

# **AWAY FOR THE DAY**

**Railway excursions and excursionists in the industrial areas  
of Oldham and Saddleworth ca1830 – 1915.**

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## **ABSTRACT.**

The study examines working class railway excursions in the setting of Oldham and Saddleworth; a relatively small area close to Manchester that sits Janus-like between industrial East Lancashire and West Yorkshire, with the Pennines and open moorland forming a natural border. To put the work into context, it concentrates on the evolution of excursions as a social institution in the area, from a point when railways were established in 1830 until 1915 by which time such journeys were diminishing with the advent of alternative modes of travel and destinations. All of which encouraged many working class people to look further afield for their leisure activities. These two ostensibly different areas were linked by the trans-Pennine railways that connected parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire from 1842 onwards.

The study uses research criteria into the complex interaction between availability, accessibility and affordability in the evaluation of railway excursions. Availability comes in the form of the establishment of rail links to and from the area that offered opportunities for a new type of travel and to experience new spaces. Accessibility considers the time constraints placed on workers as they moved from a home based economy to that of industrialization with a restriction on their leisure time and subsequent progress on how they were overcome. Affordability briefly considers the economics of excursions and excursionists that ensured the development of this type of leisure. The study also acknowledges the continuity and change of some forms of leisure activities from ca1830 although their developments are by no means exclusive to one-day journeys by rail.

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## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the Regulations of The University of York. The work is original except where indicated by special reference in the text and no part of the thesis has been submitted for any other degree, or presented for any other award at this or any other institute

Beverly Anne Moseley.



## **AWAY FOR THE DAY**

### **Railway excursions and excursionists in the industrial areas of Oldham and Saddleworth ca1830 - 1915.**

#### **CHAPTER 1. THE FRAMEWORK OF EXCURSIONS.**

##### ***Introduction.***

Any study of railway excursions has to be set in the context of the intertwined strands of what might be described as the early leisure industry, as well as the growth of railways as travel facilitators in stimulating or responding to demand in the regional and local areas under consideration. This case study of the adjoining areas of Oldham and Saddleworth aims to make a small contribution to the history of discretionary travel by train in concentrating on a confined industrial area where railways were crucial to the development of commercial interests, both in a direct financial sense and indirectly by influencing and maintaining the wellbeing of the workforce. It therefore takes into account changes in working discipline at the time, along with old and new leisure pursuits that were, or became, part of a calendar of customary free time originally attributable to religious observation. It also explores how growing working class leisure contributed to the development of an infrastructure that only declined after the First World War when discretionary rail travel began to weaken in the face of competition from motorised transport.

##### ***Rationale for the study***

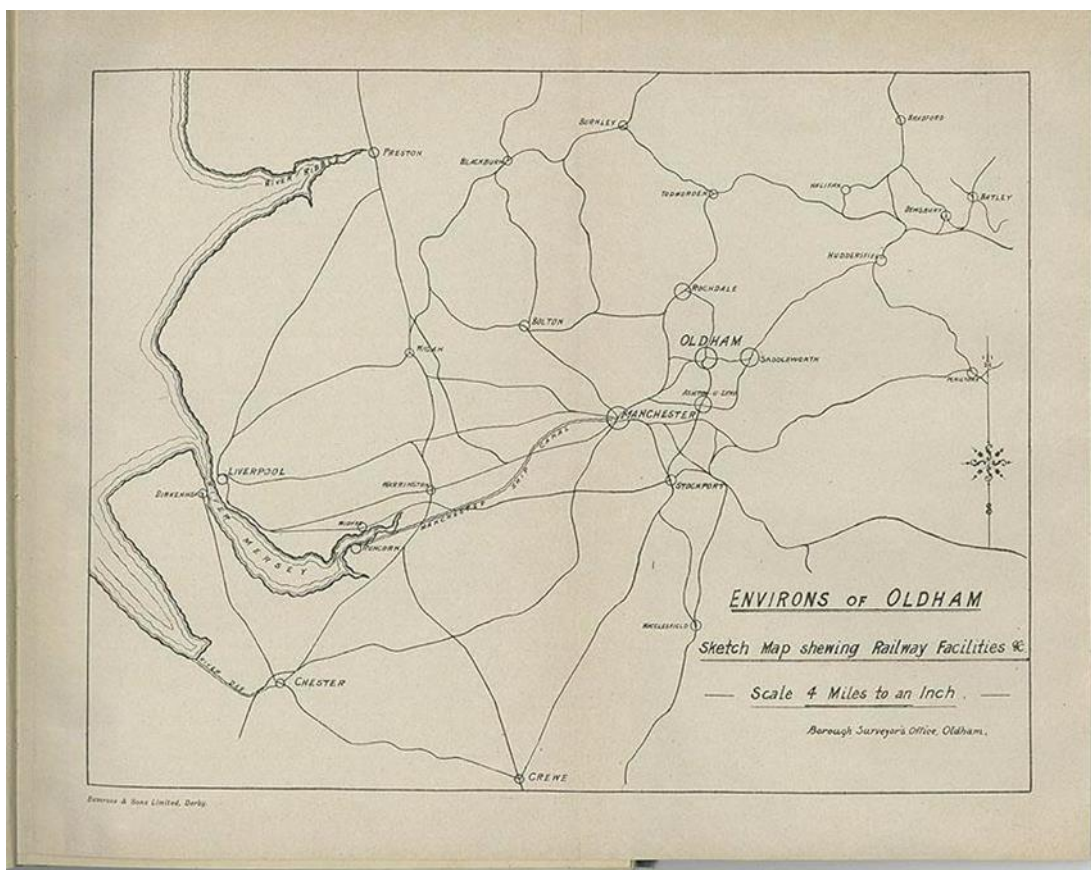
This work is mainly concerned with a period from ca1830, from when both scheduled and excursion passenger rail services were becoming established, until 1915; although there will be some references to periods outside this timeframe to place it into context. 1914 was described by Mark Casson as a cut-off point by which time the railway system had reached its zenith: the three major railway-building booms had come and gone and the construction of trunk lines had ended.<sup>1</sup> The phase chosen was to allow an overview of

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Casson. *The World's First Railway System*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2009). p28.

local developmental issues relating to excursions rather than a comparative study, which perhaps could be undertaken or examined in greater depth at a later date. Most of the work concentrates on a period earlier than that relating to Divall's call for attention to be given to a concept that might address an argument of whether transport can be a sphere of aspirational consumption beyond that which is necessary.<sup>2</sup> Yet as a case study, it could be regarded as going some way towards teasing out some of the questions and significance relating to earlier excursions in the years leading up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The sketch map in Figure 1 taken from a local commercial yearbook of 1918 depicts the position of Oldham and Saddleworth in relation to the regional network by 1915 that will be analysed in chapter four.<sup>3</sup>



**Figure 1. The environs of the railway in Oldham and Saddleworth in 1915.**

<sup>2</sup> Colin Divall, 'What happens if we think about railways as a kind of consumption? Towards a new Historiography of Transport and Citizenship in Early-Twentieth-Century Britain', (2007) p1 [Http://www.esocialsciences.com/articles/displayArticles.asp?Article\\_ID=1179](http://www.esocialsciences.com/articles/displayArticles.asp?Article_ID=1179) [accessed 3rd August 2013].

<sup>3</sup> Clifford Atkins. *The Commercial Year Book of the Oldham Chamber of Commerce*. (Derby: Bemrose and Sons. 1918). Source. Oldham Study Centre and Archives.

Historians have long made the general point that mass leisure needed transport connections between growing centres of population and those of leisure consumption. For instance, whilst acknowledging the possibility that excursionists might wish to travel to areas other than the coast, Walvin argues, that it was the seaside resorts that exemplified the enormous benefits of a railway link.<sup>4</sup> In mid-19<sup>th</sup> century the main consideration, of any seaside area was its accessibility to the home town of relatively poor industrial workers. Even so, in the absence of regulated, guaranteed holidays away from work and limited incomes, opportunities for travel to the coast were restricted. As early, as the 1820s growing urbanisation meant that there was enormous potential for transporting thousands of people out of their towns and cities to the coast or country for respite from their working conditions. Yet pre-rail travel was inadequate to meet a potential demand already manifested on summer days when workers might be free from their labours. Walton's work on the 'Padjammers' or artisans in East Lancashire who visited Blackpool is a case in point and briefly mentioned in Chapter two; as it might be argued they may have set a local precedent for journeys to the coast. For the Victorians, their successors, the seaside and other pleasure places must have had tremendous appeal. The problem was how to get there.

### ***Excursion precedents.***

Prior to the 1800s mobility had tended to be socially selective. Wealth meant that travel could be undertaken by the motive power of the horse, using wagon, saddleback or stage and mail coach. Those without prosperity had to walk. Most would never travel beyond their parish boundaries; work and leisure were more commonly attainable near to home and certainly applied to the area under scrutiny as will be seen in a later chapter. The arrival of railways eventually opened up opportunities for everyone to journey faster and farther than ever before; provided of course that they had the time, the money and the desire to travel. John K Walton reminds us that some resorts

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<sup>4</sup>James Walvin. *Beside the Seaside*. (London: Allan Lane.1978). p39. He also argues that the most striking vindication of excursion travel was to the Great Exhibition in London in 1851.

became extensions of spas that had been in existence since the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and developed into sophisticated centres of relaxation for those who had the wealth and time to do so. The social composition of visitors to spas tended to be royalty, the landed gentry and aristocracy; all seeking to take advantage of the waters and entertainment that the establishments offered. For example, Scarborough, where spring waters were discovered in 1620 and within the possible geographic range of this work, was one of them and from as early as 1667 had publicly promoted the benefits of mineral waters that occurred naturally in the area.<sup>5</sup> Buxton and Whitby were others and are discussed briefly later.

### ***Excursion definitions.***

There seems to be some debate about what constitutes an excursion. Jack Simmons argues that in 1800 at an individual level, an excursion might mean a journey of pleasure, whether by carriage, on horseback or on foot.<sup>6</sup> The idea of providing the experience for a large body of people first began through transport on water and he uses examples of travel by canal that could accommodate several dozen people at a time along with steamboats on rivers and estuaries from 1815 that could carry many more, to illustrate his point. However, once established, Simmons argues, more usually, railways could undertake the business much better by being able to carry at least 100 people at a time. With more than one engine, the total might extend to many times that number.<sup>7</sup> Reid argues that a reasonable assumption for 1846 was that an excursion consisted of just 700 people and that nobody went on more than one excursion a year.<sup>8</sup> However, his interpretation of 'excursion' seems to have extended beyond the one-day trip and may not be comparable with work in this study. He further argues that the number carried in that same year, perhaps 20,300 people, represented exactly 8% of the joint population of Birmingham and Wolverhampton; areas in which he conducted his own

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<sup>5</sup> Walvin. *Beside the Seaside*. p15.

<sup>6</sup> Jack Simmons and Gordon Biddle. *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History. Excursion Trains*. (Oxford. Oxford University Press. 1999). p149.

<sup>7</sup> Simmons and Biddle. *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History. Excursion Trains*. p150.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas J Reid. *The Iron Road and the Happiness of the Working Classes. Journal of Transport History*. III. Vol. 17, No.1 March 1996. p64.

work. The 'monster' trains of the 1840s that did much to publicize rail excursions and are briefly explored later were described by the Times newspaper as "like a moving street, the houses of which were filled with human beings".<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Michael Robbins, in his overview of the significant developments that contributed to the Railway Age in relation to travel classes, notes that the excursion train was the most characteristic product. He argues that an excursion "really signifies travel especially arranged for a particular event".<sup>10</sup>

Susan Barton in her work on the working class holiday as a communal experience takes a slightly different view. By quoting from work by J A R Pimlott, she argues not only "that it was the railway excursion that launched the era of cheap holiday travel for the masses" but that "within the early journeys, there was an element of self-improvement; or some moral edification, which put them firmly within the realms of rational recreation".<sup>11</sup> She then uses examples of both Friendly Societies and Mechanics Institutes as two of the organisations which arranged such 'trips' but suggests the over-riding motivation for an excursionist was the hope of enjoyment.

Poole seems to challenge the concept of rational recreation as a major driver of railway excursion traffic and argues that trips were run for profit rather than moral improvement; he does not elaborate on revenue for whom. He also argues that the cheap trip was too popular an institution to remain a reformers' monopoly. Organisers in the 1860s and 70s included such diverse factions as political groups, bands, sports clubs, factory workers and rush bearers rather than the churches, Sunday schools and Temperance bodies who already had experience in arranging trips and field days.<sup>12</sup> For example in well documented work, Thomas Cook is regarded by some as the founder of organised tourism and is said to have harnessed the new facilities of

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<sup>9</sup> The Times. 26<sup>th</sup> August. 1840. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Robbins. *The Railway Age*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1998). p42.

<sup>11</sup> Susan Barton. *Working Class Organisations and Popular Tourism*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2005) p29.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Poole. *Leisure in Britain. 1750 to 1939. Oldham Wakes*. Edited by J K Walton and J Walvin. (Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1983). p81.

some forms of excursion travel from 1841 onwards to further the cause of temperance to which, as a Baptist, he was dedicated. Simmons argues that Cook may very well have heard from other temperance workers of the success of excursions that were multiplying in other parts of the country, some at half price on ordinary trains that gave him the motivation to arrange his own trips.<sup>13</sup> All he did in the first instance was through the Midland Railway succeed in organising his first excursion, (but without financial advantage) a rail journey from Leicester to a temperance meeting in Loughborough. A special train carried some 570 passengers a distance of twelve miles and back for one shilling. Over the next three years there followed a number of similar journeys with a decidedly temperance character. In 1845, he conducted his first trip for profit with a railway journey to Liverpool from Leicester, Nottingham and Derby. Fares were fifteen shilling for first class and ten shillings, second class, with a supplementary charge for travelling by special steamer to North Wales. Simmons argues that it is a matter of conjecture rather than documentary evidence on how or why Cook's business expanded and succeeded in the way that it did. It may have been related to his meticulous planning and recognition that there was a limit to which he could expect others to adhere to his principles and a widening of his potential market.<sup>14</sup> Chapter four will take us a little farther in determining who the local trippers and organisers might have been.

It will also be seen in chapter four that the experience of pleasure and wellbeing was a constant feature mentioned in newspaper reports of excursions that have been used extensively in the research. Certainly Walton, particularly in his work on Blackpool which has some significance for this study and is discussed later, argues that seaside resort municipalities invested in recreational and cultural provisions for commercial rather than moral and intellectual improvement of the local working classes.<sup>15</sup> No doubt, these developments contributed to the popularity of certain areas. This

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<sup>13</sup> Simmons J. Thomas Cook of Leicester. *Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Magazine*. Vol. 49 for 1973 – 1974 .p21.

<http://www.le.ac.uk/lahs/downloads/CookSmPagesfromvolumeXLIX-3.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> Jack Simmons. *Ibid.* p25.

<sup>15</sup> John K Walton. Leisure in Britain.1750 to 1939. *The holiday industry in Blackpool*. Edited by J K Walton and J Walvin. (Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1983). p163.

thesis argues that the pursuit of pleasure would seem to be a more powerful argument given the numbers who appear to have indulged in excursions that do not readily fall into the category of rational recreation. To add to the complication, Terry Gourvish argues that it remains unclear as to whether railway companies, particularly in the first half century of the 'Railway Age'<sup>16</sup> encouraged the growth of the leisure market or merely responded to demand.<sup>17</sup> It is argued in the concluding chapter that at a local level, the evidence seems to point to a reaction to a demand but is inconclusive.

Whilst this thesis aims to shed some light on the issues just discussed by focusing on the day excursion to and from Oldham and Saddleworth, it should be noted that the area was not necessarily representative of other industrial areas in the north of England. Although Poole in his work on Oldham Wakes argues that, the surrounding villages and towns followed the trend set by Oldham at a few years' distance.<sup>18</sup> It will be seen in the questions that this argument partly forms the justification for this work. As a working definition, the research uses an established meaning of 'excursion' drawn from Simmons as – "Special trains provided by a railway company – either on its own initiative or by arrangement with other people – to carry passengers on a return journey, normally made within one day, at a fare below the standard rate".<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, in this study the term is used to refer to such journeys that ran outside normal timetabled services for a 'day trip' rather than for a longer holiday involving an overnight stay.<sup>20</sup>

### **Catchment areas.**

Although by his own admission some of Walvin's work is not written for a scholarly audience, he introduces a concept in what might be thought of as a

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<sup>16</sup>According to Simmons in *The Companion to British Railway History* 1997, the phrase 'Railway Age' is often applied in Britain to be from the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in 1830 to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

<sup>17</sup>Terry Gourvish. Taken from The UK Transport History and Policy Network Inaugural meeting Workshop. *Marketing Im/mobility*. Held on the 17th – 19th November 2010.

<sup>18</sup> Poole. *Leisure in Britain. 1750 to 1939. Oldham Wakes* p81.

<sup>19</sup> Jack Simmons. *The Victorian Railway*. (London: Thames and Hudson 2009) p272.

<sup>20</sup> It is acknowledged that the word 'holiday' has a certain ambiguity attached to it as noted by Pimlott p12. In this case, unless otherwise stated, it represents a period away from work during the timeframe under scrutiny.



useful 'rule of thumb' in which he sees England as divided into a number of regional holiday catchment areas which feed primarily into local resorts where leisure time might be spent. The regions correspond roughly to the more substantial contours of industrial and urban life.<sup>21</sup> He argues the first most obvious subdivision is the North West (that might include Oldham and Saddleworth) which had traditionally turned to the west coast resorts from Morecambe down to New Brighton and on to North Wales. Yorkshire and the North East had their own line of coastal towns, which stretch down to the Lincolnshire border. It will be seen that many, if not all, coincide with how far could realistically be travelled in an excursion with a return the same day; bearing in mind Simmons's argument that by 1914 every manufacturing town could reach the sea by rail in less than three hours.<sup>22</sup> A fact that is difficult to confirm, as it is noticeable that unlike normal timetabled services, expected times of excursion arrivals are rarely stated in advertisements.

Yet Walvin adds a note of caution by arguing that there are exceptions and

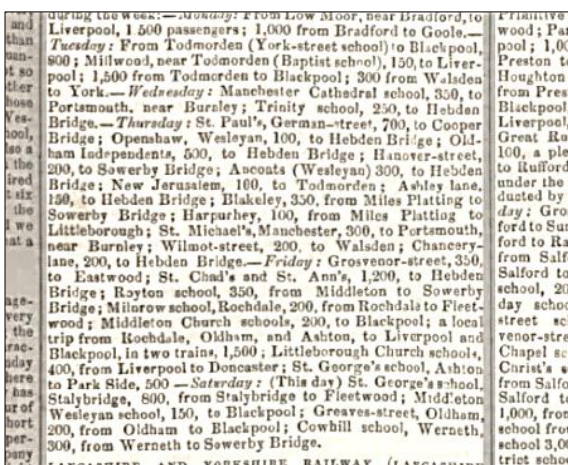


Figure 2. Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser. 14th June. 1851. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

once the regional patterns are examined, it becomes much more difficult to explain why certain resorts came to exert enormous sway over certain towns.<sup>23</sup> This would certainly apply to some of the findings within this work. For example, it will be seen in chapter four that in the early excursions,

both Liverpool and York played a prominent place in preferred

destinations, with Liverpool continuing to be popular throughout the period under scrutiny. Whilst speaking of seaside destinations, Walton noted, that the resorts that expanded most rapidly in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century were those

<sup>21</sup> Walvin. *Beside the Seaside*. p 160.

<sup>22</sup> Jack Simmons. *The Railway in Town and Country. 1830-1914*. (Newton Abbott. David and Charles. 1986). p231.

<sup>23</sup> Walvin. *Beside the seaside*. p 161.



where the working class presence was most strongly felt.<sup>24</sup> A local example was Blackpool, which he argues, was the earliest resort to develop beyond the patronage of the Lancashire middle classes and occasional gentry that are considered later. From what he termed 'a poor start', it had been linked to the national railway network a little earlier than most of its competitors which encouraged it to provide for visitors through steady rather than spectacular growth.<sup>25</sup>

The newspaper cutting in Figure 2 from the Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser shows that considerable numbers of passengers were already travelling to Liverpool and Blackpool in 1851 by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway that was incorporated in 1847 and an



**Picture 1. Blackpool Promenade. 1867.**

**Source; [Amounderness.co.uk/blackpool-improvements](http://Amounderness.co.uk/blackpool-improvements) 1863.**

amalgamation of several important lines. The chief of which was the Manchester and Leeds Railway (incorporated in 1836) and as will be seen, significant to railway excursion development in Oldham. Picture one depicts an early view of Blackpool promenade that was to evolve over many years with piecemeal development by various landowners without planning permission, building lines or streets. Picture two shows the progress by 1907 and illustrates some of the facilities that had been provided to tempt excursionists to visit.

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<sup>24</sup> John K Walton. The demand for working class seaside holidays in Victorian England. *Economic History Review*. Vol. 34. Issue 2. May 1981. p251.

<sup>25</sup> Walton. *The Blackpool Landlady*. p14.



Picture 2. Blackpool Tower and Promenade 1907.  
Source: [Amounderness.co.uk/blackpoolguidebook](http://Amounderness.co.uk/blackpoolguidebook).

### ***The consumption of leisure.***

This study also helps to shed more light on the debates over the social consumption of working class leisure. For example, Cunningham in his work on leisure in the Industrial Revolution argued that the working class usually sought its leisure in occupational groupings or in unique cultures that developed around specific trades. Although occupational cultures declined as the commercial leisure industry expanded and more amorphous groups of passengers were formed, they remained important throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>26</sup> Urry's work on the tourist gaze sought to analyse how and why for short periods, people left their normal place of work and residence that produced a rapid growth in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries of the new forms of mass leisure activity.<sup>27</sup> In particular, he argued that a feature of holiday making was that it should be enjoyed collectively.<sup>28</sup> These arguments are taken up later in this study where it will be seen that destinations that could facilitate sea bathing were important to the Oldham and Saddleworth

<sup>26</sup> Hugh Cunningham. *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution 1780-1880*. (New York: Croom Helm. 1980). p67.

<sup>27</sup> John Urry. *The Tourist Gaze*. (London: Sage Publications. 2008). p18.

<sup>28</sup> Urry. *The Tourist Gaze*. p20.

residents in the early years of tourism. Moreover the local populace could and did travel with people they knew and involved themselves in activities that they recognised. Social historian A J R Pimlott's work began in 1930 and is still regarded as one of the most scholarly introductions to holidays and the philosophy of the 'growth of enjoyment' behind them.<sup>29</sup> In a standard reference work first published in 1947 and revised in 1976, he identified the perceived importance of fashionable London physician Dr. Richard Russell whose views in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century were claimed to be the most influential in popularising the utilisation of seawater and what Walvin termed, 'medical orthodoxy, that the efficacy of seawater was superior to those cures found at inland spas for numerous medical conditions.'<sup>30</sup> Although somewhat cynically, Pimlott argues that it was inevitable that seawater would essentially supplement inadequate supplies of spa water for the numbers clamouring to use them. Used both internally and externally for the same purposes as spa waters, Russell extolled the value of the sea round Brighton; a favourite resort of the royals at the time for almost forty years and where he practiced medicine. His model of a resort that had health giving qualities is identified by Gray, whose academic interest is in the development of them from an architectural point of view.<sup>31</sup> He describes the model as "neat and tidy, distant from any river mouth to ensure high waves and a sufficiently salty sea, with a beach that was sandy and flat making easy use of bathing machines". Russell's ideas came to be widely acclaimed in England and abroad and applied to other coastal areas that claimed they fitted his perfect topography.

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<sup>29</sup> J A R Pimlott. *The Englishman's holiday*. (Trowbridge: Harvester. 1976). p52.

<sup>30</sup> Walvin. *Beside the seaside*. p67.

<sup>31</sup> Fred Gray. *Designing the Seaside*. (London: Reaktion Books. 2006) p22.



Figure 3. Manchester Times. 11<sup>th</sup> July 1840. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

## Sea Bathing

According to Walton, the leading early resorts were in the south east close to the wealth and high fashion of London. Compared with them, Blackpool and a number of other coastal areas in the North

West were in range of the areas under

scrutiny in this work but were comparatively small and rustic. Nevertheless they developed, survived and somehow met demand.<sup>32</sup> Although the research concentrates on provision ostensibly for the working class, it could be argued that excursions, particularly to the coast might have appealed to a broad spectrum of attitudes to leisure. These would range from limited dedication to the pursuit of physical, moral and health improvement, to the diffuse desire to have a spree away from the depressing constraints of the work environment. The earliest excursions responded to and may have stimulated the demand through cheap travel and the prospect of sea bathing. However, Figure 3 from the Manchester Times of 1840 indicates the tortuous and partial rail journey with completion by coach that prospective sea bathers

extensive premises in Mayes-street and Miller-street, he is enabled to carry on his business with little or no interruption. A continuance of their favours, under the present peculiar circumstances, is respectfully solicited, and will be thankfully received.—45 and 50, Shudehill, August 5, 1845.

**PRESTON AND WYRE RAILWAY COMPANY.**

**CHEAP PLEASURE TRIPS TO FLEETWOOD, BLACKPOOL, LYTHAM, ISLE OF MAN, &c., ON SUNDAYS.**

A Third-Class Train leaves Manchester and Bolton Railway Station, New Bailey street, Salford, at seven o'clock in the morning, with passengers for Fleetwood, Poulton (Blackpool Station,) and Kirkham (Lytham Station;) returning from Fleetwood at half-past five in the afternoon. Fare, there and back, 4s. each. The railway journey each way is performed under two hours and a half. At Poulton passengers can be booked to Blackpool by omnibus, which waits the arrival of the train. Fare, 9d.; there and back same day, 1s. 3d.—Excursion steamers ply every Sunday from Fleetwood, on short sea trips, to Piel Harbour, Glasson Dock, &c. &c.

**ON SATURDAY AFTERNOONS**

Double Tickets are issued at the Manchester and Bolton Railway Station for Lytham, Blackpool, and Fleetwood, by the 1 45 and 3 50 trains; to return on Monday morning from Fleetwood by the seven and nine o'clock trains; and from Lytham and Blackpool by omnibuses in connection, which leave at half-past six and half-past eight. Fares from Manchester to Lytham, Blackpool, or Fleetwood and back, including omnibus hire both ways, first class, 12s.; second class, 8s.

**DAILY EXPRESS TRAIN.**

An Express Train, of First and Second-class Carriages, leaves the Manchester and Bolton Railway Station, every afternoon (Sundays excepted), at a quarter-past five o'clock, with passengers for Lytham, Blackpool, and Fleetwood, performing the journey through in two hours.—Passengers by this train arrive in time for the steamers to Belfast, Glasgow, &c.

**ISLE OF MAN AND BACK.**

Passengers are booked to Douglas, Isle of Man, by railway to Fleetwood, and thence per iron steamer, *Orion*, on Saturdays, by the 11 15 morning train, to return on Monday, at the following low rates:—First-class railway and saloon, 7s.; second-class and saloon, 15s.; third-class and fore-cabin, 10s.—Fleetwood, 20th July, 1845.

**BIBLES, PRAYER BOOKS, CHURCH SERVICES, &c., of the newest and most approved editions, and from the establishments of the first London binders.**

**BIBLES and PRAYER BOOKS**—in cases, all sizes, and in plain and elegant turkey morocco, and velvet bindings.

**CHURCH SERVICES**, in unadorned roan, morocco, (plain and elegant,) russet, tortoise-shell, and velvet bindings.

Figure 4. The Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser. 20<sup>th</sup> September 1845. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

<sup>32</sup> Walton. *Wonderlands by the Waves*. p1.



had to undertake to get from Manchester to Southport before a direct line was established.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, in the early days, excursionists needed a determination to make the journey. As late as 1845, Figure 4 shows cheap pleasure trips to Fleetwood, Blackpool, Lytham and the Isle of Man from Manchester via Poulton for the cheapest return fare of four shillings onward journey has to be completed by omnibus for an additional charge of one shilling and three pence.

evening.  
Manchester, May 1, 1854. BY ORDER.

