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**The Charitable Work of the Macclesfield Silk
Manufacturers, 1750-1900**

**Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements of the
University of Liverpool for the degree of Doctor in Philosophy**

by Sarah Jane Griffiths

April 2006

S. J. Griffiths
The Charitable Work of the Macclesfield Silk Manufacturers, 1750-1900

Abstract

The existing literature on philanthropic effort during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries has taken a number of different approaches to the subject. These include general works charting the development of the charitable sector, the exploration of voluntary organisations as a subsidiary topic to broader themes and regional studies adopting a range of perspectives. Most research in this latter category has been conducted on large towns and cities that generally have copious amounts of source material. In contrast, lesser provincial towns have received relatively little scholarly attention, despite the more manageable nature of their documentation.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the growth of charitable organisations within Macclesfield, an East Cheshire industrial town that was dominated by the silk industry. This study concentrates on the period from 1750 to 1900, when the silk industry was dominant within the town and philanthropic activity was at its height. The town's silk manufacturers were renowned for their charitable work and thus this research focuses on the extent to which this occupational group was critical in the development of Macclesfield's voluntary institutions, the motives that lay behind their contributions, and their achievements. In order to see whether their involvement was typical of other businessmen, comparisons are drawn throughout with the charitable activities of contemporary entrepreneurs in a variety of urban settings.

This study investigates the silk manufacturers' participation in Macclesfield's voluntary institutions in the fields of religion, education, public services and public amenities, together with any additional charitable acts. The evidence from all these areas suggests that in most cases the silk manufacturers were heavily involved in funding and managing these institutions. Their obvious motives reflected altruistic, religious and educational beliefs, but there were also a variety of other concerns that could have been contributory in determining their support for particular institutions. The primary achievement of Macclesfield's voluntary sector was to provide a network of services that, in conjunction with later state initiatives, improved living standards for inhabitants by the end of the nineteenth century.

This thesis gives an insight into the development of charitable institutions in a medium sized industrial town and demonstrates how one group of businessmen were able to dominate this field. Many silk manufacturers were generous in their support of charitable causes in Macclesfield, but the scale of their support did not match that of some other notable philanthropic families, such as the Crossleys of Halifax. The charitable work of the silk manufacturers appeared to be broadly similar to that of entrepreneurs in other small and medium sized industrial towns where they could form a dominant occupational group in public life. In larger towns and cities, this strong manufacturer influence was less evident and a greater range of other people contributed significantly to philanthropic institutions. This type of approach supplements the existing material on philanthropic effort during the long nineteenth century and overlaps a number of related subject areas, such as urban élite activity and the growth of the welfare state.

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Illustration Credits

The following people have granted permission for me to use copies of illustrations from various sources within this thesis and this assistance is very much appreciated.

John Feltwell has kindly given permission for me to reproduce his photographs of silkworms, a silkmoth and its cocoon on page 2 (originally published in his book, *The Story of Silk*).

I am grateful to George Kelsall for allowing me to use the picture of Henry and Ann Brocklehurst on page 194, originally published in Brian Law's book, *Fieldens of Todmorden*.

Alyson Rogers from English Heritage has kindly given permission to reproduce the following pictures published in Calladine & Fricker's *East Cheshire Textile Mills* and they are all © Crown copyright.NMR.

Macclesfield garret houses, Little Street Mill and Chester Road Mill, page 37;
Sunderland Street Wesleyan Chapel, p. 42; St George's Church, Sutton and Holy Trinity Church, Hurdsfield, p. 44; Ragged and Industrial School, p. 79.

The portrait of Charles Roe on page 17 has been used by kind permission of Macclesfield Team Parish.

Many of the illustrations are derived from the collections held at the Macclesfield Silk Museum and I am very grateful to Richard de Peyer and Macclesfield Museums Trust for permission to use them in this thesis.

Macclesfield silk buttons, p. 8; John and Thomas Brocklehurst, p. 19; James Kershaw, p. 20; garret silk weaver and mechanised silk processes, pp. 38-39; Duke Street Schools, p. 48; J. W. H. Thorp and William Whiston, p. 60; Macclesfield Sunday School, p. 64; Christ Church, p. 73; Macclesfield silk pattern p. 109; Park Green, Macclesfield, p. 112; Macclesfield Grammar School, p. 117; T. U. Brocklehurst, p. 118; Macclesfield School of Art, p. 131; J. O. Nicholson, p. 132; Macclesfield Infirmary, p. 178; Charles Brocklehurst, p. 199; View of West Park, p. 216; Victoria Park banner, p. 224; View of Victoria Park, p. 225.

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List of Abbreviations

C.O.S.	Charity Organisation Society
G.H.S.	Girls' High School
S.D.U.K.	Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge
T.I.C.	Technical Instruction Committee
U.K.S.	Useful Knowledge Society
Y.M.C.A.	Young Men's Christian Association

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The East Cheshire town of Macclesfield experienced the transition from market town to provincial industrial centre as a direct result of its successful silk industry. The first silk mill was established there in 1743 and silk manufacture then dominated the town until the end of the nineteenth century. Throughout this period, a number of charitable institutions were established for Macclesfield's inhabitants and this thesis will explore the role of the silk manufacturers in their foundation and management.

The Development of the English Silk Industry

Silk has been a prized and luxury commodity since the inception of the Chinese silk industry in around 2700 B.C. Silk is obtained from the cocoon of the silkworm and the fibre is reeled as a continuous filament, before undergoing the processes of winding, throwing and doubling. These phases involve the removal of defects, the addition of twist and the winding together of filaments to increase strength. The resulting fine thread can then be woven into intricate patterns and is easily dyed to produce a variety of rich coloured clothing, sewing threads and fancy goods.¹

By the sixteenth century, silk production was well established in Europe, with Italy and France emerging as the main players. At this time, England tried to emulate the success of the Mediterranean countries in sericulture, but the climate proved to be unsuitable for silkworm cultivation. Consequently, English manufacturers always had to rely on imports of the raw material from countries such as France, Turkey and China.² Although there was some English silk weaving evident from the Middle Ages, the greatest impetus came with the immigration of Protestants from northern Europe. Flemish weavers, escaping religious persecution in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, settled in areas such as Spitalfields, Norwich, and Colchester. They were joined by two waves of French Huguenots: the first who fled the St Bartholomew's Day Massacre in 1572 and the second following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685. The second influx was the most significant, and it is estimated that around 100,000 French silk workers came to England at

¹ L. Briscoe, *The Textile and Clothing Industries of the United Kingdom* (Manchester, 1971), p. 19.

² D. Coleman, *Courtaulds: An Economic and Social History, Vol. 1, The Nineteenth Century: Silk and Crape* (Oxford, 1969), p. 13.

this time.³ The refugees' expertise meant that many imported goods could then be manufactured for the home market. Consequently Spitalfields, just outside the City of London, became the centre of the English silk industry during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Figure 1.1. Pictures of *Bombyx mori* silkworms and silkmoth with its cocoon.
(From J. Feltwell, *The Story of Silk* (Stroud, 1990), p. 55.)

Throughout this period, luxury silk and fancy woven goods gained in popularity and this increased the demand for silk thread. English silk throwing methods could only produce the coarse tram weft thread and the superior organzine warp thread had to be imported from Italy, where the necessary technology had been developed in the early seventeenth century.⁴ The first unsuccessful attempt to establish an English silk throwing mill for organzine production was made by Thomas Cotchett in Derby in 1704. Subsequently, one of his employees, John Lombe, visited Italy covertly to learn about the Italian machinery and his brother filed an English patent for sole use from 1716 to 1732. The brothers built their own silk throwing mill in Derby in 1721, which employed around 300 people by the patent's expiry date.⁵ At this stage, the Chancellor of the Exchequer agreed to pay Thomas Lombe £14,000 for the technology, on condition that the machines were put on public display.⁶ In 1733 John Guardivaglio, who had accompanied Lombe in Italy, was approached by a group of businessmen to set up a similar mill in Stockport. Under his supervision, the mill employed several hundred people and its success inspired others to

³ S. Smiles, *The Huguenots: Their Settlements, Churches and Industries in England and Ireland* (London, 1870), p. 247.

⁴ A. Ure, *The Philosophy of Manufactures* (London, 1967, originally published in 1835), p. 235.

⁵ W. H. Chaloner, 'Sir Thomas Lombe (1685-1739) and the British Silk Industry', *History Today*, 3, 1953, p. 782.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 785.

invest in further mills in the locality.⁷ As a result, towns such as Macclesfield and Congleton followed Stockport's lead, laying the foundation for the East Cheshire silk industry.

The Spitalfields silk industry suffered a major blow during the 1770s that drastically reduced its market share. In an attempt to address the problems of destitution caused by the casual nature of the silk trade, an Act was passed in 1773 that allowed civic leaders to regulate wages and to limit the number of apprentices. This increased overheads significantly for silk manufacturers and led to the dispersal of the industry to provincial centres, such as Derby and Macclesfield, where labour was cheaper.⁸ These silk centres benefited from England's boom economy in the late eighteenth century and the Napoleonic Wars removed competition from the French. This meant that demand for English thrown silk expanded considerably. The weaving of broad silk was introduced in the 1790s to East Cheshire and the area was then able to supply thrown and broad silk to the London market. In addition, various Lancashire towns, including Manchester, Bolton and Middleton, became important silk weaving centres. However, most of their machinery was later switched to cotton, for which the region became famous. Cotton offered greater scope for expansion than silk, as it was cheaper to produce and the demand for goods was correspondingly higher. A Cheshire example of this transition was Stockport, where Edward Baines found that 'the superior advantages of the cotton trade' had attracted the manufacturers to make it the 'staple manufacture of the place'.⁹

From 1815, the resumption of French silk imports caused many smaller English silk firms to go bankrupt. There was a slow recovery and in 1824 the duty on raw silk imports was lifted, which provided a temporary boost for the industry. However, the long-term ban on foreign silk goods was removed in 1826, in favour of a 30 per cent import duty, which made it increasingly difficult for English firms to compete against superior overseas goods.¹⁰ This marked the beginning of a series of booms and slumps that characterised the rest of the nineteenth century for the English silk industry.

One of the ways in which the silk industry withstood the fluctuations in trade was through the introduction of new technology. In the 1820s Edmund Cartwright's broadloom cotton weaving machine was adapted for coarse silks, while the introduction of Jacquard weaving

⁷ F. C. Price, 'The Italian Who Brought Silk to Stockport', *Cheshire Life*, 33, 1967, p. 112.

⁸ M. Berg, *The Age of Manufactures, 1700-1820: Industry, Innovation and Work in Britain* (London, 1994), p. 219.

⁹ E. Baines, *Lancashire Past and Present, Vol. 2* (London, 1867), p. 720.

¹⁰ E. Lipson, *The Growth of English Society* (London, 1954), p. 344.

looms meant that intricate patterns could be created by means of punched cards.¹¹ Both these inventions boosted the capabilities of the English silk industry and gave firms the opportunity to diversify into different silk processes. The powered spinning of silk from waste thread became increasingly successful from the 1830s and Bradford became the dominant centre of production.¹² Even with mechanisation, many firms still relied on a sizeable number of handloom weavers for their high quality work, but there was a gradual decline of domestic workers in favour of operatives for powered machines in factories.

The dispersed nature of the English silk industry was illustrated by the evidence of John Brocklehurst, a Macclesfield silk manufacturer, to the Select Committee on the Silk Trade in 1832, stating that 'silk mills are established in twenty counties and about fifty towns'.¹³ By the mid-nineteenth century, the main centres for the production of broad silks were towns such as Spitalfields, Manchester, Macclesfield, Glasgow, Paisley and Dublin. Ribbons were predominantly manufactured at Coventry, but other centres like Congleton, Leek and Derby also had successful companies involved in this trade.¹⁴ In addition, there were smaller centres scattered throughout England, such as Norwich and Braintree, which supplied specialised branches of the market.¹⁵

Following the depression of the 1830s, the silk industry experienced a period of growth as the European wars disrupted the supply of French silk. This encouraged the establishment of new firms and expansion of existing companies, with exports rising to £735,094 in 1844.¹⁶ The Great Exhibition in 1851 provided a showcase for the silk industry and stimulated much interest in the products. However, the 1860 Cobden Chevalier Treaty marked the end of import duties on French silk, despite their retention on English goods entering France. By this stage, the industry had reached its zenith and, although there was an initial surge in the export market, the Treaty marked the beginning of a slow decline in the silk trade. One of its main effects was to reduce the number of English silk workers by a quarter in the following 50 years and towns like Coventry were left bereft of silk firms.¹⁷ Despite this decline, East Cheshire, and particularly Macclesfield, remained the primary

¹¹ A. Calladine & J. Fricker, *East Cheshire Textile Mills* (London, 1993), p. 4.

¹² J. A. Iredale & P. A. Townhill, 'Silk Spinning in England: The End of an Epoch', *Textile History*, 4, 1973, p. 100.

¹³ British Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Select Committee on the Silk Trade With Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index, 1831-1832* (Shannon, 1968), p. 780.

¹⁴ Cheshire Record Office, DDX 610/4, *The Useful Arts and Manufactures of Great Britain, The Manufacture of Woven Goods: Part 1, Silk* (London, 1846), p. 53.

¹⁵ R. C. Rawley, *Economics of the Silk Industry: A Study in Industrial Organisation* (London, 1919), p. 210.

¹⁶ C.R.O., DDX 640/4, *The Useful Arts and Manufactures*, p. 53.

¹⁷ Lipson, *The Growth of English Society*, p. 344.

area for silk throwing and hand weaving in England. During the early decades of the twentieth century, there was a temporary resurgence in the demand for silk, but the introduction of rayon and other artificial silks manufactured abroad meant that the traditional silk trade was affected. There was another rise in demand during the Second World War, but the increasing use of artificial fibres eventually reduced the industry to a few specialist companies in Macclesfield and Congleton.¹⁸

Despite its popularity for luxury goods, silk remained a minor industry in relation to other fibres such as wool and cotton. This is illustrated by the fact that in 1851, 133,000 British people were employed in the silk industry compared to 497,000 in cotton.¹⁹ This situation may have prompted the comment attributed to Cobden ‘let the silk industry perish and go to the countries to which it properly belongs’.²⁰ Despite this factor, silk manufacture was a widespread phenomenon throughout England and was particularly important in the East Cheshire area.

The Development of Macclesfield

Macclesfield is a medium sized market town situated on the boundary between the western edge of the Pennines and the Cheshire plain (see Map 1.1 on page 36). It had gained borough status in the thirteenth century and was governed by the mayor and corporation with little external interference. The agricultural prosperity of the surrounding area meant that the town had emerged as an important service centre for its extensive hinterland.²¹ In spite of the industrial growth that was to come, agriculture remained an important part of Macclesfield’s occupational structure in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and its regular markets continued to provide an outlet for local agricultural goods.

In the 1720s Macclesfield had around 4,400 inhabitants and an established cottage industry in silk buttons for the London market that employed ‘many thousands’ of people in the town and its adjoining rural areas.²² Although Macclesfield’s development became inextricably entwined with silk manufacture, it did have a number of other industries that played a part in its history during this period. Alongside the silk button trade, the town

¹⁸ Calladine & Fricker, *East Cheshire Textile Mills*, p. 15.

¹⁹ P. Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation: An Economic History of Britain, 1700-1914* (London, 1969), p. 260.

²⁰ W. H. Chaloner, ‘Sir Thomas Lombe’, p. 778.

²¹ G. Malmgreen, *Silk Town: Industry and Culture in Macclesfield, 1750-1835* (Hull, 1985), p. 3.

