## 5. 1770s – 1802 LIFE IN WELD BANK FOR THE WEALTHY AND NOT SO WEALTHY WHEN THE PARISH BEGAN WITH FR. CHADWICK

### The Chadwick Family of Burgh Hall

With the departure of the Rigby family from Burgh Hall in 1727, the hall was purchased by still another Catholic family, the Chadwicks of Birkacre House, which was demolished and later rebuilt by the Thom family. John Chadwick was head of the family at this time and he set about rebuilding Burgh Hall, completing it in 1740. Standing in a secluded position, surrounded on three sides by a deep, well-wooded ravine, with a large lake, the original hall on an adjacent site must at one time have been a semi-fortress with moat guarding the little village of Burgh and affording protection to the farmers and cottages of the area in the troubled days of the Middle Ages and before.

Hidden away among the archives at Chorley reference library is a large, beautifully illuminated, manuscript book dealing with the Chadwick family at Burgh Hall, a book which it is a pleasure to behold and worthy of a wider public.[1] Written about 1870 in splendid copperplate with handsomely drawn edges, it contains a pedigree of the Chadwick family and various wills of heads of the family down to the early years of the nineteenth century. One portion was originally written by Fr. Richard Thompson, evidently acting as a trustee for Thomas Chadwick, the last of the family to reside at Burgh Hall.

The John Chadwick who first resided at Birkacre and later purchased Burgh Hall had eleven children, six girls and five boys. They were in order of birth as follows:

Ellen, the eldest, was born in 1718 and died in 1772.
Mary, born in 1720, became a nun at Cambrai and died in 1776.
The first John, born 1722, died five years later.

[1] This book which I have seen both as a child, when it was still in the possession of Dunstan Kevill of Burgh Hall, and then some ten years ago, is no longer at Chorley Library but at the Lancashire Archives in Preston.

Thomas, born 1724, died in 1759. *(He inherited the hall and then his son, John, inherited but he died after the Birkacre Riot and was succeeded by his brother, Edward who died in 1802 without issue.)*
Ann, born 1726, died the same day.
**Another John, born 1728, became the first parish priest at Weld Bank and died in 1802.**
Elizabeth, born 1730, died in 1776, unmarried.
James, born 1732, died in 1775.
Francis, born 1734, died two years later.
Another Francis, born 1736, died in 1792.
The youngest, Mary, born 1740, died in 1796.

The second son of the first John Chadwick, Thomas, who died in 1759, was succeeded as head of the house by his eldest son, also John, nephew of Fr. Chadwick, who died after the Birkacre Riot in 1779 leaving no issue. He was succeeded by his younger brother, Edward, born in 1749 and dying the same year as his uncle, Fr. Chadwick, in 1802, also unmarried. Thomas Chadwick, another nephew of Fr. Chadwick, born in 1755, was the last to reside at Burgh Hall. He died unmarried in 1816 and was buried in the new cemetery at Weld Bank as was his sister Ellen, who died in 1853.

In the will of Thomas Chadwick, dated 1816, and signed by Fr. Thompson, he left £200 to his housekeeper, Helen Hull, a large sum in those days. He also left £50 to the new Weld Bank school. His gold watch and case and all his effects were left to his cousin, Helen Stonor. The contents of his library went to Fr. Thompson.

Fr. Chadwick would spend his early youth at Burgh and would become familiar with his father's tenants and the district. He would attend mass in the little chapel next to the hall whenever the opportunity arose. As a youth, he was sent to Douai, the English seminary in France, with the hope that he would enter the priesthood and in 1752, he was ordained. Returning to England, he was appointed to Ladywell, Fernyhalgh, the little mission near

to Preston which had for so long been a place of pilgrimage and had retained the faith throughout the centuries of persecution.

The little chapel which was used by local Catholics before Weld Bank church was built, still stands just behind Burgh Hall and appears to be older than the hall itself, probably having been built by the Rigbys before the Chadwicks acquired the hall. It is a two-storey building, resembling, as did so many others at this time , a large barn and is of stone foundations, finished in brick, with a stone flagged roof. This would be the chapel used by Fr. Brockholes and Fr. Chadwick but for how long it was used as a chapel it is impossible to say.