**L**ANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.  
GRAND EXCURSION TRAINS, on MONDAYS (August 7th, 14th, 21st, and 28th), to Liverpool, Waterloo, New Brighton, Isle of Man, Balaclava, Furness Abbey, Fleetwood, Chester, Shrewsbury, Banbury, Carnarvon, Holyhead, Beaumaris, Llandudno, Menai Bridge, Dublin, Blackpool, Whalley, and Clitheroe, affording the utmost facilities, both as to fares and dates, for visiting and returning during the summer season some of the most attractive localities in England and Ireland. By Special Train from Salford Station at 7 35 a.m.; Miles Platting, 6 30 a.m. Fares as usual. Covered Carriages returning any day up to September 9th, 1854. Full particulars in small bills.

BY ORDER.  
Superintendent's Office, Victoria Station,  
Manchester, August 4, 1854.

**L**ANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY.  
SATURDAY SEA-BATHING TRIPS TO LIVERPOOL, FLEETWOOD, AND BLACKPOOL, AND BACK.—Trains to all the above places will run weekly, on Saturdays, during the summer as follows:—

From	p.m.	From	p.m.
Stalybridge .....	2 45	Blue Pits .....	3 35
Ashton .....	2 50	Heywood .....	3 45
Miles Platting .....	3 15	Bury .....	4 0
Oldham .....	2 50	Black Lane .....	4 6
Middleton .....	3 25	Bolton .....	4 25
Rochdale .....	3 25		

Arriving at Liverpool about 6 0; Blackpool and Fleetwood, about 6 30 p.m.—Fare, There and Back, 3s, returning by any third class train up to the Monday night following.—A third class train leaves Liverpool for Southport at 8 0 p.m. Fare, 1s 6d. Returning on Monday, at 3 45, third class.

BY ORDER.  
Superintendent's Office, Victoria Station,  
Manchester, July 31, 1854.

**L**ANCASHIRE AND YORKSHIRE RAILWAY

Figure 5 shows a much greater range of destinations offered by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway that could be experienced in covered carriages by 1854 and at reduced fares. Despite differences of opinion on the best ways to use it, few 19<sup>th</sup> century commentators disputed the value of the sea at the time.

Figure 5. Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser. 5<sup>th</sup> August.1854. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

Thus the notion of travel to the coast for beneficial

purposes was the start of what eventually became a thriving industry in the late 19th century and an introduction to the concept of seaside holidays as they grew out of excursions. Yet it will be seen in a later chapter that locally, day trips to inland areas, for example Liverpool, York and Belle Vue, a pleasure park on the outskirts of Manchester, were also popular and no doubt had a beneficial effect of a different kind that will be discussed later.

### **Excursionists.**

Walton makes a distinction between visitors to the coast for sea bathing purposes that might also be applied to other areas of interest. He argues that

<sup>33</sup> Manchester Times. 11<sup>th</sup> July 1840. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

on the one hand, there was the 'polite culture' drawn from those who previously tended to visit spas and then encouraged some coastal areas to develop and become a commercial proposition. On the other hand, was the popular culture of custom and oral tradition of what he called the 'lower orders'.<sup>34</sup> The 'popular' aspect is of relevance to this work given that the study concentrates on an industrial area with a high proportion of the working class. Their use of leisure time and a reputation for adhering to the familiar are discussed later. Despite the difficulties of making these early journeys, Poole argues that over the years there was a strong counter-attractionist ideology in existence where the seaside was seen as more physically and morally healthy than the degenerate domestic 'wakes' that will be examined in more depth later.<sup>35</sup>

Certainly, the qualities of sea bathing and associated facilities that followed came to be recognised and offered the possibility for a mass experience that widened the horizons and changed the expectations of working class consumers. Yet it will be seen that for the industrial workforce, in the early years of the Railway Age the day trip offered the best potential prospect of a time away from work that was affordable and available. The leisure industry was one of the most spectacular growth areas of a maturing industrial economy; railways played a leading part in this growth. Nationally, by the 1840s railway passenger services were beginning in a limited fashion to democratise travel for both work and leisure purposes. From the first major passenger railway that in 1830 connected Liverpool and Manchester, the two great industrial centres of the north, links were created that proved advantageous to the study areas. The key starting point for potential excursionists in the early years was Manchester, some six to ten miles away; that Casson defines as having the potential to become a hub, focusing on the interchange of traffic but did not fulfil its promise because passenger routes did not join up there. Each railway company or group of companies

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<sup>34</sup> John Walton. *Wonderland by the Waves*. p8.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Poole. Oldham Wakes. *Leisure in Britain. 1780 -1939*. Eds. John K Walton and James Walvin. (Manchester: Manchester University Press.1983) p 80.

had its own terminus in the city.<sup>36</sup> However, it would be a number of years before they could expect to travel by rail from their home areas with ease. It will be seen that as early as 1842, the inhabitants of Oldham and Saddleworth could make part of the journey by train but only by travelling on foot or by horse and cart to Middleton Junction, the first station to be established in the area. In anticipation of the arrival of the railway, Chapter three will examine the difficulties encountered in establishing rail connections to the vicinity. It will be seen that distinctions in travel class appear to have been more about degrees of comfort on the journey and ability to pay, rather than attributable to position at birth, with fare structures for first and second classes corresponding to inside and outside seating on stage coaches. Walvin remarks that the English working person took his primitively crude, third class seat that was cramped and open to the elements for many of their early journeys.<sup>37</sup> Major's work identifies that railway companies appeared to make few efforts to improve their rolling stock and station facilities to meet the needs of huge excursion crowds.<sup>38</sup> Facts that do not seem to have deterred the many thousands of day-trippers who travelled to the coast and elsewhere which will be discussed later. Picture three is of an ornamental frieze from the Thomas Cook Memorial Building in Leicester, displaying excursions and may well confirm the use of open and basic carriages by the company as late as 1851.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Mark Casson. *The World's First Railway System*. (Oxford. Oxford University Press. 2009) p2.

<sup>37</sup> Walvin. *Beside the Seaside*. p37.

<sup>38</sup> Susan Major. Ph.D. thesis, p289.

<sup>39</sup> Ornamental frieze from Thomas Cook Memorial Building in Leicester. Source: [Britishlistedbuilding.co.uk/the-Thomas-cook-building](http://Britishlistedbuilding.co.uk/the-Thomas-cook-building).



Picture three. Ornamental frieze from Thomas Cook Memorial Building in Leicester. Source: [Britishlistedbuilding.co.uk/the-Thomas-cook-building](http://Britishlistedbuilding.co.uk/the-Thomas-cook-building).





Figure 6. Midland Railway Poster.1851. Source: National Railway Museum.

them from the north. The four hundred mile return journey from York cost five shillings by the Midland Railway. (See Figure 6). The Great Northern Railway charged more for a similar distance. (See Figure 7.) Chapter two has further discussion.

In addition to everyday services and timetables established for local work and leisure purposes, Barker and Savage remind us that large excursion trains loaded with passengers of all social classes were also able to travel to national events.<sup>40</sup> The sizes of which are difficult to comprehend. For example, the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London is said to have attracted six million people to the event, thousands of

<sup>40</sup> T C Barker and C I Savage. *An Economic History of Transport in Britain*. (London: Hutchinson. 1974). p83.

# GREAT NORTHERN RAILWAY.

THE FOLLOWING

## CHEAP TRAINS

FOR THE

## GREAT EXHIBITION

Will be despatched every Week-day during the Month of JUNE, with 1st, 2nd and 3rd Class Passengers, in Covered Carriages, with the option of Returning, by any of the Excursion Trains, on any day not exceeding fifteen days from the date of the Ticket. Tickets if transferred to be forfeited.

	UP.	Train every Week-day	FARES TO LONDON AND BACK				DOWN.	Time every Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday	
			1st Class	2nd Class	3rd Class	4th Class			
11/1	HULL Pier . . . . .	departure	9 30	35 0	27 0	17 0	LONDON, King's Cross, departure	6 45	
11/1	New Holland . . . . .		10 20	35 0	27 0	17 0	PETERBOROUGH . . . . .	arrival	9 50
11/1	Uleby . . . . .		10 35	33 0	25 0	16 0	Ditto . . . . .	departure	10 5
11/1	GREAT GRIMSBY . . . . .		11 10	29 0	21 6	13 0	BOSTON . . . . .	arrival	11 15
11/1	Waltham and Humberstone . . . . .		11 18	28 0	21 0	13 0	Ditto . . . . .	departure for Hull	2 0
11/1	Holton-le-Clay . . . . .		11 24	27 6	20 6	13 0	Sibsey . . . . .		2 10
11/1	North Thoresby . . . . .		11 33	27 0	20 0	12 6	Old Leake and Wrangle . . . . .		2 14
11/1	Ludborough . . . . .		11 39	27 0	20 0	12 6	East Vile and New Leake . . . . .		2 23
11/1	LOUTH . . . . .		12 0	26 0	20 0	12 6	Little Steeping . . . . .		2 32
11/1	Legbourne . . . . .		12 7	25 6	19 0	12 0	FIRSBY and Spilsby . . . . .		2 39
11/1	Authorpe . . . . .		12 15	25 0	18 6	11 6	BURGH . . . . .		2 45
11/1	Claythorpe . . . . .		12 20	24 6	18 6	11 6	Willoughby . . . . .		2 53
11/1	ALFORD . . . . .		12 30	24 0	18 0	11 6	ALFORD . . . . .		3 1
11/1	Willoughby . . . . .		12 37	23 6	17 6	11 0	Claythorpe . . . . .		3 9
11/1	BURGH . . . . .		12 47	23 0	17 0	11 0	Authorpe . . . . .		3 15
11/1	FIRSBY, SPILSBY, & WAINP . . . . .		1 0	22 6	16 6	10 0	Legbourne . . . . .		3 24
11/1	Little Steeping . . . . .		1 5	22 6	16 6	10 0	LOUTH . . . . .		3 35
11/1	East Vile and New Leake . . . . .		1 15	21 6	16 0	10 0	Ludborough . . . . .		3 48
11/1	Old Leake and Wrangle . . . . .		1 25	21 0	15 6	10 0	North Thoresby . . . . .		3 54
11/1	Sibsey . . . . .		1 35	21 0	15 6	10 0	Holton-le-Clay . . . . .		4 0
11/1	BOSTON . . . . .	arrival	1 45	20 0	15 0	10 0	Waltham and Humberstone . . . . .		4 6
11/1	Ditto . . . . .	departure	2 20	..	..	..	GREAT GRIMSBY . . . . .	arrival	4 25
11/1	PETERBOROUGH . . . . .	arrival	3 25	14 6	11 6	7 0	Ditto . . . . .	departure	5 25
11/1	Ditto . . . . .	departure	3 45	..	..	..	Uleby . . . . .		5 55
11/1	LONDON, King's Cross . . . . .	arrival	6 30	..	..	..	New Holland . . . . .		6 12
							HULL Pier . . . . .	arrival	6 37

N.B.—By these Trains Ordinary 1st and 2nd Class Passengers at and to Stations between HULL and BOSTON ONLY may be booked at Ordinary Fares.

BY ORDER,

**SEYMOUR CLARKE, General Manager.**

Company's Office, King's Cross Station, 27th May, 1851

Printed and Sold by T. Agnew & Sons, 15, Broad Street, London, W. and 42, Cornhill, E.C.

Figure 7. Great Northern Railway Poster. 1851.

Source: National Railway Museum.



inconvenience) to inquire for the Lancashire and Yorkshire  
 Railway Company's Office.  
 Manchester, June 14th, 1850.

BY ORDER.

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**LONDON AND NORTH WESTERN  
 AND LEEDS AND THIRSK RAILWAYS.—**  
**EXCURSION TO HARROGATE, RIPON, AND STUD-  
 LEY.**—On Saturday, July 13th, 1850, and on each succee-  
 ding Saturday, until further notice, a Train will leave Victoria  
 Station, Manchester, and Stockport Station at 6.30 a.m.,  
 calling at Stalybridge, Saddleworth, Marsden, Huddersfield,  
 Mirfield, and Dewsbury.  
 Passengers will have the privilege of returning by any  
 train corresponding with the class of ticket up to the Mon-  
 day evening.

Fares: To HARROGATE or RIPON and BACK:  
 First Class. Second Class. Third Class.  
 7s. 6d. 6s. 5s.

The city of Ripon, with its ancient cathedral, will afford a  
 rich treat to the visitors. Also in the immediate vicinity are  
 many objects of attraction, amongst which are Studley Park  
 and pleasure grounds.  
 The pleasure grounds, justly celebrated as combining every  
 natural advantage embellished by the hand of art, consist of  
 about 650 acres. Amongst the many interesting objects may  
 be mentioned the moon and crescent ponds, fountains, abbey,  
 an ancient monastery, founded in the year 1132, the remains  
 of which are deservedly considered as the most interesting  
 and perfect in the kingdom.

BY ORDER.  
 Railway Offices, July, 1850.

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**EMIGRATION TO AUSTRALIA.—To**  
 sail from Gravesend July the 18th, and from Ply-  
 mouth July the 29th.—For ADELAIDE, PORT PHILIP, and  
 SYDNEY.—The fine, new, fast-sailing Ship, PANAMA, A 1,

Figure 8. An early LNWR excursion advertisement from Saddleworth to Harrogate and Ripon. Fares show three classes. Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser. 13<sup>th</sup> July 1850. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

### **Data sources.**

The main shortcoming of most analyses of working class railway excursions is their limited empirical basis. Even with definitions, it is not always easy to be precise about the popularity of excursions as a concept and their endpoints. Unless the journey was for a specified purpose or single event, for example visiting an exhibition or attending a sports occasion, it is difficult to separate out popular locations that could be visited for one day, from places where a lengthier stay could also be enjoyed. This is a problem highlighted by John Urry in his work on tourism and his attempts to define and situate sites as either leisure or tourist experiences.<sup>41</sup> This thesis will show that, neither variable is mutually exclusive. An added complication in assessing the take up of excursion trains is a lack of quantitative data. This is

<sup>41</sup> Urry. *The Tourist Gaze*. pp 2-4.



Figure 9 shows that the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway were still running similar excursions six years later but with a third class price increase of two shillings. Figure 10 shows an early Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway announcement of its new service to the Lancashire coast in 1851 at a time when excursions to the Great Exhibition was held.

Susan Major in her recent work on railway excursions and crowds in new public spaces between 1840 and 1860 noted that new space was an attractive force in drawing workers towards them, a time when excursions were in their infancy in Oldham and Saddleworth and so has little overlap with this study.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, by using a similar methodology it is possible, as Major demonstrated, to gain some sense of excursions by using newspaper reports and advertisements kept by local archives and more recently 'on line'.<sup>43</sup>



Figure 11. Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser. 26<sup>th</sup> August 1854. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

The quantity and quality of these sources is variable. In terms of the study area in this thesis, some of the articles do indicate the number of ticket returns for particular excursions. They also reveal a flavour of some of the favoured destinations for the outings and the characteristics of those who indulged in what became a dramatic change in leisure pursuits and the concept of mass travel. Yet most of the newspapers of relevance to this

<sup>42</sup> Susan Major, 'The Million Go Forth': Early Railway Excursion Crowds, 1840-1860. PhD thesis, University of York. 2013. p33.

<sup>43</sup> For example -The British Newspapers Archive. [www.britishnewspapersarchive.co.uk](http://www.britishnewspapersarchive.co.uk)



study have not been digitised and are difficult to read and print. Some are held by Saddleworth Archives in cuttings or transcriptions from the original newspapers and preserved in a haphazard but legible manner. Tameside Archives hold them on microfiche but similar difficulties have been encountered. Oldham Archives also hold copies of some local newspapers

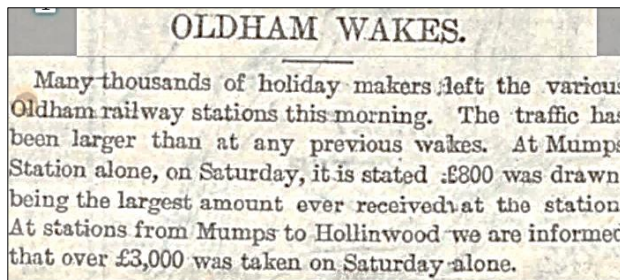


Figure 12. Manchester Evening News. 29<sup>th</sup>. August 1882.  
Source: British Newspapers on Line.

on microfiche. These tend to report on occurrences that are more unusual rather than identifying the numbers of returns or destinations as in the Saddleworth papers and so have hampered the quantitative

analysis by making a comparable study of the two areas impossible but are adequate for a case study. British Newspapers on Line in conjunction with the British Library tend to have more national copies that report on unusual events. For example, the Manchester Evening news of the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1882 in Figure 12 mentions ‘thousands’ leaving Oldham that morning and an expansion in excursionists from previous wakes week but there was no indication of what those increases might be.<sup>44</sup> Whereas In comparison with that to be gained by painstaking reading and transcription from microfiche, a typical item in the The Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter of the 25<sup>th</sup> August 1906 noted quite specific returns of trips from Saddleworth stations to Belle Vue 375, Blackpool 174, Liverpool 100, Morecambe 27, Scarborough 11, Yorkshire Coast 20, North Wales and Chester 26, Ireland 2, East Coast 2. Making a total of 737. By using similar statistics over a number of years, Chapter four gives more examples from which a matrix as a simple analytical tool has been constructed from data relating only to Saddleworth stations to assist in determining where popular destinations might have been. Given the identified difficulties in finding similar data that related to Oldham stations, it is not intended that comparisons should or could be made.

<sup>44</sup> Manchester Evening News. 29th August 1882. Source: British Newspapers on line.

### **Questions for research.**

Given that the workforce had a restricted time available for respite for much of the period under scrutiny, it could be argued that a 'holiday', in the sense, of a more prolonged break away from work than the normal one-day, grew out the concept of excursions and warranted an examination of how they fitted into the pattern of local leisure at a time when railways were being established for industrial purposes but with a recognition that they might have a part to play in discretionary travel. Divall has already posed the question if railway mobility might be seen as a kind of consumption<sup>45</sup>. John K Walton in his work on seaside resorts identified a set of variables that in his view contributed to a transition from a limited free time, most commonly one day at the local wakes, to a more extensive holiday period that eventually became commonplace. He argued that, for the working class presence at the seaside to develop and grow into a full-scale holiday industry with a substantial demand for accommodation, services, and entertainment, five pre-requisites had to be met. They were: a cheap and rapid access to a coastline, a significant income; several consecutive days holiday in the summer months; conditions in the resorts; a labour force that preferred the seaside holiday to alternative ways of allocating free time and surplus income.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, it seems reasonable to examine if they also applied to the one-day excursion from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century onwards from one small geographic, industrialised area, hence the choice of Oldham and Saddleworth, both of which are described later.

This thesis acknowledges the premise that leisure and a leisure industry became a fundamental part of post industrialisation life that would include key events such as holidays and that excursions may have been equally important. According to Borsay, one argument being that they were products of the Industrial revolution and before the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, leisure as a recognised phenomenon scarcely existed.<sup>47</sup> This may well be the case and how it developed from an extensive point of view, is beyond the scope of this

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<sup>45</sup> Colin Divall. p2.

<sup>46</sup> John K Walton. The Demand for Working-Class Seaside Holidays in Victorian England. *The Economic History Review*, 1981. 34: 249–265

<sup>47</sup> Peter Borsay. *A History of Leisure*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 2006)

work other than a relatively brief examination of excursion mobility at a local level to be found in chapter three. Indeed a local study such as this thesis might be able to function as a test of Walton's key concepts. So the research question on which this work is based becomes -

“As they apply to excursions from a local area and within the limitations of the material on Oldham and Saddleworth that is available, to what extent is it possible to identify the variables that existed and operated as forerunners to the more extensive holidays which became commonplace in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond; with the rider that they also might be of more general relevance to all of the destinations visited by excursionists?”

***In summary***

This chapter has provided the context in which this work is placed. Certainly at a national level, the excursion train seems to have been a success at least in terms of sheer numbers carried. Chapter two examines the development of excursions at a local level, Chapter three discusses how the local population moved from an agrarian to an industrial society that saw them having to make life-style changes and how those changes affected the time available for leisure, Chapter four explores how they were able to take advantage of what was offered with groups and individuals being conveyed to the seaside, cities and places of interest, all in the pursuit of enjoyment.



## CHAPTER TWO. THE EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF EXCURSIONS.

### *Introduction.*

It was acknowledged in the introductory chapter that at a relatively local level and before the railway, some workers were already travelling to the coast, on foot or by the power of the horse for recreational purposes at the August spring tides when it was believed that there was 'physic' (sic.) in the sea.<sup>48</sup> The numbers appear to be relatively small in comparison to those in later years and little evidence can be offered as to their home areas other than Walton's work on 'Padjammers'.<sup>49</sup> His belief was that they were artisans from East Lancashire, so might well have included those from Oldham and Saddleworth. However, Poole has another view. He doubts whether the working class custom of sea bathing reached as far inland as Oldham. This is perhaps of no surprise given that the area is over fifty miles away. As the town's railway link with Blackpool was completed in 1848 and that to Southport in 1855, he argues the cheap trip to the seaside soon became part of an established part of a holiday that was to become known as Oldham Wakes which is discussed in chapter four.<sup>50</sup> This chapter aims to examine whether the local experience fitted the national and regional picture of railway excursions as defined by Simmons. That is, journeys for pleasure rather than work purposes that ran outside normal timetabled services and at reduced rates.<sup>51</sup> Taken into account is the debate on whether railways were the first mode of transport to offer opportunities for mass travel for leisure, rather than at an individual level. Therefore, a brief explanation will not be out of place here.

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<sup>48</sup> James Walvin *Beside the seaside*. p31. Walvin attributes the concept to traveller Richard Ayton who in 1813 found that Blackpool's physic in the sea was "of a most comprehensive description, combining all the virtues of all the drugs in the doctor's shop and of course a cure for all varieties of disease".

<sup>49</sup> John K Walton. *The Blackpool Landlady*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1978) p123.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Poole et al. *Leisure in Britain. Oldham Wakes*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1983) p81.

<sup>51</sup> Jack Simmons. *The Victorian Railway*. (London: Thames and Hudson. 2009.) p272.

### ***The place of excursions in transport history.***

Although there has been some debate about the purpose behind railway excursions, it will be seen that they clearly fit within the overarching concept of travel for pleasure and throughout this work excursions are briefly placed within the context of transport and mobility history rather than being regarded as exclusively the domain of railway history. Jack Simmons set the scene by arguing that by 1800 an excursion might mean a “journey of pleasure” that could be taken on horseback, carriage or on foot; but accepts that the idea of offering such trips for larger numbers at any one time came from providing journeys on water and later by rail.<sup>52</sup> Although built for industrial purposes,

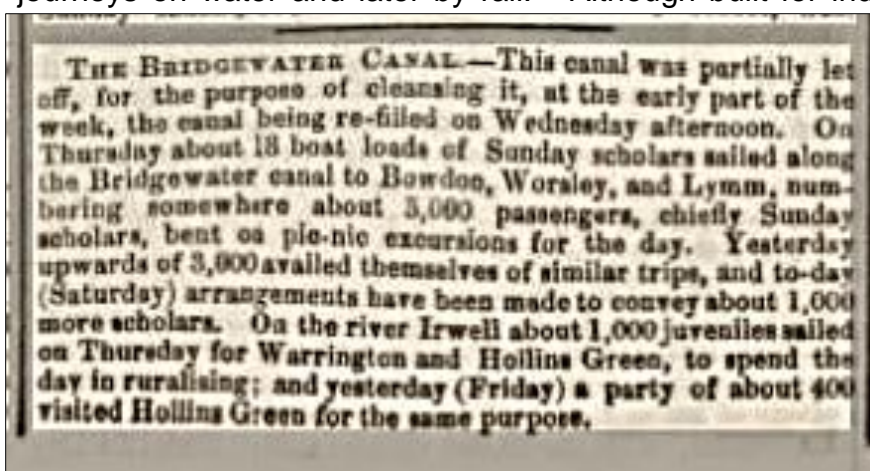


Figure 13. Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser. 14<sup>th</sup> June. 1851. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

some of the later canals were carrying substantial numbers of passengers, many purely for leisure

purposes. Charles Hadfield and Gordon

Biddle take us a little farther by highlighting the delights of passenger travel on a portion of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal in the ‘state and after’ cabins at a cost of one shilling and sixpence for a single journey and two shillings for a return fare.<sup>53</sup> However, as Hadfield points out, this type of travel was only available at a few places and over short distances.<sup>54</sup>

An unusual local example as late as 1851 can be found and re-inforces the concept that travel could be undertaken for pleasure and would involve substantial numbers. The Manchester Courier and Lancashire General

<sup>52</sup> Jack Simmons et al. *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History. Excursion Trains.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press. 1999) p149.

<sup>53</sup> Charles Hadfield and Gordon Biddle. *The Canals of North West England.* (Newton Abbott: David and Charles.1970.) p254.

<sup>54</sup> Charles Hadfield. *British Canals: An Illustrated History.* (Newton Abbott. David & Charles, 1979) p160.

Advertiser (Figure13) reported that the Bridgewater Canal built almost exclusively for industrial purposes was capable of hosting large numbers on picnic excursions for the day.<sup>55</sup> The newspaper identified that 18 boatloads of Sunday school children numbering about 5000 had been carried along the canal from an unnamed starting point to Bowden, Worsley and Lymm on the 14<sup>th</sup> June. 1851. A similar number had been carried on the previous day and a further 1,000 pupils were expected on the 15<sup>th</sup> June. The river Irwell also carried about 1,000 young people sailing to Warrington and Hollins Green to spend the day 'ruralising'. (Sic).

Philip Bagwell and Peter Lyth also cite numerous references to pleasure travel by water that were country wide and argue that the value of coastal transport around Britain was enhanced by its rivers; the navigable portions of which flowed into the sea in a manner which allowed river and canal navigation to connect almost seamlessly with coastal shipping.<sup>56</sup> Terry Gourvish uses the phrase 'leisure market services' as an alternative to 'excursions'. He argues that historical research and agreed by Simmons, confirms that 'excursions' as a concept were part of transport products offered by canals and more particularly, estuarial and coastal shipping before the railways. Such modes of transport were certainly capable of carrying passengers and did so but were subject to the vagaries and unpredictable nature of the weather, although the application of steam power in the early 19th century did at least alleviate some of the uncertainty of this type of travel.<sup>57</sup> Gourvish then uses examples of leisure travel from Glasgow along the Clyde, trips from London along the Thames to Gravesend and by sea from London to Margate: when competition with early railways allowed them to use their lower overheads and exploit the seasonality of leisure to support his case. He also argued that early excursionists seemed to prefer cheapness and comfort to speed and reliability that were factors also

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<sup>55</sup> Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser. 14<sup>th</sup> June. 1851. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

<sup>56</sup> Philip Bagwell and Peter Lyth. *Transport in Britain. 1750-2000. From Canal Lock to Gridlock*. (London. Hambledon and London. 2002) p52.

