett J.P., Hall Nook. It is thought that Stocks Lane got its name on account of the Stocks being located there. A resident of Penketh who was born there and is still living remembers the Stocks being in Stocks Lane. They were erected very nearly opposite the Crown and Cushion and at the corner immediately in front of where the original old Wesleyan Chapel stood, facing the highway leading from Warrington, Farnworth, and Widnes. Of course they were there for the punishment of drunken men and Sabbath breakers, the duties of such infliction being held by the Parish Constable, assisted by the Church Wardens, who used to follow the custom of going out of Church during Service, to search for such persons who, if found, they were placed in the Stocks at Sankey or Penketh. Respecting the old Windmill in Stocks Lane it was on or near to the present site of the two new cottages built by Mr Henry Grice that the "old Picturesque Windmill" used to stand.

The Mill was owned by the Baker family, and at one time Mr William Baker was the Miller. It was working in 1840 on that spot, but how long before it cannot be ascertained. It is known when it first started in Stocks Lane it was a second hand mill of four sails; Mr Robert Garnett of Hall Nook has a drawing of it.

The Mill formerly was built and stood at Gateacre, and it was taken down and brought to
Penketh. A man named Edwardson was at one time the Miller.

Amongst the old buildings or houses erected many years ago, we may still find some intact, but others have been altered from time to time, till at last nothing or little of the original remains. A number of straw thatched cottages have had the thatch removed, and the roofs have been recovered with slates, and the diamond shaped leaded panes in the windows have been removed, and replaced with wooden framed windows, made to slide, thus modernising them. Yet in the change they have lost much of their quaint rustic appearance.

There are only a few cottages left that are now thatched, notably one in Stocks Lane, and three in Meeting Lane all of them being owned by the Misses Tinsley of the Three Elms, Penketh.

Regarding Penketh Hall, Dr T A Murray says that doubtless it was modernised a great many years ago, and it is thought from the appearance of the out buildings that they were originally Penketh Hall for there are traces of windows being blocked up, and other features in the structure may yet be seen that would never be in an outbuilding for a large farm or Manor House which points to the belief that the Manor House having become so dilapidated that
the owners thought it would be the best plan to build a New Hall close to, and then adapt the old Hall for the outbuildings.

Respecting Penketh Hall estate numerous disputes as to ownership have from time to time occurred. It is said that at one time the Lord of the Manor was a Squire Ashton who lived at the Hall. An old man named Ashton and his two sons all hailing from the neighbourhood of Wigan, Colliers by occupation, laid claim to this property, and on one occasion probably about the year 1859 or 1860 they broke into the Hall in open daylight and took possession of some chairs which they carried to the Ferry Inn and tried to sell them, but being unable to do so they took them to Old John Gandy’s and placed them in his custody to hold as their property the chairs being afterwards demanded from the custodian who told them that the chairs were locked, and if they wanted them they must take them by breaking into the room yet they must bear the responsibility. They then forcibly entered the room and took the chairs back to the Hall. Several times afterwards they cut down trees on the estate and sold them and from time to time committed other offences appearing periodically on the scene and then returning to their laborious daily work, and earning and saving a little money which was soon fleeced from them by the different lawyers to whom they confided showing their deeds and papers in claiming their relationship to the Squire Ashton who formerly lived there. At all events the poor fellows were wearied out and as a result failed to establish their title during one of the trials which was heard before the Justices of the Police Court, the Magistrates said as it was a claim or disputed ownership they had no jurisdiction.

Penketh Hall
Penketh Hall farmyard as it is today (A.D.2000) - the home of farmer John Ditchfield. Sadly the old outbuildings referred to by Benjamin Hobson have long since been pulled down.

The old tale of Cooking the Hare had some connection with some of the work people of Penketh Hall. A hare being sent or given to an old dame who lived near the Hall who had never received any instruction in the art or method of cooking a hare. Rather than confess her ignorance she blundered and bungled at it, and tried several methods of making it ready unsuccesfully, at last placed it whole in the cauldron or oven remarking to her good man that she did not know how the thing would taste “for it would neither poo nor scaud”. It may be safely relied on that the foregoing incident is correct because it was stated to me by a very old resident who knew the old dame personally and vouched for the accuracy of the account.

Scaud = scald. Poo = not known

On the easterly side of the Common was Brimelows Hollow, and close to this place on the other side of the Brook in Sankey there once stood a famous old time farm house, known by the name of "Barnes House", but it is now pulled down, and it is to be regretted that no credible or accurate information can be drawn or furnished of it as it would add much to this record of "Barnes Farm House" at which George Fox of the Society of Friends visited occasionally and while there he often preached in the open air, taking his stand on the top cover of ashlar stone that was placed on the top of a well belonging to the Farm House. It is said that the basement walls were built of Ashlar stone all round up to the window sills. The other walls above up to the roof were built of brick, rubble, plaster and timber. A person named James Appleton, a boot and shoe maker, at one time lived at the house and as well as following his trade he looked after Sankey Chapel as caretaker, grave-digger, sexton and Clerk, so he must have been pretty well employed, because there were not many of his trade of shoemaker. The Canal boatman and farming class were good customers, it is said
that he was a shrewd man, and knew how to look after the main chance. *Ashlar* = un-dressed stone from a quarry.

Mr Peter Robinson was the landlord of Sankey Chapel Inn at that time, and he bought the Farm House or Barnes House which was the same house where Mr William Tinsley deceased was born and where George Fox the Quaker preached as already referred to. Mr Peter Robinson the purchaser pulled the house down and in doing so rumour says he found as much money concealed therein that it enabled him to rebuild the present house on the same site free of cost. Though the style and plan was more modern. It is said that the old house had a lean-to towards the Liverpool high road, and it formed the back of the premises whereas it is now the front of the house and in the old house the porch or front entrance faced the south with the windows mostly to the west.

It is said that Mr Robinson had a man helping him to pull down the building, but whenever he spied anything like money the man was sent to some other work at the Inn while he himself carefully sorted out the silver. Mr Robinson had a son of very large size and weight. When he was only eight years of age he weighed twelve stone. People came to see him as a youth from a long distance, he went by the name of the Sankey Infant.

Brimelows Hollow is situate across the Common, near the brook which separates Penketh and Sankey townships was formerly the "Picnic Ground" of Penketh, and certainly much more inviting to the eye than it is today, yet this is about the only spot you can tell that gives you a fair idea of what the Common was formerly...Gorse bushes still exist but the heather is all gone, this place was used several times for the purpose of flogging soldiers who during their marches to and from the towns and places of Liverpool, Warrington, Chester and Manchester, who had become deserters, or rebellious to discipline, possibly the recruits who had not become fascinated with a soldiers life though this is only conjecture yet it may be about the mark. “Sham fights” were occasionally held at Penketh in later years before the enclosure of the Common, the Common being the scene of action on one occasion, the Militia and the Regular Army taking part. The present site of Ye Hall Nook with its marl and clay pits being ambush for the defensive portion of the forces. Hall Nook was the most rural place of Penketh, and then might be justly called the happy hunting ground of Penketh youths and held by them as a very arcadia for genuine rough boisterous fun, doubtless from such places emanated the idea among strangers that Penketh was a rough uncultivated village, in fact the late Glazebrook Rylands remarked in his speech made at the opening of Penketh Mechanics Institute in 1860 in the Infant School.

Mr Robert Gaskell who owned and lived at Penketh House built the School in memory of an infant daughter that until that time he knew nothing respecting Penketh save gorse bushes and donkeys. Formerly the only Public School in the neighbourhood was the one near to Sankey Chapel which was built and enlarged from time to time by subscription as the inscription on the stone tablets built in the wall over each door intimated yet eventually the education of the Sankey children was undertaken by a School Board who built the present New School Board premises on the Liverpool Road near to Barnes Bridge. There were at
one time two Dame schools one held in the Cobblers Square kept by Sarah Gandy, and the
two held in a cottage which formed one of a group that was whitewashed outside situate at the
Top Lane, which was taught by a Mrs Wolsey. There was also for a time a Day School kept
at the Cottage of the care-taker of the Friends Meeting House. The school was over the
cottage and Coach House, and the way up to it was by some stone steps on the outside of
the house to a stone landing at the top similar to the strong stone steps to a granary with the
exception that there was a wooden hand rail for protection. The building was open to the
Common at the corner where the new caretaker's house is now built, and there was a large
stone with steps cut out for a horse mount which shows that at that time that the Saddled
Steed was more used as a means of locomotion than at present.

The School was taught by Mr George Casson, a most eminent man, and an excellent
teacher. Many of his scholars who are dead now, who when living spoke of him as being a
very good teacher and others who are still living have gladly borne testimony to his urbane
manner and goodness of heart.

The writer of these lines has a manuscript note of his, and written by him when in his 75th
year, the calligraphy of which is beautifully even and clear, and which would shame many a
youth who thinks he can write. A copy of the lines are written below, and they give evidence
of profound thought and feeling.

Life's Balsam

God over all. How the tired hearts
fall back upon this, like a babe
on its Mother's breast. No rebuff there.
Ah I were not so childishly impatient,
were we willing to wait for his time; instead
of demanding our own imperative now,
could we sleep sweetly, and trust
Him for the waking. Be the sky bright
or cloudy, could we only trust.
Ah many a hard lesson must we learn,
many a rebellious tear choke down,
many a despairing cry, "why hast
Thou forsaken me?" stifle ere we can
learn the sweet tranquil lesson
God over All.

Oh that this beautiful ode could be engraven or photographed on our hearts, and our lives
brought into unison, how much better and brighter would our world become, fragrant with
humility and the sweet odour of piety. Alas our lives would not become dwarfed and stunted in growth by our own wilful waywardness, and self imposing blindness, degrading and verily lowering the stamina of our humanity, making our poor puny selves miserably helpless and unable to lift our fellow men or even ourselves up to God.