Dunstan Kevill, the present occupant of Burgh Hall, remembers his father, the late T.H. Kevill, telling him that in his youth, he was told by an old lady that she remembered her grandmother telling how she often went to this little chapel at Burgh when there was a priest available to celebrate mass. She remembered taking with her the mass vestments which were wrapped round her body and concealed by the long cloak which was the fashion of the time. This was in order that they would not be found if the priest hunters came to search the hall. Other ladies did the same in turns so that the vestments did not remain in the same house during the week. This particular lady walked from Chorley Moor.[2]

No doubt the chapel, which is still standing, would be very similar in appearance to the first Weld Bank chapel and would be very inconspicuous behind the hall and dense woodlands surrounding it. Later, the upper room appears to have been converted into servants' bedrooms and windows added which would not have been there when it was used as a chapel.

[2] Chorley Moor is the area now known as Moor Road but which would have included the surrounding fields and cottages.

**Catholic resurgence in the late 1600s and early 1700s**

Whilst Fr. Chadwick was at Douai, things were happening in our area. In the Reformation period since the year 1631, when Bishop Smith died, there had been no Catholic Bishops in England. However, in 1685, the Pope appointed a Vicar Apostolic in the person of Bishop Leyburn, who later travelled the country encouraging the missionary priests and confirming many of the faithful. In Lancashire especially, this sacrament was administered almost openly, so that in 1687, Dr. Leyburn confirmed 1099 people at Ladywell, Fernyhalgh, several hundreds at Euxton and about 1400 at Wigan - evidence of the numbers in the county still anxious for the sacraments of the old faith. It was obvious even then that the state authorities were either unable or unwilling to prevent such large gatherings even though they were illegal.

Later the Catholic authorities divided the country into districts: London, Midland, Northern and Western and a Vicar Apostolic was appointed for each district. Bishop Dicconson of Wrightington Hall (now the hospital) was Bishop and Vicar Apostolic of the Northern District and he seems to have been centred mostly at Wigan where his name is perpetuated by one of the principal thoroughfares, Dicconson St.

**Fr. Brockholes**

We now bring into our story a priest, who, with Fr. Chadwick, can be said to be one of the pioneers of our Weld Bank parish. His name was Fr. Charles Brockholes. We know very little of the early life of this priest but after ministering in Manchester, he became chaplain to the Catholic family of the Andertons of Blackrod and Lostock. In a list of Papists sent by the Vicar of Bolton-le-Moors (now Bolton) to his Bishop at Chester in 1706, the majority of the names were said to belong to the Blackrod and Lostock areas. These included Sir James Anderton, his mother Lady Anderton, three daughters and their eight servants. Their three sons were said to be abroad, presumably to be educated.

Fr. Brockholes frequently visited Wigan to minister and, in 1740, moved permanently to that town where, at his own expense, he built a house in Standishgate and furnished the upper room as a chapel with outside stairs, similar to numerous other Catholic chapels then being built in the county, such as the one at Slate Delph, Wheelton. These were still dangerous times and the illegal Catholic chapels were often attacked by mobs and the upper rooms and outside stairs were often a means of escape.

Fr. Brockholes seems to have become a great friend of the Chadwick family at Burgh. He began to visit the hall every month and on Sundays offered mass for the family in the little chapel behind the hall. Many of the tenants of the estate were allowed to use these facilities together with the Catholic tenants of the Shireburnes and the Gillibrands so that the congregation began to grow. He continued to do this for nearly 15 years until in 1759 he was taken ill while staying at Burgh and he died there. He was buried at Wigan. In his will, he left £100, the interest on which was to be given to the priest who would continue his work at Burgh Hall.

**Fr. Chadwick and his contact with the Weld family**

Fr. Chadwick, four years previously, in 1755, had also begun regular visits to his relatives at Burgh Hall and gave the consolations of religion to the local residents. It appears that Fr. Brockholes had a good idea who would succeed him for, in 1770, Fr. Chadwick came permanently to Burgh Hall. He immediately saw that the little chapel at the hall was inadequate for the growing congregation and he set about collecting money for a more permanent church, as he said “for the more comfortable accommodation of the Catholics of the district” and he began to look around for a suitable site.