<sup>57</sup> Terry Gourvish. *The Historian of Marketing and the History of Marketing: Some thoughts on discretionary travel by rail*. Paper presented to UK Transport History and Policy Network Inaugural Workshop – Marketing Im/mobility. 17-19 November 2010.

acknowledged by Pimlott who refers to claims from Sir Roland Hill, Chairman of the Brighton Railway Company that they were the originator of excursion trains in 1843. Pimlott describes the origins as 'obscure' and argues that they probably cannot be attributed to one individual.<sup>58</sup>

### ***Opportunities for discretionary travel by rail.***

Despite the uncertainties, it is generally accepted that at national and regional levels, day excursions on any real scale only began with rail travel, particularly after the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway in September 1830. Despite the debate about what constitutes a rail excursion it is clear is that across Britain there were during the 1830s a number of disconnected instances of organized day travel at reduced fares. For example, Susan Barton (quoting from the *Railway Magazine* of June 1954) identifies a small number of pleasure journeys using horse drawn trains for transport on minor railways in the early 1830s and includes them in her examination of the concept.<sup>59</sup> For the purpose of this work, these have not been pursued, as they seem to have been relatively unimportant occurrences. What is more certain is that at a national and regional level, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway, Britain's first intercity line, is credited with using steam power for excursions some two weeks after the line was opened for a regular scheduled service. In its first year the company offered some of the first 'special' trains in the country. For example, in the October, individuals could travel from Liverpool to view the Sankey Viaduct and back in the train of carriages used by the Duke of Wellington at the opening ceremony. The cost was five shillings instead of the eight shillings they would normally have paid. It was followed by a special train for visitors to the Liverpool Charity Festival a few days later and the transport of thousands of visitors to Newton races on the outskirts of Liverpool, in the ensuing weeks. Yet Simmons argues what he terms the first 'real' excursion was run in May 1831 when the company agreed through an independent promoter to take 150 members of the Bennett Street Sunday School from Liverpool to

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<sup>58</sup> Pimlott. *The Englishman's Holiday*. p90.

<sup>59</sup> Susan Barton. *Working Class Organisations and Popular Tourism, 1840 – 1970*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press. 2005.) p29.

Manchester and back again for one third of the regular fare. This, he contends, set the pattern for all excursion trains from then on.<sup>60</sup>

***The growth of rail travel and pricing policy.***

Table one shows the growth of railway construction over the ten years between 1840 and 1850 and demonstrates the potential of opportunities for excursions should the railway companies have wished to follow the example of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway. In practice, the rates of growth of other companies were variable and dependent on the availability of investment in them. It also depended on the willingness of companies to use their resources in this way.

<b>TABLE ONE</b>			
<b>Miles of railway open 1840 - 50</b>			
<b>Year</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Miles</b>
1840	1497	1846	3036
1841	1775	1847	3945
1842	1938	1848	4982
1843	2043	1849	5538
1844	2235	1850	6084
1845	2241		

Source: Michael Freeman and Derek Aldcroft. *The Album of British Railway History*.  
(London: Croom Helm. 1985.) p20.

The pricing policy of passenger rail travel also helped to define the excursion fares. In the early years, regular timetabled travel seems to have been based on prices that were paid for horse drawn journeys. For example Barker and Savage use the following data to show how the early railways concentrated on first and second class passengers, (the old coaching clientele,) and how the picture was beginning to change after Gladstone's Regulation of Railways Act in 1844 as the railway companies came to realize that full

<sup>60</sup> Simmons. *The Victorian Railway*. p272.

trainloads even at lower fares, increased profits. (See Table two.) They argue that even if some allowance is made for 1842/3 being a slump year when railway construction temporarily slowed down, the change in patronage is impressive and the trend once begun, continued. Third class travel went on growing at a more rapid rate than first and second combined during the third quarter of the century.<sup>61</sup>

<b>TABLE 2.</b>				
<b>First, second and third class passengers booked on UK railways in 1842 – 3 and 1847 – 8 and the mileage travelled.</b>				
	<b>Year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 1843</b>		<b>Year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 1848</b>	
	<b>Journeys</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Journeys</b>	<b>Miles</b>
<b>First Class</b>	4,576,540	118,990,040	7,190,779	180,380,695
<b>Second Class</b>	11,998,512	172,778,573	21,690,510	348,467,044
<b>Third Class</b>	6,891,844	86,148,050	29,083,782	378,167,196
Source: T C Barker and C I Savage. <i>An Economic History of Transport in Britain.</i> (London: Hutchinson. 1974) p83.				

Barker and Savage further argue that it was accepted a little too readily perhaps, that fares of a penny a mile on what were known as Parliamentary Trains enabled the working classes to move about much more freely. They then argue that the figures in the table show that it is too optimistic a view although it is acknowledged that the opportunity to travel on excursion trains will be shown to be considerably less than a penny a mile that had been started by the 1830s. Although much later, an example they use is a return fare of five shillings for the four hundred mile excursion from Yorkshire to London for the Great Exhibition of 1851. The spirit of Gladstone's 1844 Act had been to carry the labourer cheaply and quickly to where his labour might be most highly paid. Among other regulatory measures, this act required to carry third class passenger at minimum standards of comfort; and therefore the first statutory recognition that the railways played a social role. It will be

<sup>61</sup> T C Barker and C I Savage. *An Economic History of Transport in Britain.* (London: Hutchinson. 1974) p83.

seen that rail travel did extend beyond the workman's train and became an important part of leisure pursuits in the Victorian era and beyond. It continued through the upheavals that railway companies faced through establishment

and consolidation for almost a hundred years.

In addition to what railway companies might provide at their own initiative, social, political, religious groups and charities made direct agreements with them, or intermediaries who were to become known as travel agents, to convey them to and from a place in a day for cheaper fares. For example, Susan Major's work on experiences of early railway excursions particularly in the West Riding of Yorkshire highlights the engagement of Henry Marcus of Liverpool by the London and North

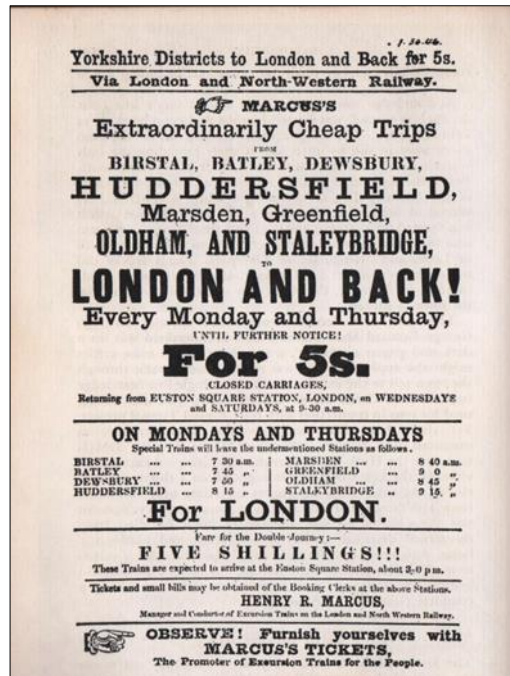


Figure 14. Undated LNWR poster, thought to relate to the 1860s. Source National Archives

Western Railway as the father of cheap trips that reduced the cost of travel for the passengers, while providing the companies with an income above what they would receive through their usual passenger services.<sup>62</sup> One example of his local excursions can be seen in Figure 14 and highlights that local people could still enjoy a cheap trip to London several years after the Great Exhibition excursions for the same price.

Whilst figures are taken from a period later than that depicted in Table one, Freeman and Aldcroft demonstrate in Table three the reported rates per passenger mile in 1866 as fares which can be used to assess the cheapness or otherwise of excursion fares from materials identified in later chapters.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Susan Major, The Million go forth: experiences of early railway excursions. Paper Presented at Cultural Histories of Sociability, Spaces and Mobility Conference, York, 9-11 July 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Freeman and Derek Aldcroft. *The Album of British Railway History*. (London: Croom Helm. 1985) p55.



Clearly the table should be used as a guide only as it was inevitable that there would be fare revisions by some companies to maintain their competitive position throughout the years.

<b>TABLE 3.</b>		
<b>Reported rates per passenger mile. 1866.</b>		
<b>Class</b>	<b>Journey</b>	<b>Cost (in old pence)</b>
First Class	Express	2.80d
	Ordinary	2.25d
Second Class	Express	2.03d
	Ordinary	1.68d
Third Class.		1.02d
Source: Michael Freeman and Derek Aldcroft. <i>The Atlas of British Railway History</i> . (London: Croom Helm. 1985) p55.		

Whilst the focus of this thesis is on excursion trains during a specific period called Wakes Weeks, it is recognized that they did run at other times, in both Oldham and Saddleworth and other industrial areas. For example, the Sheffield & Rotherham Independent reported in April 1841 that during that year's Whitsuntide Holidays the North Midland Railway would operate 'an excursion train from Sheffield to Derby, when "no doubt that thousands of our townsmen will take the opportunity of visiting that pleasant town and its arboretum". It was in this period that the ubiquitous Thomas Cook began as an agent arranging excursions and has already been discussed.

Cook's business grew rapidly and by 1850 it spread as far as Scotland and

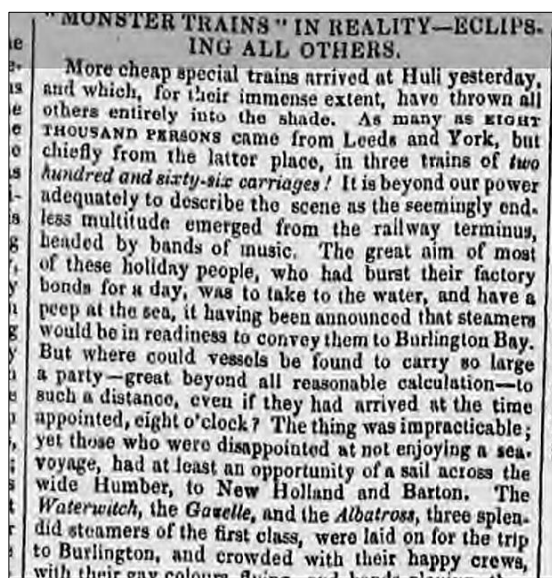


Figure 15. Hull Packet. 13th September 1844. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

North Wales. However, he was only one of many travel agents that appeared in the period.<sup>64</sup> At a regional level, we rely on Susan Major's work to argue the position of other agents, for example Henry Marcus, and to demonstrate that Thomas Cook's importance is considerably overstated, at least with regard to working class excursions. At a local level, the Oldham Standard of the 31<sup>st</sup> August 1878

recognises the existence of Thomas Cook by reporting a 'Mr. Hargreaves, the local "Thomas Cook", provides a tempting list of places at home and abroad to which excursionists can be conveyed at remarkably cheap rates. Then there are numbers of day-trips, to Liverpool, Scarborough, Matlock, Blackpool, Lytham, Southport, Romiley, Marple, Hollingworth Lake, Belle Vue, Haddon Hall, & etc. The PARIS TRIPS have been remarkably well patronized.'<sup>65</sup>

### **'Monster' excursions.**

With locomotive technology limited, and carriages small in capacity, some early excursion trains were huge in size and described as 'monsters.' Simmons quoting the Leeds Mercury of the 14<sup>th</sup> September 1844 uses the example of a trip from Leeds to Hull two days earlier, which carried six thousand six hundred passengers in two hundred and forty carriages pulled by nine locomotives. Indeed, such was their size that in that period excursion trains usually arrived late at their destinations, having had to travel much slower. This meant that the passengers only had a short time at their chosen

<sup>64</sup> Jack Simmons, *The Oxford Companion to British Railway History*, 'Excursion Trains,' (Oxford, 1997), p150.

<sup>65</sup> The Oldham Standard. 31<sup>st</sup> August 1878. Source: Oldham Local Study Centre and Archives.

location, given they had to rejoin the train to return soon after their arrival.<sup>66</sup> One can only speculate on the impact such huge numbers had on their destinations but an article from the Hull Packet of the 13<sup>th</sup> September 1844 in Figure 15, using slightly different numbers gives some further indication of the difficulties faced.<sup>67</sup> Under the heading of 'Monster trains in reality' and described as an 'impractical trip', it claimed that eight thousand people were carried to Hull from Leeds and York in three trains of two hundred and sixty carriages. The paper comments on the disappointment experienced by many of the excursionists who were expecting to 'take to the waters and have a peep at the sea' but could not be accommodated on their arrival. From posters and press reports of other excursions, it is noticeable that many left their areas very early in the morning; some as early as 4 a.m.; but this may have been because excursion trains had to fit in with ordinary timetabled services on the rails at similar times rather than considering the length of time excursionists could spend at their destinations.

An added complication was the shortage of suitable carriages to carry such vast numbers. For example, the Railway Times of the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1851 was moved to report that an attempt to carry over 1,000 passengers from Hungerford to the Great Exhibition met with the expediency of carrying some in open trucks, with the comment that it was hoped that complete (presumably better) arrangements would be made in the future.<sup>68</sup>

At a national level, the Great Exhibition between 1 May and 15 October 1851 was a high point for the early excursion trains. By this time, many small lines had been absorbed into larger networks that had terminals in London. Consequently, travel agents and groups were able to arrange excursions to the Exhibition from as far afield as West Yorkshire. Indeed, the Illustrated London News reported that some groups even set up 'exhibition clubs' to arrange the trips<sup>69</sup>. All companies serving London experienced considerable traffic increases when the Exhibition was open. For example, the Great Western Railway's passenger traffic is said to have increased by just over

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<sup>66</sup> Jack Simmons. *The Victorian Railway*. p273.

<sup>67</sup> The Hull Packet. 13<sup>th</sup> September 1844. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

<sup>68</sup> Railway Times of the 2nd August 1851. Source: National Railway Museum Archives.

<sup>69</sup> Illustrated London News. Ref XVII. 1850 p 237.

38%, the London and South Western Railway's by almost 30%, the London and Blackwall Railway's by almost 30% and the South Eastern Railway by almost 24%. Thomas Cook claimed that, acting as agent, he had brought 165,000 individuals to Euston. According to Simmons, most concluded that the railways and excursion trains contributed to the exhibition's success and that a pattern had been set for the future.<sup>70</sup>

### ***The seasonality of excursions.***

Excursions by this point were an accepted railway activity, even though many railway companies, for example the London and North Western Railway, were not entirely certain they were profitable. At a national level and after the Bank Holiday Act of 1871 the number of excursions are said to have exploded as for some workers, they increased opportunities by an extra four working days – Boxing Day, Easter Monday, Whit Monday and the first Monday in August. At a local level, Bank Holidays were rather less important, for as will be seen later, the Wakes holidays were already expanding. For example, in a good year such as 1860, excursion traffic had already been extended from Monday and Tuesday to Wednesday creating a spectacular crush at Oldham Mumps station of several hours duration and slowly became established even if regarded as an unofficial extension to the holiday. As Walton remarked, “employers had little defense against this form of holiday extension on the upswing of a trade cycle”.<sup>71</sup> They took vast swathes of people to large religious gatherings, coastal resorts, race meetings, cities, sports events and to fairs that many organisations ran.

It will be seen in Chapter three that in the early days of industrialization and until Saturday was made into a half- working day, the only day available for recreation was Sunday. National reservations in relation to Sunday Observance and opposition to travel on the Lord's Day can be found in chapter four. The National Sunday League, which was a not-for-profit organisation set up in 1855 to pressure for museum and park openings on Sundays, turned their attention to promoting other activities and began

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<sup>70</sup> Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p.275.

<sup>71</sup> Walton. *The Blackpool Landlady*. p36.

arranging their own excursions from the 1870s. After a small start, by 1914 the League organised 540 such excursions in that year.<sup>72</sup> For example, large companies, such as the Bass Brewery in Burton and the railways themselves arranged day trips for their workers, principally to the coast. It is said that the Great Western Railway's annual 'Swindon Trip' drained the town of half its population, giving a day out to almost 26,000 people.<sup>73</sup> Ultimately, the growth in excursion train numbers after the late 1860s was still spurred on by people possessing greater free time and the increased range of available lines to take them to their chosen leisure destination. However, for reasons identified in the introductory chapter, the exact number of people using them across the period is unclear. From a regional point of view, as discussed earlier, a Royal Commission on Railways between 1865 and 1867 found that the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, London and Northern Railway and the Midland Railway carried 1,140,000 excursion passengers in 1865, which constituted 3% of their passenger revenue. This proportion possibly grew up to the First World War, when all railways had other priorities and excursions all but ceased. According to Freeman and Aldcroft to discourage this type of traffic, fares were raised, cheap travel facilities withdrawn and appeals made to the public, to avoid unnecessary journeys.<sup>74</sup>

***In summary.***

The conclusion that can be drawn from this brief survey is that the excursion train began to supplement the cultural and social life of local working class populations in the Victorian period; such trains allowed many to experience previously unheard of opportunities which at a collective level were sometimes closely linked to workplace communities and so had work connotations but nevertheless became a source of pleasure with a legitimate and acknowledged use of free time. Chapter three discusses how the local population moved from an agrarian to an industrial society that saw them having to make lifestyle changes in relation to their leisure.

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<sup>72</sup> Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p288.

<sup>73</sup> Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p304.

<sup>74</sup> Freeman and Aldcroft. *The Atlas of British History*. p90.

## CHAPTER 3. THE INDUSTRIALISATION AND URBANISATION OF OLDHAM AND SADDLEWORTH.

### *Introduction*

This chapter explores the industrialisation and urbanisation of Oldham and Saddleworth and takes into account the changes encountered by the local workforce as they acquired their free time and experienced new leisure pursuits in what ultimately became commonplace to the areas by 1915. It also briefly explores how the area achieved its position within the railway network which was crucial to the development of excursions.

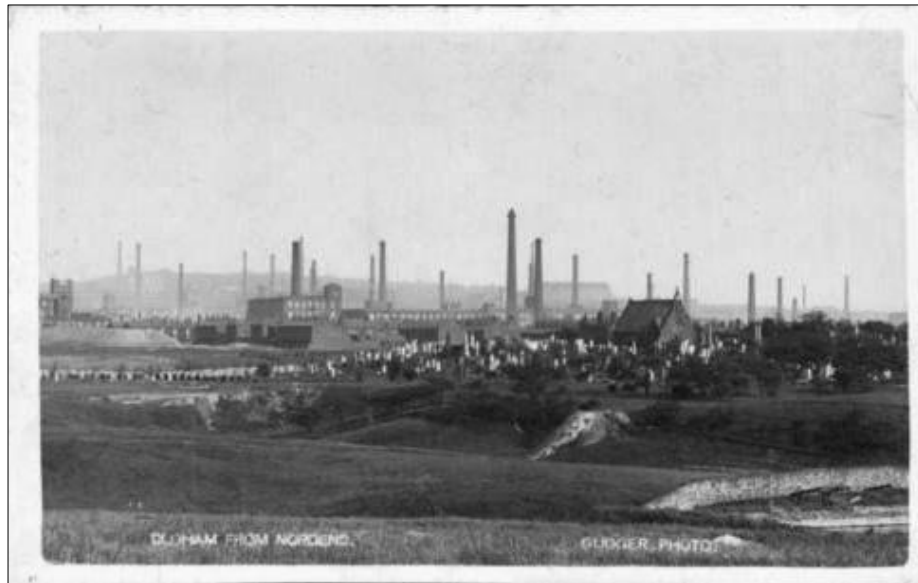
### *Industrialisation in the areas.*

Prior to industrialisation, both the Oldham and Saddleworth areas were dominated by dispersed farming settlements on hostile ground. With a need to supplement or gain an income, the marginal nature of agriculture in this part of the Pennines led to the development of a strong domestic-based textile industry in the 18th century, which in both areas almost completely eclipsed useful cultivation as the main industry. Although Saddleworth was rather later to convert than Oldham, which local historians argue was attributable to the existence of a home based industry already making comfortable if not startling profits.<sup>75</sup> As a result, the district could still support significant numbers of handloom weavers even as late as the middle of the century. Yet the many fast flowing streams and rivers in the area encouraged the building of water-powered textile mills from the 1770s onwards, particularly woollen mills in the Saddleworth villages of Uppermill, Greenfield, Dobross, Diggle and Delph. However, from the early 19th century Oldham was the focus for urban growth, its population rising from just over 12,000 in 1801 to over 137,000 in 1901; with a population in 1830 when this work began of 32,381. In comparison, Saddleworth's population in 1801 was 10,665 in 1801, 15,986 in 1830, and 13,484 in 1901. Oldham's environment became characterised by brick built terraced houses close to the cotton mills. (See picture 4.) Whereas that in Saddleworth was characterised by stone cottages with long upper floors for hand looms built more frequently along the

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<sup>75</sup> Michael Buckley et al. *Saddleworth Villages*. (Saddleworth: Saddleworth Historical Society. 2003) p12.

turnpikes or in clusters and small collections of houses tenanted by factory operatives that later became identifiable as villages. (See picture 5.)



**Picture 4. Old Oldham ca 1900. Source: Oldham Study Centre and Archives**



**Picture 5. The sparseness of Saddleworth. Old Dobcross, one of the Saddleworth villages. Date unknown. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.**

These places were important as locations for stations along the railway lines that eventually passed through the district and were close to the turnpikes that may have acted as feeders for passengers. Both arrangements are said to have given neighbours a strong sense of identity from working and living closely together. The value of this closeness was noted by Edwin Butterworth in his Oldham Sketches when he argued, “the factory system concentrating



the operatives together in larger masses than hitherto, their minds were greatly improved by constant mutual communication. Conversation wandered over a variety of topic, not before essayed.”<sup>76</sup> It will be seen in chapter four that this social and physical closeness may have been a contributory factor in the popularity of excursions by rail in the early stages as workpeople could also travel together.

Excursions need passengers as well as access to railways. To establish if there was a market for them, the historical geography of Oldham situated in the county of Lancashire, and Saddleworth, then part of the West Riding of Yorkshire and at the time surrounded by moorland, has to be understood. The unfavourable geographical conditions go some way to explaining the long drawn out period between the railway arriving in some parts in 1839 and the completion of access to the regional network as late as 1880. By then the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway that was important to the west of the area, had 291 passenger stations on 601 miles of track and regarded as the most intensively worked pre-grouping railway with a monopoly of the trans-Pennine route traffic<sup>77</sup>. To the east was the London and North Western Railway whose routes tended to be trunk lines rather than regional.

### ***Textiles***

Oldham and Saddleworth had both cotton and woollen industries that grew and evolved during the Industrial Revolution. On his tour of northern England in 1849, Scottish journalist and publisher Angus Reach wrote

In general, these towns wear a monotonous sameness of aspect, physical and moral. In fact, the social condition of the different town populations is almost as much alike as the material appearance of the tall chimneys under which they live. Here and there the height of the latter may differ by a few rounds of brick, but in all essential respects, a description of one is a description of all.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Edwin Butterworth. *Historical Sketches of Oldham*. (Oldham: John Hirst. 1856) p136.

<sup>77</sup> Source: LYRS.org.uk. Accessed 10.03.13.

<sup>78</sup> Angus Reach, *Morning Chronicle*, 1849.

However, as Bateson remarked, the woollen trade, perhaps the oldest of local industries declined inversely with the expansion of the cotton trade.<sup>79</sup> In effect, Oldham became a cotton town with a propensity for spinning; Saddleworth developed its own mills but became better known for processing wool, having easier access to markets in its own county. Both came to have sizeable working populations for their respective areas and needed to have substantial transport networks for travel and trade. For example, the Oldham area had by 1911, outstripped its neighbours in the number of mills - some 335 of them.<sup>80</sup> As an indication of the importance and vigour of the railway to the town it has been estimated that 200,000 tons of raw cotton were transported by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway that year to the Oldham area. In any one night trains comprising 50 to 80 wagons left the goods yards in Oldham, Royton, and Shaw loaded with yarn, destined to arrive by early morning in the weaving towns of north east Lancashire. In return vast quantities of 'grey' cloth and other finished goods arrived at the railway company's Oldham Road Goods Depot in Manchester, for onward transportation and transhipment through Manchester Ship Canal docks.

Saddleworth's landscape was largely shaped by economic forces over time. Until the construction of the canal and then the railway, this area of the West Riding of Yorkshire was remote. It was the only part of Yorkshire west of the Pennines. Originally, 77 small settlements of farmers were huddled on the hillsides, the only viable site to maintain a living, compared to the bleakly hostile higher moorlands or the wet, inhospitable valley floors. The need to supplement income from agriculture by weaving sheep's wool and the advent of basic industrialisation led to the taming of the valley bottoms, to harness the power of water to looms and other textile equipment in the newly built mills, and the emergence of new villages. At the same time, the increasing pace of commerce, both that originating in Saddleworth, as well as the trans-Pennine trade via the area, saw the replacement of traditional pack-horse

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<sup>79</sup> Hartley Bateson. *A history of Oldham*. (Oldham: Oldham County Borough Council. 1949) p84.

<sup>80</sup> D A Collier, Duncan Gurr, Julian Hunt. *The Cotton Mills of Oldham, brief history and gazetteer*. 3rd ed. (Oldham: Oldham Education and Leisure Services). 1998. p28.

and drovers routes by a network of turnpike roads and branches which could be joined by local people from their home areas.

**Early transport in the area.**

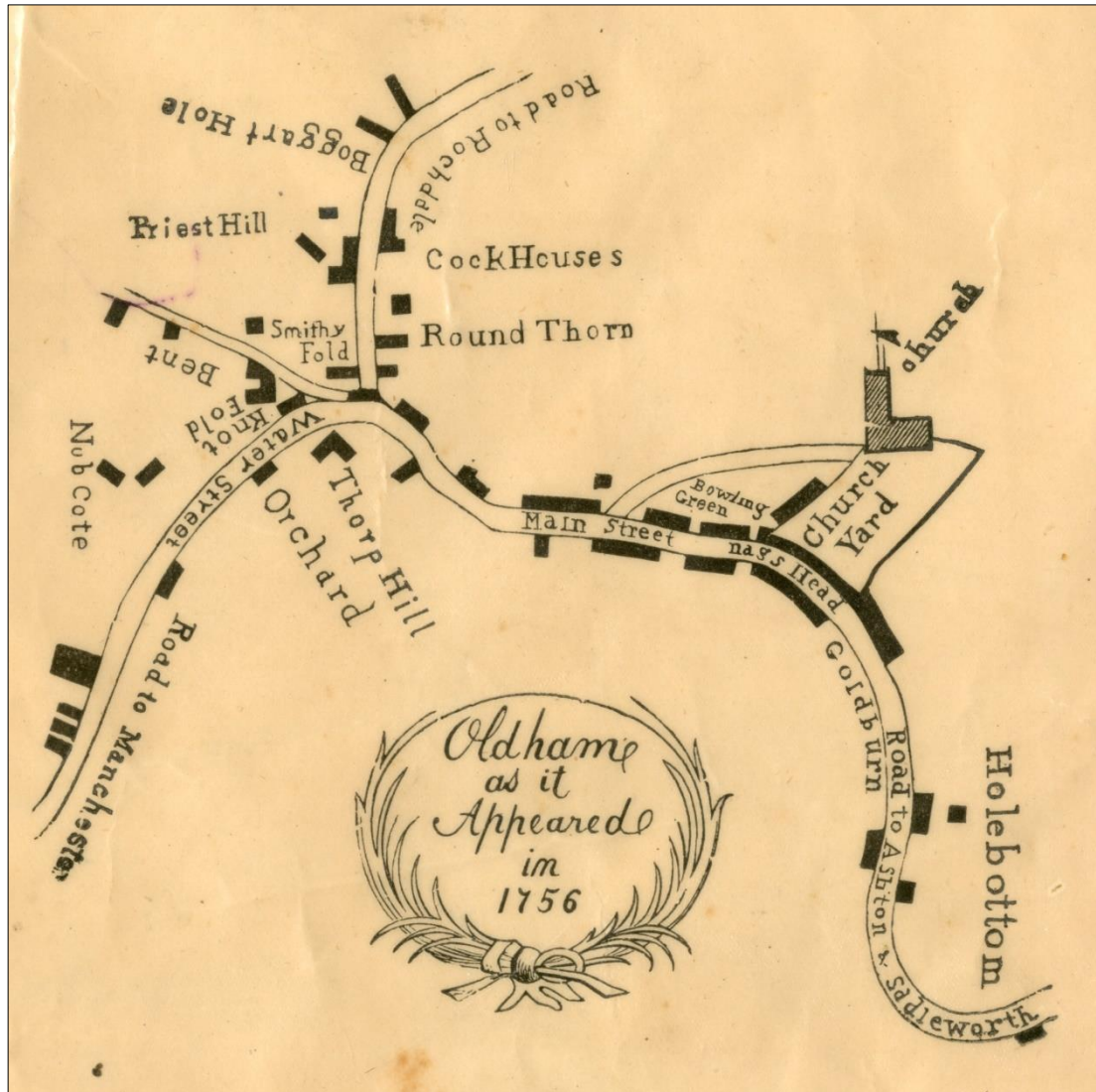


Figure 16. Oldham town centre as it appeared in 1756 with the access roads to Manchester, Rochdale, Saddleworth and Ashton. Source: Oldham Study centre and Archives.