²² C. S. Davies, *A History of Macclesfield* (Manchester, 1961), p. 123.

was known as a local centre for harness and glove making and these cottage industries provided its industrial base in the early eighteenth century.²³

Charles Roe, the founder of the silk industry in Macclesfield, went on to establish a copper smelting company in 1758 on the Common and initially relied on copper ore from Alderley Edge.²⁴ The other raw materials necessary for the process were coal and calamine and Macclesfield had its own coal seams which met the power needs in the company's early history. As the concern grew, copper ore and calamine were brought in from further afield and Cheshire's other more plentiful coal beds, such as Poynton, met the fuel demands. The copper works also produced brass, but ceased to be a profitable concern at the beginning of the nineteenth century.²⁵ A brewery had also been established close to the copper works and brewing remained an important business throughout this period.

The other main eighteenth-century industry to be established in Macclesfield was cotton manufacture. This always remained subsidiary to silk, but cotton factories were founded from the 1780s and were a feature of Macclesfield's industrial structure into the twentieth century. John Wootton speculated that silk was preferred by local workers, because of the cleanliness of the process, and that the early mechanisation of the cotton processes in nearby Manchester left comparatively little work for outworkers.²⁶ However, some handloom cotton weaving was carried out in the area and calico, muslin and fustian were produced by Macclesfield firms.²⁷

The light nature of silk products meant that the turnpiking of the Macclesfield to Buxton road in 1758, and the routes to Stockport and Leek in 1762, improved communications to London sufficiently for distribution purposes. However, Roe's copper company faced difficulties in transporting heavy raw materials to Macclesfield and he was a keen advocate of extending the canal network. Despite his pressure, the Macclesfield Canal did not open

²³ J. H. Hodson, *Cheshire 1660-1780: Restoration to Industrial Revolution* (Chester, 1978), p. 149.

²⁴ W. H. Chaloner, 'Charles Roe of Macclesfield (1715-1781): An Eighteenth-century Industrialist, Part 1', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 62, 1951, p. 141.

²⁵ W. H. Chaloner, 'Charles Roe of Macclesfield (1715-1781): An Eighteenth-century Industrialist, Part 2', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 63, 1952, p. 76.

²⁶ Macclesfield Public Library, J. Wootton, 'Macclesfield Past' (Prize Essay for the Useful Knowledge Society, 1866), unpaginated.

²⁷ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 141.

until 1831 and this linked into the Trent and Mersey Canal and the Peak Forest Canal.²⁸ Some silk products did travel via the canal system to London, but its main benefit was in the transport of coal, which became increasingly important in the nineteenth century as the main source of fuel for mechanised processes in the textile industries.²⁹ The transport network improved with the arrival of the railways in 1845 as the Manchester and Birmingham route reached Macclesfield and the North Staffordshire Railway included the town on its London route in 1849.³⁰ In 1860, it was estimated that the consumption of coal in Macclesfield had reached 80,000 tons and the Poynton pit provided over half of this amount, showing the importance of these forms of heavy transport to the town.³¹

In 1756 the town had consisted of eight streets, with a collection of alleyways and lanes, and its markets were the main outlets for goods. The eighteenth century saw the central core of streets expand southwards to Sutton and north east towards Hurdsfield. This process continued apace in the nineteenth century and these previously outlying villages were effectively merged with the town. There was also building development in all directions along the major access routes into the town and infilling of former open spaces, such as the Common.³² This meant that by the late nineteenth century the town had developed into a complex urban structure and Appendix One (on page 269) shows the appearance of Macclesfield's town centre at this time.

This physical and industrial growth meant that Macclesfield was sufficiently important to become a municipal borough by 1835 and it boasted a range of retail outlets at this time, including booksellers, confectioners, ironmongers and over 60 inns and taverns. Other small-scale industries included shoe and hat making, while representatives of the legal, banking and medical professions were also clearly in evidence.³³ In 1880 the town had amassed a total of 1,663 businesses outside silk manufacture, ranging from corn dealers and cheese factors to tallow chandlers.³⁴ Another nineteenth-century area of growth was in the field of local government. In 1823 the central Market Place had been reorganised and the Town Hall was built to replace the old Guild Hall. By 1869 the classical style building could no longer provide accommodation for all the necessary activities and it was

²⁸ Calladine & Fricker, *East Cheshire Textile Mills*, p. 4.

²⁹ C. L. Mellows, 'Geographical Basis of the West Pennine Silk Industry', *Journal of the Textile Industry*, 25, 1934, p. 382.

³⁰ Calladine & Fricker, *East Cheshire Textile Mills*, p. 4.

³¹ Mellows, 'Geographical Basis of the West Pennine Silk Industry', p. 384.

³² Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 171.

³³ Malmgreen, *Silk Town*, pp. 25-26.

³⁴ Morris & Co., *Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of the Cheshire Towns with Wrexham* (Nottingham, 1880), pp. 375-385.

enlarged, opening in 1871. This meant that all the council offices were situated in one central location and the grand extension signified Macclesfield's civic aspirations at this time.³⁵ Therefore, Macclesfield had emerged as an important industrial town in the nineteenth century, primarily due to its silk industry, and the next section will explore the development and effects of silk manufacture on Macclesfield.

The Growth and Impact of the Macclesfield Silk Industry

In the mid-eighteenth century Macclesfield possessed a number of advantages that encouraged local businessmen to explore the possibility of establishing silk throwing on a factory basis. Macclesfield had a successful trade relationship with London through the silk button business and had comparatively good transport links to other markets. It was fairly close to the new silk mills in Stockport, which provided visible evidence of how such ventures could operate. The River Bollin ran through the town to provide power and its water was soft enough for use in silk processing. Finally, the workers' familiarity with silk and a surplus of agricultural labour meant that there was a ready workforce available locally.³⁶ The first entrepreneur to seize this opportunity on a large scale was Charles Roe, a Macclesfield button merchant, who established the first silk throwing mill in 1743.

Although Roe later withdrew to concentrate on his copper business, other manufacturers were eager to exploit the new opportunities in silk. Two further incentives for button manufacturers to transfer their allegiance to silk throwing were the introduction of

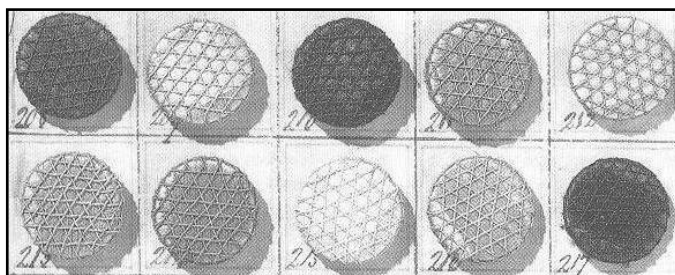


Figure 1.2. Portion of a Brocklehurst sample card of silk buttons, c. 1800.
(Macclesfield Museums Trust)

protection on foreign silks in 1766 and the enforcement of legislation favouring horn and metal buttons in the 1780s, which reduced the demand for silk buttons. Leigh and Voce's employment of Huguenot weavers in the 1790s to produce broad silk goods (including handkerchiefs and

³⁵ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, pp. 168-169.

³⁶ Mellows, 'Geographical Basis of the West Pennine Silk Industry', p. 376.

shawls) provided another area for manufacturing expansion in Macclesfield.³⁷ Therefore, it was estimated that by 1795 the town possessed between 20 and 30 silk mills.³⁸

The silk industry in Macclesfield continued to expand until the end of the French Wars when it was hit by one of the national trade depressions that were common to the luxury market. However, the town's growing importance as a silk producer was becoming evident by 1824, when silk stock worth £53,000 was recorded as being held in the town. This represented three times the quantity of silk registered in Coventry and seven times more than nearby Leek.³⁹ Macclesfield concurrently gained a reputation for high quality goods and superior design, which enabled it to become the premier English silk centre for most of the nineteenth century.⁴⁰ In common with other English silk towns, it was severely affected by the effects of foreign competition following the 1860 Cobden Treaty and this resulted in the reduction of silk businesses towards the end of the century.

As Macclesfield made the transition from market to industrial town, the need to attract workers for the silk industry meant that the population expanded significantly. For example, a newspaper advertisement was published in 1825 that aimed to recruit between 4,000 and 5,000 workers to meet the demand for thrown and woven silk in the town.⁴¹ Macclesfield's economic growth attracted significant numbers of people eager to benefit from the opportunities that the town offered and this inevitably affected the size of the settlement. In 1754 there had been approximately 6,000 residents and this number expanded to around 7,000 by 1786.⁴² The greatest expansion took place in the nineteenth century and Table 1.1 (overleaf) shows the census figures for the Township and Borough of Macclesfield between 1801 and 1901.

³⁷ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 128.

³⁸ J. Aikin, *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles Round Manchester* (London, 1795), p. 438.

³⁹ A. H. Hard, 'Silk Throwing in England', *Fibres and Fabrics Monthly*, 1, 1940, p. 155.

⁴⁰ Rawley, *Economics of the Silk Industry*, p. 208.

⁴¹ *M.C.H.*, 19 February 1825, p. 1.

⁴² J. Laughton, *The Church in the Market Place: A History of the Church of St Michael and All Angels in Macclesfield, c. 1220-1901* (Macclesfield, 2003), p. 91.

Table 1.1. Trends in the total population of Macclesfield, 1801-1901.
(J. N. Jackson, 'The Population and Industrial Structure of Macclesfield', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Manchester, 1959), pp. A11, A13.)

Year	Township	Borough	Percentage Change
1801	8,743	-	-
1811	12,299	-	+40.7
1821	17,746	-	+44.3
1831	23,129	-	+30.3
1841	24,137	32,629	+4.4
1851	29,648	39,048	+22.8*
1861		36,101	-7.5
1871		35,450	-1.8
1881		37,514	+5.8
1891		36,009	-4.0
1901		34,624	-3.8

* The percentage change for the Borough (1841-1851) was +19.7.

This data demonstrates the rapid influx of people until 1851 and the gradual decline thereafter, in line with the fortunes of the silk industry. The extent to which Macclesfield attracted newcomers to work in the factories in the first half of the nineteenth century is illustrated by Table 1.2, which shows the place of birth for its inhabitants in 1851.

Table 1.2. Principal birthplaces (50+ inhabitants only) of Macclesfield inhabitants, 1851.
(Jackson, 'The Population and Industrial Structure of Macclesfield', p. A12.)

Place of Birth	Total number of Inhabitants
Macclesfield Borough	22,784
Rest of Cheshire	5,831
Staffordshire	2,806
Ireland	2,358
Lancashire	1,779
Derbyshire	1,204
Yorkshire	401
London	356
Warwickshire	175
Scotland	154
Shropshire	146
Leicestershire	83
Nottinghamshire	80
Total Born Elsewhere	16,264
Total Number of Inhabitants	39,048

This table shows that 42 per cent of the Borough's population at that stage had been born elsewhere and that many of the newcomers came from Cheshire and surrounding counties. However, there were also significant numbers of arrivals from Ireland, almost certainly due to the Famine in the 1840s and the demand for skilled silk weavers in the town. This information also indicates how Macclesfield had to assimilate large numbers of incomers

from a wide variety of backgrounds into its existing population throughout the phase of industrial expansion.

The actual proportion of Macclesfield people employed within the silk industry is difficult to measure in the period before detailed census figures on occupation became commonplace. Stella Davies estimated that in Victorian Macclesfield around 10,000 relied directly on the silk industry for their employment and that a large proportion of the remainder were indirectly involved.⁴³ From 1841 it is possible to glean a more definite idea of the numbers involved within the town's textile industry and the ratio of male to female employees. Table 1.3 shows that textile workers were a clear majority group and how this proportion declined as the silk industry contracted. It also demonstrates how far female employees were in the majority over males and this is consistent with the fact that many families had to leave Macclesfield because of the problems in securing male employment.

Table 1.3. Proportion of Macclesfield's population employed in textiles, 1841-1871. (Jackson, 'The Population and Industrial Structure of Macclesfield', pp. A16-A19.)

	Males		Females		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
1841	4,432	57.5	3,924	78.2	8,356	65.7
1851	7,462	56.4	7,496	77.2	14,958	65.2
1861	6,390	55.4	7,317	76.4	13,707	65.0
1871	3,754	41.5	4,815	69.9	8,569	53.8

The most detailed figures available on the industrial structure of Macclesfield were included in the 1901 Census and Table 1.4 (overleaf) shows a breakdown of the principal occupations of the town's population at this stage.

⁴³ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 234.

Table 1.4. Principal occupations of Macclesfield inhabitants, 1901.
(Jackson, 'The Population and Industrial Structure of Macclesfield', p. A20.)

Industry	Males		Females		Total	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Teaching	N/A	–	181	2.2	N/A	–
Domestic Indoor Servants	N/A	–	678	8.2	N/A	–
Charwomen	N/A	–	207	2.5	N/A	–
Laundry & Washing Service	N/A	–	161	2.0	N/A	–
Commercial or Business Clerks	187	1.9	N/A	–	N/A	–
Conveyance of Men, Goods & Messages	839	8.4	N/A	–	N/A	–
Agriculture	289	2.9	N/A	–	N/A	–
Coal & Shale Miners	16	0.2	N/A	–	N/A	–
Engineering & Machine Making	277	2.8	N/A	–	N/A	–
Building & Works of Construction	999	10.0	N/A	–	N/A	–
Wood, Furniture, Fittings or Decorations	224	2.2	N/A	–	N/A	–
Chemicals, Oil, Grease etc.	63	0.6	N/A	–	N/A	–
Paper, Prints, Books & Stationery	202	2.0	93	1.1	295	1.6
Cotton Manufacture	578	5.8	470	5.7	1,048	5.7
Silk Manufacture	2,155	21.5	4,443	53.5	6,598	36.0
Other Textile Manufactures	242	2.4	262	3.2	504	2.8
Bleaching, Printing, Dyeing etc.	262	2.6	N/A	–	N/A	–
Dress	536	5.4	939	11.3	1,475	8.1
Food, Drink, Tobacco & Lodging	939	9.4	382	4.6	1,321	7.2
All Other Occupations	2,205	22.0	482	5.8	7,070	38.6
Total Engaged in Occupations	10,013	100.1	8,298	100.1	18,311	100

The evidence from these two tables points to the clear dominance of the silk industry within the industrial structure of Macclesfield, although this had declined considerably by the end of the nineteenth century. Despite this fact, silk still provided over half the employment opportunities for females at this stage and remained an important element in the town's history into the twentieth century. The town's dependence on one industry caused particular problems with mass unemployment at times of trade depression and in March 1826 it was estimated that there were 15,000 silk workers unemployed in the town.⁴⁴ Consequently, in the same year the workers were described as 'broken-hearted and reduced to pauperism' and that 'two thirds of the people were found to be in want of the common conveniences and necessaries of life'.⁴⁵ Often when the situation did not

⁴⁴ *M.C.H.*, 25 March 1826, p. 2.

⁴⁵ *B.P.P.*, *Report from the Select Committee, 1831-1832*, p. 780.

improve, workers were forced to seek employment elsewhere and emigration to overseas silk centres became a popular option in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1923 the continued decline in the silk industry meant that there were fewer than 4,000 people employed in silk (from the Borough of Macclesfield's total population of 34,000) illustrating how the town's dependence on a single industry had diminished.⁴⁶

Macclesfield's industrial activity meant that it had emerged as a principal manufacturing centre by the 1850s and was ranked number 26 in the size of boroughs of England and Wales.⁴⁷ However, this marked the zenith of Macclesfield's fortunes, as its importance was to wane in the second half of the nineteenth century. Table 1.5 illustrates its population decline compared to the continued expansion of selected cotton towns between 1871 and 1901.