This brings into our story the Weld family after which our area is named. At about this time the great family of the Shireburnes of Stonyhurst died out. The last of the family was Mary Shireburne, a noted beauty of the period and

heiress to the family fortune. She later married Thomas, the 8th Duke of Norfolk and the premier Earl of England, another Catholic family. On her death, she left her vast estates, including those in Chorley, to her nephew, Edward Weld, of Lulworth Castle, Dorset. Edward had been educated by the Jesuits at Bruges. Having to leave that place, they had settled at Liège in France but the outbreak of the French Revolution compelled them to move on again and Edward Weld offered them his large mansion at Stonyhurst which he had inherited from his aunt and where the Jesuits remain to this day.

Fr. Chadwick approached Weld for the lease of land on which to build a church and was granted a large tract of land with a farmhouse attached known as Thurston Hodson's on top of the hill to the South of Chorley and indeed nearer to Burgh Hall than the town itself. What happened to the existing tenants we do not know but it may have been unoccupied at the time and falling into disrepair. According to Fr. Thompson, who succeeded Fr. Chadwick, Edward Weld "induced by motives of charity and zeal for religion, at the intercession of friends, liberally offered lands for the new church and annexed the farm, till then called Thurston Hodson's, now Weld Bank, for the use of the incumbent."[3]

Farms in olden days were usually called after the first occupant and Thurston Hodson's had been in existence at least 150 years for in the year 1630, Thurston Hudson had to provide a hattock of oats at harvest time towards the upkeep of the curate of Chorley Parish Church and according to Richard Wykes' plan of the seating at that church, drawn up in 1625, Thurston Hudson shared two seats with Thurston Cowling "beneath the

[3] Fr. Chadwick died with concerns that he had not permanently secured the tenure of the land on which he had founded Weld Bank church. He had made every attempt to do so but his efforts were thwarted by the sudden death of Mr Edward Weld and his negotiations with his successor, Mr Thomas Weld, were not so amicable. Fr. Chadwick, when nearing his end, related his concerns about the insecurity of tenure to his successor, Fr. Thompson, who has left us a written record of the details. *See Fr. Thompson's record of the foundation of Weld Bank*

church doors on the south side". Incidentally it is astonishing the number of Christian names of Thurston occurring in Chorley in these centuries.

Seven years before Fr. Chadwick took possession of the farm, the Anglican rector of Chorley Parish Church, made a return to his Bishop at Chester in which he stated there were "202 papists in Chorley and one, Hannah Edgar, was schoolmistress". At Easter, 1771, Fr. Chadwick had 27 communicants at Burgh Hall. This discrepancy in numbers is easily explained by the fact that many "Papists" in the area would find it easier to worship at Euxton, Slate Delph (Wheelton), Blackrod or Standish.

**First mass at Weld Bank Church**

However, Fr. Chadwick persevered with his money-raising and the necessary alterations to the farm buildings so that, on 1st November, 1774, the feast of All Saints, Mass was offered for the first time at Weld Bank Church and the church was dedicated to Saint Gregory the Great. This was four years before the First Catholic Relief Act which granted Roman Catholics the right to own land and to teach their own children, although many of the laws appeared to have been observed more in the breach than in the observance.

What the first Weld Bank Church was like we do not really know though repairs made in Canon Waring's time showed up previous alterations which suggested that the first church was built as inconspicuously as possible in the style of a large barn with two floors, the lower one for the use of Fr. Chadwick and the upper for use as a church. There was evidence of a staircase which would probably also be on the outside of the building as well as inside, like so many of that time in Lancashire, as this provided a means of escape in the event of a mob attack.

Let us not forget that it was not until another Catholic Relief Act, that of 1791, that the Mass was declared legal and Catholic chapels were allowed to be

built though these “had to be of simple construction, with neither bells nor steeple and provided the priest had taken the oath of allegiance”.