But to our task or record of the School lads doings and we cannot help wonder that in going to and fro from school at Sankey that the Penkethites found ample time to enjoy themselves in a variety of ways. Firing the gorse bushes on dark nights, was a favourite pastime, the blaze throwing a bright light and seen a long way off. Afterwards catching as many donkeys as they could lay their hands on, and more than a few can tell of the rough and ready lessons of bare back, not forgetting the occasional kicks in the stomach received at such times. Catching the owl was another favourite pastime or trick, which caused some enjoyment though as oftener than otherwise some rough horse play attendant on the game causing some discomfiture to many a new arrival in the village, who were always invited and preferentially chosen to take a leading part in the ceremony, who in most cases learned from practical experience how it was done, but it was never divulged except on similar performances being proposed and decided upon.

Penketh Lodge and Penketh House, which at one time was Massey House, were built for Boarding Schools, as well as the Penketh Friends School. At one time the Friends Meeting House was the only place of worship in the village.

**The Friends' Meeting House**
(A.D. 2000.)

The cream painted mid section of the Community Centre building is the 1736 structure, though it has had major modification.

Inside there was an upper floor at the far end as we see it here, and a chimney stack at the corner by the tree, both of which have now been removed.

Penketh Friends' School

This section, built in 1913, is all that remains of the “Quaker School” in Stocks Lane. The original school was built in 1834/5 by Robert Garnett Sr, the cabinet maker, though the premises were later enlarged several times. Most of what became the main building was demolished leaving only this part. There is a picture of the complete school building in the Cuerdley Cross Inn (AD.2000). It was bought by Liverpool Corporation and used as an Approved School from 1938. Popularly called “The naughty boys' school”, it was finally closed, sold and turned into its present role as offices for a nursing home,
But often all Penketh can count some names amongst the lists who have made the little village somewhat illustrious.

**John Bright** born in 1814 was for a time educated at the Friends School, Penketh, but he lodged at Bank House, a large well built house of brick, it stands considerably back from the high road at the top lane facing the south and about the centre of the village. There is a splendid Red Beech tree on the lawn in the front of the house. The owner or tenant was named John Davies, a member of the Society of Friends, usually called Lawyer Davies. With respect to the School that John Bright is said to have attended it was the one pulled down which stood on the ground near where the new caretakers House of the Friends Meeting House now stands, 1890. It is said that George Fox preached in the Meeting House.

*Note. John Bright from Rochdale campaigned with Richard Cobden for the abolition of the Corn Laws in the 1840's. They succeeded in persuading Sir Robert Peel to end them in 1846.*

**Dr Joseph Smith J.P.** (1812–1888) and once Mayor of Warrington formerly of Ash Villa, Penketh well known in his day.

**John Warrington Wood** the famous Sculptor now also deceased.

**George Sheffield** a clever and inimitable artist in Black and White formerly a pupil under Mr George Casson.

**Mr Edmondson** who invented the dating and numbering of Railway tickets, and singularly enough **Mr Bradshaw** of the Bradshaw Railway Guide claims some connection with Penketh. But not only do we find men who have made their names illustrious in this country’s history, but we have also those who in a humble sphere of life have served their day and generation with true Christian character and zeal and have left behind them marks in the Journey of Life that we should do well to imitate.

**Mr Robert Garnett**, Senior, of Vine House well remembered by all residents of the district who perhaps had much to do with making Penketh what it is today, a Christian gentleman beloved by many, and a father to the people.
Old John Gandy or Poet Gandy as he was familiarly called (perhaps as much as anything to distinguish him from his cousin John Gandy the baker and provision dealer of the Cobblers Square) named thus because from the fact that there is five cottages in the yard and for a great number of years the cottages were all occupied by shoemakers or cobbler. Poet Gandy was also a Knight of the lapstone, and out of his four sons three of these followed the same calling (John's father James Gandy was also a shoemaker) while also John's two brothers William and James a greater part of their lives were shoe-makers. John's eldest son Thomas Gandy was very successful as a master shoemaker employing his brothers Edward and James and many other men and apprentices, sending his boots and shoes to Wigan and Manchester to shopkeepers besides getting up large shipping orders for Liverpool Merchants to export abroad. By dint of great perseverance he bought land and sold some of it while he built and bought about fifteen cottages and he bought the house he lived in the Woodwards.

While doing this large business he would then employ nearly as many hands as the Cabinet Works reckoning the women binders and the apprentices, and certainly more than the Penketh Brewery, the entire workmen of the place being either Cabinet Makers, Cobblers or Brewers. Of course there were Boatmen, and hauliers, and farm labourers, there were no tanners or tannery in the village in those days.

Mr Gandy or the Poet was a quick rhymester and one day he was sitting on a seat at Fiddlers Ferry Station when he was accosted by a gentleman who said to him "I am told you are a Poet. Now will you make me a verse of four lines impromptu and I will give you five shillings" which he did to the gentleman's satisfaction who paid him the money. The lines were as follows:-

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Greystone Cottage
The sole survivor of the group of cottages known as Cobblers' Square.
Members of the Gandy family lived here and carried on a successful shoemaking business.
Situated on the corner of Chapel Road and Falmouth Drive it is a private house.

Penketh Tannery
(c.1977)
The distinctive outline of Penketh Tannery across the surrounding fields was a welcoming sight for many a weary traveller returning to Penketh.
Today all that remains to remind us of its existence is Tannery Lane and some fine houses built for tannery workers in the lane itself and in The Park.
How noble and grand this station would stand
    If put on the opposite side
The river in sight, and the tide at its height,
    And the vessels along it doth glide.
He was often bothered by people to give them a verse,  One day while at the Ferry Station a drunken man asked him to do so.  The poet was annoyed and cut him short by the following couplet:-

        I've neither time nor tools
    To make rhyme for fools.

Poet Gandy as he was called though of humble occupation was a man of thought, loving nature much, and to those immediately in touch with him we remember his venerable appearance, and his long white hair hanging down on his shoulders.  As he sat on his seat stitching away at his work he would recite to his privileged listeners his latest piece of rhyme that he had strung together mayhap on that very day.  He has left behind him many grateful memories.  He lived to the ripe old age of 85 years.  He made bats for the tiny little ankle band shoes for wee children till nearly the last of his days.  The writer of these few records of Penketh Life is mainly indebted to him for many of them, for if you could only get talking to him of his early days, and if in the humour of talking, he would tell many racy and humorous incidents that had occurred in the past.  He would tell of the Bull Baiting and Bear Baiting at Farnworth Wakes under the very shadow of the Church, to which many young people of both sexes used to foregather as the annual event came round.  And it was no unusual thing for some of the young men to tramp to Knowsley Park to witness a Fox Hunt, or a Stag Hunt (the writer himself remembers a stag being run to Penketh.  It took to the river Mersey and swam across and thus eluded its pursuers.  It went over between Penketh bank and Richmonds Isle), the young men sometimes getting a peep into a cock pit if there was anything to be seen in the shape of a combat.

Prison Bars and Hare and Hounds gave the youths some interesting runs and exciting times, and doubtless the poet who was a great lover of Prison Bars and pedestrian feats did himself an injury by a rupture which he carried with him to his grave.  He much regretted the injury for doubtless had it not been for the pain and trouble of his internal sufferings he being a tall, well formed man, and of splendid physique he might have lived to be a centenarian.

Thomas Johnson who for many years when troubled with asthma his wife Sarah trudged the rounds at the old Wesleyan Methodist Chapel.  Thomas officiated as Candle Snuffer during the service using his fingers as the snuffers, and sometimes he snuffed some one or two out.

Peter Woods who was a local preacher and a Class leader of the Penketh Wesleyan Society and who was often called the Bishop of Penketh and he was a venerable looking man, with a white head of hair and large bushy white beard also.  He and Dr Joseph Smith, the father of Dr Starkie Smith, and the grandfather of the present Dr Reginald Smith did good service to the Wesleyan Society by preaching in the old Wesleyan Chapel built in 1818 on alternate Sunday evenings regularly for many years, the worthy doctor at that time living at Ash Villa, close to Hall Nook, Penketh.

Also John Gandy Junior (the son of John Gandy the Shopkeeper and bread baker) became a local preacher, and did good service to the Wesleyans.  He married the eldest daughter of Robert Garnett of Vine House, Amelia Garnett, but he entered into rest on October 13th 1862, aged 37 years, leaving the widow with four sons, vis., John Robert G. (who died October 19th 1837 aged 33½ years) Frederick, Thomas and Charles surviving sons.  Other names might be mentioned of those who walked uprightly and are now reaping their reward.

The Post Office was first established in the township of Penketh at a small thatched cottage near where the Penketh Infant School now stands.  This school was built by Mr. Robert Gaskell, who at the time owned and lived at Penketh House, in memory of a deceased
daughter. The date of the Post Office being opened was about the year 1847*, the first postmistress was a Mrs Cash, who had two shillings a week for the Office work, and a penny for each letter delivered within a certain radius. Prior to this the letters were daily brought on foot from Warrington, by an old Army Pensioner named Johnson who had lost one arm, a tall stalwart man was he. After the opening of the Penketh Post Office he used to travel from Warrington to Cuerdley Brewery with letters and newspapers for the firm, the occupiers of the same being the late Matthew Taylor and Brothers who were also large Farmers as well as Brewers, they employed him as a private messenger. His fees prior to the Penketh Office being opened were what we should call excessive, for instance he once brought a letter to an inhabitant of Penketh named Whitfield which had been sent from Lancaster to him, and he charged tenpence for it claiming that it was a double letter.

**PENKETH POST OFFICE**

This was the third building to serve as the village post office. It stood at the corner of Chapel Road opposite the Red Lion until both were demolished to make way for the dual carriageway. (c.1966).

The 1900 O.S. map shows a building on the site while the post office was still in premises across the road. One old photograph shows it with the legend over the main window “Union Bank of Manchester”. The Mather family were occupants for many years, and Mr Ernest Whittley, who also served as a Parish Councillor, was the last postmaster to occupy it before he moved with it to newly-built premises across Warrington Rd.


At this point the transcript and manuscript differ considerably. However it might be of interest to the reader to see both versions as some different information is contained in each. The manuscript version is given first.

a) The first Public School built in Penketh was the Day Star School.

**Day Star School**

Situated on the south corner of Chapel Road and Station Road just along the road from Vine House, the home of Mr Robert Garnett Senior.

He was responsible for setting up the school for the village’s Wesleyan Methodist Movement.

It is now a private house.