Table 1.5. A comparison of population growth for selected Lancashire and Cheshire industrial towns, 1871-1901.
(C. B. Philips & J. H. Smith, *Lancashire and Cheshire from A.D. 1540* (Harlow, 1994), p. 229.)

	1871	1881	1891	1901
Accrington	21,788	31,435	38,603	43,122
Ashton-under-Lyne	37,359	37,040	40,463	43,890
Burnley	40,858	58,751	87,016	97,043
Macclesfield	35,450	37,514	36,009	34,624
Preston	85,427	96,537	10,7573	112,989
Stockport	53,014	59,553	70,263	78,897

During the early phases of Macclesfield's silk industry, the majority of silk weavers were outworkers and lived in specially built garret houses with large windows on the upper floors to provide sufficient light for intricate work. The introduction of power looms from the 1820s meant that by the mid-nineteenth century most weavers had changed to factory work using the new technology. However, the continued demand for highly skilled handloom work ensured the survival of Macclesfield handloom weavers into the twentieth century.⁴⁸ The need to provide factory accommodation for a number of different silk processes, and a range of power sources, resulted in the town gaining a proliferation of mills in a variety of styles and sizes. For example, Little Street Mill was built in the late eighteenth century and was offered for sale in 1811 as three storeys high and 30 yards long (27.43m), with a range of silk machinery powered by horses.⁴⁹ In contrast, the large four storey L-shaped Chester Road Mill (with the main block measuring 37.5m in length) was

⁴⁶ *A Report of the Evidence Given at the Departmental Enquiry into the Condition of the Silk Industry of Great Britain, September-November 1923* (London, 1923), p. 19.

⁴⁷ Jackson, 'The Population and Industrial Structure of Macclesfield', p. 42.

⁴⁸ D. Bythell, *The Sweated Trades Outwork in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1978), p. 61.

⁴⁹ Calladine & Fricker, *East Cheshire Textile Mills*, pp. 58-59.

built in 1823 for silk throwing. Steam power was used for the machinery and the size of the building meant that it was able to house all the other phases of manufacture, including dyeing and weaving.⁵⁰ (Pictures of Macclesfield garret houses, Little Street Mill, Chester Road Mill, garret workers and the different mechanised processes involved in silk manufacture are shown on pages 37-39.)

The silk industry's workforce was skewed towards female and child employees, because of the delicacy of the fibre and the fact that it was considered light work. The 1833 Factory Act included an exemption for children working in silk mills as the conditions were felt to be less hazardous to children's health than the cotton mills. As a result, children of eight years of age and upwards continued to work in silk mills until the 1875 Factory Act, which raised the minimum age to 10 years. An illustration of the importance of child labour was the fact that that Mr Saunders, a government commissioner, estimated in 1833 that 'all the silk wrought in Macclesfield passed through the hands of children under 13 years old'.⁵¹ The preference for female silk workers was shown by the fact that in 1871 the proportion of men working in the Cheshire silk industry represented only 37 per cent of the total workforce of 17,643.⁵² This meant that male employment opportunities in Macclesfield became increasingly limited in the late nineteenth century, which made it difficult for many families to stay in the town.

The influx of large numbers of people to work in the silk trade during times of prosperity inevitably placed considerable pressure on Macclesfield's infrastructure. The town's existing services proved to be completely inadequate for its growing population and a network of voluntary institutions was established to fill the vacuum. These organisations were predominantly instigated at a local level and attempted to address deficiencies in areas such as medical provision and education. Overall control of the town's facilities lay with the police commissioners (prior to the creation of the municipal borough in 1835) and with the Corporation thereafter. Despite the initial efforts of the charities, the general living conditions for Macclesfield's inhabitants continued to deteriorate in the face of inaction by the town's leaders.⁵³ By 1850 the mortality rate had reached 32.2 per 1,000, the majority of which was attributed to the absence of main and house sewerage, the lack

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.

⁵¹ M.P.L., Wootton, 'Macclesfield Past', unpaginated.

⁵² J. Norris, "'Well Fitted for Females.'" Women in the Macclesfield Silk Industry', in J. A. Jowitt & A. J. McIvor (Eds), *Employers and Labour in the English Textile Industries, 1850-1939* (London, 1988), p. 189.

⁵³ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 178.

of a mains water supply, the want of ventilation and the poor construction and overcrowding of housing.⁵⁴

Recognition of the common problems facing all urban areas, and the fact that local initiative had generally made little headway, led to the gradual implementation of state legislation. The prime example of this was the introduction of the 1848 Public Health Act which stipulated that any town with a mortality rate of over 23 per 1,000 in the previous seven years would have to establish a Local Board of Health.⁵⁵ Macclesfield fitted into this category, and thus its Board was formed in 1852 with powers to institute a programme of sanitary improvements. This led to a gradual rise in living conditions over the remainder of the century, but the town's philanthropic organisations continued to fulfil a crucial role throughout the period in providing additional services. By 1900, Macclesfield had passed through its rapid phase of expansion and then experienced a stabilisation in population as the silk industry contracted. However, the historical importance of the silk industry was still reflected in the proliferation of industrial buildings and the survival of a select group of larger silk manufacturing firms.

The Macclesfield Silk Manufacturers

The Macclesfield silk manufacturers founded businesses ranging in size from a few employees up to thousands. Likewise, the scope of their operations could involve a single process, such as dyeing, or factories that covered all stages of silk manufacture. The number of silk proprietors in the town grew considerably until the mid-nineteenth century. For example, there were 25 firms listed in 1789 and this number had increased to 169 in 1850.⁵⁶ The entrepreneurs came from a variety of backgrounds and were keen to maximise the opportunities offered by this luxury fabric to make their fortune. Inevitably the failure rate was high and bankruptcies were common at times of depression, but there were examples of manufacturers who were able to keep their businesses profitable over long periods of time and amassed considerable yields from their investment.

⁵⁴ J. Smith, *Report to the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage and Supply of Water and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of the Borough of Macclesfield* (London, 1850), pp. 51-52.

⁵⁵ A. Briggs, Public Health: 'The "Sanitary Idea"', *New Society*, 11, 15 February 1968, p. 231.

⁵⁶ W. Cowdroy's *Directory & Guide for the City & County of Chester* (Chester, 1789), pp. 88-90; S. Bagshaw, *History, Gazetteer and Directory of the County Palatine of Chester* (Sheffield, 1850), pp. 244-245.

The common characteristics that emerge from the more successful Macclesfield silk manufacturers were that they had to have some initial expertise in the industry, either through the sale of finished products or in their manufacture. Many early entrepreneurs had experience in the silk button trade and had fostered relationships with the London market, which was beneficial when they diversified into other areas. Knowledge of the processes involved and an awareness of the availability of technology for mechanisation was also a distinct advantage, although this could be overcome by the employment of suitably experienced managers. Similarly, a detailed understanding of what other companies were producing, both at home and abroad, meant that they could identify the most competitive areas of the industry in which to direct their efforts.

The entrepreneurs' organisational skills and dynamism were critical factors in the success of their ventures and the fact that many firms declined or were sold once the original founder's involvement ceased demonstrates this importance. There was a strong correlation between nonconformity and business success, with many Methodist, Independent, Quaker and Unitarian industrialists becoming increasingly wealthy. This relationship has been attributed to a number of factors such as their work ethic, their exclusion from certain careers and their belief in practical education.⁵⁷ The need for capital, both for initial investment and to provide a buffer during times of depression, was advantageous and it was no coincidence that most silk manufacturers either had reserves of capital, wealthy connections or assets to use as a guarantee for loans. It was possible for men of more modest background to progress to become silk manufacturers, but without the benefits of some backing the chances of success were reduced. As a result, these people were more likely to remain the proprietors of smaller concerns due to restricted opportunities for expansion, which was a common situation in other textile towns such as Oldham.⁵⁸

Macclesfield silk entrepreneurs appeared to be an exclusively male group in the eighteenth century but there were two female proprietors by 1850, Ann Bayley and Lydia Downes, who were listed as a silk trimming manufacturer and a silk throwster respectively.⁵⁹ However, male dominance had prevailed again by the end of the nineteenth century and so it appears that female silk manufacturers were rare in Macclesfield.⁶⁰ Local ties with the town were no precursor to success, as many entrepreneurs moved to Macclesfield in order

⁵⁷ Mathias, *The First Industrial Nation*, pp. 158-159.

⁵⁸ K. Honeyman, *Origins of Enterprise: Business Leadership in the Industrial Revolution* (Manchester, 1982), p. 164.

⁵⁹ Bagshaw, *History, Gazetteer and Directory*, p. 244.

⁶⁰ *Kelly's Directory of Cheshire, 1898* (London, 1898), pp. 358-369.

to take advantage of the opportunities within the silk industry. However, the timing of a business launch was critical to the venture's future, as coinciding with a particular boom or slump could dictate the longevity or failure of the concern. All these factors linked the range of silk manufacturers whose business acumen contributed towards Macclesfield's emergence as a leading provincial industrial town.

Various Macclesfield silk manufacturers were able to meet the challenges faced by the silk industry and the following illustrations show how particular individuals fared. An example

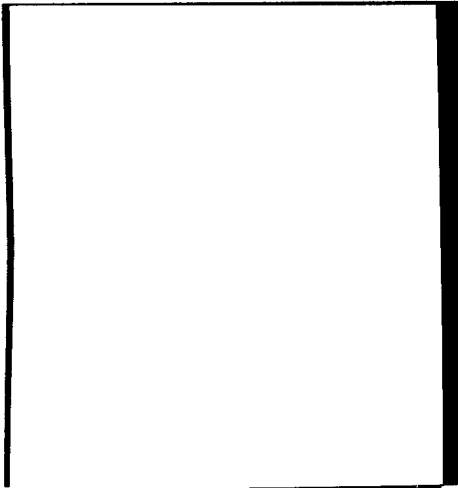


Figure 1.3. Portrait of Charles Roe, the founder of the Macclesfield silk industry. (Macclesfield Team Parish)

of short-term business success was Charles Roe's venture. He originated from Derbyshire, and was previously a button manufacturer before branching out into silk throwing. His mill on Park Green was initially an individual enterprise but he gained a number of business partners from 1750, such as the silk merchant Samuel Lankford, which enabled expansion to take place.⁶¹ Consequently by 1761 the business employed 350 workers and Roe fortuitously decided to withdraw from the industry. His withdrawal was completed in 1764, when the firm became Lankford, Robinson and Stafford, but it only survived for a further nine years before going bankrupt. Roe

had gained assets of over £10,000 when he withdrew from the business and was then able to start a copper smelting enterprise with the proceedings.⁶²

Daintry & Ryle was the largest silk firm in the town by the end of the eighteenth century and this business had been established in 1775 with a mill on Park Green. John Ryle (I) and Michael Daintry were partners in this operation and had extended their empire with the acquisition of two cotton mills in Derbyshire and Staffordshire. Their successors, John Ryle (II) and John Smith Daintry, pursued this diversification further when they took over a failed bank and went into partnership with the Wood brothers (to whom they were related by marriage), in the Old Mill Lane cotton mill.⁶³ By 1818 the silk business had grown into what was described as 'one of the largest manufactories of silk in the kingdom', but the

⁶¹ Chaloner, 'Charles Roe of Macclesfield (1715-81): Part 1', p. 137.

⁶² Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 127.

⁶³ S. D. Chapman, *The Early Factory Masters: The Transition to the Factory System in the Midlands Textile Industry* (Newton Abbot, 1967), p. 89.

two sons gradually withdrew from the silk industry in favour of cotton and banking.⁶⁴ In 1841, after some unwise business decisions, all the joint ventures went bankrupt which forced the partners to dispose of their entire private and commercial assets. This failure happened in spite of the large fortune that they had inherited from their fathers. This is therefore an example where the move away from the core silk business and an over-extension of funds proved to be critical for the proprietors. However, the silk connection was maintained as another John Ryle from Macclesfield emigrated to America to found the first successful silk manufacturing business in Paterson, New Jersey, in 1845.⁶⁵

The Brocklehurst family association with what became the largest silk manufacturing firm in the country began in the mid-eighteenth century and was passed down through the generations until the twentieth century. (A family tree for the Brocklehurst family is shown on page 40.) They originated from Kettlethulme but William Brocklehurst purchased land in Hurdsfield in 1729, which established the Macclesfield connection.⁶⁶ His son John Brocklehurst (I) joined the silk button firm of Acton & Street in 1745 and later became a partner with the Street brothers. This firm exported buttons as far afield as Moscow and expanded operations to include silk throwing later in the century. After the withdrawal of the Streets, the business was taken over by the Brocklehurst family with John Brocklehurst (II) handing over to his sons, John (III) and Thomas in 1812. From this time it became known as Messrs J. & T. Brocklehurst and went on to employ up to 8,000 hands at the height of its prosperity. A bank was also established in conjunction with the silk firm and was run by their brother William. John and Thomas were keen to maximise the potential of the company and actively sought new technology to improve productivity. Their extensive mills in Hurdsfield housed a range of powered machinery that enabled their workers to produce a variety of goods, some of which were exhibited at the 1851 Great Exhibition.⁶⁷

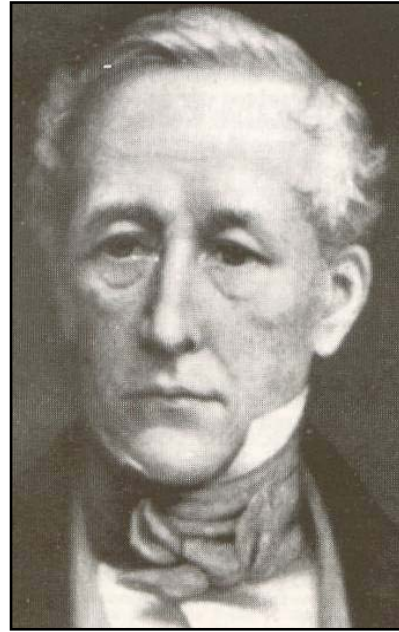
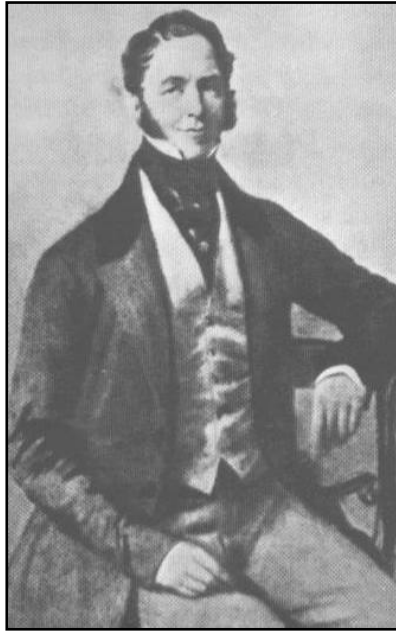
⁶⁴ British Parliamentary Papers, *First and Second Reports from the Select Committee on the Petitions of Ribbon Weavers with Minutes of Evidence, 1818* (Shannon, 1968), p. 63.

⁶⁵ R. D. Margrave, 'The Emigration of Silk Workers from England to the United States of America in the Nineteenth Century, with Special Reference to Coventry, Macclesfield, Paterson, New Jersey and South Manchester Connecticut', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of London, 1981), p. 50.

⁶⁶ J. P. Earwaker, *East Cheshire: Past and Present; or A History of the Hundred of Macclesfield in the County Palatine of Chester, Vol. 2* (London, 1870), p. 420.

⁶⁷ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 136.