Every Sunday for the next 30 years or so there would be much coming and going up to the barn-like chapel at the top of the hill. Farmers, farm labourers, handloom weavers and workers in the many primitive trades of the period would make their way there, some on foot, some on horseback and the more well-to-do in their carriages with their servants riding postillion, such as the Gillibrands, the Chadwicks and the Stonors of Anderton Hall, a family with great affection for Weld Bank, one of whom married a daughter of the Chadwicks and a later Stonor provided the Church of Saint Joseph at Anderton in the 1860s.

It would be a somewhat tortuous journey for most, especially in winter, for such roads as existed were mostly field paths and cart tracks often a foot deep in mud. The heating of the little chapel would be primitive, probably by a coal fire and the seating rapidly became inadequate as the numbers of worshippers increased. Fr. Thompson later wrote “many had to kneel outside in the cold”.[4]

**Dame Edgar’s School**

The rector of Chorley's return to his Bishop at Chester in 1767 ended with the cryptic sentence: “... and one Hannah Edgar is schoolmistress”. Who was Hannah Edgar? A lady running a Catholic school in the penal days must have had a dangerous and hazardous occupation and it was many years later before Catholics were legally allowed to possess schools. It is a great pity that we know so little of this lady and we must conclude that the school was held in her own home, one of the old time “dames’ schools” but it must have required faith and courage of a high order for the good lady to carry on her noble work. It would almost certainly be situated at Weld Bank where most

[4] I have not found this reference

of the Catholics of Chorley resided in those days and it was probably financially assisted by the families of Chadwick and Gillibrand.

The scholars would probably be no more than a dozen or so, residing in the neighbourhood and the attendances desultory, depending on the time that youngsters could be spared from harvest, haymaking, fruit picking, tending cattle, spinning etc. The teaching would be rudimentary, just reading, writing, arithmetic and, of course, religion with little in the way of copy books, mostly slates and pencils. As far as is known, this was Chorley's first elementary school and the name of Hannah Edgar should go down in Chorley's history.

**The Cotton Industry**

Five years after Weld Bank Church was first opened, an event occurred which was to cause much commotion in the town and district and was to have far reaching effects on the future of Chorley as a cotton town. The event occurred in Weld Bank parish and the Chadwick family were intimately concerned with it. Cotton had been introduced into Chorley in the 1660s and had gradually increased as a cottage industry in the next 100 years.

But it was a very different cotton trade from that we know today. There were no mills or warehouses. Merchants gave out warp and raw cotton to the weavers who worked the cotton into weft and wove it on looms in their own homes, being paid by the “piece” or “cut”. Most cottages had a loom, usually in the damp basements and many farmers had two or more looms as cotton was looked upon to pay the rent (like the Irishman's pig). The women spun through the long winter evenings and the children and old folk picked and carded the wool. There was plenty of work but it was slow, hard work and it took three spinners to keep one loom going.

In the year 1733, Kay invented his “flying shuttle” which doubled the speed of the weaving loom by means of a race-board for the shuttle which previously had to be thrown by hand from one end of the loom to the other so that a weaver could not weave cloth more than two feet wide, two persons being required for double-width cloth. This extra speed still further increased the need for spinners who could not keep up with the weft. The new invention incensed the workers so much that Kay had to flee the country.

Then in 1867[5], James Hargreaves produced his famous “Spinning Jenny”, called after his wife[6], which really increased the number of threads which could be spun simultaneously and it reduced the number of spinners required. The spinning now kept pace with the weaving looms. Once again the spinners saw their livelihood in danger and Hargreaves had to leave Lancashire for his own safety. The “Jenny” did for spinning what the flying shuttle had done for weaving so that now the two processes could keep pace. But the cotton stuffs made were really only half cotton and had to be woven up in a warp of wool or linen because the spinners could not produce cotton yarn sufficiently strong for warp.