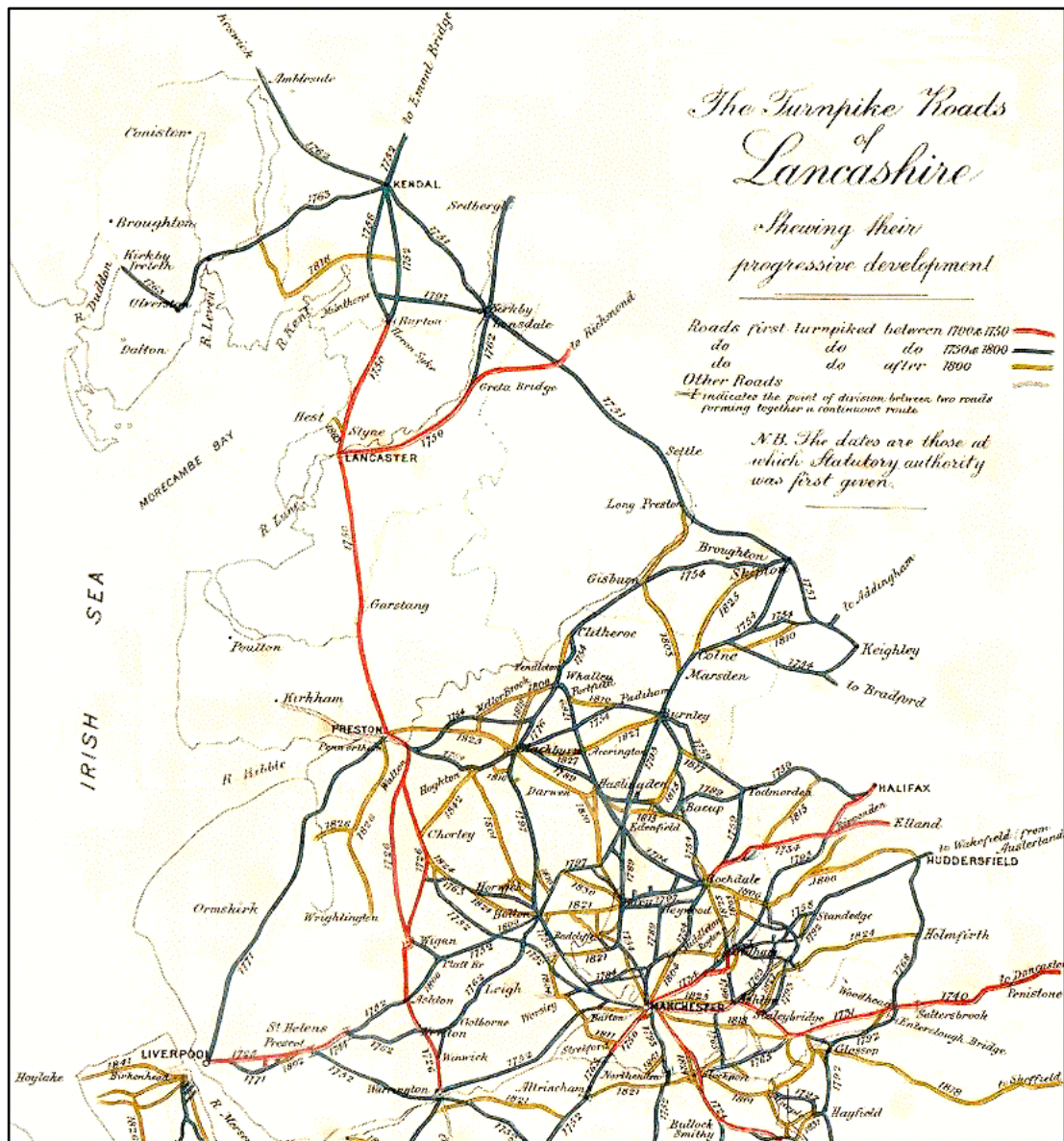
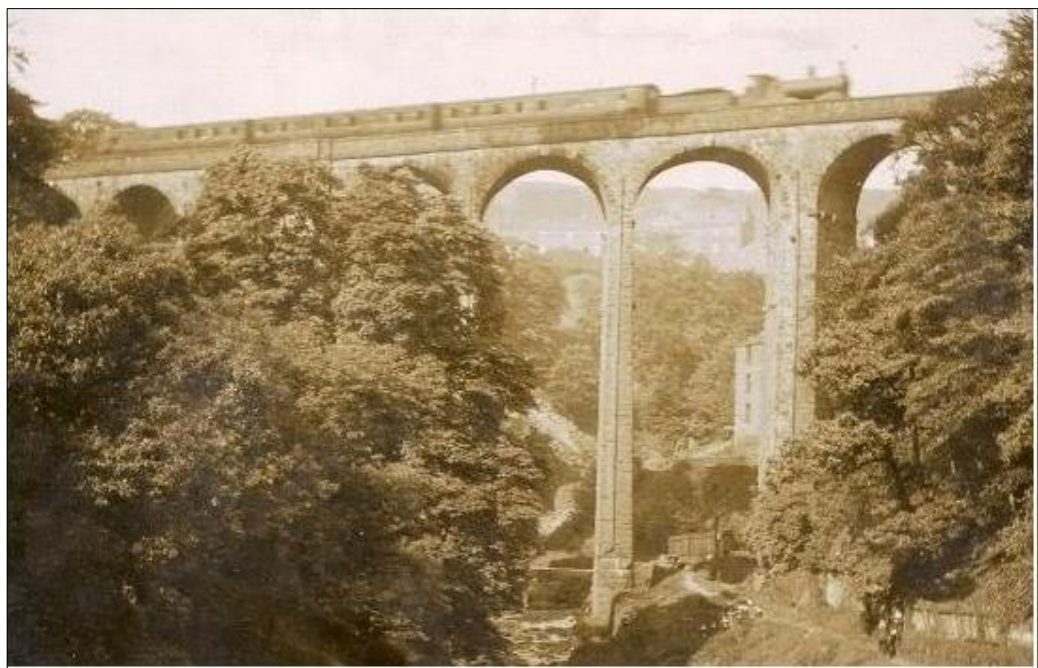


Figure 17. Turnpikes in Lancashire. Source: Lancashire County Council.  
[Lancs.gov.uk/environment/historic-highways/turnpike.](http://Lancs.gov.uk/environment/historic-highways/turnpike)

In the nineteenth century, greater industrialisation further accelerated change. Economies of scale fuelled the growth of villages round newer, larger mills. Older and smaller mills, judged uneconomic, were casualties, as sometimes, were the associated hamlets until a time when Saddleworth in particular, was consolidated into seven villages, with one of them, Uppermill, establishing its primacy in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the focus for many of the larger Wakes activities that became important in the development of leisure. It is perhaps ironic that four other local villages all came to have railway stations of their own, yet Uppermill could only manage



a halt from 1912 on the small branch line that went to Delph on the London and North Western Railway route from Stalybridge to Huddersfield. The station was only ever served by trains from Oldham to Delph via Greenfield and seems to have taken no real part in excursion traffic. For some reason, the station situated at Dobcross was named Saddleworth and caused confusion to travellers who were not local to the area by allowing them to alight there, only to find that they were a substantial distance from their intended destination. In 1871, Historian Joseph Bradbury attributes the station placement to “some extraordinary topographical genius connected with the London and North Western Railway who hit upon the brilliant device of calling the station Saddleworth that naturally would be concluded that it must be right for all Saddleworth”.<sup>81</sup> It clearly was not.



**Picture 6. Saddleworth viaduct, ca 1900. Saddleworth Museum and Archives.**

The building of a trans-Pennine canal and later, the advent of the railway lines, dramatically changed part of the landscape with bridges, viaducts, locks, aqueducts and tunnels through the Pennine ridge at Standedge, an area on the border of Saddleworth and Huddersfield.(See picture 6.) It is of no coincidence that the river, canal and railway all took similar paths through

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<sup>81</sup> Joseph Bradbury. *Oldham Sketches*.(Oldham. Hirst and Rennie 1871) p209.

Saddleworth, although the trajectory of the railway in Oldham was rather different and will be discussed later. As an example of the difficulties, the Railway Times in 1839 was moved to report on an item presented to the Committee on the Bill to sanction the Manchester to Leeds line, on which there was an application for an extension to Oldham that would ultimately connect to the Liverpool to Manchester line. Commenting on its elevated position and a proposal for the line to be worked by a stationary engine, the report noted that an Oldham branch was not favourable from an engineering point of view but is “the best which the country can afford. The town of Oldham cannot be approached by railway except by inclined planes, very circuitous routes and very broad curves”.<sup>82</sup> A steep incline of one in twenty seven feet along a two mile stretch between Manchester and Werneth the south westernmost border proved difficult for a railway line to be constructed and operated but eventually came to be an engineering triumph and at the time, was said to be the steepest locomotive worked passenger gradient in Britain. The cotton industry in the area underwent such a gigantic expansion that by the end of the 19th century the mills of Oldham were said to consume over a million bales of cotton a year, nearly one third of that used in the United Kingdom. As early as the 17th century, plans had been put forward for improving the road network infrastructure and various turnpike toll roads had been proposed following the 1734 Turnpike Act. Few were actually realised at the time and Oldham remained largely inaccessible to all but the packhorse trails by which goods were moved in a very inefficient and piecemeal fashion into marketing centres. Even 25 years later, a suitable road did not exist between Oldham and neighbouring Manchester where the great cotton markets were situated. For merchants who needed to travel to pre-rail Manchester, the hub of the cotton textile marketing trade, the first regular passenger coach service from Oldham to the city came into operation in October of 1790, with a journey time of over 2 hours and a fare of 2s.8d (about 13pence), with half fare for travellers on top of the coach. Little wonder then that by the time the railways arrived, there was a desire to transact business in a way that shortened travelling time and offered a degree of comfort on the journey.

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<sup>82</sup> The Railway Times. 1st June 1839. p422. Source: The National Railway Museum.

Clothiers, woollen manufactures, cotton manufacturers, and merchants from Manchester, Oldham, Halifax and Saddleworth financed the two turnpike roads that were constructed. All of whom had an interest in the movement of goods and services. The Act of Parliament approving the Standedge Turnpike, the road over the Pennines that traversed the two counties and of crucial importance, was passed in 1792; the road being finished by 1796. Almost immediately, property began to be built along the line of the turnpike, demonstrating the value of transport to the area.

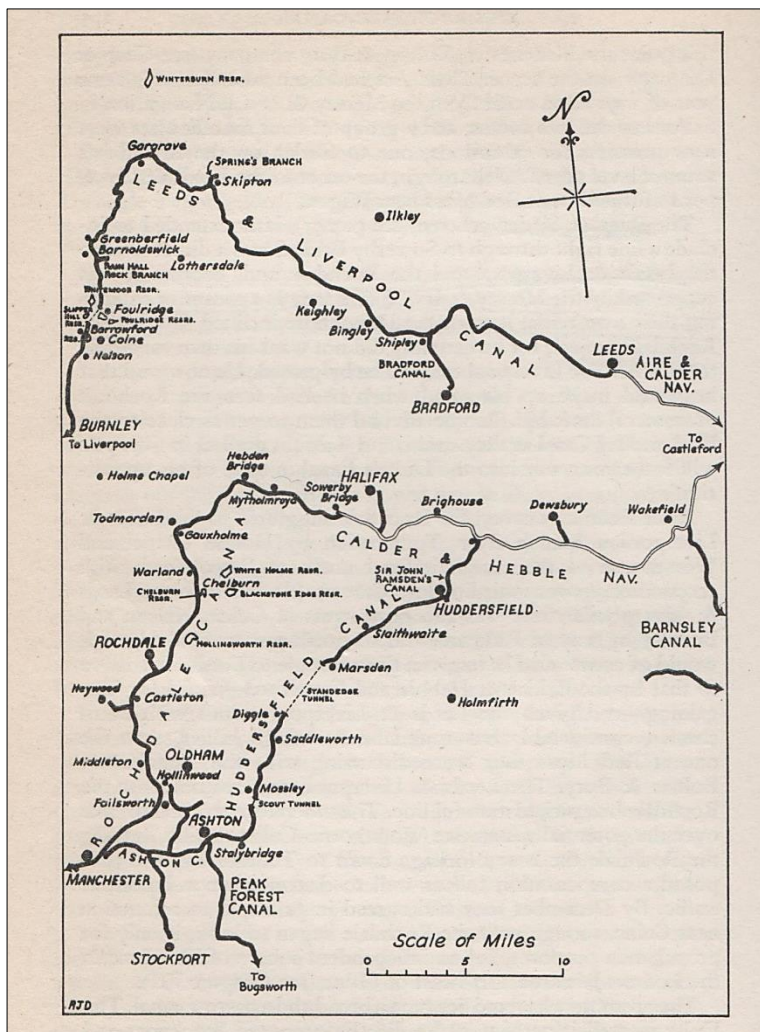


Figure 18. The location of Oldham and Saddleworth Canals. Source: *The Canals of North West England*. Hadfield and Biddle.

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arriving in some parts in 1839 and the completion of access to the regional network as late as 1880. By then the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway that was important to the west of the area, had 291 passenger stations on 601 miles of track and regarded as the most intensively worked pre-grouping



railway with a monopoly of the trans-Pennine route traffic<sup>83</sup>. To the east was the London and North Western Railway whose routes tended to be trunk lines rather than regional.

Oldham had coal in abundance, but at that time there was no real mining development in an industrial sense or on a large enough scale to completely supply fuel-hungry steam engines within the mills. Inevitably, a plan to build canals that would run through the town to supply and transport the fuel was promoted in the mid-1760s but the terrain meant that there was little flexibility in the siting of them. The same applied to the railways when construction was planned. Use had to be made of the valley floors. Strictly speaking, within the limitations of their borders Oldham and Saddleworth never really became connected to each other by canal although their area boundaries abutted one another. The Huddersfield canal completed by 1812 connected Saddleworth to Manchester, Huddersfield and beyond although for a number of years the canal split at Standedge. Goods had to be transported overland by packhorse until a tunnel was built. Two minor branches of the Rochdale and Ashton canals connected parts of the south side of Oldham to Manchester and beyond. (See Figure 18.)

With the new capability of receiving raw materials and foodstuffs, and of exporting its textiles, principally through Manchester and Liverpool, Oldham came into its own and grew into a major industrial town during this period. Whilst it might be an axiom to say that cotton created modern Oldham, it would be a mistake to think this was the only industry. Historian Edward Baines noted that the town began to produce its own coal in substantial quantities in the 19th century and became an important branch of trade giving employment to a large number of persons and an argument for the establishment of a railway. He wrote

“Every township in the parish has its collieries, and the quality of the coal obtains for it a preference in the Manchester market. The quantity of fuel dug up yearly from the numerous beds is immense, and the supply seems inexhaustible. Coal is found at

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<sup>83</sup> Source: LYRS.org.uk. Accessed 10.03.13.

all the distances, from the surface to a depth of 150 yards. The beds vary in thickness, from half a yard to five feet. The trade and traffic of the neighbourhood, both in coal and in the various branches of the manufacture, are essentially promoted by the inland navigation; and the Oldham Canal, which commences at Hollinwood, on the west side of the town, and communicates with Manchester, Ashton-under-Line, and Stockport, as well as the Rochdale canal, which passes through the heart of the township of Chadderton, co-operate to enrich and improve this district. To add to the number and to the facilities of conveyance, a railway is projected from Oldham to Manchester, and it is difficult to imagine a more advantageous situation for the application of this new mode of conveyance, whether with regard to the easy inclined plane on which the road may be constructed, or the vast weight of coals and merchandise which daily pass in this direction.”<sup>84</sup>



Picture 7. The pithead at Hole Bottom Colliery, ca 1870. Source: Science and Society Picture Library.

Despite Baines’ apparent enthusiasm, it will be seen in chapter four that that this part of the railway was never built. However, perhaps more importantly, the area began to develop a base in the production

of engineering machinery - initially for the textile trade, but later for other industries. Such was its size that eventually it had its own extensive internal rail system and a dozen steam locomotives. The sidings were below the Werneth incline mentioned earlier. Within 30 years, the railway had been constructed but the new canals could not compete with its speed and efficiency although paradoxically none of them actually ran through what became the town centre. Nor did the railway, the arrival of which is described later.

In spite of its significant textile industries, Oldham did not justify the expense of a main line or substantial railway station for passengers;

<sup>84</sup> Edward Baines. *History Directory and Gazetteer of the County Palatine of Lancaster*. Vol.2. (Liverpool: Wm. Wales and Co. 1825.) p441.

for example, such as those found in Manchester and York (which had a far smaller population than Oldham). This may have been attributable to its geographic location, the extended period over which its routes were completed, or the failure of the railway companies to recognise or foresee the key position within the textile industry that it acquired. The same applies to the routes to Saddleworth where stations were small and based in the villages housing the textile mills. Nevertheless, these facilities were essential to the development of excursion traffic and to their rail connections and so this chapter now focuses on how Oldham and Saddleworth acquired their rail connections. Chapter four will analyse how they were used by excursionists.

As already shown, before the railways both Oldham and Saddleworth were dependent on good communications in the early part of industrialisation; the products of the local businesses were marketed through Manchester and Huddersfield. To facilitate moving the goods, the locations of the early mills tended to have easy access to the turnpikes. Through them, unprocessed yarn could come into the areas where substantial warehouses had started to be erected on the south side, particularly in Oldham. A similar pattern emerged when the canals were built. For example, a transshipment warehouse was constructed in Dobcross, as part of the Huddersfield Canal to enable storage of goods between 1799 and 1811 before transfer over the Pennines by packhorse at Standedge until a through tunnel was constructed. Finished or completed items were transported in a similar manner.

It was seen earlier that unlike a number of other towns in the textile areas, canals did not run near what, on high ground, became Oldham town centre but skirted it. As has been seen in Figure 16 in essence, Yorkshire Street was regarded as the main thoroughfare at the time and incorporated the Town Hall, market place and Parish Church. It

proceeded eastward and branched out into two turnpike roads. One that went to Holmfirth, The other went to Huddersfield and beyond. Both went through Saddleworth. The latter also had a branch leading north-east to Halifax.

For financial reasons, railway companies tended to seek the geographically easiest routes for their main lines. Oldham and Saddleworth both lay on difficult hilly territory and had to wait for branch lines, spurs and junctions to be built before they could be connected to the through routes in the region and beyond. On a positive note, Simmons argued that the opening of branches in almost every 'hamlet' put the manufacturers on the same footing as though they were in Manchester itself; which certainly seemed to apply to the Saddleworth area where it acquired five stations but as was seen in pictures 6, 7 and 8 they were small and rustic.<sup>85</sup> Peter and Michael Fox in their study of the line from Greenfield to Delph, describe the status of the railway in the area as

More than a branch line, which wound down the valley to link with more important railways in Lancashire and Yorkshire. It was an institution, part of the fabric of local life, the point of entry for coal for the textile mills on which much of the village depended, the carrier of the products of the factories to the markets, the means of escapes for outings and annual holidays.<sup>86</sup>

In a sense it is the 'escape' aspect that is of interest here as it is clear that excursions into the area, were just as important to extend the principles of excursions, if not as numerous, as those to outside but have not been pursued with any vigour for this work. By its very nature, Saddleworth, however bleak, came to be an area known for open spaces and so was attractive to visitors from towns and cities. Whilst this is only one example, journalist Angus Reach in 1849 was moved to report in the Morning Chronicle

"Saddleworth is now intersected by the Leeds and

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<sup>85</sup> Simmons. *The Railways in Town and Country*. p124.

<sup>86</sup> Peter and Michael Fox. *The Delph Donkey. A local railway*. (Oldham: The Commercial Centre. 1984).p4.

Huddersfield Railway (sic) and as a consequence is beginning to lose much of those primitive characteristics for which it was long renowned. The rail has thrown open the wilds of Saddleworth to the world.”<sup>87</sup>

**L**ONDON AND NORTH-WESTERN RAILWAY.  
**S**ATURDAY AFTERNOON PLEASURE EXCURSIONS.—  
 Every SATURDAY during the SEASON, until further notice,  
 SPECIAL TRAINS will run as under:—  
**FROM LONDON ROAD STATION TO ALDERLEY AND  
 CHELFORD.**  
 At 2.30 P.M.—Fares there and back to Alderley, first class, 2s; third class, 1s 3d; ditto ditto to Chelford, first class, 2s 6d; third class, 1s 6d.  
**FROM LONDON ROAD STATION TO PRESTBURY AND  
 ADLINGTON.**  
 At 2.0 P.M.—Fares there and back, first class, 2s; third class, 1s; Returning the same day by any of the ordinary trains.  
**FROM VICTORIA STATION TO HUDDERSFIELD,  
 SADDLEWORTH, GREENFIELD, &c.**  
 At 2.15 P.M.—Fares there and back to Greenfield, Saddleworth, and Diggle, first class, 2s 6d; second class, 2s; third class, 1s 6d.—Marsden and Slaithwaite, first class, 4s 6d; second class, 3s; third class, 2s.—Golcar, Longwood, and Huddersfield, first class, 5s; second class, 4s; third class, 2s 6d. With the privilege of returning by any train (express excepted) up to the Monday night following.—Further particulars may be obtained at the station. BY ORDER.  
 Manchester, July 7, 1854.

As an example of the ‘world’s’ access to Saddleworth the Lancashire and North-Western Railway were running ‘trips’ to the area within a relatively short time as shown in Figure 19.

**Figure 19. The Manchester Courier and Lancashire Advertiser. 8<sup>th</sup> July 1854. Source: British Newspapers on Line.**

The fare structure is interesting as one shilling seems to be quite expensive

for the short journey from Manchester to the three Saddleworth stations in comparison with what was paid for much longer journeys and already discussed.

By contrast as a large urban settlement, Oldham came to be known for what it could offer at Wakes week in terms of huge fairgrounds that arrived on a temporary basis but had implications for excursions. As an example of an interest in the area, some years later, the Oldham Chronicle of 1<sup>st</sup> September 1860 reported

On Sunday, the number of visitors was very large and the trains to Oldham in the early part of the day and from Oldham in the evening were very crowded. Carts and other vehicles were put into requisition in country places to convey persons to Oldham but many people walked to the town as the day was fine. The principal day of Wakes is Monday. On that day, mills and manufactories are closed. Children stop away from school and the greatest numbers of visitors flock into the town demanding Wakesings.<sup>88</sup>

Both of these will be discussed in chapter four. Nevertheless, the area is a good example of a fragmented local railway network. As

<sup>87</sup> Angus Reach. Taken from *Manchester and the Textile Districts in 1849*. (ed. C Aspin) Helmshore Local History Society. 1972. p120.

<sup>88</sup> Oldham Chronicle. 1 September 1860. Source: Saddleworth Museum Archives.

David Joy succinctly remarks, “There was plenty to attract railways to the area, but no single golden goal and so once established, a company strived to put out tentacles which soon became interwoven with its competitors”.<sup>89</sup> Oldham and Saddleworth’s experience is best depicted in Figure 20 summarising developments over many years and shows multiple exits and entrances, with Delph the only terminus that remained. The Oldham/Saddleworth border that was also the Lancashire/West Riding of Yorkshire border is at Lees. The station was unusual as the platform for passengers and the engine shed was in Lancashire. The goods warehouse and signal box was in West Yorkshire. For simplicity, all the lines are identified thematically rather than chronologically in the following paragraphs.

### ***The Oldham and Saddleworth Railway Network.***

This was probably not the most efficient network from either the railways perspective or that of their traders. Yet, as will be seen later, ironically and ultimately it gave residents a substantial number of choices in their ‘home stations’ for excursions. Figure 20 shows the locations of the Oldham and Saddleworth stations and their positions in the network.



**Picture 8. Saddleworth station. Date unknown but probably 1900. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.**

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<sup>89</sup> David Joy. *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain. Volume 8. South and West Yorkshire.* (newton Abbot. David and Charles. 1984.) p14.

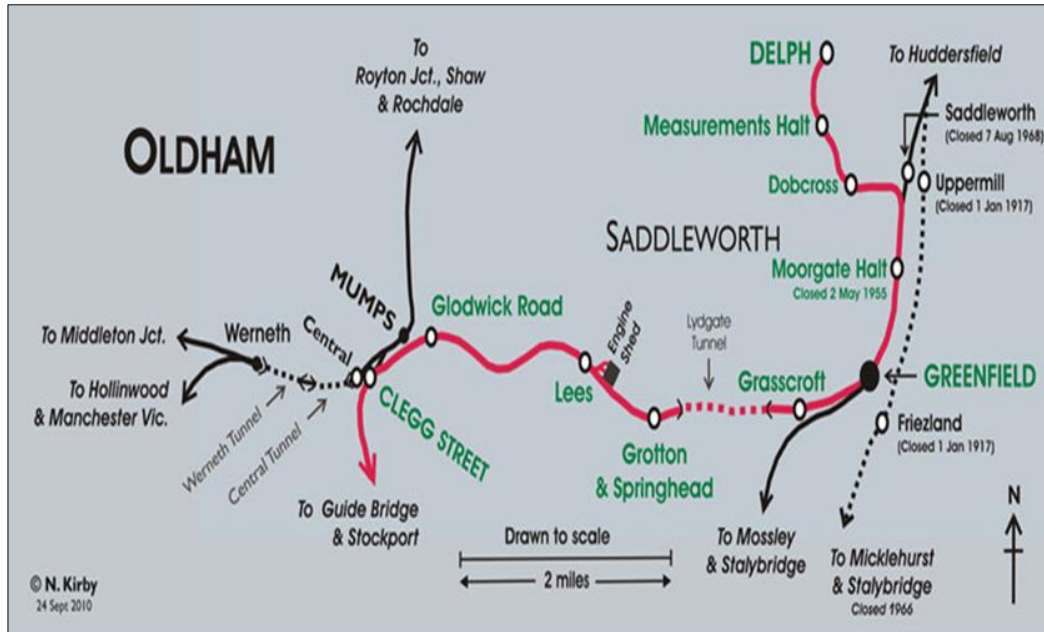


Figure 20. The Oldham/Saddleworth railway connections.