Figure 1.4. Portraits of John (III) and Thomas Brocklehurst, proprietors of the largest English silk manufacturing firm in the nineteenth century. (Macclesfield Museums Trust)



Following John (III) and Thomas's retirement, their descendants took control of the silk manufacturing firm throughout the rest of the nineteenth century. Although the brothers (with the exception of William) had remained in Macclesfield, their children moved out to country estates. For example, Thomas Unett Brocklehurst bought Henbury Hall, which had been the residence of John Ryle (II) until his bankruptcy. By the 1920s, there were no longer any family members wishing to enter into the business and it was merged with William Whiston's silk dyeing firm to form Brocklehurst Whiston Amalgamated. The profitability of the venture is illustrated by the fact that John (III) left assets worth £800,000 to his heirs in 1870 and William B. Brocklehurst left £1,081,425 in his will of 1930.⁶⁸ Therefore the firm provided considerable dividends for the Brocklehurst family over a prolonged period of time and it was one of the select silk companies that were able to remain profitable into the twentieth century.

Other families where succeeding generations ran silk businesses during the nineteenth century included the Jacksons, Smales and Thorps. An early example of family involvement and the progression of manufacturers from humble beginnings was the Pearson family in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. George Pearson, an illiterate tailor, and his brother James were described as 'successful pioneers of this industry' in the eighteenth century and George's two sons subsequently ran their large

⁶⁸ C.R.O., MF 91/15, Will of John Brocklehurst (1870); *M.C.H.*, 4 January 1930, p. 8.

Sunderland Street Mill as a profitable concern. The revenue from this business enabled George (I)'s grandson, Samuel Pearson, to purchase Buglawton Hall in the 1820s and to become a country gentleman on retirement.⁶⁹

James Kershaw was another illustration of how some determined men were able to work their way up the social scale through the silk business. He worked as a silk weaver in



Figure 1.5. James Kershaw in his mayoral regalia, 1889. (Macclesfield Museums Trust)

Lancashire, but through attendance at evening classes progressed to become a designer. He moved to Macclesfield in 1864 to take up a position at Pickford Street Mills and became manager when the mills were taken over by a London firm. Messrs Baker, Tucker & Co. expanded to employ 1,200 people by 1871, but recession caused the company to close its operations. Kershaw and John Swindells decided to start their own business concentrating on innovative and attractive styles to appeal to customers.⁷⁰ The firm expanded significantly and they employed 400 workers by 1889. The partnership was then dissolved when Swindells took over his father's silk throwing firm, leaving Kershaw in sole charge.⁷¹ By the time of his

death in 1908, James Kershaw had given away large sums of money to many Macclesfield institutions, but still left £93,991 to his relatives.⁷²

These examples show how certain manufacturers were able to capitalise on the Macclesfield silk industry and to accrue considerable rewards, while others fell prey to the difficulties the trade presented. The negative side of the coin is illustrated by the fact that of the 71 silk mills in the town in 1832, 30 were unoccupied due to the depression in trade.⁷³ Multiple mill occupancy was a common practice for smaller silk firms, so this represents a failure rate of at least 40 per cent.

⁶⁹ *M.C.H.*, 4 November 1871, p. 5.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 4 April 1908, p. 8.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 14 November 1896, p. 5.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 30 May 1908, p. 5.

⁷³ B.P.P., *Report from the Select Committee, 1831-1832*, p. 780.

Even for those working in profitable firms, the nature of the silk trade meant that manufacturers had to find ways in which to cut costs during trade depression, which usually resulted in hardship for the workers and their dependants. The measures utilised by employers to keep their companies solvent included widespread lay-offs for employees, decreases in working time, wage reductions and sending weaving out to country areas where lower rates prevailed. This meant that the relationship of the silk manufacturers with their workers was occasionally tempestuous, with strikes and unrest following unpopular moves such as wage decreases. For example, the 1829 strike resulted in widespread damage and the breakage of many Brocklehurst factory windows, in protest at the company policy of paying weavers 30 per cent below the prevailing list price in the town.⁷⁴ Inevitably there were differences in attitudes between silk manufacturers, with some gaining reputations as good employers and others less so. However, they all adhered to the prevailing market conditions of comparatively low wages, which meant that their workers were often forced into destitution as a direct result of the business decisions they made.

Certain silk manufacturers were able to use their status as successful businessmen to join professional men and representatives of local county families in an élite body that dominated the town during the silk industry's phase of prominence. For example, six members of the Brocklehurst family acted as mayor in the nineteenth century and three served as Members of Parliament in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The members of this group were active in political, social and charitable circles and were able to influence the town's development during this period. The emergence of this élite, and its effect on Macclesfield, is explored in greater detail in Steven Ainscough's thesis, which focuses on their role between 1832 and 1918.⁷⁵

The Macclesfield silk manufacturers were therefore a diverse group of people who shared certain skills and knowledge that enabled them to launch their businesses. There were a number of manufacturers who were able to prosper, despite the difficulties of producing a luxury commodity, and amassed significant fortunes during their careers. This success meant that a proportion of silk manufacturers were able to form a large section of the town's ruling élite during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

⁷⁴ K. Austin, *Troubled Times: Macclesfield, 1790-1870* (Leek, 2001), p. 5.

⁷⁵ S. Ainscough, 'Élites in Macclesfield, 1832-1918', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Liverpool, 2003).

Charitable Work and the Role of the Industrial Magnates

The growth of wealthy industrialists in Macclesfield was mirrored nationally in a variety of businesses including other textiles, brewing and confectionery. These entrepreneurs joined other landowners and professional men in an increasingly important stratum in society that was able to exert considerable influence on the ways in which many urban areas developed during the nineteenth century. An integral part of this process was the establishment of a network of charitable organisations to service industrialising towns and cities.

Charitable work has always played an important part within English society, although the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw its horizons expand significantly. The traditional concept of charity implied certain selfless obligations for religious followers, including benevolence to one's neighbours and acts of charity for the poor.⁷⁶ This bias was reflected in the fact that 60.6 per cent of bequests left between 1480 and 1490 were of a directly religious nature.⁷⁷ Following the Reformation, charitable activity took on a more humanistic focus, but religious influences have continued to be closely entwined with its development to the present day.⁷⁸ In current usage, the term charity is often used interchangeably with the more secular philanthropy and both versions will be used in the same manner throughout this thesis.

The most common form of charitable donation had always been an endowment, where money was invested to provide an annual income and was overseen by appointed trustees. These bequests were left for such diverse objects as the relief of poverty, the building of almshouses, the maintenance of clergy, new church building or the establishment of schools. The donors came from a variety of backgrounds including the gentry, merchants, tradesmen and the clergy. All this activity, which had been stimulated by the 1601 Statute of Charitable Uses, meant that by the end of the seventeenth century there was a strong precedent for wealthy inhabitants to consider their social responsibility to the poor and to distribute any excess funds accordingly on their demise.⁷⁹ As a result, donors left a number of endowed charities designed to improve conditions and facilities in their locality or birthplace. The wealth created within ancient and historically important towns and cities, such as Bristol and London, meant that they had amassed a rich network of endowed

⁷⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. 3* (Oxford, 1989), p. 43.

⁷⁷ M. J. Daunton, *Progress and Poverty: An Economic and Social History of Britain, 1700-1850* (Oxford, 1995), p. 468.

⁷⁸ W. K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660: A Study of the Changing Pattern of English Social Aspirations* (London, 1959), p. 297.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

charities and this contrasted with lesser provision in many smaller provincial towns.⁸⁰ Many of these towns became industrial centres and therefore did not have the benefit of an existing system of charitable institutions.

The eighteenth century saw the organisational structure of joint stock companies replicated in new forms of charitable institution. This was particularly evident in the foundation of charity schools and hospitals, which gave subscribers the opportunity to take an active part in their management. The fact that these organisations were generally open to public scrutiny also removed much of the opportunity for corruption or poor administration, which had become synonymous with many endowed foundations. This type of charity gained in popularity and became the most common form of philanthropic organisation into the nineteenth century. By 1806, the extent of charitable giving is illustrated by the fact that the annual charitable income from all sources in England and Wales was estimated at nearly £4 million.⁸¹ This network of provision operated in parallel with the Poor Law, which provided basic support for the destitute and was funded by rates levied on inhabitants.

The Industrial Revolution brought many changes to the charitable arena, particularly in the expansion of its role to accommodate the problems of rapid urbanisation and the part that industrialists played in the founding, management and support of new charities. Local charitable initiatives often provided the first tentative steps towards establishing permanent institutions for inhabitants who had been attracted by factory employment to the growing towns and cities. Some enlightened businessmen took the decision to provide their own complete range of facilities and housing in factory villages, but the philanthropic endeavours of most industrialists took place within the confines of a town or city and accompanied their participation in the field of public service. This meant that throughout the nineteenth century there were groups of wealthy middle-class manufacturers who could wield considerable power in their communities, alongside representatives from other traditionally respected backgrounds.

The gradual accumulation of wealth by businessmen, together with a rise in living standards and the Victorian enthusiasm for charity, meant that philanthropic institutions were often able to attract significant surplus income from entrepreneurs. The scale of the charitable sector in the nineteenth century is illustrated by the fact that in the late 1860s it

⁸⁰ G. Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain, 1851-1875* (St Albans, 1971), p. 155.

⁸¹ *Treatise on Indigence* (London, 1806), p. 148, cited in D. Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660-1960* (Cambridge, MA, 1964), p. 101.

was estimated that charitable expenditure in London alone was running between £5.5 million and £7 million annually.⁸² In comparison, the 1870 figure for national Poor Law expenditure was £7.7 million, demonstrating how private voluntary philanthropy appeared to dwarf its state counterpart.⁸³ The high priority assigned by most Victorians to charity in their daily life is demonstrated by the fact that by the 1890s it had become the second largest item of middle-class household expenditure after food.⁸⁴ However, this figure only accounts for charitable expenditure and does not include the additional value of the time given by family members to charitable bodies, which was often considerable.

Charities were established at both a national and local level, with the majority of the revenue being utilised within Britain. There were also appeals for certain overseas causes, such as the Indian Famines and religious missions. Most local charities attracted some funding from outside their immediate neighbourhood, especially in response to widespread publicity such as newspaper coverage, but the majority of the funding for local projects still tended to originate from the area in which the charity was to operate. There were exceptions to this precedent, such as the Cotton Famine during the 1860s when the scale of the unemployment experienced by the Lancashire cotton workers necessitated greater action than local sources could provide. As a result, the Central Executive Relief Committee was formed to oversee the distribution of aid from the London Mansion House Fund, the Mayor of Manchester's local funds and its own fundraising income throughout the affected districts.⁸⁵

As the number of charities continued to grow rapidly throughout the nineteenth century, there was considerable scope for the overlapping of functions between organisations and some inefficiency. The first attempt at some form of national regulation was the Charitable Donations Registration Act of 1812. Subsequent legislation was implemented and the 1853 Charitable Trusts Act led to the foundation of a permanent Charity Commission. This body tackled the field of endowed charities and its commissioners were gradually given increasing powers to improve the efficiency of this type of foundation.⁸⁶

⁸² T. Hawksley, *The Charities of London* (London, 1869), cited in Owen, *English Philanthropy*, p. 218.

⁸³ A. J. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-century England* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 67.

⁸⁴ *Statistics of Middle-class Expenditure*, British Library of Political and Economic Science, Pamphlet HD6/D267, 1896, cited in F. K. Prochaska, 'Philanthropy' in F. M. L. Thompson (Ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950, Vol. 3, Social Agencies and Institutions* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 358.

⁸⁵ N. Longmate, *The Hungry Mills* (London, 1978), p. 137.

⁸⁶ Owen, *English Philanthropy*, p. 202.

The Charity Organisation Society was founded in 1869 to provide an overall framework in which subscriber-based charities could operate. This action followed the lead of towns such as Liverpool, whose Central Relief Society pre-dated the London organisation by six years.⁸⁷ The C.O.S. offered some semblance of coherence for the work of charitable institutions and sought to channel efforts to wherever they were needed most. It aimed to discourage indiscriminate giving, to promote the ideals of self-help, to investigate thoroughly the prospective recipient's personal circumstances and thus to administer aid solely to the deserving poor.⁸⁸ The Society's original focus was the capital, but branches were later formed in many larger towns and its ideas permeated the whole field of charity in the late nineteenth century.

The form of support offered to charities by industrial magnates included financial contributions of varying sizes, the holding of an honorary position or active involvement as an officer. For those who did take part in the management of charitable institutions, there were varying levels of commitment required. For example, hospital admissions committees usually met weekly and their members were often expected to serve on the range of other committees necessary to operate a large institution. Other organisations were less demanding of their management and the majority met on a monthly basis.⁸⁹ Their dedication to a particular cause was dependent on a number of variables, such as personal preferences, time constraints and the urgency of the situation. In most cases, the female members of their immediate families were also mobilised to assist with associated activities, including fundraising events and visiting duties. Their efforts added substantially to the resources available to individual charities and were often critical to the chances of success.

Early industrialists who established their own self-contained communities included the cotton manufacturers Robert Owen at New Lanark and Samuel Greg at Styal. Their example was followed in the nineteenth century by individuals such as Titus Salt at Saltaire, the Cadbury family at Bournville and William Lever at Port Sunlight. They wanted to attract workers for their factories, which were often established in relatively remote areas, by offering accommodation and facilities superior to those available in the towns. Robert Owen's policy at New Lanark was to see 'whether the misery in which man

⁸⁷ M. Simey, *Charity Rediscovered: A Study of Philanthropic Effort in Nineteenth-century Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1992), p. 92.

⁸⁸ R. Humphreys, *Poor Relief and Charity, 1869-1945: The London Charity Organization Society* (Basingstoke, 2001), p. 1.

⁸⁹ P. Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1798* (Oxford, 1991), p. 497.

had been and was surrounded, from his birth to his death, could be changed into life of goodness and happiness by surrounding him through life with good and superior conditions only'.⁹⁰ He aimed to achieve this ideal by reducing working hours, improving factory conditions, providing education and creating a pleasant environment in which to live.

Likewise in Cheshire, Samuel Greg established his Quarry Bank Mill at Styal in 1784 and established a culture of good working conditions and security of employment. He took on parish apprentices as workers and gave them accommodation, a wholesome diet, medical services and a reasonably broad education.⁹¹ In the 1820s, the family expanded their housing stock in the village and continued to add good quality accommodation over the rest of the century, along with a range of religious and social amenities. Closer to Macclesfield, a further factory colony on the same paternalist lines was established in the 1830s at Lowerhouse Mill, Bollington by Samuel Greg junior. He passionately believed in promoting social harmony with his workers through social events and education. However, he focused on this aspect to such an extent that he sacrificed the company's profitability and his brother had to rescue the business.⁹² Bollington's proximity to Macclesfield meant that Samuel Greg junior also became involved with many Macclesfield institutions in the nineteenth century.

Other entrepreneurs whose factories were sited in existing settlements could channel their charitable efforts into improvements for the whole town's population. As a result, the direct benefits of such actions for their workforces were diluted, compared to the controlled environment of the factory villages. For example, the Strutt hosiery and cotton family was involved with most of the charitable institutions in Derby and provided the town with a range of facilities, such as the Arboretum and an art gallery/museum, which were accessible to all inhabitants and visitors. In addition, they were major benefactors at Belper, another of their mill sites, donating a church, public baths and public gardens to the town.⁹³ The example of Daniel Grant, a Manchester cotton manufacturer whose family business was established in the 1780s, shows the potential magnitude of personal philanthropy. Charles Dickens believed that Grant's papers showed that he had donated in

⁹⁰ R. Owen, *The Life of Robert Owen* (London, 1971, originally published in 1857), p. 60.