**Sir Richard Arkwright comes to Chorley**

Then in 1769 came Richard Arkwright, a Preston barber, who later moved to Bolton as a peruke maker (wig maker) and he also turned his attention to the cotton industry. He invented a spinning frame in 1769 which overcame the difficulty by means of swiftly turning rollers which gave the yarn a tighter twist than the old spinning wheel. To avoid the rioters he took his invention to Nottingham where the new frame, worked by horses, was the only one used but he found horsepower to be costly so he moved to Derby where he used water as the motive power.

[5] This date is incorrect. James Hargreaves invented the Spinning Jenny in 1764-65

[6] Apparently, this has been a commonly held misconception as Hargreaves wife was not called Jenny. In fact, the term Jenny was a corruption of the word ‘engine’ and was often used in Lancashire dialect.

He began to make money and opened another mill in his native Preston. This was also successful so he looked round for other sites with suitable water power and he found one at Birkacre, where the River Yarrow seemed ideal for his purpose. At Birkacre Forge the Chadwick family already had a small spinning mill which had become neglected as the family found small coal mines in their area were much more profitable. Arkwright approached John Chadwick who, with his younger brother Edward, then resided at Burgh Hall and a lease of the land and buildings was agreed upon. The document can still be seen in the Lancashire Record Office at Preston signed by both Arkwright and Chadwick. It reads as follows:

> "Agreed between John Chadwick of Burgh, gentlemen, and Richard Arkwright of Derby, merchant, that the said John Chadwick will let and lease to the said Richard Arkwright the newly erected spinning mill, the Higher Forge, the Lower Forge, and all cottages, outbuildings, edifices and the granary thereto belonging, and the lower pool, the middle pool and the higher pool and also the house called Birkacre and the garden and the plot of land at the bottom of School Brow and the orchard thereto belonging, the whole comprising 13 acres, 2 roods and 33 perches at a lease of £150 a year." The date is November 29th 1777.

Arkwright immediately began to install his new spinning machinery in the mill at Birkacre and the necessary water wheel and mill race for his power. The mill was opened the following year, most of his work people coming from the Coppull and Birkacre districts, numbering between 30 and 40 and under the managership of one of Arkwright's partners. Arkwright had a good reputation as an employer at Derby where he had built cottages for his workers and schools for their children and it was expected that he would do the same in Chorley once his mills developed.

But it was not to be. Samuel Crompton, of Bolton, whose invention of his spinning mule, which combined the best of Hargreaves and Arkwright's inventions and who can be said to have done most to improve the

Lancashire cotton trade, found the handloom weavers of that town did not take kindly to his invention whilst others attempted to steal its secrets.

**The Birkacre Riot**

Bands of handloom weavers began to roam the country wrecking the new machinery in the mills and they seemed to have been particularly strong in the Bolton and Blackrod areas. In 1779, a number from Blackrod began to move on Chorley with the intention of wrecking Arkwright's mill at Birkacre. Gathering in numbers as they came, by the time they moved through Weld Bank, the crowd was estimated at between 300 and 400 strong whilst many from Chorley itself assembled to watch the proceedings.

There is a tradition that, when passing Burgh Hall, the Squire of Burgh, John Chadwick, who was not in a very good state of health at the time, appealed to the rioters to disperse and offered them refreshment before going home. The ringleaders replied that they had no quarrel with him but were determined to protect their livelihood by wrecking the machinery.

However, on arrival at Birkacre, the mob was surprised to see a company of soldiers drawn up on the other side of the River Yarrow to protect the mill. They were a company of York militia who had been brought to Lancashire for the protection of various mills but the authorities had been forewarned and had hastily sent the military unit to Chorley. It appears that there were others ready to protect the mill - probably gamekeepers and workers from the estates in the vicinity - and whilst the army commander was advising the ringleaders to call the whole thing off, some shots rang out and one of the rioters fell dead and others were wounded.

The commander vehemently denied that any of his men had used their guns and it was assumed that some of the other defenders had become nervous at the attitude of the mob and had discharged their weapons. Whatever the

reason, this episode caused the mob to fall back but with no intention of dispersing. They were now more determined than ever to achieve their purpose and avenge their comrades.