Source: [www.ribblevalleyrail.co.uk/delph/donkey](http://www.ribblevalleyrail.co.uk/delph/donkey)

Local historians have made little of the network's geography. In 1949, Hartley Bateson, Oldham's principal historian devoted little time and space to railways in the town, affording them a few lines within a 235 page tome of Oldham's civic history.<sup>90</sup> Given the eventual importance of the railway to the town, it is difficult to understand why that is. According to Marshall, as far back as 1825, a railway was projected between Oldham and Manchester to supplement or replace the inland canal and horse drawn transport on which the area had relied for its industry. An Act was passed in 1827 for making and maintaining a railway or tram road between the two conurbations but the scheme was abandoned.<sup>91</sup> Apart from briefly referring to the matter, Bateson offers no evidence as to why this occurred but Hooper (probably quoting Marshall) and Marshall<sup>92</sup> confirm that the terrain was thought to be too hostile to easily overcome at the time and the cost would have been prohibitive.<sup>93</sup> Oldham and Saddleworth had to wait and rely on more major railways for connections to the outside world,

<sup>90</sup> Hartley Bateson. *A History of Oldham*. (Oldham: Oldham County Borough Council. 1949) p84

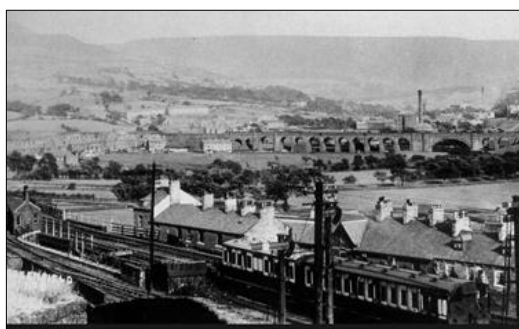
<sup>91</sup> John Marshal. *Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. Vol. 1. Ch.3* (Newton Abbott: David and Charles. 1970)

<sup>92</sup> John Marshall. *ibid*

<sup>93</sup> John Hooper. *Oldham's Railways*. (Bedfordshire:Irwell Press. 2006) p2



which perhaps could be seen as having a number of phases. For example – Oldham to Manchester and Leeds<sup>94</sup>, Oldham to Saddleworth<sup>95</sup>, Saddleworth to Manchester and Leeds<sup>96</sup>. A fourth joined Oldham to Ashton and Guide Bridge<sup>97</sup> from where it was possible to travel to Stockport to gain access to London. Hollinwood station, to the south west of Oldham was opened by the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway (LYR) on 1st April 1881 as part of a line between Thorpe’s Bridge Junction just outside Manchester to Oldham Werneth. The purpose was to provide a direct route from Manchester to Oldham avoiding the steep incline on the existing Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway line that provided a through route via Middleton.



**Picture 9. Greenfield station and the second viaduct on the relief line. Date unknown but probably ca1900. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.**

Finally, in December 1886 a relief line that went from Diggle to Stalybridge via a second imposing viaduct opened for goods trains and through express trains between Leeds and Manchester passenger traffic took some of the pressure off the existing line,

sandwiching Uppermill and Greenfield between the two but probably not affecting excursions in any significant way.

An application for abandonment of the original Act that would have connected Oldham to Manchester much earlier was made and

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<sup>94</sup> A branch of the Manchester to Leeds Railway (later to become the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway) opened 31<sup>st</sup> March 1842 and ended at Werneth. Later extended to Oldham Central then Oldham Mumps stations in 1847 and on to Rochdale by 1863 where it re-joined the Manchester to Leeds Railway.

<sup>95</sup> Oldham branch of London and North Western Railway connected Greenfield in Saddleworth to Oldham Mumps then Glodwick Road stations in 1856.

<sup>96</sup> Huddersfield to Stalybridge section (passing through Saddleworth) of the London and North Western Railway opened 1<sup>st</sup> September 1851. Proposed Branch to Delph not proceeded with.

<sup>97</sup> Oldham Ashton and Guide Bridge Junction Railway brought the Manchester Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway between Oldham Clegg Street station and Stockport in 1861 where coaches could be attached to the Manchester to London Euston trains.

agreed in 1850. To appease the shareholders who were expecting a dividend from their investment, they were paid via a mortgage, profits from services or income not being realised.

The second Act authorising the building of the first railway to Oldham, or at least the southern part of it, that actually came to fruition was given Royal Assent just four days before parts of the Manchester to Leeds railway opened. The Middleton Junction and Oldham Branch Railway, as it was named, curved off the Manchester to Littleborough portion of the main line (opened on 4 July 1839), and ended at Werneth at the top of the 1:27 incline already mentioned. It opened on 31<sup>st</sup>. March 1842. It left the line at Middleton (then known as Oldham Junction) went through the expanding satellite township of Chadderton (which had easy access to part of the Rochdale canal) to Werneth as a terminus, in the lower end of Oldham and became part of the originally planned route to the town. The Werneth Incline (already discussed) just over a mile long, was the steepest passenger worked railway line in Britain. The earliest trains to use this line required cable assistance to get to the top of the slope. Hooper tells us that it was 10 years before passenger trains were entrusted wholly to locomotive power. Goods trains if heavy used the assistance on the Incline section until 1854.<sup>98</sup> It is perhaps of no coincidence that Werneth was the original terminus, as the line was located right by Platt Brothers, textile machine manufacturers whose influence was substantial within the town. Not only was it Oldham's largest single employer and exporter but it carried considerable weight in operating savings schemes throughout the area for holidays.

It is here that there is some confusion about the viability for passengers of this branch line. For example, Hooper believes that it was a success and was used by three quarters of a million passengers each year in the 1840s; although there is no way of

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<sup>98</sup> Hooper. *An illustrated History of Oldham's Railways*. p2.

knowing how many, if any, were excursionists.<sup>99</sup> The research has not uncovered any references to them. Yet it is also said that this portion did not prosper in its early stages and plans were made for the line to be extended to arrive nearer the town centre of Oldham. For example, Bateson suggests that it was unable to compete with the existing stagecoach service that stopped in more appropriate places and was regarded as being safer. He argues that as a deliberate attempt to drive the horse drawn service off the road, rail fares were reduced but it was the inconvenience of having a station so far from the town centre that prompted further action to be taken.<sup>100</sup> Yet it was not until five years later in 1847 that the problems seem to have been overcome, as the line was extended and went through and under the town via Central tunnel to Central Station then on to Mumps. The three principal stations in Oldham, - Central, Clegg Street and Mumps, were literally yards from one another although had different lines and had reflected the commercial needs of local industries. Picture 10 shows the structure of Mumps station in comparison with the Saddleworth stations. Of benefit to passengers, they could easily get into Manchester from where there were far more routes that linked commercial centres to coastal resorts.<sup>101</sup> For example, travel to Blackpool could be undertaken by 1848 and to Southport by 1855. In the other direction, passengers could get into Huddersfield, Leeds, and York and so on, to parts of the east coast.

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<sup>99</sup> Hooper. *An illustrated History of Oldham's Railways*. p2.

<sup>100</sup> Bateson. *A History of Oldham*. p122.

<sup>101</sup> By 1850, Oldham Central was served by 10 normal service trains to and from Manchester.



**Picture 10. The sweeping lines of Oldham Mumps station 1905. In contrast to the compact nature of Saddleworth stations. Source: Oldham Local Study Centre and Archives.**

The railway as a financial entity was then said to prosper with consolidation and expansion slowly taking place over the next forty years. A system around Oldham, known as a loop line, was completed when a line to Rochdale via satellite townships Shaw with Crompton and Milnrow, from Mumps opened on 12 August 1863 for freight traffic and for passengers from the 2<sup>nd</sup> November, connecting



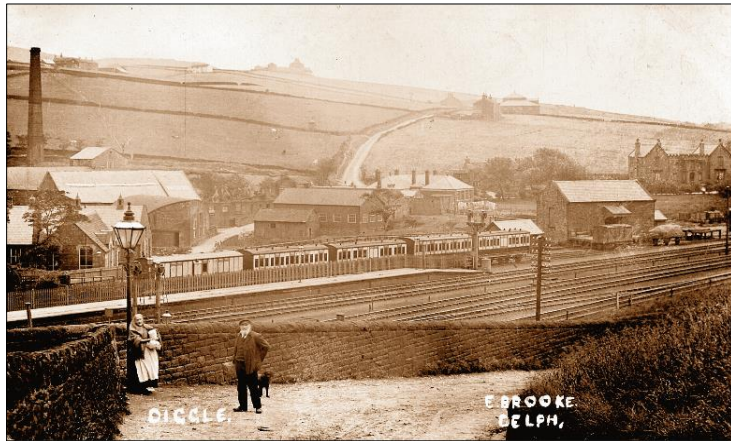
**Picture 11. Saddleworth Station. Date unknown. Probably 1900. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.**

it to Leeds. A branch to Royton (another satellite township) was completed on 21 March 1864. By this time, Oldham had five railway stations: Werneth, Central, Mumps, Clegg Street and Glodwick Road that had the

potential to offer workers opportunities for excursions. A further connection to Manchester was made from Werneth via Hollinwood (right on the border between Oldham and Manchester) which already had a link to the city by way of its link to the Ashton canal. A London and North Western Railway's line, which eventually ran eastward into

Saddleworth, ran south into Newton Heath in Manchester and opened on the 17<sup>th</sup> March 1880. However, by the 1930s road transport was taking over, and the cotton mills and collieries were closing in this area. Broadway, a new arterial road that joined parts of Manchester to parts of Rochdale, skirting this south end of Oldham opened, and the significance of this part of the railway line was lost.

Having identified the importance of access to Manchester and its



Picture 12. Diggle station. Date unknown. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

surroundings in terms of many of the excursions, it will be seen in Figure twenty that both Oldham and Saddleworth

had different routes there. Although their

borders abutted and there were through roads by turnpikes, the two railway lines that directly connected Oldham to Saddleworth both traversing the village of Greenfield were completed at different times and separated from the one that went through Saddleworth to Huddersfield and beyond.

On the north east side, in 1844 the Huddersfield and Manchester Railway had bought the local canal that traversed Saddleworth. It is said that the purchase was made so that the company could take control of transport through the valley<sup>102</sup>. On the 21st July 1845 authority was given to the company to construct a railway line from Huddersfield to Stalybridge, part of which would follow the canal along the valley bottom and penetrate the Pennines at Diggle.

<sup>102</sup>Charles Hadfield and Gordon Biddle. *The Canals of North West England. Vol.2.* (Newton Abbott: David and Charles. 1970) p335.

Included was a proposed branch to Delph, one of the other Saddleworth villages. In construction, the valley had to be straddled by a spectacular viaduct that went over the canal, the river and the access road to the turnpike. Goddard and Wells argue that the railway company was in no mood to spend additional money in building the line to Delph, particularly after meeting the cost of the viaduct so the branch was not built until James Lees a mill owner and industrialist in the village pressed the Lancashire and North West Railway for its construction.<sup>103</sup> It was opened in September 1851 and became known as the 'Delph Donkey. Folklore suggests that the name came from a time when there might have been horse drawn carriages on this part of the line but literature from Saddleworth Historical Society and discussion with Peter Fox<sup>104</sup>, curator at Saddleworth Museum indicates that there is no evidence to support this. Since the branch trains worked on the main Manchester to Huddersfield line it is unlikely that horse drawn trams would have been permitted. The myth may have risen from the Government Inspector's report on the proposed opening of the Delph Branch in 1851. In it, Captain George Wynne of the Royal Engineers, the Board of Trade Inspector, comments that the Directors anticipate such a small amount of both goods and passenger traffic that they have made arrangements for working the line with horse power. Noting that it was a single line without turntable, he anticipated that at times an engine would be used and that he was of the opinion that the line was in a fit state to open for the conveyance of passengers.<sup>105</sup>

The Directors of the railway seem to have been proved wrong. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 1852 the Huddersfield Chronicle reported that "The spirit of emigration appears to have taken root among the people of Saddleworth. On the morning of Tuesday last, five families heretofore

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<sup>103</sup> Larry Goddard and Jeffrey Wells. *Scenes from the past 49. Delph. Saddleworth and Greenfield to Oldham.* (Stockport: Foxline. Undated.)

<sup>104</sup> One of the authors of *The Delph Donkey. A local railway.* 1984

<sup>105</sup> Peter and Michael Fox. *The Delph Donkey. A local railway.* (Oldham: UKFox.1984.)p43.

residents of Delph took their fares at New Delph station *en route* for Australia". For those still in the area, in 1854 on the 9<sup>th</sup> September, the Huddersfield Chronicle made what seems to be the first reference to what was quickly to become an annual exodus from Delph Station when the local wakes were said to be in full swing. 'Large numbers' were said to have left the district by excursions to Belle Vue and Liverpool'. It will be seen in Chapter four just how well this branch came to be used. On the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1856 the working of Delph was combined with that of a new line opened by London and North Western Railway from Greenfield to Oldham with two service trains in each direction a day to coincide with working hours. Although it had a minimal timetabled passenger service, it meant that the Oldham branch now connected the Lancashire and Yorkshire railway to the Manchester and Huddersfield Railway through the branch and could take passengers from the next day. The terminus, Clegg St was a temporary one that was adjacent to Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway station at Mumps. The line to Delph proved to have far greater usage than predicted by the Directors. Yet it was clearly not up to a standard expected by the residents. For example, the Oldham Chronicle of the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1864 drew comparisons with stage coach travel.<sup>106</sup> It commented on the difficulties of those who were old enough to remember the agility once required in mounting the top of the stage coach but "in consequence of the extremely limited stagecoach at Delph, the passengers had a similar feat to perform before they could comfortably be seated." As a remedy, the railway company had "lengthened the platform, so that step ladders were no longer needed, the spaces between the rails had been paved, and a new line of rails had been put down," so that "carts can, without undergoing as much jolting as amongst mountain (sic) roads with ruts a foot deep and mud ad infinitum approach the wagons easily in order to unload." As an indication that contrary to expectations from when it was agreed that the line should be built, on the 17th May 1879 Delph

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<sup>106</sup> Oldham Chronicle. 13<sup>th</sup> April 1864. Source Saddleworth Museum and Archives.



residents presented a petition to the London and North Western Railway requesting further improvements to the station and better treatment of passengers. These included the provision of a ladies waiting room; additional lengthening of the platform, increased warehouse space for storage, loading and unloading goods, safer access to the station to avoid having to encounter horses, carts, luries (sic) etc. In addition, a better service to Oldham, particularly in the evening!

Only slowly were improvements were made. On the 15th April 1899 Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter commented on the persistence of local people and added that three extra trains to and from Delph had at last been granted, and which included one from Oldham that arrived at 9.15pm and left again fifteen minutes later.<sup>107</sup>

Yet as late as 1914, the Oldham Chronicle of the 26th of December was reporting that the local cotton spinners had felt the need for increased railway accommodation and improved facilities. A committee that was representative of the district was formed to endeavour to get a new main line to Oldham but was unsuccessful.<sup>108</sup> Although it did succeed in getting some minor improvements that included new sidings in two small areas capable of accommodating a very large number of wagons for coal and goods but did nothing to improve access and facilities for passengers.

***In summary.***

It took approximately forty years for the network surrounding Oldham and Saddleworth to be completed. Given by that time they were surrounded by railway lines, albeit from two different companies, most if not all of the local population had relatively easy access to a line that would take them to a chosen destination for leisure purposes.

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<sup>107</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 15<sup>th</sup> April 1899. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>108</sup> Oldham Chronicle.26<sup>th</sup> December 1914. Source: Oldham Archives.

Within this brief analysis it seems clear that the principle motivation for establishing the lines was for the benefit of industry rather than passengers, let alone excursionists which given the nature of seasonality, perhaps is understandable. The substantial numbers that travelled over a relatively short time span within the calendar year are dealt with in the following chapter and demonstrate the viability of the network for possible expansion.

## CHAPTER 4. THE INTERACTION OF EXCURSIONS AND LEISURE.

### *Introduction.*

Having established that by the 1850s Oldham and Saddleworth had sizeable populations with reasonable access to a railway network, it is appropriate to explore what part the development of working class leisure in the area played in the new form of transport. A significant factor was 'Wakes Weeks' which were crucial to the development of railway excursions in the locality. In Lancashire and West Yorkshire, where the factory system had developed early and extensively, 'Wakes holidays' developed from a few hours away from work, into a mass industrial break, faster and farther than anywhere else in the country. The importance of these holiday periods for rail excursions from the areas under scrutiny should not be underestimated. They continued in excess of seventy years, despite changing ideas and practices of working class leisure. The previous chapter has shown how both Oldham and Saddleworth developed their industries that moved the populace from a mainly agrarian society with long held traditions, into locations that were almost entirely dominated by manufacturing and how they acquired their places in the railway network. Local leisure in the early 1800s had revolved round blood sports and activities associated with rush bearing, such as Morris dancing and fairs. As Poole noted in his work on Oldham and the Lancashire Wakes "The County's early and rapid industrialisation tended not so much to obliterate the customary holiday as to incorporate it into the new order".<sup>109</sup> This chapter outlines the development of Wakes Weeks from roots firmly planted in the mass activity of rush bearing particularly in Saddleworth that provides context for the discussion of local rail excursions. Poole further noted, "The coming of the railways in many ways enhanced the wakes as a local celebration and the real decline of this side of the festival did not appear for several decades".<sup>110</sup> Whilst excursion trips were open to all, most or at least those organised by the railway companies, were run at a time when the workforce were known to be on holiday and were therefore highly seasonal.

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<sup>109</sup> Poole. Leisure in Britain. *Oldham Wakes*. p72.

<sup>110</sup> Poole. *Oldham Wakes*. p80.

The aggregated numbers discussed in chapter one and appear later confirm that view, as most are specifically related to the wakes period.

### ***The development of free time.***

It has been seen that Oldham and Saddleworth had both cotton and woollen industries many of which were developed from home based activities. Attracted by higher wages and the promise of regular employment, in the late 1770s local workers began to move in to mills built specifically to enhance production; although Saddleworth was rather slower than Oldham to convert.<sup>111</sup> By the end of 1778, 12 mills existed in which over 500 people were employed, which was the majority of the population in the area at that time. By 1795 the town of Oldham had 22 cotton mills, and by 1805 the number had risen to 30. Long working hours were experienced with only Sundays free.

Other local industries also flourished. In 1817, James Butterworth's first history of Oldham recorded 22 firms involved in the hatting industry, producing more than 1000 hats a week. Edward Baines, writing in 1825, recorded that over 65 mills now existed in Oldham, and all but two were built since 1800, adding that of the 6,982 families in the parish of Oldham, 6,667 were involved in some way in the cotton industry. By c1830, the transformation of the home-based industries in the area to factory production had moved even further and was a key period for the start of alternative leisure pursuits. The factory based local workforce was becoming dominated by the clock, their employers and even the rules of Government. No longer were they regulated by the vagaries of the weather, the seasons and the religious calendar that had dominated when they were home-based and self-employed. Whilst in no way can the two areas be regarded as affluent, it will be seen that Wakes holidays as they came to be known, did magnify some of the more positive and cheerful features of working class existence. By using

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<sup>111</sup> Neil Barrow, Mike Buckley, Alan Petford, Jean Sanders. *Saddleworth Villages*. (Saddleworth: Saddleworth Historical Society. 2003) p2. The authors argue that Saddleworth manufacturers were making comfortable if not startling profits. Because of this, they had no incentive to mechanise and were happy to continue with old-fashioned methods of production. As a result the district could still support a significant number of hand loom weavers even as late as the middle of the nineteenth century.

the infrastructure of everyday life that included sport and mass participation in leisure activities, with a propensity for thrift that will be explored later, there was a shift from the regulation of leisure by the religious calendar to something more controlled by the 'rhythms of industrialised work'.

In the early years of the 19th century, leisure time for workers meant Sunday after church, Christmas Day and Good Friday. Saturday was a working day. Christmas was regarded as a time for renewing home associations, Easter was purely for enjoyment and Whitsuntide was for Christian witness in the form of processions, a favoured activity in the area. Partly through default or design but not universally, other one-day festivities, commonly known as rush bearing gradually expanded into what became known as 'wakes weeks'; although it would be many years before all workers could expect to be paid for their time away from work and have more than a few days away from their workplaces. The Factory Act of 1833 had ensured that workers could anticipate two whole and eight half days away from their jobs per year if not always with the blessing of their employers. For some, the Bank Holiday Act of 1871 took workers a little farther in a quest for leisure time by introducing a statutory right for them to take holidays, even if they were not paid at the time. Although Walton argues that for the cotton industry in Lancashire, the West Riding of Yorkshire and other industrial areas where old summer holidays had survived, (presumably he had in mind, the local wakes holidays), August Bank Holiday was unnecessary and unimportant for the local workforce, as they already had their own designated leisure time.<sup>112</sup>

### ***Rush bearing***

Although it is alleged that it had origins dating back to pagan times, the word 'wake' is more commonly associated with formalities relating to death. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century it applied to a vigil observed overnight on the eve of a religious festival. Later it became better known as a period of days away from work as a regular feature during the summer months in what might be called 'customary leisure'. Wakes weeks were said by Poole to be peculiar in name

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<sup>112</sup> Walton. *Wonderlands by the Waves*. 21.



**Picture 13. The mass activity of rush bearing in Uppermill. 1880. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.**

to the north of England; Oldham and Saddleworth in particular<sup>113</sup>. Locally they had their origins in festivals associated with the anniversary of the dedication day of a parish church that could also be the day of its patron saint. Participants would stay 'awake' overnight to keep a vigil for their saint alongside associated activities having a strong connection to 'rush bearing', one of the area's best-known customs at the time; that of carrying rushes by elaborately decorated carts that reflected the wealth and loyalty of each village as part of the ceremony.

Picture thirteen shows a typical construction of a rush cart and associated crowd in 1880.

Before the days of hard flooring, church bases were made of clay or well-trodden earth that were commonly covered in rushes to retain some warmth and softness for the feet of congregations during the winter months. They were renewed once a year, most frequently on patronal saint's days, a practice that continued locally and as a serious activity until mid-nineteenth century, with much rivalry between the communities who built the carts, before tending to have less importance in later years. Perhaps as a demonstration of the conflict that existed between some of the groups who kept up the tradition, the Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser of the 14th September of 1844 reported on an inquest on a Jas. Walshaw (sic), a spinner. He died after an incident involving two groups who were 'amusing' themselves in Oldham town centre by drawing a rush cart along the street, on Wakes Monday, a few days before the inquest. One group is said to have jostled the other and a second altercation resulted in

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<sup>113</sup> Poole. *The Lancashire Wakes Holiday*. p6.

the deceased being struck by a piece of equipment from the cart and died a few days later.<sup>114</sup>

Whether by accident or design, most festivities seemed to occur within the summer months, although the tradition may have been more to do with the growing season of the rushes. Several areas within both Oldham and Saddleworth had their own wakes and rush bearing celebrations that had the potential to disrupt working patterns that are briefly explored later. Finance for the construction of the carts most commonly came from local gentry. 1820 seems to be the last date on which rushes were actually laid within a church although a representation of the activity continued for many years afterwards and its significance changed. Picture fourteen depicts the mass activity of rush bearing outside Saddleworth Church.



**Picture 14. Lithograph of Saddleworth Church and rush bearing activities 1826. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.**

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<sup>114</sup> Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser of the 14th September of 1844. Source: Oldham Local Archives and Study Centre.



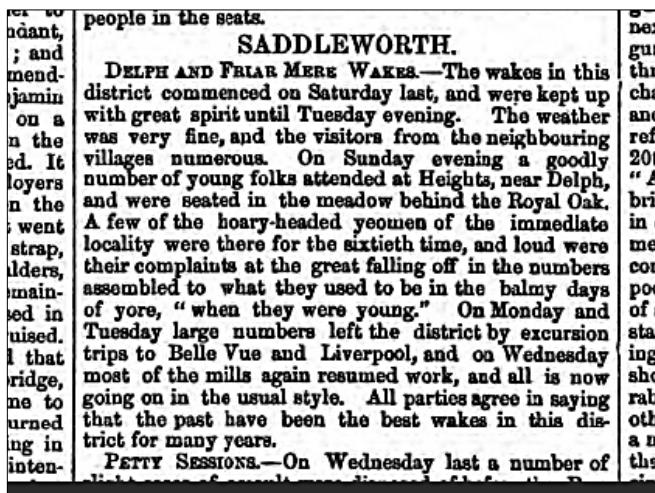


Figure 21. The Huddersfield Chronicle. September 9<sup>th</sup>. 1854.

Source: British Newspapers on line.

It is clear that rush bearing had a strong association with the consumption of alcohol that tended to attract negative publicity. After about 1850, lack of support from benefactors meant that the activity tended to be symbolic rather than functional with a sense of

nostalgia for the past. Until almost the turn of the century, it was still associated with crowds

and leisure activities but by that time as seen in Chapter three, Oldham had achieved connections with some parts of a railway network and there was the alternative of opportunities for rail excursions as evidenced in Figure 22 and others. The wakes holiday was still only two days but large numbers were already travelling to Belle Vue on the outskirts of Manchester and Liverpool for recreational purposes.

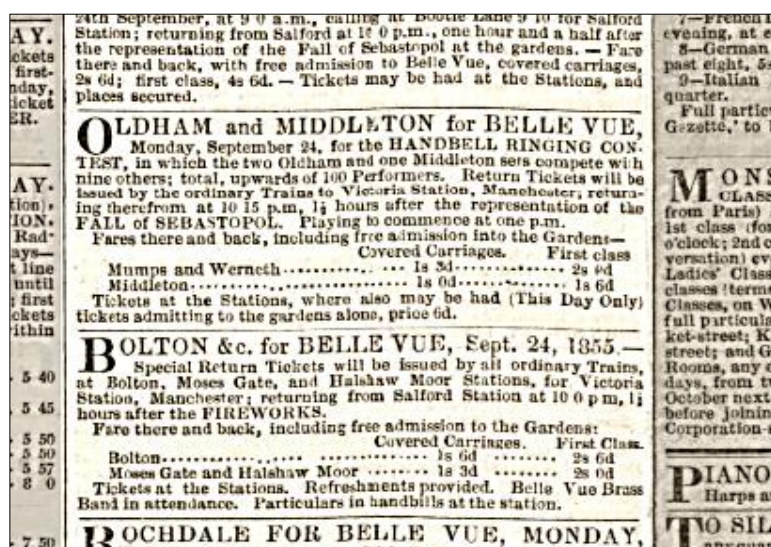


Figure 22. Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser. 22<sup>nd</sup>. September 1855. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

Figures 23, 24 and 25 indicate some of the activities that attracted excursionists and were available at Belle Vue.

They also demonstrate some of the co-operation that existed with the railway companies by allowing excursion crowds to visit via four specially

built stations where excursionists could alight.

8 30 p.m.)

**SADDLEWORTH AND MOSSLEY TO BELLE VUE, MONDAY, September 24th.**—A SPECIAL TRAIN will leave Saddleworth at 8 30 a.m. and Mossley at 8 45 a.m. for Belle Vue, returning at 9 p.m. Fare there and back, including free admission to the Gardens, covered carriages, 1s 6d; first class 2s 6d. The Hand-bell Ringing takes place at one o'clock, p.m. and the fireworks at 8 p.m., together with the representation of the Fall of Sebastopol. Tickets at the Stations.

**SALFORD CEMETERY.**—The Burial Board

Figure 23. Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser. 22<sup>n</sup>. September 1855. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

old maxim, "Never halloo till you're out of the wood," for there are not many whose keen perception of the intricacies of the place will lead them to the centre without making a few wrong turns.

We might thus wander on, describing without much arrangement, but just as the various places present themselves in a vagrant stroll round Mr. Jennison's domain; but we have said enough to show that so long as the public continue to countenance him he will be ever ready to meet them by catering for their comfort and amusement. We may say in conclusion, that the London and North-Western Railway Company have had an additional siding laid at the Longsight Station, of sufficient length to receive a train of 50 carriages; so that holiday parties may be landed or embarked without inconvenience or interruption to the regular traffic on the line.—Macewen's omnibuses also set down; and start from the end of the road leading to the gardens, within five minutes' walk of the lodge, every quarter of an hour, so that on this side the gardens are as accessible as possible, and at a cheap rate.

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**OPENING OF THE DUBLIN EXHIBITION.**

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Figure 24. Lancashire Evening Post. 24<sup>th</sup> August 1899. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, BELLE VUE,  
**EXCURSION & PLEASURE PARTY**  
ARRANGEMENTS.

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**EXCURSION ARRANGEMENT**  
BY SPECIAL TRAINS.