It was built by the late Robert Garnett Senior who resided at Vine House – but born November 9th 1805 at Lunts Heath, Farnworth. It was a mixed school and erected in 1854 at the junction of Chapel Road which runs into Station Road. A Miss Gaston was the first teacher and the subsequent teacher was a Miss Kirk. The school met a long felt want, being used in the evening for Lectures and meetings of various kinds, Wesleyan Class Meetings of the body, and, while the new Chapel was building in Chapel Road, it was used on Sundays for Preaching and Sunday School.

b) The first public Day School in Penketh was built by Mr Robert Garnett of Vine House, and intended to accommodate about 40 of his workmen’s children. It was called the Day Star, and opened on the 8th January 1854 by Miss Kirk from the Wesleyan Training College,
Westminster, and Miss Fanny Garnett of Vine House as assistant teacher. Miss Kirk did well for many years and then left to be married, she is still living 1907, and with her venerable husband celebrated their golden wedding a few months ago. The Day Star (when made into a cottage) supplied the needs of the immediate neighbourhood for many years - until larger and more commodious premises were built close to the Wesleyan Chapel. The attendance at the present time numbers some 250 with Head Master and a staff of six teachers.

Mr Robert Garnett Junior at that time lived with his father at Vine House, and he was then, as he is still, a great advocate of Temperance. He restarted the Penketh Temperance Society or in other words he was the means of giving it new life. It has come to my knowledge of a previous Temperance Society Meeting being held in a large barn of Mr William Gandy at a farm then called Halls Farm many years before.

By the courtesy of Mr Henry Taylor P.C., Missionary of the Liverpool Diocesan Church of England Temperance Society, I have been able to give some extracts from a small book he has lent me for a few days. It is called the Liverpool & Warrington Temperance Herald and printed at Liverpool by J Pannell, 24 Byrom Street, Liverpool. Issued weekly at 1d, the first issue appears to have been on May 4th 1836. The following extracts from its first number as or will set at rest any doubts when the Temperance cause first started at Penketh although some doubt may or in some instances will be left to surmise, as it is not clearly made known who the persons were who took a part in starting the Society. For instance Mr Gandy building his name when there were several persons of that time living of the same surname two Johns and one William Gandy. We are led to believe that it will be the latter because we find in one place in the book William Gandy, Penketh as the agent for the Herald - Penketh.

“As a desire has been intimated that we would insert in our publication some account of the origin and progress of the Temperance cause in Penketh, we would observe that - on Monday January 4th 1836, a public Meeting was held at Penketh, Nr Warrington for the purpose of forming a Temperance Society in that place. Mr Thistlewaite, Dr Smith, Mr Broadhurst, Mr Smith Junior and the Reverend Mr Joseph Minister of the Hebrew Church whose generosity came over from that place to render his valuable assistance each of whom spoke of the baneful effects of temperance on the character of the morals of the lower orders of society, and before the evening closed there were resolutions moved and unanimously adopted organising the Society and appointing its officers. Subsequently public meetings were held regularly once a fortnight. After a vote of thanks to the Chairman the doxology was sung – ‘Praise God from whom all blessings flow’, with delightful effect to the tune of the Old Hundred psalm after which the Chairman pronounced the Benediction. It is gratifying to know that the number of persons who signed amounted altogether to 60.

“The following meeting was held a fortnight after, and the interest of the
meeting or the numbers attending had diminished. At the close of each meeting several names have been added. Though there have, as there may always be expected where a new Society is established some few cases of delinquency occurred yet we understand that there are now about 100 members among whom are two gentlemen of the Medical Profession and two Clergymen. About a fortnight ago a Herald of May 4th 1836 the Warrington Teetotal band played several beautiful tunes with very good effect from Warrington along the Liverpool Road to the Penketh Meeting. On this occasion the meeting was full to over-flowing. Many persons could not gain admittance by reason of the crowded state of the Meeting. The speeches, some were delivered by reformed characters, which were very interesting. We are sorry to add that when the Band was returning several persons who had most likely been treated with intoxicating liquor for the purpose rushed out of the Red Lion public house Penketh, and grossly insulted several persons and also interrupted the harmony of the music. Also two carters, whose names we are not furnished with, drove at a furious rate their horses and carts through the midst of the band to the great horror of many and to some small injury of one or two persons occurred.”

We copy the following anecdote from the Herald, Monday April 11th 1836:-

“As the teetotal Band was proceeding from Warrington to Penketh it was met by a flatman in a state of what may be called three parts intoxicated. He went dancing before it in derision of the temperance meeting being held that evening, entering the place of meeting, behaved himself with decorum attentively listened to the addresses which were delivered, and after that meeting, signed his name to the total abstinence pledge, with a full determination to keep it. We have enquired of him since, and we have every reason to believe that his conduct has been consistent.”

“On Friday April 29th 1836, Penketh Speakers, went to Stockton Heath, to address a Temperance Meeting there when there was a very full one, which was addressed by Messrs, Smith, Thistlewaite, Broadhurst and Turner, Mr Crother presided on the occasion. The Meeting was an interesting one. At the close several signed.”

“TEMPERANCE MEETING MONDAY MAY 9th 1836 PENKETH

“The Meeting here last Monday evening was well attended, though not quite so thronged as has generally been the case, but we think it was an interesting a meeting as any held in the place. The different Speakers were listened to with great interest. The audience frequently testified their appropriation during the addresses with which the Speakers gratified the Meeting particularly the last Speaker, Mr Clarke, occupied the attention of the Meeting, at the close. We were informed that amongst those who signed the pledge are some who in consequence of their profligate conduct, have been looked upon with feelings of commiseration and as almost past recovery, but now we trust they will be reclaimed from wretchedness and misery, and become decent and useful members of Society, and ornaments to the neighbourhood where they reside but by the blessing of God upon the means used be bad led by that still small voice that always whispers love into the path that leads to glory (Copy of the Herald of viz).”

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“PENKETH TEMPERANCE TEA MEETING”

“A public tea Meeting of the members and friends of the Penketh Temperance Society was held in the large room belonging to Mr Gandy of Penketh on the evening of the 23rd of May 1836, John Cropper Esq., of Liverpool in the chair. A procession headed by the band of music of the Warrington Temperance Society met on the Common in Penketh at 4 o'clock in the afternoon of the day, and in accordance with previous arrangements walked through the principal lanes of the village to the room appointed for their reception. On approaching the premises of Mr Gandy our attention was arrested by the appearance of a large tricoloured flag suspended over the principal entrance to the building, and having almost immediately beneath it a frame of considerable dimensions the inscription "TOTAL ABSTINENCE SOCIETY". The decoration of the room had been principally delegated to the taste and direction of the Sub-committee of the ladies Committee of Superintendents in conjunction of Mr Garnett of Penketh. The appearance which it presented from the entrance was certainly and striking, and a considerable part of it was covered with calico. Upon the platform and immediately above the president's Chair was erected a beautifully decorated canopy hanging over inscribed in large characters - "PEACE ON EARTH GOOD WILL TO MEN". Alongside the walls were placed festoons of evergreens natural and artificial flowers, etc., with suitable mottoes and inscriptions. The band occupied an elevated gallery on the opposite end of the room to the platform. The ladies who had undertaken tea services on the occasion amounted to 18 in number were arranged along one side of the room at a distance of one yard from each other forming a decoration not less beautiful and infinitely more interesting than the perishing productions of the earth. The company were placed on cross forms it having been previously agreed in order to effect the greatest economy of room and to promote the future order of the meeting that the provision be handed round at the seats. The tea and coffee were excellent and from the appearance of active interest and convivial enjoyment which so strikingly marked the aspect of the assembly we should think that few individuals were present who did not leave the room with feelings of more than ordinary satisfaction. After the conclusion of tea Mr Smith proposed and Mr Broadhurst seconded that John Cropper Esq*, of Liverpool be called to the Chair. In rising to acknowledge the unanimous vote of the meeting the Chairman adverted at considerable length to the advantages of Temperance Societies.

*Co-founder and head of Penketh School in Stocks Lane

“He detailed to the Meeting from his own observation many deeply interesting examples of their good effects, the adduced evidence which unanswerably proved the absurdity of the opinion that these institutions are calculated by lowering the wages of the poor men to curtail the comforts of his station. He concluded by calling on the Secretary to read the report. The report having been read the Reverend H S Joseph, of the Hebrew Church Liverpool, was called upon to move its reception. He expressed the gratitude which he felt on viewing the present state and prospects of the Penketh Temperance Society. He adverted to the circumstance of its formation at the public meeting which he attended and addressed on the 4th of January 1836 and he appeared to regard the large and interesting assembly then before him with no small share of paternal satisfaction.

“We were exceedingly gratified by the remarks of the Reverend gentleman in allusion to the inseparable connection subsisting between Temperance Societies and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Martin Frazer a reformed drunkard next addressed the meeting. It is utterly out of our power to give any abstract of his clever and pointed remarks without materially diminishing their merits. They contained in
our opinion more originality of thought and expression than address we ever heard delivered on the subject. Mr J Smith of Manchester then rose and in a long and eloquent address illustrated the evils of intemperance and the wretchedness of its victims. He advertised with considerable effect to the constitution of a tap room assembly in its variety of character and ably delineated those introductory habits and practices by slow degrees imperceptibly strip man of his humanity and degrade him beneath the condition of the beast that perish. Mr Clarke of Stockton Heath then rose and addressed the Meeting as a Christian minister furnished additional evidence of the good effect of Temperance Societies concluding with a forcible appeal to the females for the support of their name and for their aid and sanction of their extensive influence. A vote of thanks to the lady Committee of Superintendents was moved by Mr Church. In a brief address he conclusively proved the extent and superiority of female influence and in consequence their increased responsibility for its application. Mr Broadhurst then rose and briefly and spiritedly seconded the resolution. It was then put from the Chair and carried by acclamation. The vote was acknowledged on behalf of the Ladies Committee by one of their Secretaries of the Society who in a short address returned thanks for the honour which had so deservedly conferred upon them by the decision of the Meeting. A vote of thanks to the Chair moved by the Reverend Mr Joseph and seconded by the Reverend Mr Turner was unanimously carried after which Mr Cropper briefly returned thanks. The doxology was then sung and the meeting then separated evidently delighted with the proceedings of the evening. Of a subsequent meeting we read the number of individuals present on the occasion amounted to upwards of 290. The attendance and efficient services of the band of the Warrington Temperance Society in combination with the truly eloquent addresses delivered on the occasion contributed much to the interest of the Meeting, but it was in a great measure to the spirit and activity of the Ladies Committee and their well digested arrangements that we must attribute that high sense of gratification and satisfaction which so universally and obviously marked the character of the assembly in every stage of its proceedings. A teetotal christening (re T Herald) on the 22nd instant a reformed character and a member of Temperance Society who resides in Sankey Parish of Prescot solemnly dedicated his first child at the Baptismal Font to that God who blessed the fruitful mariner on teetotal principles. When the parties retired from the sacred temple with the little charge whom they had religiously dedicated to him who said "Suffer Little Children To Come Unto Me and Forbid Them Not" they sat down to a good cup of well prepared Bohea over which they enjoyed rational and religious conversation, and spent a delightful evening. The cordials and drinks of which the company partook during the evening were exquisite and all of a refreshing, but none of an inebriating, quality. After an excellent supper and before the company separated they united in singing one of the songs of Zion.”