⁹¹ M. B. Rose, *The Gregs of Quarry Bank Mill: The Rise and Decline of a Family Firm, 1750-1914* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 107.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁹³ R. S. Fitton & A. P. Wadsworth, *The Strutts and the Arkwrights, 1758-1830: A Study of the Early Factory System* (Manchester, 1958), p. 187.

the region of £600,000 to charitable causes over his lifetime.⁹⁴ Although the veracity of this claim may be questionable, any sum approaching this figure still represents an immense outlay for this period.

The prevalence of wealthy industrialists within particular areas had an effect on the availability of funding for local charities. Where smaller business concerns predominated, for example in Sheffield where the steel industry was predominantly located in small workshops, there were fewer wealthy people to call upon during fundraising campaigns.⁹⁵ Conversely, the textile belt of Lancashire and West Yorkshire benefited from the number of people who had managed to make handsome profits from their trade and from the reasonably high degree of importance that particular individuals attached to charitable effort.⁹⁶ For example, Henry William Ripley, Titus Salt (in addition to his efforts at Saltaire) and John Rand were amongst a group of prominent Bradford manufacturers who assigned a generous proportion of their considerable wealth to most of the town's charitable causes. These included grammar schools, hospitals, churches and relief funds.⁹⁷

Therefore, the tradition of charity had been passed down through the generations as a Christian duty to help those in need. The emergence of wealthy manufacturers from the late eighteenth century meant that many followed the examples of the gentry and professional men in contributing time and money towards philanthropic institutions. Their participation was accompanied by significant changes in the structure, scope and principles of the numerous charities that evolved during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The charitable efforts of the industrialists tended to be concentrated in the vicinity of their factories so that their workforce could derive some benefits from the investment. As a result, the industrial growth of Macclesfield meant that there was a pool of successful businessmen who might be expected to support charitable efforts in the town, as part of their dual role as an employer and public figure.

⁹⁴ M. House, G. Storey & K. Tillotson (Eds), *The Letters of Charles Dickens, Vol. 3, 1842-1843* (Oxford, 1974), p. 216.

⁹⁵ C. Reid, 'Middle-class Values and Working-class Culture in Nineteenth-century Sheffield – The Pursuit of Respectability', in S. Pollard & C. Holmes (Eds), *Essays in the Economic and Social History of South Yorkshire* (Sheffield, 1976), p. 275.

⁹⁶ A. Howe, *The Cotton Masters, 1830-1860* (Oxford, 1984), p. 271.

⁹⁷ J. Reynolds, *The Great Paternalist: Titus Salt and the Growth of Nineteenth-century Bradford* (Bradford, 1983), p. 75.

Literature Review

Macclesfield

The sources available on the town of Macclesfield consist of a mixture of primary and secondary material. Original records are available for many of the institutions and these generally consist of minute books, annual reports, financial information and correspondence. Some of the voluntary organisations were later transferred into Borough Council control and are therefore included within their series of nineteenth-century minute books. These records, together with a few personal letters of the Brocklehurst family and a wide range of secondary sources, are available at the Cheshire Record Office in Chester (now part of Chester and Cheshire Archives). There is one surviving collection of family papers, kept at Sudeley Castle in Gloucestershire, that also relates to the Brocklehurst family. The Charity Commission in Liverpool holds files on a number of Macclesfield's endowed charities, which outline their objectives and operation. Most elementary schools had to submit preliminary statements to be eligible for grant aid and these documents, along with any endowment information, are available at the National Archives in Kew.

The *Macclesfield Courier and Herald* was the main newspaper covering the period and a detailed series of its articles on the public institutions of Macclesfield was also published in book format in 1888.⁹⁸ Some Cheshire trade directories have survived and give information on the town's main businesses and institutions at various timepoints. Macclesfield Silk Museum and Macclesfield Public Library both have extensive collections of secondary material on the town and its silk industry. The main reference works are the books by Stella Davies and Gail Malmgreen, which give a broad account of the development of the town, together with Keith Austin's study that concentrates on the Macclesfield silk workers.⁹⁹ This material is supplemented by books and pamphlets published on the history of various local institutions and the role of public figures.¹⁰⁰ Some journal articles have also been published on a range of subjects, such as the growth of Macclesfield and sanitary reform.¹⁰¹ In terms of theses, apart from Steven Ainscough's

⁹⁸ *A Walk Through the Public Institutions of Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, 1888).

⁹⁹ C. S. Davies, *A History of Macclesfield* (Manchester, 1961); G. Malmgreen, *Silk Town: Industry and Culture in Macclesfield, 1750-1835* (Hull, 1985); K. Austin, *Troubled Times: Macclesfield, 1790-1870* (Leek, 2001).

¹⁰⁰ M.P.L., *Historical Notes and Reflections to Celebrate the Building of Park Green Church, 1877-1977* (Macclesfield, 1977); *Pen Pictures of Macclesfield's Public Men of Today* (Macclesfield, 1907).

¹⁰¹ O. J. P. Bott, series of articles on the development of Macclesfield, *Cheshire History*, 18-21, 24, 1986-1989; P. McBride, 'The Politics of Sanitary Reform in Early Victorian Macclesfield', *Cheshire History*, 39, 1999, pp. 70-82.

study of élites, there is a decided concentration on different aspects of education in the town and other topics include Poor Law reform and the role of town councillors.¹⁰²

The limitations of the primary sources are that the institutional records vary considerably in their quantity and quality. Some institutions have relatively complete and detailed records while others have nothing surviving from this period. The earliest example of continuous records was the Macclesfield Preparative Meeting Minutes of the Society of Friends that run from 1694. There is some surviving documentation for institutions founded in the eighteenth century, such as Christ Church and Macclesfield Sunday School. Otherwise, the majority of the primary source material is from the nineteenth century. The religious organisations differed considerably in their record-keeping abilities and this is illustrated by the fact that Sunderland Street Wesleyan Chapel has reasonably complete records from 1814 (in addition to some eighteenth-century material) while St James's Church in Sutton has no primary sources.

The educational institutions fared better, with most permanent Sunday and day schools retaining managers' or teachers' minutes and some larger schools produced annual reports. Similarly, the secular education institutions chose to utilise annual reports and most of these have survived. The earlier public service institutions, such as the Dispensary and Relief Association, had newspaper coverage of their operations while the later Infirmary had its own annual reports. The progress of the public parks, museum and Baths were reported in the *Courier* and some commemorative pamphlets were produced. Once these institutions had transferred into municipal control, detailed minutes of meetings of their respective committees exist within the Borough Council series of records. In general, the amount of documentation increases throughout the time span and most of the large organisations have a reasonably consistent set of records from the 1850s.

The use of institutional records, and particularly annual reports that were designed for public consumption, do give an overly optimistic view of the individual organisation's achievements. Their primary aim was to attract subscribers and so glossed over the

¹⁰² S. Ainscough, 'Élites in Macclesfield, 1832-1918', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Liverpool, 2003); G. Longden, 'Further Education in Macclesfield, 1835-1945', unpublished M.Ed. thesis (University of Manchester, 1980); N. L. Pole, 'Elementary Education in Macclesfield, 1833-1918', unpublished M.A. thesis (University of Sheffield, 1975); P. McBride, 'Town Councillors and Police Commissioners in Early Victorian Macclesfield', unpublished M.A. thesis (Manchester Metropolitan University, 1998); G. A. Oliver, 'The Process of Poor Law Reform in the Macclesfield Union, 1834-1845', unpublished B.Ed. thesis (Manchester Polytechnic, 1981).

difficulties or failings experienced, in favour of lauding the organisation and its participants. In a similar vein, newspaper articles tended to heap praise upon those who donated large sums of money for charitable purposes and there was rarely any speculation apparent on the less altruistic reasons for their actions. The relative scarcity of surviving family correspondence means that it is difficult to get a personal perspective on many of the silk manufacturers' actions and there is therefore a reliance on the institutional records, despite their obvious bias. Likewise, the comparatively small amount of evidence available for philanthropic actions outside the main organisations has resulted in the focus on charitable institutions throughout this work. However, where such examples exist they have been used to supplement the main core of material.

Trade directories have been utilised to identify the names of the silk manufacturers, but they do present certain difficulties. For instance, with common family names it was often difficult to ascertain which individual was concerned with a particular charity. Where there is no supporting evidence positively to identify an individual as a silk manufacturer, this person has been omitted to aid accuracy. The terminology used to describe occupations means that there were a number of titles that covered different phases of silk manufacture, such as silk throwster and silk dyer. For the purposes of this thesis, any process undertaken in silk manufacture has been included under this umbrella term, along with silk merchants as most either had their own mills or strong manufacturing connections. Entrepreneurs with multiple business interests have also been included, on condition that they had some definite connection with silk manufacture. As a result, the occupation of silk manufacturer is used in its broadest sense throughout this work.

Charitable Work

The general literature available on charitable effort offers a range of perspectives on the subject. The material includes general narratives on philanthropic activity, the investigation of charity within the context of other major themes and a variety of studies exploring the development of particular urban areas. The first attempt to provide an account of national charitable development was made by B. Kirkman Gray in 1905.¹⁰³ He charted a natural progression from endowed to voluntary charities, followed by the increasing responsibility of the welfare state. W. K. Jordan's detailed description of English endowed charities between 1460 and 1660 was followed by David Owen's volume on English philanthropy from 1660 to 1960.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ B. Kirkman Gray, *A History of English Philanthropy from the Dissolution of the Monasteries to the Taking of the First Census* (London, 1967, originally published in 1905).

¹⁰⁴ Jordan, *Philanthropy in England*; Owen, *English Philanthropy*.

Both of these authors explored the extent of private charity and the way in which it evolved to tackle problems arising within a changing society. Owen's comprehensive study also covered themes such as the range of nineteenth-century charitable action, its lack of originality and the move towards more efficient methods of administering aid. He alluded to the difficulties involved in assigning motives for philanthropists' actions, but suggested that religion, medical considerations, civic pride and a degree of personal satisfaction were all important factors.

Brian Harrison and Frank Prochaska have produced a wide range of general material on the social effects of charity. Their work explored different aspects of philanthropy and emphasised its positive benefits for urban communities. Both authors considered that the prime motivation for participants was altruism, usually in the form of a genuine desire to improve conditions for the population, while acknowledging that there were many other factors to be borne in mind. For example, the evangelical movement was felt to exert a strong influence in the rapid escalation of new charitable foundations during the nineteenth century and Christian duty was a significant motive for involvement.¹⁰⁵ There has been much material written on the female side of charitable involvement and the important contribution that women made throughout the nineteenth century to these causes.¹⁰⁶ However, these organisations tended to be dominated by men and their role in the initiation and operation of such bodies has generally been covered in conjunction with other subject areas.

There have been a number of works that explore the relationship between the Poor Law and voluntary action in the provision of services for the needy.¹⁰⁷ There was considerable crossover between the two sectors, as many of the same people were Guardians of the Poor and held positions in charities.¹⁰⁸ The 1834 New Poor Law, together with most of the voluntary societies, emphasised the need for able-bodied individuals to take responsibility for their situation and to make every effort to improve their circumstances. Consequently the ethos of self-help was central to their combined efforts in tackling the problems caused

¹⁰⁵ B. Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1982); F. K. Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain* (London, 1988); Prochaska, 'Philanthropy'.

¹⁰⁶ F. K. Prochaska, 'Women in English Philanthropy, 1790-1830', *International Review of Social History*, 19, 1974, pp. 426-445; L. Davidoff & C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London, 1987).

¹⁰⁷ D. Fraser, *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976); R. Humphreys, *Sin, Organised Charity and the Poor Law in Victorian England* (London, 1995).

¹⁰⁸ N. McCord, 'The Poor Law and Philanthropy', in D. Fraser (Ed.), *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976).

by rapid urbanisation.¹⁰⁹ There are also a number of studies charting the progress of the welfare state that include nineteenth-century voluntary institutions as a subsidiary part of this process.¹¹⁰

Harold Perkin ascribed the social difficulties experienced by many urban areas to the 'abdication on the part of the governors'. The traditional relationship between the landed class and the poor, based on patronage and dependency, could not survive rapid urbanisation and he believed that the personal bond between rich and poor had been broken.¹¹¹ The introduction of subscriber-based charities was perceived as an impersonal approach to charity with little contact between donors and the objects of their contributions. These factors, together with the withdrawal to the suburbs by the increasingly affluent middle classes, were seen as exacerbating urban problems and causing a widening gulf between rich and poor.

Despite the limitations of the newer charitable structures, they were still collectively seen as a means by which the Victorian middle classes could bridge this divide and restore some personal contact within urban society. In areas where mass immigration had occurred town leaders saw voluntary organisations as a mechanism through which newcomers could develop ties with the town and join in the sense of civic pride generated by the addition of facilities. There was also a keen sense of one-upmanship between neighbouring towns vying for recognition of their superior set of institutions.¹¹² More recent research has established that many industrialists either had strong links with the landed classes, or were members themselves, which points towards greater continuity of leadership and a gradual assimilation of new members alongside existing landowners.¹¹³ Similarly, many factory owners continued to display paternalist attitudes in their management of their workers throughout the period and this implies that paternalism never totally disappeared from the charitable arena. These factors all limit the argument for Perkin's idea of a decisive break in patronage.¹¹⁴

¹⁰⁹ Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor*, p. 70.

¹¹⁰ D. Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State* (London, 1984); P. Thane, *Foundations of the Welfare State* (Harlow, 1996); K. Woodroffe, *From Charity to Social Work in England and the United States* (London, 1962).

¹¹¹ H. Perkin, *The Origins of Modern Society, 1780-1880* (London, 1969), p. 182.

¹¹² S. A. Caunce, 'Industrial Towns: Rivals or Partners?' *Urban History*, 30, 2003, p. 355.

¹¹³ S. Gunn, 'The Failure of the Victorian Middle Class: A Critique', in J. Wolff & J. Seed, *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-century Middle Class* (Manchester, 1988), p. 28; S. Nenadic, 'Businessmen, the Urban Middle Classes and the 'Dominance' of Manufacturers in Nineteenth-century Britain', *The Economic History Review*, 44, 1991, p. 82.

¹¹⁴ P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics* (London, 1980), p. 134.

The progression of a section of the middle classes to form part of a ruling élite within towns and cities has resulted in many studies examining this process. Participation in the affairs of charitable institutions formed an essential part of the public role of élite members within the community and is therefore covered by various authors as a subsidiary topic to political and power issues.¹¹⁵ Voluntary organisations were seen as unifying the religious and political divisions that characterised much of urban society, and provided a relatively neutral territory in which class formation could take place.¹¹⁶ The patronage of charities by respected citizens meant that they offered access to powerful people and gave an opportunity for potential candidates to demonstrate their suitability for public office. The organisations also provided a medium through which existing leaders could enhance their reputations and underline their superiority to those lower down the social scale.¹¹⁷

Social historians writing in the 1960s and 1970s examined the conflict between classes and saw charities as a mechanism used by the middle classes to pacify the working class.¹¹⁸ There were evident concerns about the threat of revolution, damage to property and crime, especially during the first half of the nineteenth century. The proponents of this social control theory believed that middle-class moral values could be imposed on the population through charitable institutions and that this action could lessen the risk of unrest. However, authors such as F. M. L. Thompson and Frank Prochaska have rejected this idea in favour of a shared set of values that was common to all classes of society and which encouraged people to capitalise on the opportunities offered to them by their superiors.¹¹⁹

Gramsci's concept of hegemony has been used to explain the process in which dominant leaders created a harmonious society through the imposition of respectable culture, leaving radicals isolated and unable to mount a significant challenge to authority.¹²⁰ Subsequently, R. J. Morris has proposed that voluntary societies, because of the disparate range of aims

¹¹⁵ J. Garrard, *Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns, 1830-1880* (Manchester, 1983); J. Smith, 'Urban Élites, c. 1830-1930 and Urban History', *Urban History*, 27, 2000, pp. 255-275; R. H. Trainor, 'Urban Élites in Victorian Britain', *Urban History Yearbook*, 1985, pp. 1-17.