Special Cheap Rates, including Free Admission to the Gardens, for Excursion Parties of not less than 300 in number, may be obtained from all Stations on the Midland, Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire, Great Northern, London and North Western, Great Western, Cheshire Lines, and North Staffordshire Railways. Applications must be addressed to the various Superintendents, or particulars may be obtained from Messrs. Jennison.

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DANSON & SONS' GRAND SPECTACLE  
OF THE  
RECENT

**SIEGE AND FALL OF PLEVNA**

Will be represented every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday evening, to October 31st inclusive, and every Saturday afterwards to November 5th, and information as to the hour the Fireworks will take place on any particular date may be obtained on application to Messrs. JENNISON, by letter, or at the Gardens.

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**PIC-NIC OR PLEASURE PARTY TICKETS**

At about a Single Fare for the Double Journey, with 6d. additional for Admission to the Gardens.

Will be issued from the principal Stations on the Midland, Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire, and Cheshire Lines Railways, not less than twelve miles distant, to Ashbury's or Belle Vue Station, near the Gardens, to Parties of not less than Six 1st Class, or Ten 2nd or 3rd Class Passengers desirous of visiting the Gardens.

To obtain these Tickets application must be made at any of the Stations from which the Party wish to proceed, not less than Three Days before the Excursion, stating the following particulars, viz:—

That it is exclusively a Pleasure Party; the Stations from and to which the Tickets are required; for what Class of Carriage, the date of the proposed Excursion, and the probable number of the party.

Pleasure Party Tickets will be available for return the SAME DAY ONLY, and Parties can only proceed and return by the Trains which stop at the Stations where they wish to join and leave the Railway, and having that Class of Carriage attached for which they have taken Tickets.

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Promoters of Excursions to Belle Vue, will, after making final arrangements with the Railway Company, be supplied, if required, with a few Posters and Handbills for distribution amongst the workmen and their friends, announcing the Trip, the time of Departure and return of the Trains, with the attractions of the Gardens and places where Tickets may be obtained.

Figure 25. Belle Vue Pleasure Gardens Instructions for party organisers. Source. Chethams Library. Manchester

### ***Behaviour.***

Drunkenness and hostility were certainly features of rush bearing crowds as evidenced in reports of 'Wakes Weeks which were regular features in local newspapers. It is not clear if the alleged state of many of the participants in the festivities militated against them being capable of work on the first day after the weekend's celebrations or they were merely following tradition. Both may have applied. The issue of 'going off' as unapproved absence from work was a considerable irritation for employers who had production to maintain. Many of the mills were owned jointly by several small manufacturers who themselves had or worked in the mill as operatives, and merely rented their portion of the mill; an arrangement not peculiar to Oldham. Angus Reach of the Morning Chronicle argued at mid-century that employers who themselves had arisen from the ranks of the mule or loom, were unlikely to be fatally hostile to customary holidays and so were tolerated.<sup>115</sup> Cunningham has another view that suggests that employers acknowledged that Wakes holidays were a compromise on their part and that they had to submit to the force of custom.<sup>116</sup> Whatever the reason, informal arrangements gave rise to approved time away from work. It is interesting to note Walton argues that excursions were promoted with particular eagerness at times of fair and festivity inland with a view to distracting workers and especially children, from the attendant drunkenness, gambling or immorality.<sup>117</sup> During the course of this research no local evidence has been found to support that view but that is not to say that it did not exist. The concluding chapter speculates on some alternative views. Certainly some local advertisements and news reports seem to mention the health benefits of the seaside but with what vigour and attention were paid, it is difficult to say. Poole also remarks "Oldham had a long standing reputation as a town of rough, independent and traditionalist character".<sup>118</sup> His observations seem to have been based on local literature relating to economic and political grievances most of which are beyond the remit of this work but certainly seem to have been influential in forming the

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<sup>115</sup> Angus Reach. Morning Chronicle. 1849. p79

<sup>116</sup> Hugh Cunningham. *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution. 1780 – 1880.* (New York: Croom Helm. 1980.) p58.

<sup>117</sup> Walton. *Wonderlands by the Waves.* p16.

<sup>118</sup> John Walton and James Walvin. *Leisure in Britain 1780-1939. Oldham Wakes.* Robert Poole p72.



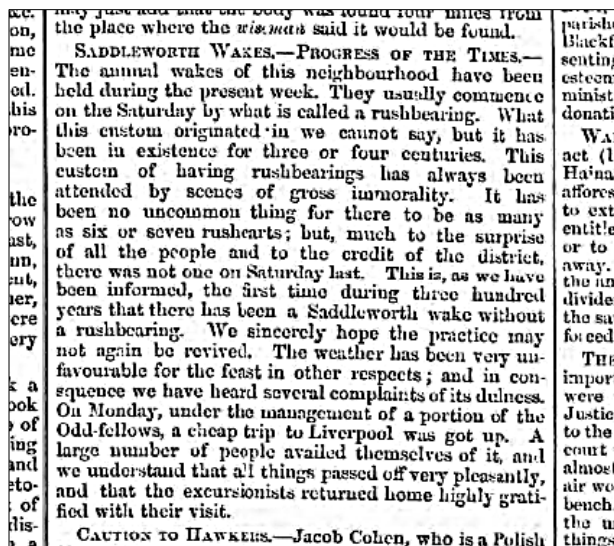


Figure 26. Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser. 31<sup>st</sup> August 1851. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

character of many of the residents at the time.<sup>119</sup> This reputation seems to have been an enduring trait as the Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser of the 31<sup>st</sup> August 1851 was moved to comment that the custom of rush bearing has always been ‘attended by scenes of gross immorality’. (See Figure 26).

Although written about a period much later, the Oldham Chronicle the 29th August 1898 remarks on workers’ free time by reporting “Oldham operatives do not change their characteristics because they turn their backs on the mills for week. The vigour they have previously thrown into work, they immediately fling into play”.<sup>120</sup> No wonder then, in the same newspaper article on a rail trip to Liverpool that is reproduced verbatim later, comments were made on the excursionists’ demeanour.

It is also relevant to note that Poole attributes an eventual civilisation of wakes to the railway excursion. Whilst still emphasising the importance of ‘wakes’ he argues that they gradually moved their focus from the town and country to the seaside resort.<sup>121</sup> There may well be some justification for this argument as it has been seen in a number of newspaper reports relating to railway excursions during the Wakes time, comments on improved behaviour were made. He contends that the period from 1850 to 1875 saw ever-greater numbers of workers taking advantage of the new railway network in Lancashire and Yorkshire that had the densest rail systems in the country as well as one of the greatest concentrations of regularly paid industrial workers. By using quotations from local newspapers in the 1870s, he goes so far as to

<sup>119</sup> For example – in *Class consciousness in Oldham and other North West Industrial Towns. The Historical Journal*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. pp161 – 172).

<sup>120</sup> Oldham Chronicle. 29th August 1898. Source: Oldham Local Archives and Study Centre.

<sup>121</sup> Poole. *The Lancashire Wakes Holidays*. p20.

describe Blackpool as 'Oldham by the sea'.<sup>122</sup> The railway link to Blackpool from Oldham was completed in 1846 and in what he describes as the peak year of 1860 more than 23,000 holidaymakers travelled on special trains to the resort during wakes week from the town alone. In the last quarter of the 19th century trips, increased from day trips to full weeks away and Wakes saving or 'going-off' clubs became popular as a means of providing the finance for them. The saving clubs were a feature of the industrial north until paid holidays became a reality in the 1940s and 50s. Later sections will examine what became other favoured destinations.

### ***The move from rush bearing to the wakes holiday.***

In spite of alternatives becoming available, the symbolism of rush bearing and its association with leisure time continued for many years with an apparent modification of conduct. For example, the Huddersfield Chronicle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 1854 reports on what it describes as the 'annual holiday, or merrymaking' that commenced on the previous Saturday and outlined some of the festivities with a comment on the improved behaviour of the crowds. It was reported that about 5pm in the evening, in Greenfield, one of the Saddleworth villages, the rush cart and Morris dancers began to march through the district and arrived at the church about 8pm in a very orderly well conducted manner. There is no mention of an overnight vigil taking place but the paper also commented that there was 'none of that brutal party faction fighting which disgraced this happy time in former years'.<sup>123</sup>

After a number of Factory Acts, conditions slowly improved and working hours were reduced until the ten hour day was the norm, with Saturday afternoon and Sundays free. The rush bearing weekend, had already been informally extended to incorporate Monday. By 1870 the idea of a week's holiday for factory workers, albeit unpaid, was beginning to be accepted, reviving the old name for celebrations this became "Wakes Week. As it was more cost effective for the mill to shut down and give everyone a week off, it became usual for all the mills in one area to close together. A move that

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<sup>122</sup> Poole. *The Lancashire Wakes Holidays*. p23.

<sup>123</sup> Huddersfield Chronicle. 2nd September 1854. Source: Saddleworth Museum Archives.

spread through other industrial areas. (See Figure 28) No doubt this arrangement would have been an advantage to railway companies who were able to spread their excursion traffic across a broader area but is an issue that has not been pursued.

24

## ANNUAL HOLIDAYS ("WAKES")

*ALPHABETICALLY ARRANGED*

Following is a list of the annual holidays of the principal Lancashire towns. For details of all other holidays refer to the notes appearing in the Directory immediately after the names of the towns.

	From	To	Page
Accrington ...	27th July ...	3rd August ...	117
Ashton-u-Lyne ...	16th August ...	24th August ...	123
Bacup ...	27th July ...	3rd August ...	125
Blackburn ...	20th July ...	29th July ...	127
Bolton ...	29th June ...	8th July ...	141
Burnley ...	6th July ...	13th July ...	159
Bury ...	10th August ...	17th August ...	173
Chorley ...	20th July ...	29th July ...	179
Clitheroe ...	20th July ...	29th July ...	183
Colne ...	20th July ...	29th July ...	185
Crompton & Shaw ...	17th August ...	24th August ...	295
Darwen ...	12th July ...	20th July ...	192
Denton ...	10th August ...	17th August ...	197
Dukinfield ...	16th August ...	24th August ...	199
Farnworth, etc. ...	29th June ...	8th July ...	201
Glossop ...	17th August ...	24th August ...	206
Great Harwood ...	13th July ...	20th July ...	209
Haslingden ...	27th July ...	3rd August ...	211
Heywood ...	20th July ...	29th July ...	215
Hyde ...	7th September ...	14th September ...	219
Lancaster ...	3rd August ...	10th August ...	221
Leigh ...	6th July ...	13th July ...	221
Littleborough ...	17th August ...	24th August ...	224
Manchester ...	3rd August ...	10th August ...	227
Middleton ...	31st August ...	7th September ...	255
Mossley ...	27th July ...	3rd August ...	259
Nelson ...	29th June ...	8th July ...	261
Oldham ...	31st August ...	7th September ...	273
Padilham ...	20th July ...	29th July ...	298
Preston ...	10th August ...	17th August ...	301
Radcliffe ...	6th July ...	13th July ...	307
Ramsbottom ...	10th August ...	17th August ...	311
Rawtenstall ...	27th July ...	3rd August ...	313
Rochdale ...	17th August ...	24th August ...	317
Royton ...	3rd August ...	10th August ...	297
Salford ...	3rd August ...	10th August ...	327
Stalybridge ...	20th July ...	27th July ...	331
Stockport ...	10th August ...	17th August ...	333
Todmorden ...	13th July ...	20th July ...	341
Uppermill, Greenfield and Diggle ...	17th August ...	24th August ...	343
Warrington ...	30th June ...	8th July ...	344
Wigan ...	3rd August ...	10th August ...	344

### HOLIDAYS IN ORDER OF DATE.

June 29th—July 8th ...	Bolton, Farnworth, Nelson and Warrington.
July 6th—13th ...	Burnley, Leigh and Radcliffe.
July 12th—20th ...	Darwen, Great Harwood and Todmorden.
July 20th—29th ...	Blackburn, Chorley, Clitheroe, Colne, Heywood, Padilham and Stalybridge.
July 27th—August 3rd ...	Accrington, Bacup, Haslingden, Mossley and Rawtenstall.
August 3rd—10th ...	Lancaster, Manchester, Royton, Salford and Wigan.
August 10th—17th ...	Bury, Denton, Preston, Ramsbottom and Stockport.
August 16th—24th ...	Ashton-u-Lyne, Crompton and Shaw, Dukinfield, Glossop, Littleborough, Rochdale, Uppermill, Greenfield and Diggle.
August 31st—September 7th ...	Middleton and Oldham.
September 7th—14th ...	Hyde.

Figure 27. The Lancashire Textile Industry directory and reference book. 51st edition, 1935. Page 24, Annual holidays (wakes). Source: Oldham Local Study Centre and Archives.



Such an extended period also allowed seaside towns to cope with a longer summer season as other industrial areas followed suit. With all the mills closed, other businesses found themselves redundant, and carriers found new uses for their carts by converting them to people carriers, advertising day excursions to the newly fashionable "health resorts" by the sea. Workers began to save a small amount each week in holiday funds to pay for their yearly extravagance, and soon people would go to the seaside for a whole week, to "clear the lungs" breathing the sea air, and enjoy the entertainments provided at the new resorts like Morecambe and Blackpool although as will be seen in the picture below, Oldham still had its own temporary form of Wakes funfair. (See picture 15.)



Picture 15. Oldham Wakes Fair on Tommyfield. 1905. Source: Oldham Study Centre and Archives.

### ***Excursion trends.***

For those unable to afford a week away, there was still the day-long rail excursion. By using the returns that came from Saddleworth stations described in chapter one and analysed as already described, it is possible to understand that some trends might be discernible. The evidence seems to suggest that initial trips went to Liverpool which perhaps is not surprising given the early establishment of the Liverpool to Manchester line from 1830.

As shown in Table four, the number of available destinations increased, that may be attributable to a correlation with the growing establishment of an overall network but more work needs to be done and is speculative at this stage. Yet for the workforce, being able to get away had its consequences for those staying at home. Whilst the newspaper carried many examples of local celebrations as part of the customs of the area, for example and presumably speaking of Saddleworth, on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 1858 the Huddersfield Chronicle reported. "On Monday, this district became nearly depopulated, most of the inhabitants having left by cheap excursions either to Belle Vue or Liverpool and loud and long were the murmurs to be heard among the Wakes loving people against the railway company for allowing 'cheap trips' to take all the money out of the district at Wakes time".<sup>124</sup> Similarly, Figure 28 from the Huddersfield Chronicle of the 1st September 1860 also comments on the negative effect of excursions on village life by reducing the numbers who took advantage of what was traditionally available locally at Wakes in favour of a day away. It also paints a picture of some of the other changes that were being experienced in the villages.

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<sup>124</sup> Huddersfield Chronicle. 9<sup>th</sup> September 1858. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

**SADDLEWORTH WAKES.**—These wakes commenced on Saturday last, and about seven o'clock in the evening groups of rough, half-drunken, disorderly young men, from what is familiarly called "the lower end" of Greenfield, yoked themselves to "rush carts," by long ropes and poles, or "stangs," by which they drew them through their different districts, and to Uppermill, to the evident delight of themselves—judging from their uproarious laughter and merry-andrew capers, as they went along drawing the carts. Four carts were thus drawn through Uppermill; and as is usual on such occasions, the parties drawing the different carts came into contact with each other, and fully sustained the true character of their affair by kicking and striking one another. If the guardians of the peace had not happened to be there, no one can tell what might have been the result of the encounter; as it was, kicks and cuffs were dealt about in a profuse manner for a few minutes, before the police could get the parties separated. The wakes, however, are not to be disparaged on account of the disorderly conduct of those who get up "rush carts" for the sole purpose of getting money to spend in drink. These displays of rival rush carts will cease to exist, if parties who get them up are not supplied with money and drink. The wakes, or annual pastime, are a great benefit generally to the working classes, as they give them a short relaxation from toil, and enable them to invite and entertain their friends at the social board with good old English fare. This is not the only benefit. Children mostly get their new winter's clothing, and domiciles get thoroughly cleaned and renovated against the wakes. Besides, in these railway days of cheap trips, the humblest individual can, at the wakes time, avail himself of the boon, to extend his knowledge or recruit his shattered health, by spending a few days at the seaside. On Sunday evening the wakes were held at Saddleworth Church, and were very thinly attended. On Monday, at Dobcross; but in consequence of a great number of people from that neighbourhood having gone to Liverpool, by the Oddfellows' cheap trip from Diggle and Saddleworth, the village was nearly deserted. On Tuesday the wakes reached Uppermill, where the landlord of the Marquis of Granby entertained his friends with a pigeon shooting for a free sovereign. And on Wednesday the wakes ended, according to custom, at "Bill's o' Jacks." This favourite resort is mostly well attended; but this year there was a great falling off in numbers in comparison with former years. Probably this was owing to the unfavourable state of the weather in the forenoon, which, however, cleared up and was fine during the afternoon and evening. Upon the whole, there was great provision made for the wakes in the shape of "roast beef and home brewed;" and on Saturday and Sunday there were many visitors in the district.

Figure 28. Huddersfield Chronicle 1<sup>st</sup> September 1860. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

### ***Excursion numbers***

Despite the effect on village life as adumbrated in previous sections, the annual Wakes still remained an important factor in railway excursion history for many years. Local newspapers reinforce the importance of these trips for people in the areas of Oldham and Saddleworth and offer a flavour of the favoured destinations. Susan Major's work on excursion crowds in a similar geographic area, demonstrate the value of such sources. However, her extensive use of digitised newspapers cannot be entirely replicated as few related closely to the areas studied in this thesis. Moreover, given the railway companies failure to collect detailed statistics on types of journeys other than by class, reliable excursion numbers are few and far between. Yet, for example, an article dated the 21st August 1909 that relates to Saddleworth is of value as it commented on the Wakes that had just passed and compared it with previous years. It suggested that in its view traditionally the emphasis of Wakes was very much on the hospitality afforded to families, guests and friends during the holiday period and that it was the one time in the year when locally, "the butchers and publicans had a fine and profitable year".<sup>125</sup> Cheap railway trips and seaside catering were said to have changed it all, certainly it seems from a local traders' point of view. Nevertheless the paper argued for the wider and social benefit that could be gained in getting away from the area by commenting "who shall blame those who are tied up in the greater part of the year for enjoying a complete and rational change?" It then went on to discuss the current Wakes and compared it further with previous years. It remarked "considering the bad trade of the preceding twelve months the number of trippers has been very satisfactory to the railway company who's offered facilities for cheap travel have been taken advantage of". It argued that the figures obtained from the stationmasters at Delph, Saddleworth and Greenfield prove this, for in each instance the opinion is expressed that the holiday traffic returns are almost equal to those of 1908. It also gave a full account of the wakes activities and the aggregated returns from the three stations mentioned which are to be found in Table four.

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<sup>125</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 21<sup>st</sup> August 1909. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

It is likely that statistical returns were purely informal as it is noticeable that the local newspaper served the same geographical area as the one that published the figures. Another factor could well be that once the lines were well established and used, they ceased to be newsworthy a factor that has been apparent within this research. Local papers seem to have had different reporting priorities and writing styles. It is not clear whether in Oldham and Saddleworth these differences were attributable to editorial policies but the general phenomenon was certainly noticed by Susan Major in other publications. She argues that early excursion activity was represented as spectacular events whereas later in the century the press were compiling routine aggregated activity.<sup>126</sup> This trend was apparent in Oldham and Saddleworth. Another variable that has to be borne in mind and as depicted earlier is that Oldham and Saddleworth were served by and ‘sandwiched’



Figure 29. Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway advertisement. Source: Manchester Evening News. 28<sup>th</sup> November. 1887.

between two railway companies that might have had dissimilar policies on excursions. To the west was the Lancashire and

Yorkshire Railway, which was not a great proponent of excursions when it will be seen there are a number of references to a lack of excursions and discussed later. To the east was the London and North Western Railway that from the evidence in local papers seems to have been more consistent in running excursions from 1850 onwards. Both had lines that connected Manchester with Leeds on entirely different routes and increased the possibilities for onward travel by local people once a network had been established.

<sup>126</sup> Susan Major. Ph.D. thesis. p288.



Although the newspaper accounts suggest that excursions by rail for the working class were highly seasonal there is some slight evidence that excursions left from the area at times other than Wakes. For example the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railways were advertising excursions to Blackpool, Lytham and Southport in the Manchester Evening News in November 1887 that suggests the possibility of a trip to the resort at any time of year, provided that they could get into Manchester.<sup>127</sup> It is known that in other areas Whitsuntide was the major holiday period but other than being a time for religious processions of Witness it does not seem to be of particular significance for excursionists in this area.

### ***Excursion destinations***

In examining many of the early destinations from both Oldham and Saddleworth it is clear that seaside resorts were popular and it is worth briefly exploring the possible reasons for the phenomenon before examining the attraction of a number of inland areas. It is important to remember that over the 19<sup>th</sup> century the time available for leisure for the local working people ranged from a few hours on a Sunday to a week-long and recognised holiday period that inevitably governed the distance that could be travelled. Careful analysis of newspaper reports have proved to be valuable in identifying the changes that relate to destinations, numbers of excursionists and the number of days available for excursions. For example, from the Saddleworth and Mossley newspapers it was noticeable that excursions from Saddleworth seem to have begun in 1850 but were to Liverpool and York. Poole argues that it was in the late 1870s that Oldham was the first town to get a regular Wakes week and that it was not until twenty years later that a week was near universal as the Wakes holidays spread to other parts of the county.<sup>128</sup> Most were established by negotiation between unions and employers but locally developed from the custom of taking time off immediately after a rush cart celebration that was traditionally held on the second Saturday after the 12th August. Except for a brief period between 1879 and 1882 when abortive attempts were made to standardise the wakes period throughout the year,

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<sup>127</sup> Manchester Evening News. 28<sup>th</sup> November 1887.

<sup>128</sup> Poole. *The Lancashire Wakes Holidays*. p22.

the Saddleworth Wakes holiday fell between the 16th and 24th August each year; the Oldham Wakes holiday was between the 31st August and the 7th of September and most references to excursions in this chapter are within these two weeks although there were others outside them.

LONDON AND NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.

# SADDLEWORTH WAKES.

## A Cheap Excursion TO BLACKPOOL

WILL RUN AS UNDER  
On SATURDAY and MONDAY, AUGUST 21 and 23, 1886.

STATION.	Time of Starting.	FARES.	
		Going on Saturday & Monday and Returning the same day at 7.40 p.m. from Talbot Road.	Going on Saturday and Returning up to the following Tuesday by Ordinary Trains.
Saddleworth .	7.5	2/9	4/6

The Tickets will be available only as shown above.  
Tickets not Transferable.  
CHILDREN UNDER TWELVE YEARS OF AGE HALF FARE.

All information regarding Excursion Trains on the London and North Western Railway, can be obtained on application to Mr. G. E. MAWBY, District Superintendent, Exchange Station, Manchester.

EUROPEAN STATION, LONDON, July, 1886. G. FINDLAY, General Manager

Figure 30. LNWR poster 1886. Source: National Railway Museum.

Poole argued that the future of the wakes holiday belonged at the seaside.<sup>129</sup> Walton argues that the rise of the Lancashire resorts was achieved without the added attractions of alluring scenery, (except perhaps Morecambe Bay, which grew slowly and belatedly), historical interest, quaintness or climatic advantages. What counted was the sea itself, ease of access and above all from an early stage, artificial attractions and careful municipal management.<sup>130</sup>

Whilst most of these variables are covered within the following paragraphs, there is an issue of

municipal management that is beyond the scope of this thesis except to acknowledge the tremendous scope of Blackpool's local authority in influencing the resort's development that went far beyond the previous concerns of public order, services to property and public health.

Given that from both Oldham and Saddleworth, there was a limit to how far could reasonably be travelled with a clear intention to return home in one

<sup>129</sup> Poole *The Lancashire Wakes Holiday*. p20.

<sup>130</sup> Walton. *Wonderlands by the Waves*. (Preston: Lancashire County Books. p8.



day, there is no doubt that the railway network to which local people had access almost from its inception had the potential to contribute to the development of the concept of recreational and discretionary travel for all social classes. By the eve of the railway there was already the beginning of a hierarchy of undeveloped seaside resorts within reach of Oldham and Saddleworth; in particular the coasts of Lancashire, North Wales and Yorkshire that eventually became accessible by rail for local people and perhaps attest to a recognition of their health-giving qualities of the sea and the notion that pleasure through travel was attainable. For example, providing that they could travel there by alternative means, lines from Preston would have given them access to Fleetwood and the Fylde coast as early as 1840, and by 1844, cheap third class trains ran between there and Blackpool. With the opening of a direct line to Blackpool in 1846 a wave of working class excursionists arrived from Manchester and other textile towns. Yet of relevant to this thesis the first mention of a trip to Blackpool from Saddleworth was not until 1870 when it was reported that 431 were taken there in a trip organised by the committee of the Uppermill and Greenfield Reform Clubs.<sup>131</sup> On that same day 414 tickets were also issued for a trip to Liverpool,

**LANCASHIRE & YORKSHIRE  
RAILWAY.**

**SEA BATHING**  
FOR THE  
**WORKING CLASSES.**

ON AND AFTER SUNDAY MORNING NEXT,  
and on each succeeding Sunday until further notice, with a view of  
affording the benefit of

**SEA  
BATHING,**  
A Train will leave the following Stations for  
**FLEETWOOD AND BLACKPOOL.**

		FARES THERE AND BACK THE SAME DAY.		
		Males.	Females & Children.	
Leave Manchester at	6 0	3s. 0d.	1s. 6d.	
„ Bolton at	6 30	2s. 6d.	1s. 3d.	
„ Chorley at	7 0	2s. 0d.	1s. 0d.	
„ Preston at	7 40	2s. 0d.	1s. 0d.	

Arriving at Fleetwood at 9 a.m.

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FROM SALFORD STATION.

**MANCHESTER TO LIVERPOOL**

FARES there and back same day.

		Males.	Females and Children.	
At 7 a.m.		2s. 6d.	1s. 6d.	

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**BURY TO LIVERPOOL, BLACKPOOL,  
AND FLEETWOOD.**

FARES there and back same day.

		Males.	Females and Children.	
At 6 20 a.m.		2s. 6d.	1s. 6d.	

Parties availing themselves of these trains will be enabled to  
**BATHE & REFRESH THEMSELVES**  
In ample time to attend a Place of Worship.

These Trains will return punctually at 6 p.m., arriving  
at Manchester about 8 and 9 p.m.

The Tickets will take the Passengers to the above-named places for ONE  
FARE, but for the purpose of preventing any unnecessary confusion or  
BUSINESS ON THE SUNDAY, it is desirable that tickets be taken on  
SATURDAY EVENING.

Bradshaw and Blacklock, Printers, 47, Brown-street, Manchester.

Figure 31. Undated poster probably 1860s  
Source: National Railway Museum

<sup>131</sup> Huddersfield and West Yorkshire Advertiser. 27<sup>th</sup> August 1870. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

organised by the Ancient Order of the Druids. Posters seen for this work relating to other trips, show fare structures for all three classes of travel. It could be argued that the companies intended excursions to be enjoyed by a wide range of social groups. Indeed, Reid, argued that the excursion trains were too large to be the province of any one group.<sup>132</sup> However, through a lack of hard relevant data, it has proved to be almost impossible to offer evidence on how each class of accommodation was used and so reliance has had to be placed on the posters themselves to identify the travel class for which they were intended.

It was seen earlier in the Chapter how the local wakes holiday period evolved from a tradition known as rush bearing and the attendant festivities. Robert Poole argues that the cheap trip to the seaside was soon an established part of Oldham Wakes and although there are earlier examples that are given in following paragraphs, cites that in 1858 nearly fourteen thousand people left Oldham on excursion trains on five days over the wakes period. In 1860 the total traffic, ordinary trains included, was over twenty three thousand. In Poole's opinion, this proved to be a peak year and although the numbers recovered after the cotton famine (from 1861-1865) the excursion traffic remained at a similar level during the 1870s.<sup>133</sup> Whilst the source for this statistic is not clear, it set the baseline for an argument to search for others to establish a level of consumption of excursions and the construction of a simple matrix (Table four) to assess possible trends. Reference to the matrix will be found where appropriate.