What a difference between the Foregoing account and the one which is now inserted next.

“UNFORTUNATE AFFRAY AT HALE WOOD.”

“(Pub, August 3rd 1836 re Warrington and Liverpool Temperance Herald)”

“An unfortunate circumstance occurred at this place on Sunday evening the 17th instant which painfully exhibits the degrading and baneful effects of public houses, and the close connection which exists between drunkenness and crime. It seems that a number of men and boys just growing into manhood had met by the Derby Arms public house to spend the evening together with another party who were
celebrating a christening at the same place. In the course of the evening a quarrel arose amongst the party and betwixt 12 and 1 o'clock they went out of doors to fight when a general combat took place betwixt four men and five young men on the front of the public house and used a wheelwrights yard in the course of which one man took a scoop and struck the young man named Phythian so violently on the head that he fell down dead on the spot. An inquest was held on Tuesday the 19th instant before John Hayes Esq., the coroner for the division which terminated in the jury finding a verdict of manslaughter against the four men who were immediately committed to Kirkdale to take their trial at the ensuing Liverpool Assizes.

It was remarked by a gentleman present at the inquest that the whole party admitted that they were fresh in liquor, but not drunk, but there was no doubt, said the coroner, that they were all in a state of intoxication at the time. At the inquest they all professed entire ignorance of the affair, and endeavoured to exculpate each other so much so that it was impossible to ascertain which was the murderer of the unfortunate individual.

“It is thus that the Sabbath is continually violated and profaned by this accursed system of allowing public houses to be open on Sundays, and these are scenes of no unfrequent occurrence which follow the celebration of the ceremonies of religion where the hardened sinner of matured years initiate the young and the unworthy into those debasing habits which obliterate and destroy the traces of better education which intercepts the progress of civilisation and the genial influence of the gospel.”

In a most forcible tirade the writer contends against certain persons and ministers of various denominations who can, with cold and bitter apathy, view efforts which Temperance Societies are making to put down the unhallowed traffic in intoxicating drink. Further he said without making any complaint it was the duty of Temperance Societies to try and close the public houses on Sunday and was clearly expressed how the matter should be dealt with by them. It is very pleasing to think that we are led to believe the writer from his initials appended “S. H. B.” would be the Mr Broadhurst of Sankey - B H.

We come across the following paragraph in the Liverpool and Warrington Temperance Herald July 20th 1836, Penketh -

“A gentleman declared a short time ago who knew Penketh some years past that it was notorious for dissipated people, and that he knew not a hamlet or village anywhere else that exhibited so much profligacy as this did, but that it now manifested a marked change for the better. Many valuable men have become soberly and orderly men.”

We must now bring our extracts from The Herald to a close with the following which tells its own tale how in about six months the Temperance Society had made itself felt.

“ANECDOTE OF PENKETH”

“Our jerry shop* was closed and another public house in the village that had hitherto defied all order and decency both Sunday and weekdays wears as much the appearance of a private as a public house.”

*Jerry-shop = a low beer house or groggy

We now return to the time when the Penketh Temperance Society became rejuvenated. Some 18 years had passed since the previous jottings or incidents had transpired and Mr Robert Garnett Junior had been told that he had been taken when quite a little one in the
arms to the barn or building of Mr William Gandy at Halls Farm to some Meeting but it was the writers impression that it was some Missionary meeting, but when we come to think it would scarcely be right because the old Chapel being built in 1818 the Missionary would be held there, and if we consider that it being a Church of England Temperance Society it shows the possibility of it being the Temperance that he attended. But sufficient for our object or explanation he was a teetotaller and was very earnest and anxious for the spread of Temperance. The meetings were held in the Day Star School Room. The late Thomas Whittaker Esq., of Scarborough has given many a teetotal lecture in that room.

Purveyors of the Demon Drink.

Joseph Davies and his family pose outside the Sportsman's Arms. Though extensively modified this section of the building still exists.

The sign reads:-

JOSEPH DAVIES
Licensed retailer of
ALE, PORTER, TOBACCO
To be Drunk on the Premises.

The Red Lion opposite had a George Davies as licensee possibly at around the same time.

Also a Mr J Lythgoe of Warrington, both lecturers used to be very popular. Mr Whittaker's way of taking a text was very taking. One of them next door to a sweet shop made a good impression on the hearers.

Mr Lythgoe also could tell humorous tales, one especially of the young married woman who wanted to make a shirt for her husband, getting him to lay down on his back on the floor, and then she chalked round him on the floor as a pattern. When the shirt was finished the husband tried to put it on, but there was not a place left for his head to go through. Mr R Garnett Junior as well as Mr J Gandy Junior were also much pleased when they had got some person who was addicted to drink to sign the pledge, and it is within the memory of the writer how gratifying and how pleased they were to see and to hear Mr G Cawley give a temperance on that platform, and to give the quotations from Shakespeare, "There is a tide in the affairs of man which taken at the flood leads on to fortune". Yet how sad to think that in a few years afterwards the quicksands of the drink drew him down, and still lower down, and what a gloom was cast over the village when his dead body was drawn out of Gate Looms pit. How sad was his end, and his death to occur on the farm where he had been the tenant, and a prosperous one too, if he could have conquered the drink. The Band of Hope Meetings were also very popular and the room was crowded to the door.

We were before Warrington, and also some portions of Manchester in having or holding our Band of Hope Meetings. The writer proposed that a Band of Hope Society should be forged and he was appointed the first Secretary of the Society. He has gone with a bell round the village, and rang it after the style of Mr Whittaker did when he sprung his rattle to announce his Meetings in his early Teetotal days. While the Band of Hope lads took their turn in carrying a black canvas light framed notice board with the time of the meeting chalked on, and the places on the route he rang the bell and gave out the notice of the Meeting. He had just come to Penketh from Leeds where the Band of Hope Meetings had only been first inaugurated by the Reverend Jabez Tunnicliffe.

Mr B Hobson had come to work for Messrs Garnett & Sons, and he lived close to the School. The origin of the Penketh Band of Hope will be remembered by Mr R Garnett Junior, Mr David Garnett, though he was only about leaving school, Mr J Gandy Junior, Misses H and Fanny Garnett who each took a great interest in the Meetings, several being members of the Committee. A dialogue was very popular entitled "Playing at a Temperance Meeting".
youths appointing their own Chairman, and also their speakers, who made some very fluent speeches, their meeting was very well sustained, and lasted for twenty minutes to an half an hour – this took immensely. Songs and recitations were interspersed by the girls of the Society.

Mr Edwin Waugh’s popular pieces in the Lancashire dialect, "Come whoam to thee Childer and me", "My Bonnie Brid", and other pieces, by the same author and also Mr Samuel Laycock’s pieces, another Lancashire dialect author, was always to the fore.

Some notice of the doings of the Penketh Parochial Committee, is worthy of a place amongst these jottings for the work they did so well while in existence with respect to the drainage or sewerage of a portion of the Township, and who by their economical ways of procedure doubtless saved the township several hundreds of pounds. And as a matter of opinion it may be expressed they had a freer hand, and in consequence did better, and more elaborate red tapeism of its embodiment, and it is realised when its meetings are often futile because as a body they in reality can only recommend and recommend to the District Council through the Chairman of the Parish Council who is nearly always appointed the District Councillor. It may be interesting to the Ratepayers generally in the matter of finance if the accounts of the cost of the Highways could be so arranged to show whether the main roads cost more or less than what the County Council allows the District Council for their maintenance, and also what proportion of cost the byeroads of the Township take to maintain them.

As it is noticeable that most of the work is done on the main road while the bye-road and the footpaths as a whole are miserably short of attention, the comfort and safety of the pedestrians seems of secondary importance with the ever increasing number of motor car, motor-bicycle, and bicycles, and other fast going vehicles of locomotion, and it is difficult for a child or other person to walk in the lanes in safety especially where neither side of the road is properly kerbed for their guidance and use of foot passengers on a dark and foggy night.
They may be running into the hedge on one side, or on the roadway on the other side being then in danger of being run over by any of the before-named fast going vehicles.

Our Parochial Committee were some of them professional men of some experience, while the others were in touch with the wants and needs of the Township gained by length of residence and knowledge of the growth of the Township, and thus they were men eminently qualified for their duties. Mr Joseph Carruthers Routledge did yeoman service in the sewerage of the Township, in fact it was his plan drawn and carried out to the finish, and under his own supervision, he being both surveyor and clerk of the works as well. The Township thought well of him for when the Parish Meeting adopted the Parish Council Act he was always put at the head of the poll, and was always appointed the Chairman for several successive Parish Councils until a very serious and prolonged illness, which it was much to be regretted, compelled him to withdraw from active duties. Yet the Parish Meeting always retained his name as a member until his death. Then they felt they had lost a good man, and his wife and children had the sympathy and condolence of the whole Township in their bereavement.

The other members of the Parochial Committee were as follows, to the best of my memory, Robert Garnett Junior, Mr R Boardman, Mr Henry Hughes, Mr James Jackson, Mr James Millington and Mr James Turner; Mr James Millington being for several years sent by the yearly Township Meetings as a member of the Highway Board or Rural District Council, and he certainly attended to his duties with regularity, and never lost an opportunity of speaking on behalf of necessary improvements at the Rural District Meetings.