¹¹⁶ R. J. Morris, 'Voluntary Societies and British Urban Élites, 1780-1850: An Analysis', *The Historical Journal*, 26, 1983, p. 110.

¹¹⁷ R. J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: The Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds, 1820-1850* (Manchester, 1990), p. 280; P. Shapely, *Charity and Power in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester, 2000).

¹¹⁸ A. P. Donajrodzki, *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1977), pp. 138-162; J. Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three Towns* (London, 1977).

¹¹⁹ F. M. L. Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', *The Economic History Review*, 34, 1981, pp. 189-208; Prochaska, 'Philanthropy', p. 370.

¹²⁰ M. Hewitt, *The Emergence of Stability in the Industrial City: Manchester, 1832-1867* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 5.

and functions they covered, were unable to provide complete hegemony. Likewise, he saw a two-way relationship between the middle and working-class participants within these organisations, rather than middle-class domination.¹²¹ The fact that class conflict was still evident in the latter half of the nineteenth century suggests that the process was incomplete, despite an improvement in class relations. The general dearth of evidence demonstrating working-class involvement within charitable organisations and the survival of many working-class traditions, also limits the argument for total social unity.¹²²

Sociological perspectives have been applied to the charitable field to explain the relationship between donors and recipients. The importance of the gift relationship to various cultures has been explored, such as the North American native *potlatch* ceremony, and social scientists have concluded that within such exchanges the gift implies an obligation on the part of both the donor and the receiver. It is the giver's duty to carry out a charitable action and they may derive some satisfaction from this act, while the receiver should either be expected to show gratitude or to return a similar favour in the future. The charitable act also confers status and prestige on the donor.¹²³ The application of this interpretation to certain modern situations has been criticised by Richard Titmuss in his study of blood donors, as the gift relationship in this context does not allow for a primarily altruistic deed in which there is no reciprocal action involved.¹²⁴ However, the gift relationship has also been used to explain the class interaction involved within charitable organisations. For example, Gareth Stedman Jones traced the development of the C.O.S. in London and proposed that it was founded as a direct result of the breakdown in the gift relationship. The practice of indiscriminate charity was believed to have encouraged the demoralisation of the poor and the deformation of the gift relationship, with a stratum of society expecting charitable handouts and failing to display the moral regeneration and gratitude expected by their superiors.¹²⁵

The general literature on charity criticised the limitations and inefficiency of the voluntary institutions and questioned whether their overall influence was beneficial. For example, philanthropy lends credence to the Marxist view that living standards for workers were depressed in the early nineteenth century because of industrialisation and that any surplus

¹²¹ Morris, *Class, Sect and Party*, p. 321.

¹²² J. Smith, 'Urban Elites', p. 268.

¹²³ M. Mauss (tr. I. Cunnison), *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (London, 1970), pp. 10-11.

¹²⁴ R. M. Titmuss, *The Gift Relationship: From Human Blood to Social Policy* (London, 1970), p. 237.

¹²⁵ G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1971), p. 251.

capital tended to go to the manufacturers. Many businessmen did subsequently divert some of this money towards charitable causes, but the limitations of these bodies meant that such assistance did not always reach the most needy and therefore did not represent a fair redistribution of wealth.¹²⁶ This situation was highlighted at the time by Engels who stated that philanthropists placed themselves 'before the world as mighty benefactors of humanity' only giving 'back to the plundered victims the hundredth part of what belongs to them!'¹²⁷ Another negative aspect was that the voluntary charities did not go far enough in terms of reforming their recipients and were therefore unable to effect real social change.¹²⁸ However, the general consensus of opinion is in favour of the positive aspects of these organisations and the contribution that they were able to make within urban communities.

There have been a number of studies written on the growth of charitable institutions within specific localities and these offer a variety of approaches. Most of this literature focuses on the larger British towns and cities such as Bristol, Liverpool and Manchester.¹²⁹ The scale of charitable growth within these conurbations means that there is inevitably a degree of selectivity involved in covering such organisations during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Relatively little research has been conducted on charity within smaller provincial industrial towns which, because of their more manageable size, can offer a more detailed view of philanthropic activity during this period.¹³⁰

As a result, this thesis will explore the development of the various charitable institutions in Macclesfield between 1750 and 1900, the period in which the silk industry dominated the town. It will examine the influence of the silk manufacturers on these organisations and evaluate, wherever possible, the motives that lay behind their commitment. This information will be used in comparison with evidence from other British towns and cities to see whether Macclesfield and its industrialists conformed to a national pattern in the field of charitable endeavour.

¹²⁶ B. Harrison, 'Philanthropy and the Victorians', *Victorian Studies*, 9, 1966, 9, p. 363.

¹²⁷ F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (London, 1987 originally published in 1844), p. 277.

¹²⁸ R. H. Bremner, *Giving: Charity and Philanthropy in History* (New Brunswick, 1994).

¹²⁹ M. Gorsky, 'Charity, Mutuality and Philanthropy: Voluntary Provision in Bristol, 1800-1870', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Bristol, 1995); M. Simey, *Charity Rediscovered*; P. Shapely, 'Voluntary Charities in Nineteenth Century Manchester: Organisational Structure, Social Status and Leadership', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Manchester Metropolitan University, 1994).

¹³⁰ M. Whittle, 'Philanthropy in Preston: The Changing Face of Charity in a Nineteenth Century Provincial Town', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Lancaster, 1990).

Map 1.1. C.R.O., PM 3/2, Emmanuel Bowen, Bowles's New Medium Map of Cheshire (London, 1785).

Figure 1.6. Macclesfield garret houses, Little Street Mill and Chester Road Mill.
(Calladine & Fricker, *East Cheshire Textile Mills*, pp. 55-56, 49.)

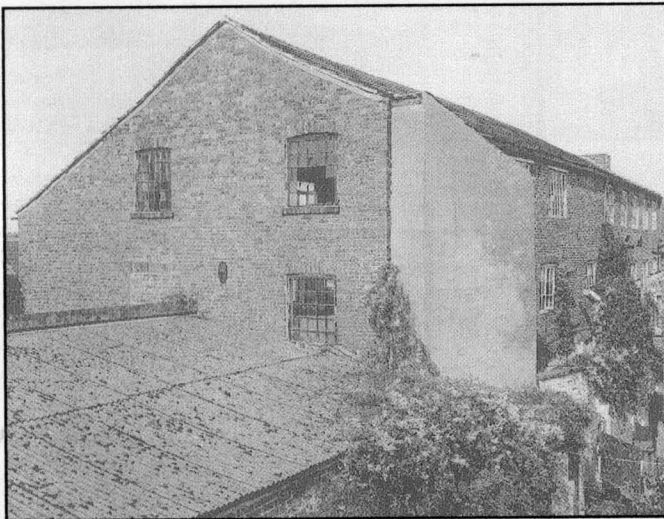


Figure 1.7. Garret silk weaver (the lady on the left is preparing quills of silk for use in weaving) and the process of silk doubling.
(Macclesfield Museums Trust)

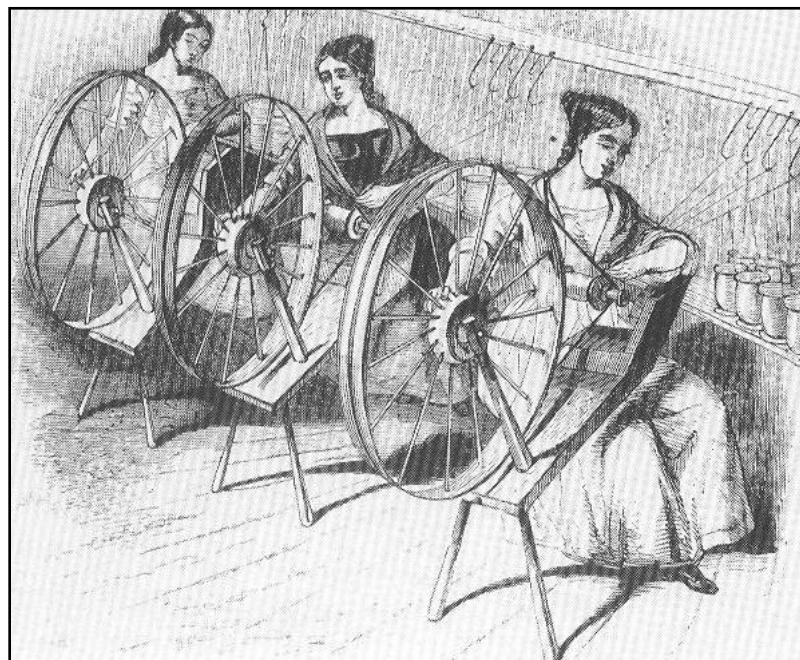
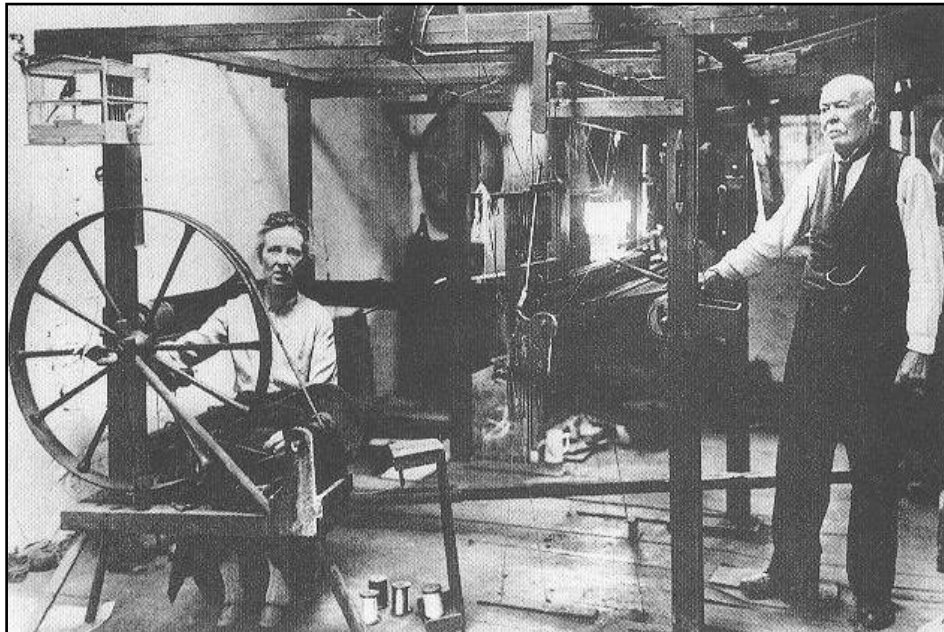


Figure 1.8. Silk winding, spinning and throwing machines.
(Macclesfield Museums Trust)

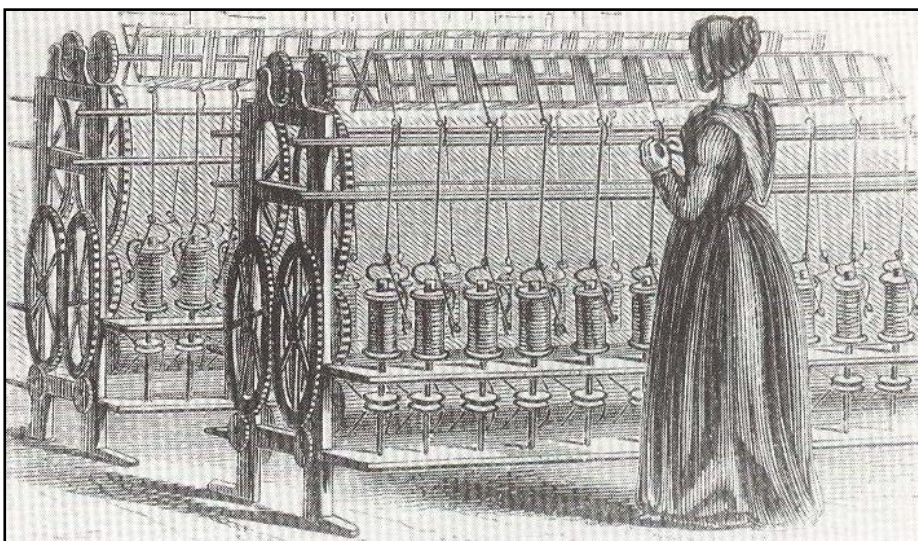
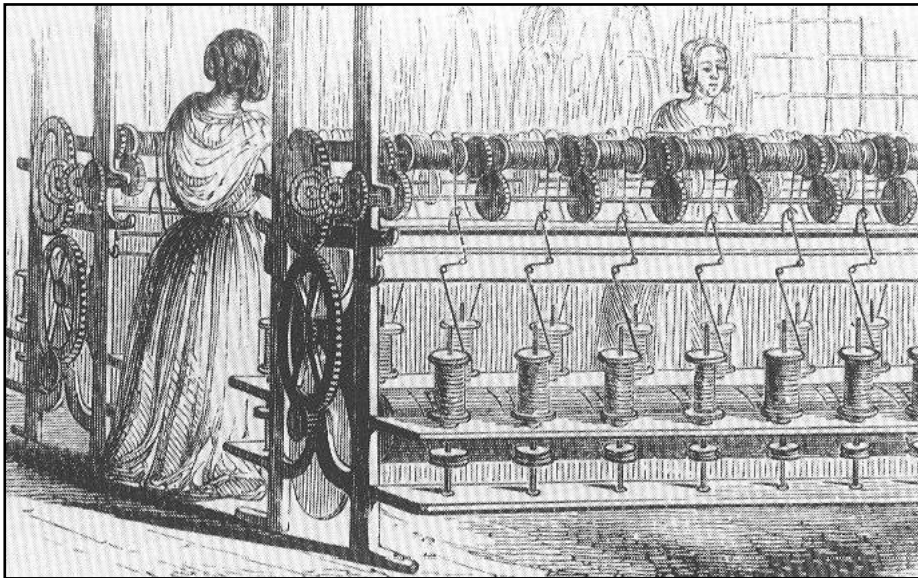
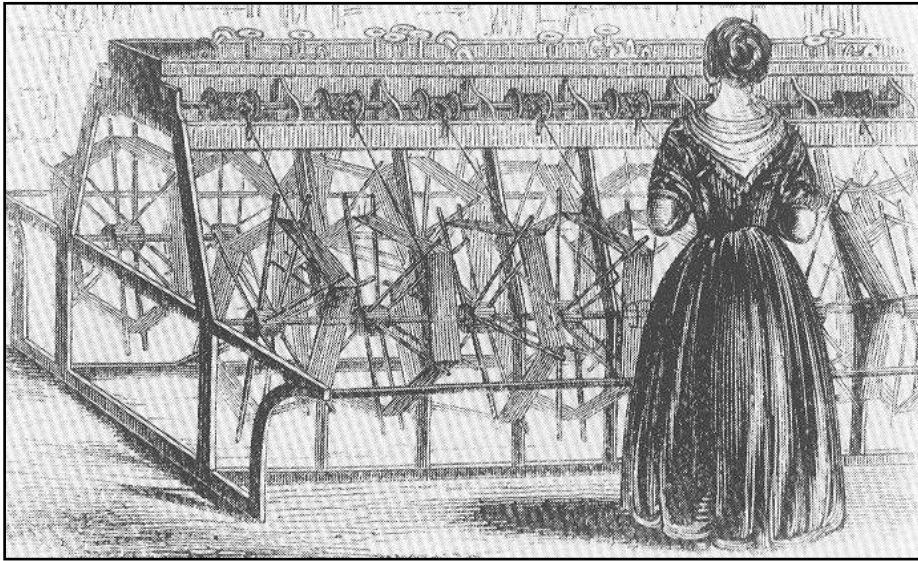
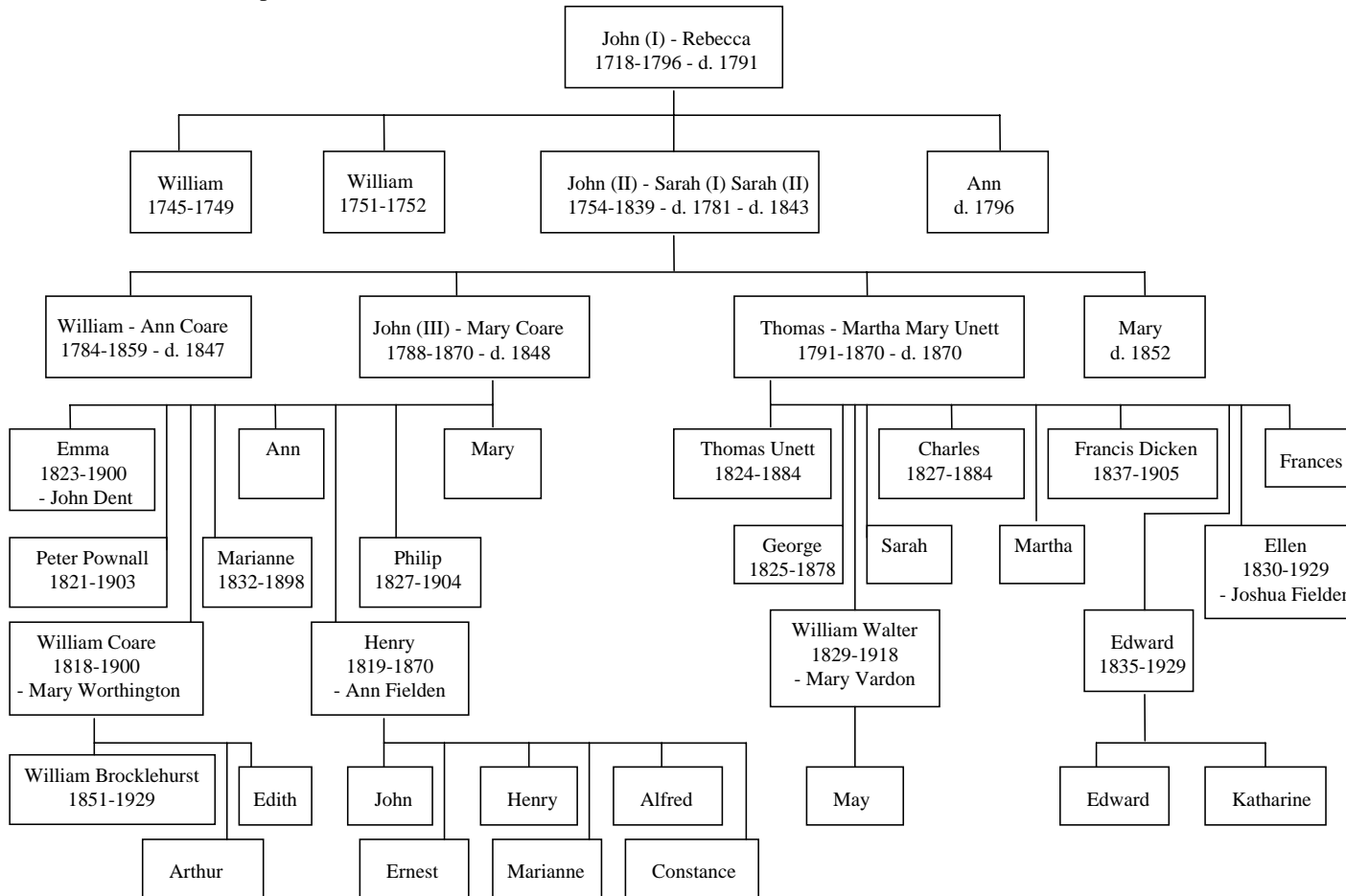