On the Friday evening matters took a different turn when a trooper rode up from Preston with instructions to the Garrison commander to deploy most of his force to another part of the county where trouble was expected. Evidently, they were under the impression that the Birkacre trouble was not considered serious.

But the commander knew otherwise and he instructed the small number of men left not to attempt to defend the mill or they would be overwhelmed. On the Saturday, the mob moved in and began the complete wreckage of the mill and all its machinery. The work continued throughout Saturday but the following day the mob rested “in honour of the Sabbath”. However, the work was completed on the Monday, the whole place being left a shambles and afterwards the mob dispersed carrying with them the dead body of their friend.

Many details of the affray are lacking, the best account being from no less a person than Sir Josiah Wedgwood, the “father” of English pottery who was a friend and admirer of Arkwright. It appears that his three sons were being educated at a gentleman's small school in Bolton and one of them had been ill so he decided to continue their education at his home in Staffordshire. He journeyed by coach with his wife to Bolton, picked up his three sons and was proceeding back home at the time of the riots. Why his journey home should take him through our district is not clear - maybe the roads were a little better - but he met the rioters coming from Birkacre and got the details of the occurrence which are mentioned in a history of the Wedgwood family. As an employer himself, he naturally took Arkwright's part and condemned the rioters.

The Chadwicks were a quiet, peace-loving family and good employers and the distressing happening on their land upset them exceedingly. The head of the family, John, did not survive the occurrence long, dying within the year. It was said that his illness had been aggravated by the riots. His younger brother, Edward, succeeded to the estates and his signature, along with Arkwright's, is to be seen on the deed surrendering the lease of the land and buildings by Arkwright back to the Chadwicks “because of a riotous mob”.

**Chorley’s progress retarded**

The riots retarded the progress of Chorley as a cotton town during a vital decade when places like Blackburn, Bolton, Oldham and other places, hitherto little more than villages, suddenly mushroomed into large cotton towns. For some years, Chorley landowners like the Welds, the Standishes, the Gillibrands and the Chadwicks, whose lands were eminently suitable for cotton mills because of the Yarrow and other waters flowing through them, flatly refused to let land for mills, fearing more and bloodier riots. This prevented the development of the district, otherwise so well-suited by its position in the centre of the county, into a great cotton centre instead of a third-rate place in Lancashire towns.

The Birkacre riot seems to have remained “news” for many years. Nearly 100 years later a stage play “Arkwright's Wife” by Tom Taylor, editor of “Punch” was performed first at the Theatre Royal, Leeds and later at the Globe and Prince’s theatres in London. It had as its central theme the Birkacre riot but the author departed somewhat from the truth for in the last act, after Arkwright and his wife had become estranged, they came together again when his wife was depicted successfully pleading with the rioters to spare the mill!

The authorities seem to have taken a very lenient view of the Birkacre riot probably on account of the loss of life of at least one person involved. According to the order book for the Quarter Sessions held at Preston in April,

1780, one person was named and she was a woman - Mary Leicester, otherwise Lister (otherwise Knight). She was found guilty of sabotaging machinery at Birkacre mill with twenty other unspecified persons and was sentenced to be gaoled at Lancaster for 18 months or to be bound over for six months to be of good behaviour and for keeping the peace in £100 with sureties of £50 each. These sums of course would be very hard to find in those days among handloom weavers.

After 1785, when Cartwright invented the power loom and practically put an end to handloom weaving, mills sprang up almost overnight but Chorley had had a bad start and never caught up with its larger neighbours. Machine-wrecking continued intermittently for several more years, One of the worst cases being the destruction of a mill at Westhoughton for which three men and a boy, declared to be the ringleaders, were publicly hanged. The boy was only 14 years of age and it was said he cried out piteously for his mother in the crowd as the noose was placed around his neck.

It was not until 1790 that spinning mills powered by steam engines were first erected in Chorley. The first is believed to have been at Cowling Bridge and another on the site of Messrs. Witters in Water Street. In an 1835 directory only eight spinning mills were listed in Chorley, though there were a number of muslin, cotton and silk manufacturers.