Twenty-one years have past by, and with the lapse of years certain things transpired with respect to it and it would have been as well to have been recorded in a way similar to the one at the beginning of this book.

**BOUNDARY WALKING**

Mr William Tinsley who was an over-seer for a great number of years, and also a member of the Board of Guardians was a very faithful and attentive representative of the duties for while living there was no one better qualified to give information of any encroachment either in respect to an owner bringing his hedge more into the road than he should do. He, Mr Tinsley was a very martinet for Parish Custom being carried out to the letter. The two burlymen were always appointed at the yearly Vestry Meeting, but nowadays they are often passed over, and never appointed. During his time woe to the person who fouled any water course that cattle were in the habit of using. He was down on them. The Penketh Penny Saving Bank was also started in the Day Star school, one of the oldest trustee Penny Banks in Lancashire, in 1854. The credit must be given to Mr Robert Garnett Junior, as the founder of the Penny Bank. He was the Treasurer. Mr David Garnett was not on the first Committee, but afterwards was made Joint-Treasurer along with his brother Robert. Mr Thomas Garnett Senior, Mr Frederick Brown Hobson, Mr J Naylor and Mr B Hobson, also others, were the first Committee. Mr B Hobson took the name, and entered the first money paid into the cash book from the first depositor.

Since then Mr J C Routledge, Mr William Garnett, Mr Thomas Garnett Junior, Mr J W Wigfield and Mr Thomas Gandy, and Mr T Davies gave volunteered help on the Committee. The last named, Mr Thomas Davies, has notably done good work for a great number of years for the Bank.

Mr Robert Garnett Junior has always been much interested in the process of the Bank, and wished for it to be patronised by the working classes of Penketh, and it is proverbial that Mr Garnett never lost an opportunity of recommending it to thrifty persons.
Much more might be said of Penketh and its past History, yet before this account is closed mention may be briefly made of the enclosure of the Common as it was usually called. This enclosure was allowed on condition that six statute acres be allotted as a recreation ground forever for the village of Penketh and neighbourhood, and also six statute acres were allotted to the Burial ground for Penketh and Sankey, the old Burial ground at Sankey being nearly full. A public subscription was started, and the sum of £160.0.0 was collected. The Committee laid out a portion of the ground, also built a Mortuary Chapel, walls, iron rails and entrance gates, and they then made a further subscription to complete the portion first laid out.

The Recreation Ground being awarded in trust to the Lord of the Manor, and he not being a resident of the village, it is scarcely to be reacted that he would show much interest in the upkeep of it on behalf of the inhabitants. While they have a right to use it as much as they think proper for recreation, yet he holds the rights of herbage, and also the rights of all minerals under the same, yet he has been always very liberal in letting the herbage for a normal sum to the Parish Council, yet after all they have not a free hand, it being held up then under so many conditions it leaves things so complicated that as far as they are only custodians the chance of making any great improvements in the ground in question is very remote.

Before concluding these jottings regarding certain phases or records of incidents that have occurred during the past History of Penketh, there remains this valuable factor from which we may derive a certain amount of pleasure and satisfaction, that, which regard to crime, Penketh has no stain of a very horrible nature written against it, setting aside the Prize Fights of earlier days, and most serious cases are wholesale robbery of a complete dairy of cheese from Penketh Hall, and sheep stealing from the Marsh. These latter thefts were attributed to a man who lived near the marsh, in a hovel, named sailor Jimmy, but such thefts could never be clearly proved against him. His mode of life was well known to all; begging coal from the flatmen, and getting washed up wood left by the tide on the river banks, spending his time on a rough bench that constituted his bed, and chumming with any of the Ne’er do wells, who chose to honour him with their company.
Our old time records has nearly come to a close with respects to the annals of Penketh. We could perhaps lengthen out a little by telling some of the practical jokes that were practised by the cobblers on each other, such as substituting an old crow in the place of a fowl that was being boiled on the fire of a lonely widower who contemplated a feast at dinner, but alas he was doomed to disappointment for his fowl was eaten by his conspirators in an adjoining cottage, and then subsequently enjoying the joke immensely in watching his efforts to negotiate the crow which failed to satisfy his expectations it not being as toothsome as it should have been. The late Henry Booth who was the first employee of Robert Garnett Senior as a rush-bottom chair-maker took a part in the fore-going joke and he used to tell it with much glee, in the narration of which he laughed until the tears ran down his face.

It was a favourite pastime with the young men to assemble at farm houses during the long winter evenings to play at a game of cards with the farmers sons. It is said that one night two brothers who were cobblers, and two farmers sons, at Mr James Baker’s Brook Farm Penketh, were engaged in a game and it was usual for them to play for a fowl or a couple of fowls and it goes without saying that the cobblers, when they were set against the farmers, by their sleight of hand work they often managed to secure the prize, but when the stitchers had to pay off, then came the tug-of-war, and it was seldom finished without some noisy altercation or quarrel. One night the winner was the younger brother, and on claiming the stakes a row ensued, and he was put out of the house. He was reluctant to withdraw, but he took his prize under his arm, which was a big cochin china cock. Though for some short time chafing under the insult, he determined to be quits. So he got a ladder from the barn, and mounted the roof, and put his fowl down the chimney. This made such a row, the fowl flapping its wings in the chimney bringing down clouds of soot and smoke which caused the trio to exhibit much astonishment and alarm, and as the noise became louder, and the smoke denser, they looked at one another in dismay. They forgot their play and stared at each other in the face fearing that it was some token from his satanic majesty. Still the fowl came down, lower and lower in the chimney, and then their superstitious fears got so hold on them, they held their cards in their hands aghast. One of them snatched up the cards off the table, and jumping up from his chair, blew out the candle, and cried out “It’s the Devil lads! Burn the cards, Burn the cards!” The cards were thrown at once on the fire. When a moment later the fowl came plunging down to the bottom of the chimney on the fire it made such a noise, and it brought such a quantity of soot and volumes of smoke, suffocating in its effects, that each stumbled tipsy turvy to the door for air, only to find just outside the wiry cobbler choking with fun, laughing in his sleeve at their fears and blackened features. Then it dawned upon them and they at once saw how the game lay and how he has done them one.

Moral - Don't play cards on a Saturday night, but always be particularly careful if you do for to give up "before the sma' wee hours *ayont the twal."

(“Scottish expression = go beyond the twelve, or midnight)
Saint Crispin was invariably kept up by a change of occupation as recreation to the monotony of their daily toil of hammering the lapstone by a pre-arrangement by many of them in laiding the brook or the nets in order to secure big hauls of trout or snigs as they were called. One matron got wind of an intended raid on one of the famous pits noted eels, and she told the neighbours that their Henry had gone for some snigs and she had made her doff ready to make some snig pies. But for some cause the pies were not baked because no fish came to hand. Why, tradition says not. Whether the farmer was in too close proximity at work near to the scene of the intended operations and so had to be postponed on a more favourable chance, or whether it was purposely said as an excuse to go further afield on some convivial or more exciting adventure, but it is sufficient to say that the good old dame did not hear the last of getting her doff ready before-hand, and it is vouched for being true.

\( \text{Doff} = \text{dough} \)

Alas'. Alas! Some of the young men fell into the more resolute habit of poaching and awful meetings occurred between the keepers of the Bold estate, several being caught and imprisoned whilst some fled their country in consequence, and were never heard of again fearing to stand the trial which might be for manslaughter.

With reference to the question who first introduced Wesleyan Methodism into Penketh it has often been discussed, but tradition says it was introduced by Mrs Sarah Gandy, widow of James Gandy who lived in Cobblers Square, and her daughters. One named Amelia Gandy was the mother of Robert Garnett Senior of Vine House who died there on the twenty-first day of April 1877. From his autobiography we cull the following remarks written by him which may throw some light on the matter only a short time before death:

"I have every reason to believe, and have never entertained a doubt in my own mind that my mother was a dedicated Christian in addition to which she had naturally a most amiable spirit. Both she and my Grandmother had, prior to her marriage, January 29th 1805, been connected with the old Wesleyan body and been on intimate terms with some of the preachers long before there was any Society in Penketh".

Then again, page 31, he refers or alludes to –

".......a most unpleasant estrangement though only for a season between my relatives on my mother's side and my father. The Wesleyan had erected a new chapel in the village in the year 1818, and as nearly all my Uncles and Aunts with my Grandfather and Grandmother had joined the body there was no stone left unturnd to induce father to join them also. I should state that my father was a most uncompromising Church and King man, or to speak more plainly his attachment to our glorious constitution, and what he considered as the great bulwark of Protestant principles, viz. the Episcopal Church of England was such that he could not tolerate the scent of Nonconformity in any form, and he almost regarded schism as one of the greatest of sins. This will in a measure account for the estrangement for a season betwixt us and my mother's relations".

Mr John Gandy, brother to Amelia Gandy who afterwards was married to Robert Garnett Senior, and mother to then Robert Garnett Junior used to tell of Mrs Sarah Garnett, his mother, whilst living at the Cobblers Square, having Wesleyan preachers from Warrington having religious services in her cottage which must have been previous to those at Mr Percival's farm which has been asserted was the first to open his house for Methodist preaching, the statement made in public press at the time when the present Chapel was enlarged the last time. - the builder being Mr R W Collins of Warrington, the Architect being Mr William Gwen, the cost of the alterations being about £1,100.00, and the preacher of the special service being the Reverend F L Wiseman B.A. of the Birmingham Central Mission.
The following account is the one referred to viz., “History of Methodism in the village”.

The introduction of Methodism into Penketh it seems was owing to a farmer named George Percival, who lived at the Farm House, now occupied by Mr Cook. He opened his house for Methodist preaching between the years 1812 and 1815. At that time old William Muskett, William Mee, John Hall and William Clarke were local preachers. A class was formed with Percival as leader. As the work prospered it was found desirable to try and procure a more convenient place of worship, and soon afterwards Mr B L Hall gave a small plot of land at the fork Lane Ends, or at the bottom of Stocks Lane upon which was erected a building in the year 1818 containing twelve pews, each to hold four persons. In addition free seats were provided, and they were occupied by the Sunday Scholars during attendance at service, but whenever necessary by adults.