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<sup>132</sup> Douglas A. Reid p63.

<sup>133</sup> John K Walton and James Walvin eds. *Leisure in Britain. 1790-1939*. Oldham Wakes. Robert Poole p80

**TABLE FOUR. MATRIX OF DESTINATIONS FROM SADDLEWORTH STATIONS**

	YEARS																			Total				
	1850	1854	1855	1860	1870	1871	1879	1883	1891	1892	1893	1895	1900	1902	1906	1909	1912	1916	1917					
<b>DESTINATIONS</b>																								
Barmpouth													6					24				30	Barmouth	
Belle Vue												545		375	665	220							1805	Belle Vue
Birmingham																				3		3	Birmingham	
Blackpool					431		560	200	381		1207.5	221	302	250	907	725	1239	329	670			7422.5	Blackpool	
Bridlington													1			26	65			58		150	Bridlington	
Buxton						350							14									364	Buxton	
Carlisle																	5					5	Carlisle	
Chepstow																				2		2	Chepstow	
Chester														20						4		24	Chester	
Douglas									18				40	30		45						133	Douglas	
East coast *														2	4	33						39	East coast*	
E. Counties																2				2		4	E. Counties	
Glasgow																	2					2	Glasgow	
Harrogate																						0	Harrogate	
Huddersfield											73							3				76	Huddersfield	
Ireland*														2	7	2	7					18	Ireland*	
Isle of Man									27		63			30	115	129	37			179		580	Isle of Man	
Lake District															28	7						35	Lake District	
Liverpool	400	520	600		414			600	139		187.5		162	80	245	181	109			90		3727.5	Liverpool	
London									10		1		2		32	6				47		98	London	
Manchester											187									37		224	Manchester	
Mid Counties*														20	10	10				10		50	M. Counties*	
Morecambe													60	50	196	217	265	48	101			937	Morecambe	
New Brighton													23				36	15	7			81	New Brighton	

**TABLE FOUR. MATRIX OF DESTINATIONS FROM SADDLEWORTH STATIONS (Continued)**

N.Wales Colwyn Bay													5				18		10	33	N. Wales (Colwyn Bay)	
N.Wales Rhyll)										1			7		26		6	12		52	N. Wales (Rhyll)	
N.Wales Llandudno)													25	10			49		21	9	114	N. Wales Llandudno)
N. Wales.*				100											23	26	112	20			281	N. Wales*
Newcastle																					0	Newcastle
Oldham										1403											1403	Oldham
Peel Park																	11				0	Peel Park
Scarborough										102			2	11	11	30	65				221	Scarborough
Scotland *														20	9				35	3	67	Scotland*
Southport									15			60				73		185		39	372	Southport
South Wales*																	47			2	49	South Wales*
Stafford																				3	3	Stafford
Stratford										4											4	Stratford
Thornaby																					0	Thornaby
Torquay																	20				20	Torquay
Whitby																	4			2	6	Whitby
Wrexham																				2	2	Wrexham
York	1200													20							1220	York
Yorks. coast *												20									20	Yorks.coast*
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1600</b>	<b>520</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>845</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>800</b>	<b>590</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3229</b>	<b>826</b>	<b>666</b>	<b>966</b>	<b>2440</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>455</b>	<b>1273</b>	<b>19677</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	
<b>YEARS</b>	<b>1850</b>	<b>1854</b>	<b>1855</b>	<b>1860</b>	<b>1870</b>	<b>1871</b>	<b>1879</b>	<b>1883</b>	<b>1891</b>	<b>1892</b>	<b>1893</b>	<b>1895</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1902</b>	<b>1906</b>	<b>1909</b>	<b>1912</b>	<b>1916</b>	<b>1917</b>			

Key: Unspecified destination \*

It was seen in the introductory chapter that the sea has alleged prophylactic and curative qualities of the sea had been recognised since the 18<sup>th</sup> century but largely at the upper classes. The popularity of the seaside among the lower social classes was also evident in the pre-railway period and provided the companies with a ready market for excursions. This was reflected in their advertising material. For example, an undated poster for the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway on display at local stations, (see Figure 32) advertised trips to Fleetwood, Blackpool and Liverpool 'on and after Sunday morning next and succeeding Sundays' stating that it was specifically for the Working Classes for the purpose of sea bathing and to refresh themselves. This same poster mentioned in the small print, that whilst there, excursionists would also have time to attend a place of worship to fulfil their Sabbath duty which raises the issue of religious observance. Although no doubt visitors would partake of whatever else the resort had to offer and will be discussed later.

Railway companies had different policies on providing services and excursions on a Sunday. Some had faced resistance from a number of sources, particularly religious organisations who advocated the preservation, observance and sanctity of the Lords Day. Simmons quoting from a census question on church attendance at the time (1851) that was never repeated, cites that "half the population of Great Britain at least one service at church or chapel so for many families it would have been unthinkable for to break into this routine of life to carry themselves off on a pleasure trip".<sup>134</sup> It was not until a succession of Factory Acts regulated the hours of the daily grind in which the length of the working week was reduced from six to five and half days, Sunday had been the only day available for leisure purposes.

As will be seen in Table four, in response to a growing demand, apart from the three areas already mentioned in an earlier paragraph, an array of resorts to suit all budgets were to become developed in many areas of the country along with hotels, guest houses, fairgrounds, piers, swimming pools, and

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<sup>134</sup> Jack Simmons. *The Victorian Railway*. p282.

casinos. Sporting facilities and the countryside also became accessible by railways once they had been built and recognised. As Borsay in his work on leisure noted, 'the rise of the railways revolutionised sport by widening the catchment area for spectators and enabling competitors to compete nationally'<sup>135</sup>. Simmons also identifies football, cricket and horse racing as activities benefiting from large numbers transported to grounds.<sup>136</sup> However, little or no direct evidence has been found to justify them being included,

except for one trip to Thornaby races in 1909 for twenty people. That is not to say that they did not occur: but if they did, they were not of sufficient size or concern to have been recorded in the press.

#### ***The context of destinations***

The development of resorts also involved transforming landscapes. As a nation, Great Britain was fortunate to be surrounded by the sea with no inland place being more than seventy-five miles from the coast. Simmons notes that by 1914 every manufacturing town could reach the sea even during winter in less than three hours.<sup>137</sup> Oldham and Saddleworth were between forty and

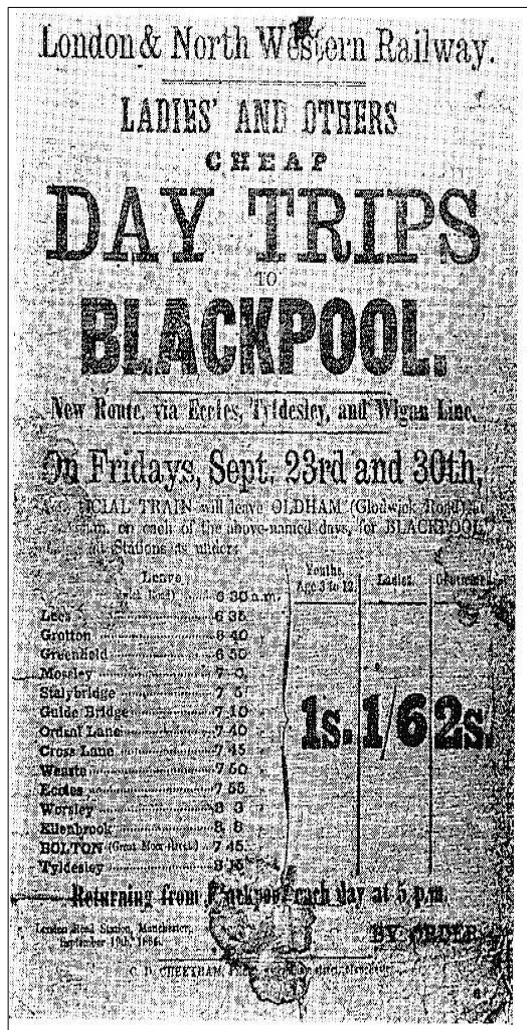


Figure 32. LNWR poster believed to be 1864. Source: National Archives.

fifty miles from a number of coastal

destinations. Through the introduction of railways, areas once perceived as marginal or valueless sites could be reclaimed for resorts and developed into facilities attractive to outside visitors. Indeed the value of a visual experience

<sup>135</sup> Peter Borsay. *A History of Leisure*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. 2006.) p28.

<sup>136</sup> Jack Simmons. *The railway in town and country from 1830 – 1914*. p88.

<sup>137</sup> Simmons.

for excursionists was noted by Urry in his work on the tourist gaze; for example, he argues that an incentive to travel was what could be viewed at outside places not directly connected with work or residence of the traveller.<sup>138</sup> The importance of the visual experience of travelling away from Oldham and Saddleworth was confirmed in a number of newspaper articles but more to do with what could be seen at the destination rather than the journey.

Whilst the aesthetic pleasures of travelling should not be ignored, little local evidence has been found to support a view that people took excursions primarily for the journey itself, except perhaps in the early stages of travel. Forms of architecture often assumed cultural status that defined specific destinations, for example the North Pier at Blackpool, which opened to the public in 1865. Whilst many resorts like Blackpool offered opportunities for sea bathing, apart from the ocean the town had little other natural scenic beauty and in development of the resorts relied on man-made structures like piers, promenades and other accoutrements associated with the coast. Those that were in what became tourist areas may very well have eventually overtaken the attraction of their health giving properties. The British seaside appears to have acquired a special magnetism, and this may have something to do with the fascinating structures made fashionable by the Victorians as well as the early attraction of sea bathing. Piers were designed to be as individual as the character of the particular resort where they were placed, but the primary function of many of them was to provide an area for 'promenading' or 'taking the air'. They could be adapted to incorporate landing stages for the increasing paddle steamer trade that as already discussed; some historians have argued was the beginning of mass travel rather than that provided by the railways. It can be seen that for local people who were used to the arrival of temporary fairgrounds in their own areas during 'Wakes Week' and which have already been discussed, the establishment of similar but permanent features at Blackpool may have been

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<sup>138</sup> John Urry. *The Tourist Gaze*. (London: Sage. 2008.) p3.



an added incentive for excursionists to travel there once the railway line had been established.



**Picture 16. Lithograph of the Sankey Viaduct. Source: Manchester Libraries.**

Another example of reported tourist interest was the Sankey Viaduct (picture 16).<sup>139</sup> Built between 1828 and 1830 by George Stephenson for the Liverpool & Manchester Railway Company and was a popular destination. It enabled the railway to cross the line of the Sankey Canal with sufficient clearance for the Mersey flats, the sailing vessels for which the canal was constructed. Built principally to enable the transport of coal from the Lancashire coalfields to the growing industries of Liverpool, the canal was an important factor in the industrial growth of the region as well as being a tourism attraction for those from other industrial areas.

Bearing in mind that the railway did not arrive in parts of Oldham until 1842 and Saddleworth in 1849, one of the earliest examples on which material on excursions from an Oldham station comes from work by Arthur and Elizabeth Jordan and reinforces Susan Major's findings of some railway travellers adopting strategies for taking advantage of low cost excursions.<sup>140</sup> David Joy describes a 'close encounter' for railway officials at Oldham Mumps station in

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<sup>139</sup> The Sankey Viaduct. Source: Manchester Libraries.

<sup>140</sup> Susan Major Ph.D. thesis. p301.

1848, which must have been not long after the line opened. The Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway issued day excursion tickets to Blackpool at a reduced price of one shilling for ladies. Gentlemen had to pay one shilling and sixpence. The concession was said to have been withdrawn because it was suspected that men were masquerading as women to gain the reduction. It was also said that a Passenger Superintendent along with four Inspectors were sent to investigate, although the method of differentiating the sexes was not recorded but their technique was clearly time consuming. The episode resulted in a rush of impatient passengers who overwhelmed the Superintendent and had to be rescued by the Stationmaster and dragged to the safety of the waiting room. It is not known if this was the end of the concession on the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway but discrimination in favour women did exist as the poster from 1864 in Figure 32 shows and others throughout the thesis.<sup>141</sup> The London and North Western Railway were certainly running these excursions from Oldham Clegg Street and Lees, Grotton and Greenfield in Saddleworth as the poster shows.

What is more certain comes from an article that appeared in the Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser on the 7th September 1850, and is produced verbatim below as it sets the scene for excursions in the area and demonstrates that they were not always strictly confined to the usual one day's rest in the early Wakes weeks and could be organised at short notice.<sup>142</sup> It describes a visit to Liverpool.

#### “Cheap trip to Liverpool”

On Tuesday last a cheap trip from Saddleworth to Liverpool took place. The arrangements were only made late on the previous Saturday, yet notwithstanding this short notice and the previous termination of the Saddleworth Wakes, a very orderly and respectable company of 350 to 400 people persons assembled at the station at six o'clock a.m. the time named in the placards for starting and very patiently waited for the appearance of the train. Which through some awkward blunder or censurable neglect, was fully two hours and a quarter later in starting than the time

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<sup>141</sup> For example, see figure 32.

<sup>142</sup> Huddersfield and West Yorkshire Advertiser. 7<sup>th</sup> September 1850. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

appointed. The stationmaster Mr Hirst by his civility and good nature, did much to mitigate a dissatisfaction which was too reasonable. With the exception of the delay in the morning, all went on as well as could be desired. The train arrived at Liverpool at about half past ten and got back to Saddleworth at 10.20pm. Numbers who never before saw Liverpool or the sea, had this day for the gratification of their curiosity and all enjoyed themselves very much. Such trips as this and the one to York will do a great deal of good in a variety of ways and they deserve to be encouraged rather than discouraged, though some of our moralists and economists denounce them as injurious.

The trip to York some three days later was reported as being met with equal enthusiasm and described by the Huddersfield Chronicle in Figure 29 as a

about £5.  
**RAILWAY EXCURSION TO YORK.**—On Monday, the 26th ult., a monster train started from the Mossley Brow Station, soon after 6 a.m., calling at Greenfield, Saddleworth, and Diggle Stations, to take passengers up for the cheap trip to York. Twelve hundred persons were in the train; the day was fine, no accident occurred, and everything passed off very satisfactorily, excepting the long time consumed on the road in going, as it was nearly noon before the arrival at York. Much time was lost owing to there only being one engine to the train. The passengers enjoyed their trip very much, and got home between ten and eleven o'clock in the evening.  
**CHEAP TRIP TO LIVERPOOL.**—On Tuesday last, a

'monster' excursion train carrying 1200 persons and leaving from four local stations, Mossley Brow, (the next down the line from Greenfield), Greenfield, Saddleworth and

Figure 33. Huddersfield Chronicle. 7<sup>th</sup> September 1850. Source: British Newspapers on Line.

Diggle. It demonstrates the size of these excursions and the

shortcomings of the railways to cater adequately for large numbers.<sup>143</sup>

It is not clear if these excursions were organised solely by the railway company. However, evidence of departures from Diggle (near the entrance to the Standedge Tunnel) have a particular significance as they are rarely mentioned in other literature. Twelve hundred passengers were reported as being carried. However, much time was lost owing to 'there being only one engine for the train'. Both articles were written not long after the local lines were introduced and in terms of numbers from one small station, perhaps epitomise the potential that railway excursions had to introduce a new dimension to workers' leisure lives even if they demonstrated the unreliability of the service and lack of preparation on behalf of the railway company.

<sup>143</sup> Huddersfield Chronicle 7<sup>th</sup> September 1850

Other trips to Liverpool from the area are recorded in local newspapers over successive years with similar comments on the pleasure that was experienced by the participants. The 'Oddfellows' organisation, features a number of times. For example, and headlined as 'the progress of the times', a report from the Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser noted that there was no rushcart for the first time in three hundred years. Yet clearly the weekend was still recognised as a holiday time as a 'large number' of a portion of the Delph Oddfellows were said to have travelled to Liverpool and returned 'highly gratified' with their visit.<sup>144</sup> On the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1860 some three years later 520 of the 'sons and daughters of toil' were said to have met at Saddleworth and Greenfield stations on a trip to Liverpool and on which they sailed to 'the beautiful villages on the Cheshire side of the Mersey' and returned without accident! (sic).

It was seen in the section on Wakes Week that over the years there had been comments made on the unruly nature of participants in rush bearing and that some of the behaviour had been transferred to resorts used by excursionists. In 1857, there were indications that the reputation of local people was beginning to improve. Whilst not reporting on excursions as such, the Huddersfield Chronicle of the 29th September commented that the Wakes had never before been known to pass in such an orderly fashion. They were covering a procession relating to a rush cart in which 'thousands' from all over the district took part.<sup>145</sup> Robert Poole's argument that railway excursions contributed to the calming down of the area may well have had some justification. One of the rare Oldham articles with any indication of excursion numbers came from the Oldham Standard that is produced verbatim as it suggests that the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway were not consistent in providing excursions.

"On Saturday morning, 953 persons left the Oldham Ashton and Guide Bridge Railway Stations for London. The trip principally consisted of the workpeople of Messrs. Platt's and their friends, and was only five shillings for the double journey. The trip returned

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<sup>144</sup> Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser. 30<sup>th</sup> August 1850. Source Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>145</sup> Huddersfield Chronicle and West Yorkshire Advertiser. 29th September. 1857. Source Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

on Thursday. On Sunday extra trains were run from Clegg Street Station to Ashton during the day, all of which were well filled. On Monday an excursion train left the same station for Sheffield, Worksop and Lincoln, returning the same day. There were also special trips run to Belle Vue Gardens, of which about 3,000 availed themselves. There has not been a single extra trip started from the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway line, although a good number have availed themselves of the privilege of going to Preston, while the Guild has been held, at one half the usual fares. As might have been expected, however, there has not been that amount of travelling this wakes as it is usually the case when trade is prosperous."

This last remark presents an interesting perspective as it suggests that when trade is good, people seem to spend their money at home and is an issue that might need to be pursued at a later date.

For some reason, 1871 seems to have been a particularly busy Wakes. The reason of good trade in the area being hinted at by the Huddersfield Chronicle who commented that "it was considered that the Wakes were never more numerously attended. It also indicates that by this time, the

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**THE WAKES.**—On Saturday evening last, the Saddleworth Wakes were commenced, and carried on until the Wednesday evening following. The general preparations for the wakes were on a very extensive scale, as the trade of the district has been good for some time past, and employment plentiful. Notwithstanding the very high price of butcher's meat, a good supply was obtained of roast beef, plum pudding, and home-brewed beer, so that friends and relations from a distance had no reason to complain of a poor supply of provisions. Two rush carts were taken to Saddleworth Church, on Saturday evening, one from Greenfield, and the other from Frenches; both were drawn by men and boys. On Sunday, the day was remarkably fine, and crowds of people visited the district from a distance; many came by train, and many others with conveyances of almost every kind. The three following days were all particularly fine; the sun shone out beautifully on each day. On Monday, two excursion trains left the neighbourhood, one for Liverpool and the other for Buxton. The train for Liverpool was got up by the Reform Clubs of Uppermill and Greenfield, and the Ancient Order of Druids. Nearly 800 persons left for Liverpool. The trip for Buxton was got up by the Committee of the Uppermill Temperance Society, and took about 350 persons, most of whom visited Chatsworth Hall. The wakes on Tuesday were principally confined to Uppermill. In the square, a large number of people were present, and besides the usual articles being exhibited for sale, there were various kinds of amusements, such as swinging boat, wooden horses worked round by steam, shooting saloons, &c., &c. Wednesday, as usual, was Bill o' Jack's Wakes, and as the day was so fine, several thousands visited the place, and almost all kinds of vehicles were used. It is considered that the wakes were never more numerously attended. There was no disturbance of any kind.

holiday had been extended to three days. Crowds of people visited the district from a distance, many came by train, many others by conveyances of every kind. Trade in the district was reported as good and "Employment plentiful."

However, as it was the year in which legislation introduced August Bank Holiday Monday that freed other workers outside the local textile industries for the day, the two holidays may

Figure 34. Huddersfield Chronicle. 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1871. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

well have coincided with one another.<sup>146</sup> For example, it was reported that two excursions had left the district. Nearly 800 persons left for Liverpool in a trip organised by the Reform Clubs of Uppermill and Greenfield. A second one organised by the Ancient Order of Druids Temperance Society with nearly 300 passengers went to Buxton and visited Chatsworth, a stately home.<sup>147</sup>

Large numbers and co-operation between groups continued within the area, as the Stalybridge Reporter commented that Delph, Dobcross and Friarmere cricket clubs jointly organised an outing to Blackpool on which some 800 were estimated to have travelled.<sup>148</sup> Sobriety issues were also to the fore as the same paper reported a special train to Delph carried 300 representatives and friends from the Temperance Union for their quarterly conference.

In 1884 the Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter offered what might be the first reference to competition between organisations hiring trains and the railway companies providing their own and that railway companies wanted assurances that organisations hiring trains needed an assurance on the number of expected passengers. It reported “An unnamed local society was reported to have lost heavily by its trip to Rhyl and they complain and not unjustly, it is not fair in so small a place for the railway company to demand a guarantee of 300 bookings and then organise opposition trips.”<sup>149</sup> In another article, the same publication reported that 500 people had patronised a special train to Belle Vue.<sup>150</sup>

It was seen earlier that Liverpool was a favoured destination in the early days of excursions, Sankey Viaduct being the object of their interest. Almost forty

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<sup>146</sup> Included were Easter Monday, the first Monday in August, the 26th December (or the following Monday if the latter fell on a Sunday), and Whit Monday. (In England, Wales & Ireland, both Christmas Day and Good Friday were traditional 'days of rest' and Christian worship, as were Sundays, and did not need to be included in the Act.

<sup>147</sup> Huddersfield Chronicle. 2<sup>nd</sup> September. 1871. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>148</sup> Stalybridge Reporter. 4<sup>th</sup> September 1875. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>149</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 6th September 1884. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>150</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 6th August. 1891. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

years later, Liverpool continued to attract the curiosity of local people but with a spectacle of a slightly different kind. For example, on the 29<sup>th</sup> August 1891 Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter said that a large number of trippers went away to Liverpool to see the Manchester Ship Canal (then still under construction) and view the wonders of the docks, shipping and river traffic. The Canal had a particular significance for local people and was one of the last major canals to be constructed in Britain. It stretches for 36 miles from Eastham, on the southern shore of the Mersey estuary 6 miles from Liverpool, almost to the centre of Manchester so played a major part in import and export for local industries. The Mersey and Irwell Navigation had opened in 1740, enabling boats to navigate from Liverpool right up to Manchester. In 1882, a meeting of Manchester businessmen resolved to create a canal to enable sea-going ships to reach Manchester, so that Manchester industry could compete with other areas by avoiding the high charges for using rail transport and Liverpool Docks. The proposals were bitterly opposed by Liverpool and the railway companies but, in 1885, Parliament passed a bill approving the plan and the canal opened in 1894, so the prospect of seeing sea-going ships may well have presented an opportunity for another visual experience for excursionists

Perhaps one of the more unusual events was recounted by the Oldham Standard in 1879. It reported "The stations on Tuesday morning crowded with excursionists, tickets for Blackpool seemed to be in great demand, for one man was bawling out, "Aw'll give onybody a suverin for four tickets to Blackpool bi' the next train. Another was shouting this was for tickets for Liverpool, when a smart youth of 17 went up to the ticket seller and asked him, "if he could no let him ' one fur haue-a'dollar, cose that wer o' he had aw'but two bob for speuses."<sup>151</sup> There is no record of the outcome of the attempted negotiation.

Clearly there was a limit to how far could be travelled on an excursion, if the return journey was to be on the same day. For example, an Oldham

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<sup>151</sup> Oldham Standard. 12<sup>th</sup> August 1879. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.



Chronicle in 1882 reported that a special excursion left Lees for Barmouth on the west coast of Wales. Many people were said to have made the journey but the consensus was “it was too far for a day trip”. As something like sixteen hours was spent in the railway carriage and the return train arrived back at 4am the following day.<sup>152</sup>

At a local level, Belle Vue on the outskirts of Manchester seems to have been a favoured venue with numerous reports in the local papers. For example, in 1893 the Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter highlighted the fact that 600 said to have packed into Belle Vue.<sup>153</sup> On the 21<sup>st</sup> July 1898 Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter commented that an unusual group were also taken there. The Castleshaw Navy Mission (a group set up to oversee the welfare of the workforce employed at the building of a reservoir above Delph station, number unknown), also took them to Belle Vue.

As a demonstration that visitors did come in to the area for recreational purposes, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1898 Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter<sup>154</sup> reported that ‘some 700 or 800 scholars came from Oldham by special train to Delph ‘to enjoy the splendid scenery and the refreshing breezes’. A month later on the 23<sup>rd</sup> August the same paper reported an invasion of 500 poor children and their caretakers.<sup>155</sup> The trip was said to have invoked a good deal of sympathy from the local people who accompanied the children back to the station.

By 1895, the area was beginning to experience a reduction in the numbers who were able to go on trips and the Wakes were said to be far less lively and rail receipts were down by £30. It is said that the causes were not too far to seek but were not identified. It may well be that the effects of the Boer War were being felt. Yet not too far away from that date in 1902, receipts at

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<sup>152</sup> Oldham Chronicle. 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1882. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>153</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 9<sup>th</sup> September 1893. Source Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>154</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 23<sup>rd</sup> July 1898. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>155</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1898. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

Delph were said to be £200 from trips to Blackpool 250, Douglas 30, Liverpool 80, Morecambe 50, Llandudno 10, Chester 20, Scotland 10, Midland counties 12, Belle Vue 375 and unspecified numbers to South Wales, Aberystwyth, Bridlington and Ireland.<sup>156</sup> In 1906 numbers were similar. For example, Belle Vue 375, Blackpool 174, Liverpool 100, Morecambe 27, Scarborough 11. Yorkshire Coast 20. North Wales and Chester 26, Ireland 2, East Coast 2. Total 737<sup>157</sup>

### ***Other travel issues.***

Whilst other historians have commented on the inadequacies of rolling stock used for early excursions, complaints were still being made in 1909. On the 21<sup>st</sup> August the Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter commented on carriage accommodation. Only three were supplied; two coaches and a composite which was the normal arrangement for the timetabled journey for regular daily passengers. The paper reported that a mistake had been made by the railway company in not supplying adequate transport from Delph to Greenfield where excursionists could board their trains. The coaches were said to be overflowing with passengers who were not amused and were “packed inconveniently enough to vex the spirit of even those on holiday”.<sup>158</sup> However, it is here that there were interesting comments about booking arrangements for excursions and offered an insight into the behaviour of excursionists when making decisions about their trips. It was said that railway officials offered facilities for advanced bookings of which the public ‘do not take much advantage’. Although the offices were kept open until a late hour on the two preceding evenings for intended excursionists to secure their tickets in advance, “it is regrettable that the trippers seemed to prefer to secure their tickets at the last possible moment.” The paper does not mention what happened to the hapless excursionists but comments that only one or two normal passenger trains left behind the scheduled times. Perhaps this dilatory trait of passengers explains why some excursions were notoriously

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<sup>156</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 23rd August.1902 Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>157</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 25<sup>th</sup> August 1906. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>158</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 21<sup>st</sup> August. 1909. Source Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

badly organised if railway companies did not know how many excursionists to expect. However, it does go some way to confirm Susan Major's findings that railway companies were unwilling or unable to predict the level of potential demand.<sup>159</sup>

***Changes in discretionary travel in the area.***

By 1910, newspaper evidence suggests that major changes were being experienced in the area and that the workforce were able to have more than the traditional two or three days away from their workplaces. For example, the Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter commented on the fact that a "great many of the residents have been able to get away for a week" and that "perhaps more had gone away than ever before". Consequently it had affected the locally based celebrations where there was no rush cart and "it had been very quiet".<sup>160</sup>

One might expect that there would be little newspaper evidence of rail excursions through the First World War; in 1914 the railway companies were obliged to put their organisations at the disposal of the government for the movement of troops and supplies for which they were guaranteed an income equal to that of 1913. To discourage civilian traffic, Freeman and Aldcroft argue fares were raised, cheap travel facilities withdrawn and appeals made to the public to avoid unnecessary journeys.<sup>161</sup>

However, there were a number of articles that suggested discretionary travel continued much as before; substantial amounts had been saved, excursion numbers and destinations held up reasonably well throughout the war. For example, the Oldham Chronicle of the 15<sup>th</sup> August 1914 reported that "Saddleworth is better prepared to meet the war than most places. The Wakes have arrived and with it the division of funds of the various savings

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<sup>159</sup> Susan Major. Ph.D. thesis. p298.