Figure 1.9. Brocklehurst family tree.
 (based on Earwaker, *East Cheshire*, Vol. 2, p. 423.)



CHAPTER TWO

Religious Institutions and the Influence of the Silk Manufacturers

Introduction

This chapter will investigate the development of the religious institutions in Macclesfield from the perspective of the silk manufacturers' involvement. Their contribution will be compared to supporters from other occupational groups, and any factors to affect the institutions outside the control of the silk manufacturers will also be considered. The underlying reasons for the silk manufacturers' support will then be examined, together with an evaluation of how far the institutions were able to meet the expectations of their founders. Finally, Macclesfield's experiences will be compared to other industrial towns to see if the support of its entrepreneurs was characteristic of businessmen in similar settlements.

As Macclesfield developed into an industrial centre, the various religious denominations jostled to establish places of worship for the expanding population. The Church of England was the dominant force in religious provision throughout much of the eighteenth century alongside the older dissenting groups, such as the Quakers and Presbyterians. The Chester Diocese was responsible for the Anglican efforts in Cheshire and its vast administrative area, together with the national problems of insufficient church provision, pluralism and non-residence of clergy, meant that it was poorly equipped to face the threat posed by the new dissenting movements.¹

The parish church for Macclesfield in the mid-eighteenth century was St Peter's in Prestbury, although its own St Michael's Church gradually gained independence throughout this period. Following the Toleration Act of 1689, which gave Dissenters the freedom to worship in their own chapels, a Presbyterian chapel in Macclesfield's King Edward Street was established in 1690. This was a venue where people with most non-evangelical beliefs could worship and, in common with most other Presbyterian congregations, it converted to Unitarianism in the 1770s.² The Society of Friends built their Mill Street Meeting House in 1705 to offer a more individual and spiritual form of religion under the direct leadership of God.³ Both these congregations were relatively small in size and were to remain unaffected by the evangelical ideas that came to

¹ L. E. Elliott-Binns, *Religion in the Victorian Era* (London, 1964), p. 40.

² R. Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760-1860* (London, 1998), p. 4.

³ O. Chadwick, *The Victorian Church: Part 1, 1829-1859* (London, 1971), p. 422.

prominence during the eighteenth century. (A complete list of Macclesfield's religious institutions, their commencement dates and affiliations is included on pages 105-106, while Appendix 1 on page 269 is a map showing the location of the main institutions in Macclesfield.)

The evangelical movement that led to Methodism was evident in Cheshire by the 1740s. John Wesley preached in neighbouring Knutsford in 1738, and the county became a



Figure 2.1. Sunderland Street Chapel. The first permanent place of worship for Methodists in Macclesfield. (A. Calladine & J. Fricker, *East Cheshire Textile Mills* (London, 1993), p. 148.)

regular fixture on his itinerary from 1745.⁴ This movement, led by Wesley and George Whitefield, aimed to disseminate the message of the Gospel by means of itinerant preachers and open-air meetings. Significant numbers of people were attracted to Methodism through the enthusiasm of the preachers and the relatively simple nature of its practice. Stockport gained its first chapel in 1759, followed by Chester in 1765. Having been part of the York, Cheshire and then Chester circuits, Macclesfield became the head of its own circuit in 1770 and this had 1,380

members by 1783.⁵ From 1795, Methodism became a denomination distinct from the Church of England and local societies were permitted to hold services in direct competition with the Established Church.⁶ The first Wesleyan chapel in Macclesfield was opened in 1779 on Sunderland Street and it had to be enlarged twice before the end of the century to accommodate its followers.

The only other Anglican place of worship to be built in the eighteenth century was Christ Church, which was a gift from Charles Roe and opened in 1775. The Independents (or Congregationalists as they were otherwise known) were also active in Macclesfield in the eighteenth century. They believed in the right of each congregation to act independently from the Established Church and the Toleration Act allowed these Calvinist congregations the freedom to exist alongside the Presbyterians.⁷ The Macclesfield Independents seceded

⁴ B. E. Harris (Ed.), *A History of the County of Chester, Vol. 3* (Oxford, 1980), p. 109.

⁵ C. S. Davies, *A History of Macclesfield* (Manchester, 1961), p. 329.

⁶ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, p. 370.

⁷ F. L. Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford, 1958), p. 329.

from King Edward Street Chapel when it became Unitarian in 1772 and opened their own Townley Street Chapel in March 1788.⁸

The Wesleyans were primarily responsible for the foundation of the nondenominational Macclesfield (or Large) Sunday School in 1796, which was the first permanent educational institution in Macclesfield for poor children. The Sunday school movement had gained in popularity because of the publicity surrounding Robert Raikes's Sunday school in Gloucester in the 1780s. He was keen that children could experience religious education on the Sabbath, instead of recreational activities, and this idea met with approval from most quarters.⁹ By 1789 there were approximately 25 Sunday schools in Cheshire, concentrated in urban areas, of which the most famous was the nondenominational Stockport Sunday School founded in 1784.¹⁰ The Macclesfield version proved immediately popular and was the forerunner of the many Sunday and day schools that followed.

The first half of the nineteenth century saw a dramatic expansion in the establishment of new places of worship in Macclesfield. The failure of Anglicanism to meet the needs of expanding urban populations, and the fear of revolution, galvanised Parliament into action. In addition to annual grants of £100,000 from 1809, £1 million was allocated in 1818 and a further half million in 1824 to build churches in urban areas. Furthermore, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners were appointed to oversee the distribution of money to ensure that it was directed to the most needy areas.¹¹ Clergymen were expected to play a key role in their parish through pastoral and educational work and this contrasted with the passivity of some eighteenth century ecclesiastics. In addition, evangelicalism had permeated the Church of England and there were many clergymen keen to attract worshippers and to restore Anglicanism to its former position of authority. A concerted church building programme started to address the deficiencies in provision in urban areas, but there was a time delay for this new investment to reach all districts. Therefore, in terms of density the Established Church was over 50 per cent weaker in 1830 than it had been a hundred years earlier.¹²

⁸ *A Walk Through the Public Institutions of Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, 1888), p. 181.

⁹ I. Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London, 1976), p. 44.

¹⁰ G. P. Higgins, 'Anglican Provision of Elementary Education in Cheshire During the Voluntary Period, c. 1780-1870', unpublished M.Phil. thesis (University of Liverpool, 1985), p. 66.

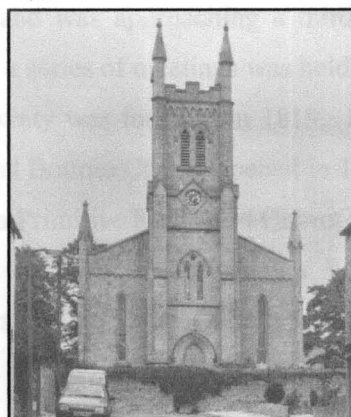
¹¹ K. S. Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England* (London, 1964), p. 7.

¹² A. D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change, 1740-1914* (London, 1976), p. 29.

At this time, the three Macclesfield churches could only accommodate 13 percent of the population, compared to the town's 11 nonconformist chapels, which had attracted a membership of around 3,000 people (12.97 per cent).¹³ In Macclesfield, apart from St George's Church (which was taken over from the Independents) the first of the new Anglican churches to be built was Holy Trinity, which was completed in 1839. A further six churches were in existence by the time of the Ecclesiastical Census in 1851, showing how the Church of England was keen to redress the balance in its favour. The Wesleyans and the Independents continued to expand their efforts with a further two chapels each and the latter was aided by the formation of the Cheshire Congregational Union in 1806 to provide some organisational structure for the county's Independents.¹⁴

Figure 2.2. St George's Church, Sutton and Holy Trinity Church, Hurdsfield. The architecture of St George's reflects its early history as an Independent chapel, while Holy Trinity is a typical Anglican preaching church of the 1840s. (Calladine & Fricker, *East Cheshire Textile Mills*, p. 150.)

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A number of groups left the Wesleyan fold following the death of John Wesley. The first of these secessions took place in 1796 when Alexander Kilham was expelled from the denomination. His controversial views centred on the role of lay members and the Methodist New Connexion was founded to allow them to play a more active part in chapel life.¹⁵ A small proportion of Wesleyans joined this sect and its growth was comparatively slow. In Cheshire, a preacher was assigned in 1797 to cover the Manchester, Stockport and Macclesfield areas, with a further one for Chester in the west of the county. Macclesfield gained its own circuit in 1814 and by 1820 the Stockport, Macclesfield and

¹³ D. Whomsley, *Anglican Churches in the Macclesfield Area* (Macclesfield, 1993), p. 45; J. Laughton, *The Church in the Market Place: A History of the Church of St Michael and All Angels in Macclesfield, c. 1220-1901* (Macclesfield, 2003), p. 93.
¹⁴ S. H. Mayor, *Cheshire Congregationalism: A Brief History* (n.p., 1957), p. 19.
¹⁵ J. A. Vickers (Ed.), *A Dictionary of Methodism in Britain and Ireland* (Peterborough, 2000), p. 387.

Chester circuits numbered 25 societies with a total membership of over 700 people.¹⁶ The first Macclesfield Methodist New Connexion chapel was opened in 1806 in Parsonage Street. The congregation later transferred to Park Street Chapel and established the Fence School Chapel in Hurdsfield in 1841.

The English Primitive Methodism movement began in response to the visit of an American, Lorenzo Dow, to Staffordshire in 1800. He advocated the use of open-air meetings to attract support and his largest camp meeting was held in 1807 when thousands congregated on Mow Cop, near Congleton.¹⁷ The Wesleyans distanced themselves from these activities and Hugh Bourne, the main leader of the Staffordshire revival, was expelled in 1808, followed by William Clowes in 1810. The first Primitive Methodist chapel was erected in Tunstall in 1812 and national membership grew dramatically from 7,842 in 1820, to 29,472 three years later, predominantly in the north of the country.¹⁸ The Primitive Methodists' working-class appeal was illustrated by the fact that their numbers were larger than any of the other Methodist sects and was approaching a third of the Wesleyan total by 1851.¹⁹ After the Mow Cop event, a series of meetings was held around Macclesfield and the town's Primitive Methodist Society was founded in 1819. In 1830 the followers built their own chapel in Beech Lane and Bourne Chapel opened in 1840 for the Sutton district. Macclesfield became the head of a Primitive Methodist Circuit in 1833 and total Cheshire membership had reached 4,000 by 1840.²⁰ The smaller Wesleyan Methodist Association seceded from the Wesleyans in 1835 and Church Street West Chapel was its only representative in Macclesfield.

The other denominations to build Macclesfield chapels in the first half of the nineteenth century were the Catholics and the Baptists, but there was also a transient congregation of the Church of the Latter Day Saints at Parsonage Street Chapel from 1836. The Catholics were excluded from the Toleration Act of 1689, so they were forced to continue worshipping in secret. In 1790 there were around 30 Catholics in the Macclesfield area but, due to the arrival of Irish silk weavers, this total had increased to around 90 by the end of the century.²¹ As a result, they met in temporary accommodation until the congregation

¹⁶ Harris, *A History of the County of Chester*, p. 111.

¹⁷ H. McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 1984), p. 26.

¹⁸ P. Stignant, 'Wesleyan Methodism and Working-class Radicalism in the North, 1792-1821', *Northern History*, 6, 1970, p. 116.

¹⁹ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, p. 386.

²⁰ D. Whomsley, *Methodism in Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, 1998), p. 34.