The total accommodation provided was for seventy persons. One Samuel Kelsall of Whittle Hall officiated as leader for a short period. He was succeeded by John Stead (b.1771-d.1845) who was a gardener at Bold Hall, and he came all the way from the Hall to the service every Tuesday evening. It was not without considerable daring that Stead associated himself with the sect everywhere regarded with jealousy. It is said that while employed at Bold Hall directly under the surveillance of Lady Bold he went to the opening of the new Wesleyan Chapel in Prescot on the Sunday, and in the fullness of his heart gave more at the collection than his good wife thought wise. On the following morning Lady Bold sent for Stead who feared that his absence on the Sunday had created suspicion, and might cost him his situation. Her ladyship questioned him about the Chapel, and it is evident he had spoken so eloquently in favour of it that instead of sending him away she commended him and gave him £5.0.O. When he went home he showed the money to his wife and said, “Si thee! The Lord will not beholden to me for what I gave at the collection”. Stead continued to attend the various means of grace, and it is stated that the Housekeeper at Bold usually came to the Sunday service, often driven there in one of her ladyship's carriages. About the year 1835, Dr Smith married and with his amiable wife settled at Ash Villa. He soon began to render valuable assistance for which his many qualifications so well fitted him, and by agreement with Peter Woods a class leader they conducted preaching services every Sunday evening taking the Sundays alternately. From 1840 to 1850 men visited Penketh who had since become known in Methodism including Reverend Gervaise Smith, the Reverend Luke Wiseman, Mr Rattenbury and Mr G B Macdonald.

We now pass on to the year 1859, when it was decided to build a Chapel and Day School. Dr Smith promised the land and the friends set out to collect subscriptions until at last in 1860 the new Chapel and Schools with teachers' house were erected in a more favourable position. In the year 1877 Mr Garnett who had taken a very active part in connection with all matters both religious and educational passed to his reward, and as a fitting tribute or memorial the Chapel was considerably enlarged at a cost of £500 or £600. The additional accommodation supplied the wants of the congregation until recently when it was felt that still further extensions were necessary, and these were carried out by Mr Collin from plans supplied by Mr Owen, Architect, Warrington, to whom we have already referred.

*Note: The next paragraph of the manuscript is rather disjointed.*

Mr Robert Cook of Hall Nook took great interest in the scheme, and also his good wife and daughter, Mr Cook being Society Steward at Warrington for many years, and Steward at Penketh, and his son became a local preacher and itinerant, to his daughter, Miss Cook, (who) married an itinerant Minister, the Reverend Howard (he was Mrs Cook's brother), supernumerary at Sankey Old Hall, still survives. B. Hobson was the first occupant of the Teachers' House both Chapel and School Keeper.
WALKING THE BOUNDARY OF PENKETH TOWNSHIP

(This section appeared as a supplement to the Warrington Guardian 20th Nov 1869)

On Friday morning the 5th November 1869 this old and ancient custom was observed of preserving a knowledge of the boundary of the Township by walking round its limits.

The following persons were present viz. Mr William Tinsley, the Three Elms, Overseer, Mr T Garnett, Senior Assistant Overseer, Mr Robert Garnett Junior, Brookside, Mr William Wheeler, the Poplars, and George Segar, Penketh Hall, also Messrs. Henry Chatterton, B Hobson, J Ford, T J Garnett, Mr W Jones, Common Nook, and

Police Constable Dunn of the County Constabulary, who was in attendance, not so much as a conservator of the public peace but for information regarding the Township. Also there were about a dozen youths invited varying in their ages from six to sixteen years. The place of meeting was opposite Mr John Johnson’s The Ferry Inn. After having indulged in a few greetings, salutation and conversation how and what point to start from, the company by mutual assent appointed Mr William Tinsley as the Captain of the expedition, who at once fell into harness, and soon gave evidence that he had fully thought the matter out, and started, PC Dunn in the front leading the way, down the St Helens and Sankey Canal Bank in the direction of Sankey Bridges to the Culvert named Black Bear Bridge under which the brook flows under the railway and Canal.

The brook divides Penketh and Sankey Townships under the same bridge. The tide backs up some half mile distance from the river Mersey. Here a halt was made, the Captain then jocularly saying “Now lads to work. Here our task begins”. The middle of the brook is the boundary of Penketh and Sankey. Each Township cleans its own hearth. Then, making a dash over a ditch disdaining the use of jumping pole which had been provided, he wound his way along the side of Turkey Pool pointing at the other bridge which at this juncture divides little Sankey and Great Sankey and Penketh. A post was here seen in the Pool Mouth stream which was described as being part of a foot bridge that was there formerly. There was once a pleasant foot-path from Warrington along the banks of the River Mersey to Fiddlers Ferry.

It was stated that the bridge had been pulled down by the late Edward James Pemberton Esq., of the Ash, Great Sankey. A general regret was made that such a pleasant foot-path should be ruthlessly abolished, and further that some strong protests should be made so that the right should be returned to the neighbourhood. A few yards further on the finding of the body of Pownall, the Warrington Man who was mysteriously shot some two years before with its melancholy and mournful details came rushing to our minds. Mr H Chatterton who was on the Coroners inquest pointed out the spot and the position of deceased when found. The land on the Penketh side of Pool mouth was noticed to be washing away, caused by the recent high tides. Turning to the right and turning to Richmond's Isle on the left marching on the cop* in Indian File the party looked most formidable. Several diverged from the rest of
the party at the Cheverel near the Ferry Inn thinking of doing the thing more conscientiously. They were nearly swamped in the river mud, top boots and knickerbockers soaking, piteously bedaubed to the chagrin of the wearers to the great amusement of those who had kept on the cop.

Passing forward in front of the Ferry Inn along the Ferry field, on forward over the Canal Locks which enters into the river at this point, and may be called the new Locks, the old Locks beyond having been filled up when the new Railway was made from Warrington to Widnes, and when the Canal was diverted from the limefield gate and re-made running alongside the Railway on the South side as far as Widnes. The party scrambled through both Messrs Wilkinson's Ship Yard, and also the one occupied by Messrs Clarke and Ford with the intention of going forward on the Wharf Cop. But lo and behold the Captain was missing or "non est". While waiting for him coming to resume the lead someone of the party discovered him trudging through on the Canal Bank about 130 yards away from the Boundary. Mr T Garnett Senior then took the lead "pro tem" and about 60 yards from Mr Oaklands, the White House, it was noticed that the high tides were making sad havoc and devastation by washing large slips of land into the river. The Captain "pro tem" thereupon called a "Chiel to take rates" of the encroachment of the river. Then proceeding on in front still taking the lead to Cuerdley Brook. On arriving there it was remarked by Mr J Ford that the mouth of the brook was now three times wider than it was eight years ago. The leader here stated that Cuerdley claimed the brook and therefore the bank of the brook on the Penketh side was the Boundary of Penketh, resuming the walk on the Wharf Cop to the Canal Bank.

Cop = local word for a mound or bank. Chiel = a young lad (Scottish word).

Mr Tinsley, the Captain, was found walking on the other side between the Canal and the Railway line, he having chartered a barge, which when brought across the Canal all the party stepped into it and was quickly sculled over to the other side regaining "Terra Firma". A goods train came rushing along the line interrupting their progress, it having passed helter skelter bounded the boundary walkers, and stood aghast to see before them a thick thorn hedge, which soon succumbed to the broad shoulders of Mr Jones who, selecting a weak place backed and wriggled through it remarking that it was the neatest and safest way of going through a hedge that he knew of. Mr Tinsley, our Captain, now shouted "Lads are you all right?" and answering in the affirmative he rejoined "That's right!. Now I am in Cuerdley and you are in Penketh. Let's get on as fast as we can, but stop lads, let me tell you this is Cuerdley Brook, and it is the best stream of water for miles around. It is never dry and never freezes over in the hardest frost", and looking slyly towards Mr Wheeler, said, "It is a rare place for snipes." This information would doubtless be remembered and taken advantage of by Mr Wheeler who was an ardent sportsman and never appeared so happy as when going round a field, along with dog and gun, in search of game. The jumping poles were here brought into requisition, there being some wide ditches to cross. Roughing it over or through hedges and ditches and making tracks along and over ploughed fields was now the order of the day. Further afield the party now reach Grimly Brook, and going along
the stream for a fields length or so, then coming out on the highway where the boundary was placed of Cuerdley and Penketh near the finger post at the junction of the two roads leading to Cuerdley. The waste land not then enclosed, stretching alongside the road passing Doe Green has been apportioned to Mr W Long as executor for the land and house with farm buildings on the westerly side of the highway. At the previous Boundary Walking, Mr Wilson, the then Agent for the Cuerdley Estate owned by Sir Richard Brookes, met the boundary walkers at this point and wanted to lay claim to it, but failing to do so, it remained still a part of Penketh though with a right of an 18 foot road by Cuerdley Township into Cuerdley from the highway opposite Doe Green farm buildings, Penketh. Skirting Doe Green on the South of Farnworth Road, there is a narrow patch of land on the roadside about 200 yards long that has been allotted to Mr J Dutton of Penketh Lodge for enclosure. He owning the farm adjacent which is rented by Mr W Pye, the house and buildings belong in Penketh. On this patch a foot race was got up by the Captain for the benefit of the youths who were walking the Boundary, the distance being 150 yards, the winning post being the fore topped Oak Tree. Mr W. Wheeler acted as starter, some four or five youths entered and a well contested race ensued for some distance. There was a neck to neck race between Thomas Davies and Mark Woodward, though Davies by a spurt at the finish proved the winner, Edward Moss being a good third. Across Farnworth Road through Pye's land into the thistle field along side of which the Boundary fence changes four times from Penketh to Bold, and vice versa after noticing the place where the new Railway will cross Cheshire Lines, there was a sycamore tree in this field. A drizzly rain began to fall which hastened the party along passing Mr W Baker's farm at Bold on our left across Back Lane coming to a pit at the corner which at one time was unfenced but has now been enclosed. In January 1867 two females were drowned in this pit by the over-turning of a trap. It was here found that Mr Baker had encroached two yards in fencing the pit. Proceeding forward through Edward Kenwright’s garden and orchard we presently arrived at the boundary of the three Townships, Penketh, Sankey and Bold. Young Thomas Davies was now placed with one leg standing in Sankey the other leg in Penketh, while he stretched one arm into Bold thus being in three Townships at one and the same time. At Knockers Green Wright’s Farm the Boundary mark goes through the centre of an open bay, so did the jumping pole also. The party then went through Wright's front garden, the boundary line, then along “Dirty Lane to Mr James Turner's new house where it was found a serious encroachment has been made. Now onward through Penketh Friends' School yard the boundary line of Penketh and Sankey going right through the gas house onward crossing over the field where the new Railway will be made to Liverpool and Manchester. At this point a halt was made, and a conversation took place with reference to the desirability of memorializing the Chester Lines Railway Company to place a railway station in Stocks Lane or in Meeting Lane. Passing along we came to the bend of the road running from Penketh to Liverpool highway near to Sankey Chapel and noticed that at Smallshaws the “Ashley stone slatts, which covered the ditch running and crossing the said road, did not give enough space or free course for the water to run under, and it was thought that the stones should be raised, and the road made higher. Also that the narrow path of stone crossing the brook at the bottom of Smallshaw’s field was thought to be dangerous for people passing over on dark nights. (*Dirty Lane now called Friends Lane. Ashley = probably ashlar)