<sup>160</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 20th August. 1910. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>161</sup> Michael Freeman and Derek Aldcroft. *An Atlas of British Railway History*. (London: Guild Publishing, 1985.) p64.

clubs".<sup>162</sup> The article went on to identify the amounts that had been distributed which totalled just over £7,000 through five savings clubs and that it was, 'pretty certain' that there would be 'going off' during the holidays. Yet the same newspaper commented that Dobcross Loom works, one of the large employers in the area were closed for a fortnight and that it was expected that other mills in the area would be closed for a week. It said that "Some will however be working night and day to carry out Government work orders for shirtings for the army and the workpeople agreed to work during the Wakes holidays" which had started that day. However, another article dated a week later, commented that the 'trip list' had been withdrawn and that there was comparatively little 'going away'. Presumably it was referring to the excursion advertisements that regularly appeared on the front page of the Saddleworth and Mossley Reporter. Moreover, it was commented that most of the workforce had been at work manufacturing materials for 'old soldiers and sailors now discharging such trying duties'.<sup>163</sup> In 1916 the Oldham Chronicle noted that the receipts are "in the happy position that with the decreased Wakes (railway) traffic, and consequent reduction of work and traffic damage to rolling stock, are practically the same as last year. At Greenfield, the bookings were stated as – Blackpool 329, Southport 35, Newcastle 4, Hull 3, Colwyn Bay 7, Rhyl 12, Llandudno 21. There are no long distance bookings".<sup>164</sup> The paper stated that the figures were not necessarily representative of excursions from the area as many were said to have booked to Manchester Victoria station and travelled from there. In 1917 a degree of ambiguity seems to have crept in. On the one hand, the Oldham Chronicle of the 24<sup>th</sup> August commented that "for the first time, possibly in recorded local history Saddleworth Wakes was without a fair. There was not even a gingerbread stall or Aunt Sally."<sup>165</sup> Yet people still travelled and it seems reasonable to speculate that other areas offered pursuits that were of greater interest than that offered locally. For example, on the same date the London and North Western Railway from Delph station had ticket returns of – Blackpool 104, Southport 8, Liverpool 21, Stafford 3, Chester 4, Birmingham

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<sup>162</sup> Oldham Chronicle. 15<sup>th</sup> August 1914. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

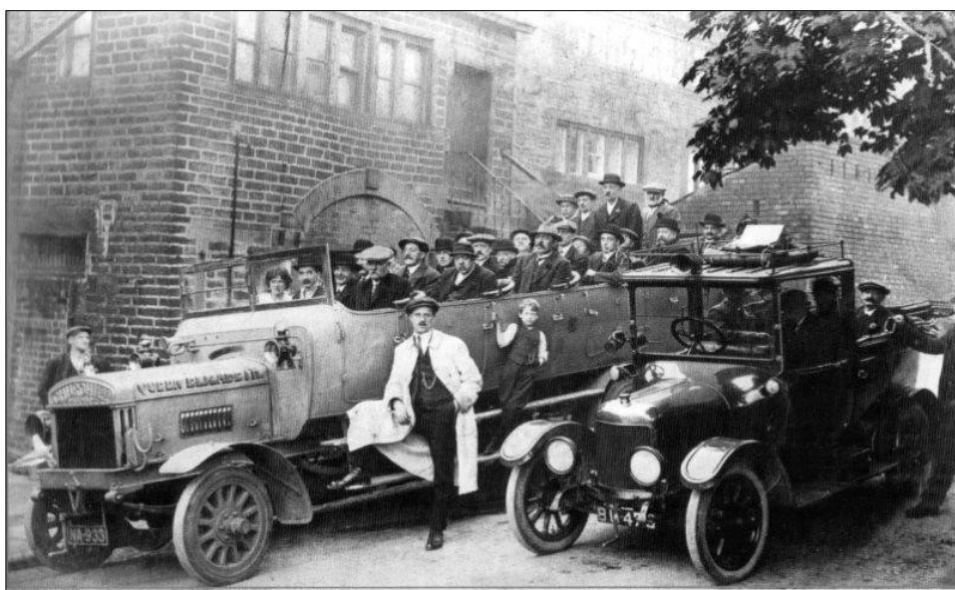
<sup>163</sup> Oldham Chronicle. 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1914. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>164</sup> Oldham Chronicle. 25<sup>th</sup> August 1916. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>165</sup> Oldham Chronicle. 24<sup>th</sup> August 1917. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

3. From Greenfield station – Blackpool 229, Southport 24, Colwyn Bay 10, Llandudno 9, Morecambe 101, Liverpool 33. From Saddleworth station – Blackpool 337, Southport 7, Liverpool 36, Manchester 37. Yet the Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter commented a day later, “Things have been very quiet indeed during the week. Numbers of people have gone to Ashton Wakes, Belle Vue and the seaside (presumably as identified in the Oldham Chronicle the previous day), whilst owners have been busy driving parties round the district.”<sup>166</sup>

Whilst outside the time frame, having gone through a period of war between 1914 and 1918 there is some further evidence that perhaps trips by rail were beginning to be superseded by other means of transport. For example on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1920, Mossley and Saddleworth reporter carried a large advertisement for trips by charabanc to numerous destinations; although the same newspaper still carried a report of a ‘great exodus’ of 300 people from



**Picture 17. A trip by charabanc from Dobcross. 1920. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.**

Delph station on the 21<sup>st</sup> August 1920.<sup>167</sup> In addition, on the 20<sup>th</sup> August 1921 the Oldham Chronicle reported under the headline of ‘Few Bookings and

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<sup>166</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 25<sup>th</sup> August 1917. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>167</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 21<sup>st</sup> August 1920. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

Busy Charabancs' it reported that there were remarkably few bookings during the Saddleworth Wakes due to the bad trade throughout the year. Day-trippers were reported as being caught by motor coach proprietors, who found that 'this method of visiting pleasure resorts is growing in popularity'. It was reported that six hundred and forty two local people were transported by road over five days.

The enduring quality of the Wakes holiday and excursion travel after the war is worth noting. As late as the 14th August 1936, the local Wakes Weeks were still being observed with vigour as the Saddleworth and Mossley Reporter was moved to say that "Probably never in its history has a railway company placed better, cheaper and more commodious facilities before its patrons than during the Saddleworth Wakes holidays".<sup>168</sup> Return fares were quoted as Blackpool for 4 shillings and 6 pence; Southport was slightly cheaper at 3 shillings and 6 pence; Llandudno was more expensive at 5 shillings and 6 pence. All of which were still less than one mile per old penny.

### ***Affordability***

The value of railways almost from their inception was that they could cater for high and low value passenger traffic as well as the intended carriage of freight. Barker and Savage drew the distinction between two types.<sup>169</sup> Individual passengers travelling on business and on whose time a greater value was placed were not deterred by higher fares if the journey was rapid. Low fares were essential for building up bulk travel such as excursions and later, more extensive holidays. In the earliest days of passenger railways, travel by the poor was encouraged to find employment in the growing industrial centres, but was generally unaffordable except in the most basic of open wagons, in some cases attached to goods trains. Political pressure caused the Board of Trade to investigate, and Sir Robert Peel's Conservative government enacted the Railway Regulation Act, of 1842 that took effect on 1 November 1844. It compelled "the provision of at least one train a day each

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<sup>168</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 14<sup>th</sup> August 1936. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

<sup>169</sup> T C Barker and C I Savage. *An Economic History of Transport in Britain*. (London: Hutchinson.1974.) p83.

way at a speed of not less than 12 miles an hour including stops, which were to be made at all stations, and of carriages protected from the weather and provided with seats; for all which luxuries not more than a penny a mile might be charged". It is interesting to note that in the Act, being able to stay dry and seated was regarded as luxuries at the time. Whilst Parliamentary Trains, as they became known, were specifically inaugurated for work purposes, a precedent seems to have been set in making prospective passengers aware that there might be opportunities to travel for leisure that were extended by way of excursion trains and at cheap fares. As Simmons remarked 'Working men and women began to travel as they had never done before. More and more were accustomed to the idea of railway journeys to and from work and conveyed at exceptionally cheap fares'.<sup>170</sup> It has been seen in this study, there is a strong argument that confirms that although the local railways were fundamentally for work purposes where journeys by train were essential, they also offered opportunities for mass leisure pursuits and were well used within the limits of the service provided.

It has also been seen throughout this work a number of references have been made to excursion fares. The profitability and viability of excursion traffic has been much debated by historians but beyond the remit of this work except in general terms. Argued by Philip Bagwell and Peter Lyth, throughout the nineteenth century, and seen in Chapter one, no alternative means of inland passenger travel could seriously challenge the railways.<sup>171</sup> Whilst not necessarily relevant to excursion traffic, they highlight the ability of railway companies to give those who travelled by train a cost advantage over those who made the journey by road. They use an example of an eighty-minute, thirty one mile journey between Leeds and York at a cost of three shillings in comparison with the charge of three shillings and sixpence for a four hour journey on the outside of a horse driven coach. An argument for consideration should be that railway companies were not philanthropists or motivated by benevolence, and must surely have made or at least intended

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<sup>170</sup> Jack Simmons. *The Victorian Railway*. (London. Thames and Hudson 2009) p321.

<sup>171</sup> Philip Bagwell and Peter Lyth. *Transport in Britain. From Canal Lock to Gridlock*. (London. Hambledon and London. 2002.) p59.



to make a profit from excursions: as it is unlikely that they would continue to run for a hundred or more years if they did not do so. The counter argument is that they simply did not know. Despite these uncertainties, it is beyond doubt that excursions were an important element of working class leisure. Yet according to Simmons there was never any special direct investigation or encouragement into excursion business by Parliament.<sup>172</sup> More generally, he argues, Parliament was broadly in favour of their development for instance, and did not wish to encourage the suppression of excursions that “might restrain the enjoyment of the people”.<sup>173</sup> It is speculated that costs of fares for excursionists must surely have been an issue. Throughout this thesis and based on whatever evidence can be found, which is not extensive, it can be seen they did fluctuate although no attempt has been made to establish comparative rates between railway companies. However, the use of Table three taken from Freeman and Aldcroft on reported ordinary timetabled fares that existed in 1866 and reference to early Bradshaw Railway Guides, suggests that there might be a baseline that could possibly be used as a marker to assess the relative cost of an excursion fare. For example, the guide of 1842 gave a fare from Manchester to Liverpool as six shillings and sixpence, first class and four shillings and sixpence in third class open carriages. Somewhat surprisingly in 1869 the first class fares were slightly cheaper at five shillings and sixpence for first class, four shillings for second class and two shillings seven and a half pence. In 1862 Manchester to Lytham, Blackpool and Fleetwood were six shillings, first class, five shillings third class and three shillings and sixpence for third class. The same three journeys in 1890 cost ten shillings, eight shillings and six pence, six shillings and sixpence respectively. Manchester to York was one pound for first class and thirteen shillings. It has been assumed that in their broadest sense, many resorts and other places of interest developed to provide for most types of visitors although there will of course be exceptions. Reference to specific excursions have already been made earlier in the chapter.

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<sup>172</sup> Jack Simmons. *The Railway in Town and Country.1830 – 1914*. (Newton Abbott: David and Charles. 1986.) p272.

<sup>173</sup> Referred to by Simmons. Quoting from Parliamentary Papers 1846 xxxix pp 26-27.

Whilst it might be tempting to believe that excursions were inextricably linked with 'holidays with pay' to which Susan Barton in her work on working class organisations and popular tourism alludes, evidence for this study shows that



many local people despite poverty in the area, were capable of making their own arrangements to save for days out before the Act of 1938.<sup>174</sup> For example, Walton argues that Oldham was a town where real wages were well above the Lancashire average. Known locally as 'going off clubs', 'wakes clubs' 'shakers clubs'<sup>175</sup> and others, substantial amounts were saved through membership of neighbourhood Friendly Societies, Co-operative societies, savings clubs, political groups and public houses well before that date.<sup>176</sup> Savings were distributed by these sources just

Figure 35. Lancashire Evening Post. 24th August 1899. Source: British Newspapers on Line

on by local newspapers for example see Figure 35. However, that is not to say that saved funds were spent entirely on leisure journeys; there is not enough evidence to support that supposition. In his work on Oldham Wakes, Robert Poole identifies that traditionally, a high proportion was spent on clothes, furnishings and other durables that would last the year and beyond.<sup>177</sup> As late as 1910 another local newspaper, the Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter were commenting on the thriftiness of the average Saddleworth householder and that in spite of

<sup>174</sup> Susan Barton. *Working Class organisations and popular tourism. 1840 – 1970.* (Manchester: Manchester University Press) 2005.  
<sup>175</sup> A primitive form of gambling at the time that can be likened to a lottery. Workers saved over the year and at the pay-out, had the opportunity to win a jackpot by the throw of a die.  
<sup>176</sup> Every village in the area was known to have a Co-operative Society of its own.  
<sup>177</sup> Robert Poole. *Oldham Wakes. Leisure in Britain. 1750 to 1939.* edited by J K Walton and J Walvin. (Manchester: Manchester University Press. 1983.) p88.

the cost of living being reported as higher than normal, 'comfortable sums' had been saved for a well-earned respite from work.<sup>178</sup>

From this, a practice was set by which excursion trains became a well-recognised feature of the English summer and, after Bank Holidays were established in 1871, a visit to the coast by train came to be an annual and exuberant event for tens of thousands of working class families. 'Oldhamers' and those who lived in Saddleworth were no exception although some evidence shows that early passenger trains used by excursionists were still notoriously unsophisticated. For example, posters show that for a time, third class carriages were exposed to the elements and were no more than open wagons but priced to reflect the comfort that could be expected. Handbills showed whether they were covered or uncovered. On occasions, distinctions were also made between fares for women and men. The former, along with their children, could travel cheaper than the latter. A concession that was open to misuse and demonstrated earlier.

***In summary,***

This chapter has placed much emphasis on the concept of Wakes Week and explains how leisure increased and changed from a few hours away until a week away was possible by a combination of the custom of 'going off', a habit associated with rush bearing; employer convenience, tolerance and negotiation; along with financial prudence through the ability to save. Yet despite the increase in leisure time it is not easy to explain why certain destinations were favoured over others. One might speculate that fares were an issue but is not one that has been given much attention by literature from historians who have been influential in this field and is clearly an area for further work.

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<sup>178</sup> Mossley and Saddleworth Reporter. 13th August 1910. Source: Saddleworth Museum and Archives.

## CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS.

### *Introduction*

Given the limitation on the amount of time that was available for leisure during the period under examination this broad brush approach has identified a number of distinct strands which have all combined to highlight matters relating to discretionary rail travel in one small industrial area in the North West of England. They have tested generalisations by challenging or supporting issues raised on the nature of working class holidays and with some adaptation, influenced the structure and content of the research question which was “As they apply to excursions from a local area and within the limitations of the material on Oldham and Saddleworth that is available, to what extent is it possible to identify the variables that existed and operated as forerunners to the more extensive holidays which became commonplace in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and beyond; with the rider that they also might be of more general relevance to all of the early destinations visited by excursionists?”

The concepts formed the basis of the thesis with the understanding that others may be revealed.

All have been examined in the case that may or may not be applicable to other industrial areas but no inferences are, or should be made. The most obvious conclusion that can be drawn is that at a local level, it appeared that excursions by rail from the area were highly seasonal at the time and fitted into the pattern of what had become well-established, pre-rail leisure time mostly confined to the wakes period when it was known that the workforce was likely to be free. By careful analysis of the newspaper reports, it is clear that in the early stages, one day's respite from work was all that the workforce could expect outside that connected with the religious calendar: consecutive days of freedom were rare for many years, making extensive holidays for the workforce almost impossible. A major drawback was the absence of reliable excursion statistics that to an extent was expected, given that it was known before the work began that few if any were collected on a consistent and national basis. Therefore, reliance has had to be placed on

what could be discovered in local papers that were published at the time but even these displayed disparities in what was reported, so may only reflect a flavour of trends, destination preferences and possible numbers of excursionists that could perhaps be used as a starting point in future work and can be found in the matrix in table four.

Much of the data used were informal and relate mainly to Saddleworth stations in 'hundreds' as they were the numbers that were more consistently available for a short period of time, even though there were substantial gaps in what was reported. In comparison, most Oldham numbers were described in press evidence as being in the 'thousands' but lacked any precision other than perhaps indicating trends in destinations and the differences in the populations of the two areas. Whilst this thesis has raised far more questions than it has provided answers, it may still be a small-scale contribution towards Divall's call for work on the consumption of rail travel that wanders into the realms of aspirational and necessitous consumption<sup>179</sup> It confirms an argument for a recognition that whilst cheap rail travel was implemented for the benefit of working classes in relation to work purposes, excursions were one way of sharing those advantages that had to be bought along with the ephemera of other leisure activities at the time. Perhaps equally importantly, it is an addition to Susan Major's study of northern working class excursions over the twenty years between 1840 and 1860.

Whilst the occasional poster or advertisement seen for this work specifically stated that the excursion was intended for the working class, there is little evidence to suggest that they were not open to anyone who cared to join them. So one wonders if discretionary travel could have been designated as 'the excursion class' as clearly at work was a set of fares that could be identified as being different from ordinary fares in the usual three classes and the journeys-to-work use of Parliamentary trains.

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<sup>179</sup> Colin Divall, 'What happens if we think about railways as a kind of consumption? Towards a new Historiography of Transport and Citizenship in Early-Twentieth-Century Britain', (2007) [Http://www.esocialsciences.com/articles/displayArticles.asp?Article\\_ID=1179](http://www.esocialsciences.com/articles/displayArticles.asp?Article_ID=1179) [accessed 3rd August 2013].

However, there was some slight evidence to suggest that trips did take place outside the holiday period when a few employers took their members away for the day but these seem to be almost exclusively to Blackpool. The issue of whether excursions took place by supply or demand was not satisfactorily resolved and may have been a mixture of the two variables, evidenced by a small number of references to outside organisations arranging trips other than those by the railway companies. Whilst it is acknowledged that Saddleworth gained direct access to the railway system later than Oldham, in a sense, both populations were fortunate in eventually having access to a number of stations not far from their homes, from which they could take a trip to a range of destinations. The rail connection between the two may have meant that Saddleworth people could travel to Oldham and Oldham people could travel to Saddleworth depending on which station was closer and their work commitments. There was also a strong argument to suggest that excursions fulfilled and recognised a need to escape the environment, even if it was just for one day. Whilst the joint forces of industrialisation and urbanisation had the potential to destroy pre-industrial recreational patterns, it can be seen that for many years excursions fitted in with other local celebrations and became a commodity that could be purchased for leisure purposes and absorbed into the customs of the areas. There was however a recurring theme in the newspaper reports that was not always positive and related to the impact of negative effects on village life that has been acknowledged but not pursued.

In the early stages, prominent amongst the idea of taking a break away from work particularly at the seaside was slowly becoming accepted that fresh air and seawater were good for the health of everyone, not just the upper classes. The coast had both. Whilst it was seen and discussed briefly in Chapter one, at a national level the impetus may have come from the sea bathing practices by the aristocracy in the south of England based on fashion or orthodox medicine at the time. Regionally some workers had their own distinctive customs. These may have been seen as a precedent that had been set and built on by the small number of 'Padjammers' use of Blackpool, mainly at the August tides when it was believed that there was 'physic' in the

sea. Evidenced by newspaper advertisements, many early users had to undertake difficult journeys to be able to take the advantage it offered before lines to the coast were well established. Walton had argued that in the early railway age, these 'unpretentious bathers' transferred themselves to the cheap trains making the second week in August the busiest part of what became the Blackpool season. The local mass leisure activity associated with rush bearing which became known as 'wakes' or wakes weeks of Oldham and Saddleworth almost coincided with this time period. Susan Major suggested an argument might be that the working classes were trying to imitate their 'betters' who were known to favour the benefits of water that came from the sea or the spa. No local evidence can be found to support that view but that is not say it did not exist in the early excursions. Given that they were available on a Sunday which for years was the only day of rest, posters that sold sea bathing as an incentive for travel added the rider that excursionists could satisfy a moral issue by having time for church attendance at the destination if the trip was undertaken on that day.

The elasticity of time available for leisure for the local working people ranged from a few hours on a Sunday to a week-long and recognised holiday period that took many years to achieve before legislation took hold. So the one day excursion was crucial in building the custom of going elsewhere for specific leisure purposes during whatever 'free time' was available but it is not clear if or when the custom became commonplace. The evidence suggests that some excursions were not available locally until 1850. Poole had argued that it was in the late 1870s that Oldham was the first town to get a regular week away from work and that it was not until twenty years later that a week was near universal as the Wakes holidays spread to other parts of the county. Reports in local newspapers relating to Oldham and Saddleworth reflected that expansion. Most were established by negotiation between unions and employers but locally developed from the custom of taking time off immediately after rush cart celebrations. Walton et al had also argued that excursions were promoted with a view to distracting workers from drunkenness, gambling and immorality, features of early rush cart celebrations but the matter of diversion has not been pursued in this work



except to acknowledge that the early one day trips did seem to have a temperance bias. From the newspaper reports, there was certainly evidence of a dampening down of local anti-social conduct over the years that Poole had argued was attributable to alternative activities associated with excursions. However, it could also be argued that there may well have been transference of anti-social behaviour to the excursion destinations but has been impossible to verify or disprove. An alternative view might be that the issue was generational and as the participants involved in the rush cart celebrations and associated activities changed, conduct was also modified.

The very nature of their living and working conditions along with communal leisure time and strong customs meant that the people of Oldham and Saddleworth had a distinct sense of group identity, which was evidenced in the popularity of rush bearing and switched from a functional to a symbolic activity for many years. It is argued that it might have encouraged substantial numbers to travel together for recreational purposes once excursions became available: although it does not explain why other industrial areas identified by both Poole and Walton followed suit. The phenomenon was certainly noticed by Poole when he described Blackpool as 'Oldham by the sea' based on the numbers who travelled there. In practice, railway excursions from Oldham and Saddleworth were activities of the masses at a time without realistic options that changed the leisure experience for many years until alternative means of travel and choice became available. That experience would have depended on potential excursionists having time, money and motivation available to them, as well as the establishment of railway lines to places of interest. It is interesting to note that a number of historians have commented on a vindication of the concept of excursions based on the vast numbers who were said to have travelled by rail to the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London. Yet, no evidence has been found of local excursions at a time when at least the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway was promoting trips to Blackpool, Lytham and Fleetwood. So it is not known if local residents did visit the exhibition. Whilst the Victorian era in which the work is mainly sited is said to have been one where the desire for self-improvement in life was of great importance, this thesis argues that

enjoyment was probably a more powerful motivational force than a quest for advancement through rational recreation although it cannot be ignored. At worst, the satisfaction of curiosity as evidenced in a number of newspaper reports at the time was achieved.

Scrutiny of the matrix in table four that was constructed and reference to a number of advertisements for excursions suggest that a variety of destinations did become available. Yet through the variables identified in the preceding paragraphs and aggregation of the numbers of returns that applied to Saddleworth stations, it seems possible to speculate that three destinations were the most popular and presented an eclectic mix of opportunities even though they could not be confirmed by statistics that applied to Oldham; except by vague newspaper reports some of which have been identified throughout the text. Although this is not a comparable study, it also seems reasonable to speculate that many thousands did travel from the town throughout much of the period covered in this thesis. Liverpool as a city destination but with access to country areas like the Cheshire side of the Mersey had been consistently popular with large numbers of 'trippers' right from the first mention of excursions from the area which appeared to be 1850 and may have been motivated by early excursions to the Sankey Viaduct. Consultation of Bradshaw's Handbook of 1863 confirms that the 'city had much to commend it.'<sup>180</sup> Blackpool as a seaside resort attracted far more excursionists than anywhere else; the first identified trip was 1870 that was from Saddleworth but clearly some opportunities for travel there existed much earlier than that date. The same version of Bradshaw's Guide describe the town as a 'pretty bathing place situated on a range of cliffs facing the Irish sea, with 'great facilities offered for excursions to Furness Abbey, Coniston Lake and Ulverston.' Belle Vue Pleasure Gardens on the outskirts of Manchester was the third choice with excursions from 1895 and described as a place for recreation. Given the relatively close proximity to the area, it would not have been difficult to travel without an organised trip. There may of course have been earlier and more consistent dates for all three destinations

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<sup>180</sup> Bradshaw's Descriptive Railway Handbook. 1863. Section III. Source: Facsimile. (Old House. Oxford. 2012).

but given the timeframe and word limitation for this thesis, more extensive use of possible sources of materials that have been uncovered, could perhaps be used as an area for further study in the future.

The work yielded some surprises. For example, Morecambe did not appear to be a popular destination until 1900 yet came within Walvin's rule of thumb that related to the relationship between coastal and industrial areas. It seemed to be within travelling distance and was well known to be popular with other areas of the West Riding. The east coast resorts such as Bridlington, Scarborough and Whitby also seemed to have few excursionists from the area but given that reliable statistics are virtually unobtainable there may be others that have been missed. An alternative view might be that they may have been too far away for comfortable travel in the early years and travel was too expensive in comparison with other destinations that were available. For example, excursion fares to the east coast were shown to be seven shillings from both Oldham and Saddleworth that in comparison with trips to other areas seems to be expensive, given that a trip to Blackpool could be had for around two shillings. It was also noticeable that the number of possible destinations that no doubt related to the railway links within the networks increased over the years as evidenced in newspaper advertisements. By 1915, at the end of the timeframe for the research, there was an array of places that could be accessed by rail but by that time, there were signs that alternative means of recreational travel were coming into play and of course the implications of war.

The issue of affordability was not really resolved. The sheer weight of numbers of excursionists suggests that they found some way of funding their trips, and the success of the different savings clubs that paid out just before Wakes week would seem to imply that they did. Clearly, at work were fares that seem to have been affordable by many of the working classes and is an area for further work in the future; particularly as a contribution to Divall's work in establishing the extent of discretionary travel in the area. The thesis would have been enhanced by life stories from excursionists based on

resources that have been discovered but time was not available and may also be an area for further work.

In summary, throughout the work, it has been important to recognise and acknowledge that at this local level, the transition from the local 'wakes' of a few hours duration to a full scale seaside holiday within the limitations imposed by accessibility, availability and affordability have been crucial in the development of excursions as forerunners to much more extended holidays that became a feature of urban life. The religious calendar had played a primary role that defined when leisure could be expected. The customary calendar as it became known, seems to have led to traditional leisure that provided realistic opportunities for working people to escape their environment that was quite different from anything experienced before and the railway companies responded to the changes. The opportunities for new free time pursuits provided through this type of rail travel became part of customary leisure perpetuated over many years that eventually started to transfer to other types of transport and would justify further examination of a period that began in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century using similar variables.

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