We now came to Greystone Heath which had in former times been the scene of many bloody prize fights. One Boscoe, a Cheshire champion fought Jarvis Cross, a Warrington Tradesman there on the top of the Common, near to the Friends' Meeting House, which resulted in both the combatants being heavily fined, the money accruing from the penalty being spent in linsey woolsey petticoats for the aged and infirm women of Penketh. There was another large Prize Fight at the same place on June 5th 1805. Magee and Doloman were the combatants. There was a vast concourse of people to witness it gather together from Liverpool, Manchester and Cheshire. The ring on this occasion was surrounded by Irish Harvesters who were armed with potato forks, pitch forks and sickles ready for any emergency. the outer circle being blocked by the coaches, carriages and other vehicles of the people from a distance. Taking the bank of the brook on the Penketh side, we came to the waterfall or Brimelow's Hollow formed by old Marl pits or Sand Holes, which went by that name. On the top of the mound grew gorse bushes and heather, while in the scooped out
hollow grass grew of a bright emerald green which looked very pretty and restful to the eye. Mr Tinsley, our Captain, here told the party that in this secluded place just away from the highway it was there the military officials punished the insubordinate soldiers or deserters by flogging as the occasion required in those days. The soldiers were often marched to and fro between Warrington, Liverpool, Manchester and Chester. Passing along the edge of the Brook opposite to Barnes House we passed the point where Whittle Hall Brook, which runs under Barnes Bridge on the Liverpool highway in Sankey, joins the brook close to Cowsill Hall, so called, this portion of Penketh being the easterly edge of Greystone Heath. We here passed over the brook into Sankey at the bottom of James Sankey’s garden and Brook Cottages, the boundary walkers now being in the lower part of the field and the Sankey side of the brook alongside the plantation of Mill Bolton’s House which is on the Penketh side of the brook. In getting across the brook at the meeting of the stream of junction near Cowsill Hall it caused young Thomas Davies a mishap in jumping the brook into the field which is lower ground. The pole stuck in the brook which caused him to slip down the pole with one leg coming flop into the brook. While waiting for the laggards to bring up the rear and shaking ourselves on Haltons Bridge, it dawned upon us that the tide must be backing up which we found to be correct on looking over the parapet of the bridge, and a signal was passed along that unless the boundary walkers made haste and put the best leg first the task of completing the work would momentarily become more difficult. So the party set off post haste to the edge of the brook down Common Nook on the Penketh side only to find that in the low lying part of the pasture field past Mr W Jones’s house that the flashes were being rapidly formed by the in-coming tide. Now the most difficult part of the work as the flashes were being widened came the jumping poles more seriously into quick requisition. Mr G Segar, being of light build, essayed to jump first and came off fairly well though he dropped short of clearing the water. Mr W Jones, a heavy bulky man, slipped down the pole in the water, the water reaching to his waist. Mr R Garnett did not fair much better. Mr T Garnett came in for the fair share of the watery element. Now came the last leap which was a much larger flash in going over which Messrs J Ford, B Hobson and T Garnett Senior came to grief, and each came in for being nicely soused. The Captain and the others not so daring went upward on higher ground a little further down and thus saved a wetting. The whole party having now regained the Railway track from Warrington to Widnes now walked straight across with a culvert under foot to the side of the Canal directly opposite the outlet of the culvert or the Black Bear Bridge as it is called, our task being now ended. Those who had got wet went home and got a change of dry clothing after which all with one exception returned to the Ferry Inn where a good substantial dinner had been provided to which 25 sat down and did ample justice to the repast, each having had their appetites sharpened up to the proper pitch. On the cloth being removed, Mr W Tinsley was voted to the chair. An account of the work done was read over, and an animated conversation was engaged in and suggestions made after which the company separated with a wish from the Chairman that some good might result from the day’s labours. This account was sent to the Warrington Guardian by B Hobson and was printed in the subsequent edition, the following week. At the following Town’s meeting Mr R Garnett suggested that a copy should be bought and placed in the “Town’s Chest.” I often wonder if it was done,

*B Probably refers to what is now called the Penketh Chest kept in Penketh Library*

B Hobson.

*Probably refers to what is now called the Penketh Chest kept in Penketh Library*
The "Penketh Chest" was kept at Stocks Lane Junior School for many years and is now at Penketh Library. Its age is not known; neither is the significance of the initials "R R" carved either side of the clasp on the front.

The contents have been removed for safety to Warrington Library, but transcripts and photocopies of some of its contents may be seen at Penketh Library on request, including the original handwritten manuscript of this text by Benjamin Hobson.

Note.
At the time of this event in 1869 Penketh was in the county of Lancashire, and the boundary walked by the group remained virtually unchanged until the reorganisation of county boundaries in 1974. On the right is an extract from the O.S. map circa 1973, and by referring to it the reader can easily follow the party’s progress.

Watercourses formed much of the boundary, and the River Mersey was the southern-most edge of both the County and the village. Penketh’s western boundary was marked from the River Mersey to Doe Green first by Cuerdley Brook then Grimley Brook. Both brooks are now mainly in culverts.

A stretch of the northern boundary followed an un-named brook around The Dale and the High School playing fields to its confluence with Whittle Brook which then marked the eastern boundary back to the River Mersey. The south bank of the Mersey was the northern edge of Cheshire.

In 1974 county boundaries were moved and Penketh became part of Cheshire.

Since then the village appears to have gained a considerable area of mainly farmland and marsh south of the Mersey as far as the Manchester Ship Canal.

Comparisons can be made between the 1973 map and the 1997 map shown on the left, with the new area marked in green.

It is no longer possible to walk the complete boundary.
BUMPING THE MAYOR
May 25th 1904, Liverpool Express

A QUAIN'T DUNSTABLE CUSTOM

Beating the bounds, as the custom is always carried out at Dunstable, is a ceremony which attracts hundreds of visitors, who come from miles around to see the Mayor and Aldermen bumped on the Boundary posts. Yesterday a record crowd accompanied his Lordship and his colleagues, notwithstanding the falling rain. The day began with a short service in the beautiful old Priory Church, at which the Rector founded an eloquent address on the text "Remove not the ancient landmark which thy fathers have set up". Divine service over, the Mayor and corporation, in their capacity of Lords of the Manor, proceeded to the southern limits, where at the first boundary posts in accordance with ancient custom, his Worship was seized and soundly bumped. This year the official victim is of goodly build and weight and to bump him is no small task, but the operation was thoroughly performed. Next came the turn of the Aldermen and Councillors, priority going by weight and portliness. Then the general public were admitted to their share in the ceremony, hundreds being genially bumped. Even the clergy could claim no exemption from the tyranny of tradition, and the Town Clerk himself, the author of the days' programme, was bumped as heartily as anybody.

Half way through perambulation a halt was called, and a free lunch of bread and cheese and beer provided - refreshments most welcome to those operators who had been so energetically at work.

Many other difficulties had to be overcome. At one place the boundary ran through a farm yard and over a tall range of buildings. Just before the beaters got there these buildings had been copiously daubed with tar, the roofs especially being well saturated. But the boundary beaters scaled the obstruction and marked their success by bumping the farmer with earnest care. On the northern boundary a house had to be negotiated, and a large crowd watched some of the blaring of the beaters in their perilous climb over the roof.

The "Litany" pond had also to be waded, a sheet of water so named from being a halting place in the old Rogation days, when the choir and clergy beat the bounds and prayed for the success of the crop. Speakers at the public dinner in the evening were chiefly in a reminiscent vein.
In comparison what can we boast of today in the year 1890? Now today we have three places of Worship, The Church Mission Room with its tubular bells and stained glass windows built on the main road to Warrington given by the late Richard Ockleshaw. Also the Friends’ Meeting House situated in Meeting Lane which runs parallel with the main road on the highest table land in Penketh, and most rigid plain and unpretentious building nearly covered on the outside with ivy in which the thrrostles build and breed without let or hindrance, the small scant headstones on the graves acting as sentinels on guard independent of the purpose of indicating where the dead bodies lay, towards which the bird-nester has more fear than the placards posted on the Smithy door of the Councils and penalties for bird nesting during close time. Also the Penketh Wesleyan Chapel built in Chapel Road on the land given to the Wesley body by Dr J Smith who was a great supporter and also a local preacher as already mentioned. It is to be regretted that the decoration of the interior of the same has not kept up with the times, it being about thirty years since the brushes of the painter tried to adorn it, and make it more suitable for the House of God. We have two public Schools one for Infants presided over by the Misses Sankey as already named built by Robert Gaskell in memory of his deceased daughter, a large marble tablet in the school on the north side of the building records the same, while over the exit at the western end records also, on a small marble tablet, the death of John who was borrowed from Robert Garnett Senior for the purpose of building the School by Mr Gaskell, and he, John Naylor, worked at it all the time until its completion and he had the whole of the ordering of the other work.

And the Wesleyan School, next building to the Chapel situated also in Chapel Road, built also on the land given by Dr J Smith. And here it will be as well to say that in a few years the Day School, before called the Day Star, became too small for the requirements of the Township and neighbourhood, therefore the present Wesleyan School was built by subscription by the inhabitants and friends and it was aided by Wesleyan general Connectional funds. Miss Morely was the first teacher and next in succession was Mr Thomas Bell Richardson next followed Mr Frederick Woodruff who resigned to take a better appointment at West Hartlepool. There was a general regret expressed on the removal of Mr Woodruff who had endeared himself to all with whom he had become associated with. He was presented with a purse containing £33 and an illuminated address at a crowded tea meeting at the Penketh Wesleyan Schools when he left to go to West Hartlepool.

At the same meeting Mr James Watson was introduced to the audience as the teacher selected by the Managers to take Mr Woodruff’s place. He still retains the position and is being ably assisted by a clever staff of teachers. And it is proverbial that he has turned out more apprentices of Church of England parents who have become successful certified
teachers than they have done at the School in the adjoining Townships. So it becomes self evident that there is no fear of anything of proselytizing exhibited by those parents. It is perhaps one of the best regulated and conducted village schools in the whole County. There are also two private schools. Also a Liberal and Conservative Club where the aspiring politicians of Penketh meet and discuss matters political and secular. These seem to have taken the place and superseded the Penketh Assembly Rooms built some few years ago by Mr James Turner a former principal teacher of the Penketh Friends' School.

Penketh Junior School
When Penketh Junior School was opened in Stocks Lane in 1908, just after this account was first published, Wesleyan Methodism, in a sense, “came home”. The original 1818 chapel had been on a site a few yards to the right as we see it here and the Chapel Road Methodist School was absorbed into the new school. The building now houses The Oaks community project.

Class of 1908
When the picture on the left was published in the Warrington Guardian in 2001 it was thought to have been taken in Penketh Junior School at about the time it first opened in 1908. However the shape of the windows makes this unlikely. The earlier school at Barnes Close, which has round-topped windows, is a much more likely candidate. The picture is included for the sake of interest.

Note the slightly blurred face of a much younger child being held by the girl on the front desk.

Also we are minus the Mechanics Institute which was held at the Penketh Infants School but when the unfortunate occurrence of the sale of Penketh House by Robert Gaskell, and his leaving the Township on account of the health and family for the South of England, there was some clause made in the deed that the School was to be only used for the purpose it was built for therefore the Institute had no "Locus Standi" and hence it became merged into the Workman's Club and it also in its turn, became defunct, possibly more on account of not being able to secure suitable premises than the zeal of its adherents or its members.

The postal service is wonderfully improved having now two deliveries of letters per day at every one of the houses in the village instead of the letters being brought on foot by the one-armed man as before stated. We have three mail despatches daily and mail deliveries. Also in connection with postal service we have the telegraph department and in addition to this also money order office, a post office saving bank, and a branch of the Inland Revenue Office where the necessary licences for dogs, and carriages may be obtained. The telephone has claimed a place at Messrs R Garnett & Sons, Penketh Cabinet Works.

Buses run from Penketh and Warrington on two days per week viz. on Saturdays and Wednesdays they being the principal market days in that town.

We have the London and North Western Railway Station at Fiddlers Ferry and a Cheshire Lines Station at Sankey from where, generally speaking, you can book to almost any part of the world. We now possess good roads in place of the old-fashioned cobble stones. We
have good macadamized roads and in many instances with respectable side walks and kerbstones. The traction engine is rapidly taking the place of the four wheeled wagons for heavy loads.

The Penketh cabinet Works still exists. The quality of the work is as good as ever, yet the building and the machinery are still behind the times. What used to be the old brewery is now perhaps, or soon will be at the present rate of increase, one of the largest tanneries in England and in full keeping and equipment of the times, having all the latest improvements in the art of carrying on such a large business. Lighted by the electric light, and in tanning leather is about as many weeks as it formerly took months as also giving constant employment to a goodly number of employees, villagers and others, from the adjacent Township. Further there is a company formed apart from the Penketh Tanning Company for cutting up leather for heels and soles and other portions ready for the manufacturers of boots and shoes by special machinery for that purpose which must have been purchased at a considerable outlay of capital and labour which gives employment to some few other hands. If the Penketh Tanning Company or some other wealthy capitalist could only see their way to procure an unlimited supply of pure soft water like unto the Vyrnwy water which the Liverpool Corporation are endeavouring to carry under the River Mersey through Cuerdley, thence forward to Liverpool, what an inestimable boon it may ‘ere long prove to be although the thought and skill of man with his engineering knowledge is trying its level best yet so far as the old tidal stream has proved itself a most determined barrier to all the ingenious operations hitherto carried out, its treacherous sandbeds or bottom making it most difficult to obtain a solid foundation for the bulky tubular tunnel wherein the two other pipes are laid for the water to pass through them. And should this grand Vyrnwy water scheme ever reach the expectation of the promoters then we may hope to be independent of other erratic sources of questionable quantity and scanty supply. Hence it is already stated some large and enterprising manufacturers of cotton or furriers of various leather or skinners and dyers would take advantage of the clause contained in the Act of Parliament and tap the pipes for the water as excellent in quality for its purpose as a famous Sheepscar beck which the skinners of Buslingthorpe, Leeds prize so much for their lyring of skins. What thriving places Cuerdley and Penketh might both become in developing means of employment for both sexes of the ever growing industrial classes now rising up in the district.

And further the proposed Penketh Public Park Companies Bowling and Open-air Swimming Baths scheme may then be realized, and become jointly both a humanitarian and profitable investment as, ere long it will be a sure certainty, form part of the compulsory educational training of all children that they should be taught to swim during their school days.

The Sankey Wire Mills and the Mersey White Lead Works together with the Chemical Works at Sankey Bridges each give some employment to the residents of Penketh and its surroundings. This is an age of progress. If we look round on every side we see marks of advance.

Some of the old time honoured oaks, the spreading elms and the tall poplars still stand but black and gaunt poisoned by the smoke poured out of the neighbouring chemical and other works at Widnes. Though we must admit that the gases and smoke are not as bad as it was formerly, we trust that the compulsory burning of the smoke etc., is having a beneficial effect on young trees and plantations. Yet the previous trees of years ago, their luxuriant growth, are things of the past, and they point like grim spectres to the work of man and tell their silent tale. The hedgerows and coppices too are fast being superseded by the wire fence. The vacant and available lots are rapidly being built upon. When we note the fact that within the past seven months something like twenty houses have been built in Penketh alone, this should speak for itself as to the age of progress we live in.
The population from the Census Returns of the years indicated are as follows:-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>POPULATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>1041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>1259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Benjamin Hobson,
Registrar of Births and Deaths, Sankey District, Penketh, September 1890.

Before concluding our remarks of what Institutions there are now in Penketh, it may be stated that we have a Young Mens’ Christian Association, a Musical Society and two Sunday Schools, a Drum and Fife Band, that on various nights of the week treat their friends to various functions from different composers.

The Penny Bank already named one of the first formed in Lancashire.

Also Bands of Hope and Society classes. We can boast of a Branch School in connection with South Kensington, and also the Wesleyan Mutual Improvement Association formed by Mr James Dodds and Mr C E Parker.

The Penketh and Sankey Garden and Window Plant Association along with which we have the Cage Bird Association which was first promoted by Mrs R Garnett, to encourage the cottagers to cultivate a love of flowers by growing them for exhibition and further to promote the culture of window plants, fruits and vegetables by the working men of the two Townships. It has been in operation now for ten years, and appears to grow every year. Mr Geo Clarke of Sankey has been the Secretary from the beginning, Mr & Mrs Robert Garnett and Mr James B Aitken has been the president for some years. Mr Geo H Bolton and Miss Bolton have also been generous supporters of the Society's funds.

So we must now draw to a close with these remarks about different things that have occurred up to 1900.

Richmond’s Isle - that at one time was in the middle of the River Mersey at the bend of Penketh Bank - is now washed away, and not a vestige of it remains. The high tides have done the demolition. Perhaps George Sheffield, the black and white artist, may have left some picture of it in the hands of some of his Penketh patrons and admirers.

Fiddlers Ferry is also a misnomer, at least as far as the Ferry is concerned. For some years now the present tenant, Mr J Johnson, who was born at the Ferry Inn, has given up ferrying any person across to and from Cheshire to Lancashire, possibly it may be on account of his advanced age. He must be now getting near to his 83rd year, and it is a pity about the Ferry because it used to be a nice change to go from Penketh to Moore and Daresbury. The cool and shady lanes overhanging and fragrant with scent of the wild roses and luscious clusters of big grannie blackberries is a thing to be remembered. Methinks it is enough to make the poor old Fiddler turn in his grave. And with the disuse of the time honoured custom, with its fond memories of the walks through wood and shade through Norton Priory Park, rising up to the Castle Hill, there resting on the rustic seat on the well kept Bowling Green, and feasting our eyes on the beautiful scenery that lends enchantment to the view, we are led to think of the times when my Lord Rock Savage held his Court out there, and the gay jest and song that echoed through its carved oaken chambers when his Lordship gave his banquets with board ladened with the spoils of the chase of the wild boar and the venison taking an imminent place thereon. Our mind’s wanderings are then awakened by
the noise of our inner man, which causes us to seek the aid of the host who soon satisfies the craving to repletion. We begin our return journey at once. Arriving at dusk we notice the welcome Ferry lights, and shout a boat ahoy when we are hailed by mine host as soon as a swish of the water sends the boat to the Penketh side.

Fiddler’s Ferry

The view across the Mersey looking towards Widnes and Runcorn.

Halton water tower can just be seen on the horizon to the left of centre and Halton Castle can be seen just right of centre.

The white building is the lock-keeper’s office and observation point.

FINIS.

Note: The last member of the Gandy family to follow the shoemaker’s trade was Mr D. Gandy.

When he retired the entire contents of his shop at the corner of Rose and Crown Street and Mersey Street in Warrington were donated to Warrington Museum. He is pictured at the door of his shop, probably in the late 1960’s