²¹ G. Malmgreen, *Silk Town: Industry and Culture in Macclesfield, 1750-1835* (Hull, 1985), p. 159.

had amassed enough money to build St Michael's Chapel on Chester Road in 1811. This plain building consisted of a school on the ground floor and the chapel above it, possibly to minimise the chance of persecution.²² The passing of the 1829 Catholic Emancipation Act allowed the denomination more freedom to worship openly and fundraising started in the 1830s to build a larger church in Macclesfield. Concurrently, gradual improvements were made in the efficiency of the Cheshire Catholic organisation and increased funding for new churches became available.²³ The resulting St Alban's Church was built alongside the chapel in 1841 and the older building became a school.

The modern Baptist movement is believed to have originated from the actions of John Smyth of Amsterdam who, in 1609, established the practice of baptising committed Protestant members in place of the traditional infant baptism. His followers brought the movement back to England and founded the first Baptist church in 1612. Two branches evolved; the General Baptists who were Arminian in influence (believing that everyone could attain salvation) and the Particular Baptists who were more Calvinist and emphasised the importance of predestination.²⁴ During the seventeenth century, Particular and General Baptists became established at various Cheshire locations and Bollington was the closest to Macclesfield.²⁵ Revd W. Marshall from Wigan was the initiator of the Macclesfield General Baptist movement from the end of the eighteenth century and his congregation grew sufficiently to buy Bethel Chapel, situated on the Common, in 1822.

The result of all this activity meant that by the Ecclesiastical Census of 1851, the Church of England had seven churches in Macclesfield providing 46.12 per cent of the accommodation, compared to the nonconformists' 20 places of worship, with a 53.88 per cent share.²⁶ This compares to the national situation where the Anglican Church had 61.98 per cent of the total sittings, followed by the combined Methodist figure of 25.57 per cent and the Independents with 12.44 per cent.²⁷ Therefore Macclesfield (in common with other northern industrial towns such as Bradford, Halifax and Leeds) had a significantly higher nonconformist presence than the national average.²⁸ This nonconformist dominance was to be further accentuated by 1872, as 66 per cent of the 16,918 sittings in the Borough of Macclesfield were outside the Church of England.²⁹

²² *Ibid.*, p. 158.

²³ Harris, *A History of the County of Chester*, p. 94.

²⁴ Cross, *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, p. 154.

²⁵ Harris, *A History of the County of Chester*, p. 107.

²⁶ *M.C.H.*, 14 December 1872, p. 5.

²⁷ Elliott-Binns, *Religion in the Victorian Era*, p. 77.

²⁸ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, p. 368.

²⁹ *M.C.H.*, 14 December 1872, p. 5.

A fundamental feature of most of the churches and chapels founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth century was their educational institutions. The evangelical emphasis on education for the working classes resulted in the dramatic expansion of Sunday schools. By 1818, there were 450,000 children attending Sunday schools nationally and this number increased to 2.5 million by 1850.³⁰ Some of these Sunday schools also offered day schooling and this was stimulated by the availability of government funding for this purpose.

In 1833, the Treasury started to provide an annual grant of £20,000 towards the building and operation of day schools.³¹ The British and Foreign Schools Society (for nonconformist schools) and the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church (for Anglican schools) were involved with the establishment of their respective day schools and they were made responsible for allocating the state funding. The money was divided on the basis of how much the societies were able to raise through their own means and consequently the wealthier Anglicans tended to attract the lion's share of the funding. Alarmed at the prospect of Anglican domination of elementary education, the nonconformists became increasingly active in establishing their own day schools, particularly following the controversy surrounding Graham's Factory Bill of 1843. This proposed the establishment of factory schools under the control of the Anglican Church and caused an outcry from Dissenters that resulted in the failure of the Bill. Sustained pressure from nonconformists resulted in grant aid from 1847, on condition that the schools were controlled by the Wesleyan Education Committee and were open to inspection.³² A similar agreement was made with the Catholics and this broadened the range of schools that could benefit from state funding.

Bishops Law and Blomfield were keen to work with the National Society from 1810 to establish schools in Cheshire and the area was designated a 'special case' for financial aid, because of its growing industrial towns.³³ Their successor, Bishop Sumner, also took a particular interest in promoting education within the Chester Diocese and in 1838 he stated that 59 new day schools had been established in the preceding three years in the area between Macclesfield and Preston, catering for a total of 21,960 pupils.³⁴ In Macclesfield, Townley Street Sunday School (Independent) and Higher Hurdsfield Sunday School

³⁰ J. Walvin, *Victorian Values* (London, 1987), p. 85.

³¹ Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, p. 338.

³² D. Hempton, *Methodism and Politics in British Society, 1750-1850* (London, 1984), p. 90.

³³ Higgins, 'Anglican Provision of Elementary Education', p. 25.

³⁴ N. Scotland, *John Bird Sumner: Evangelical Archbishop* (Leominster, 1995), p. 56.

(nondenominational) were the next additions, founded in 1801 and 1811 respectively. After Anglican attempts to convert the Large Sunday School into a National school failed

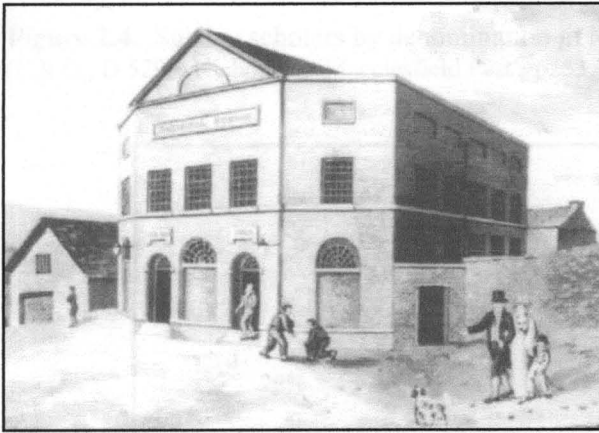


Figure 2.3. Duke Street Day and Sunday Schools. Boys were taught on the ground floor and girls on the first floor. A separate infant class was formed in 1845. (Macclesfield Museums Trust)

in 1813, the decision was made to establish a new Sunday and day school for Macclesfield. This was one of the earliest National day schools in the country, illustrated by the fact that Stockport did not gain its version until 1825.³⁵

In response, the Wesleyans founded their own Mill Street Sunday School in 1814 to provide education on Methodist principles. This was distinct from the congregation's integral roles in the two

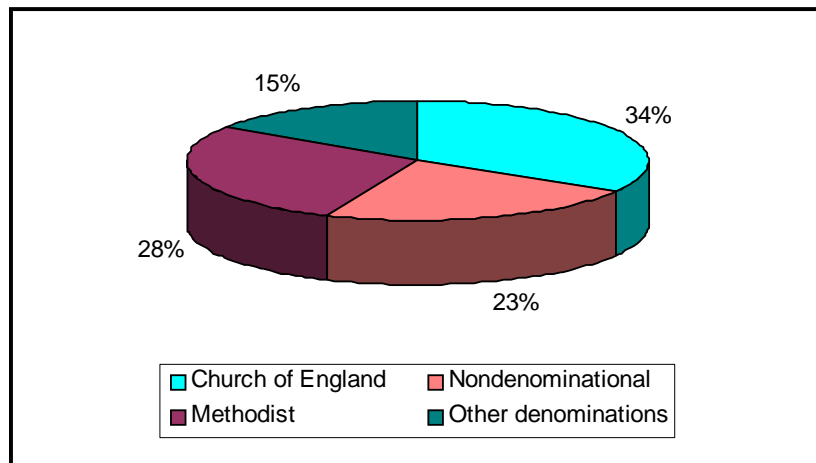
nondenominational Sunday schools and laid the foundation for further Wesleyan schools in the town. Most of the other denominations had Sunday schools attached to their churches and chapels and by 1850 there was a total of 27 Sunday schools serving Macclesfield Borough. The Anglicans operated nine of these schools, the combined Methodists seven (plus the two nondenominational schools) and there was a total of five for the other nonconformists.³⁶ Figure 2.4 (overleaf) shows the percentage denominational share of Macclesfield Sunday schools in 1865 that gives a clear advantage to the Methodists, with 51 per cent of the total, if their figures are combined with those of the nondenominational Sunday schools.

At a national level, the Anglicans were educating 42 per cent of Sunday scholars in 1851, the Methodists had a 30 per cent share and other nonconformists accounted for 28 per cent, again showing Macclesfield's strong nonconformity.³⁷ In contrast, day schooling was dominated by the Church of England and its National Society had established nine day schools in Macclesfield by 1850, the Catholics had one and other nonconformists only provided day schooling on an intermittent basis. This is consistent with the Anglican

³⁵ I. J. D. Steele, 'A Study of the Education of the Working Class in Stockport During the Nineteenth Century', unpublished M.Ed. thesis (University of Sheffield, 1968), p. 139.

³⁶ C.R.O., D 5299, J. O. Nicholson, 'Macclesfield Past' (Prize Essay for the Useful Knowledge Society, 1866), p. 53.

³⁷ Hempton, *Methodism and Politics*, p. 90. *Historical Atlas of Cheshire* (Chester, 2001), p. 104.



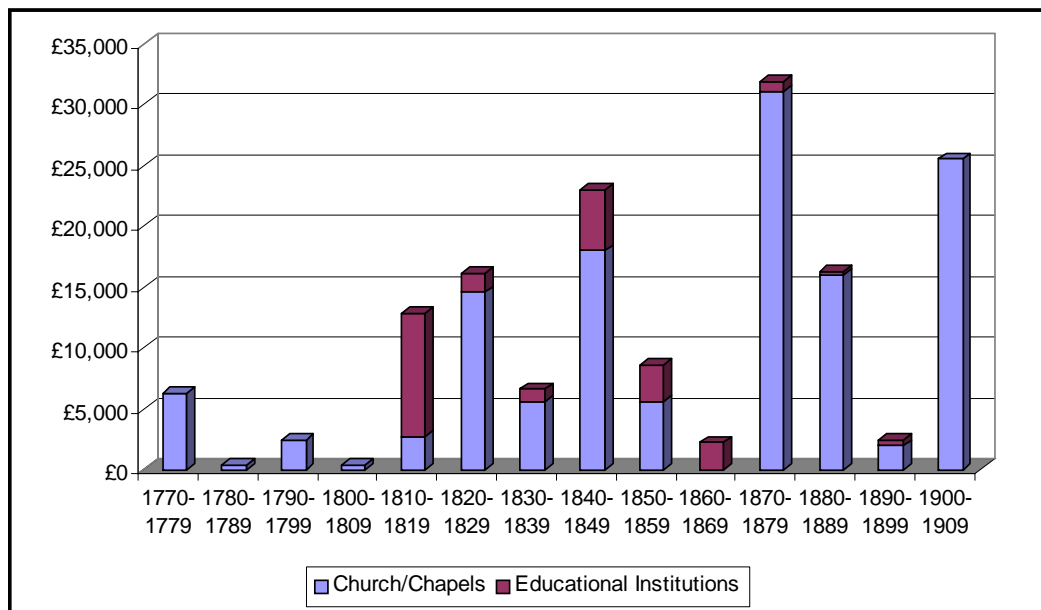
The second half of the nineteenth century saw the consolidation of the Anglican efforts to improve its performance in urban areas. The spate of church building in the 1840s was followed by a reduced rate of foundations, but progress continued to be made in attracting new worshippers. The fragmentation of the Methodist movement into sects continued to affect the dynamism of their movement and, although expansion continued for some time, the late nineteenth century saw a gradual decline in their efforts. This was also evident with the other nonconformist denominations, but Catholicism continued to experience sustained growth.

In Macclesfield, a further two Anglican churches were opened during this period, two Wesleyan chapels, one Baptist chapel, one Primitive Methodist chapel, one Congregational chapel and one Spiritualist chapel. In addition, a group of Wesleyan Reformers built the Park Green Chapel in 1858, which became the head of the new United Methodist Free Church circuit, following their merger with the Wesleyan Methodist Association. The foundations in the second half of the nineteenth century resulted in church and chapel building on an increasingly ambitious scale. For example, both Trinity Wesleyan Chapel and Park Green Congregational Church (picture overleaf) cost £10,000 to build and this underlined how far these denominations had progressed from their early beginnings. Figure 2.6 (overleaf) demonstrates the heightened spending during the 1870s. It also shows the investment in schools in the early nineteenth century, the increased expenditure on schools and churches during the 1840s, and the large fundraising effort for St Michael's that reached fruition in the early 1900s.

Figure 2.5. Park Green Congregational Church. This shows the grandiose nature of the nonconformist places of worship built in the 1870s.



Figure 2.6. Recorded spending on the building of Macclesfield churches, chapels and educational institutions, 1750-1909.



This period also saw concerted attempts to reach the poorest members of the population who were not generally welcome in religious institutions. Missions were established as a forum for educational and recreational activities with a strong biblical emphasis. They were considered to be preparation for joining a church or chapel, aimed to inculcate such desirable traits as sobriety and thrift and offered help for the poor.³⁹ The Wesleyans were the first denomination to establish a mission in 1873, but they did not manage to gain

³⁹ British Library Reading Rooms, D. H. Kjeldsen, *A Century of Mission, 1889-1989: The Story*

permanent premises for a further 20 years. The initial popularity of their venture was compromised by the arrival of the Salvation Army in 1883. This evangelical organisation, founded by William Booth in 1865, focused on social relief and followed the biblical view that God is concerned with both body and soul.⁴⁰ In contrast to some other towns, the Salvation Army did not experience persecution in Macclesfield, possibly due to the high level of nonconformity, and it rapidly gained followers. The Manchester City Mission completed the picture when its Macclesfield branch was opened in 1889.

The 1870 Education Act gradually enforced compulsory elementary schooling and supplemented existing school provision through the creation of School Boards. Macclesfield's School Board was established in 1872, but it focused on school attendance and the expansion of existing facilities instead of establishing new Board schools. Although most towns used the opportunity to gain new secular schools, some other northern towns, such as Preston, followed the same route as Macclesfield.⁴¹ Many nonconformist congregations opened their own day schools to avoid Anglican domination and this meant that by the end of the nineteenth century, Macclesfield had 16 voluntary day schools receiving grants for over 4,700 children. The Church of England had retained its dominance in this field and educated 73 per cent of the pupils at this stage, compared to the Methodist share of 20 per cent.⁴² The Sunday schools attached to most places of worship still continued to provide education for those unable to attend school on a regular basis.

The other developments in Macclesfield's educational field were the establishment of the Y.M.C.A. and the Ragged School. The Y.M.C.A. movement was founded in 1844 to provide a forum outside the working environment where young men could meet to diffuse 'religious knowledge to those around them'.⁴³ The organisation became international in nature and Macclesfield's branch was founded in 1856. The Ragged Schools were also established in the 1840s to address the problem of educating the poorest of children. During the 1850s, the Vicar of St Paul's Church started to gather up groups of children in order to feed and instruct them and the school was officially opened in 1858. Following

of the Macclesfield Christian Mission (Macclesfield, 1989), p. 30.

⁴⁰ B. G. Worrall, *The Making of the Modern Church: Christianity in England Since 1800* (London, 1988), p. 241.

⁴¹ M. Whittle, 'Philanthropy in Preston: The Changing Face of Charity in a Nineteenth-century Provincial Town', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Lancaster, 1990), p. 27.

⁴² J. T. Brunner & J. L. Hammond, *Public Education in Cheshire in 1896* (Manchester, 1896), p. 70.

⁴³ Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness*, p. 48.

the Industrial Schools Act of 1865, it became a national industrial school, providing educational and vocational training for children on a residential basis.

At the end of the nineteenth century Macclesfield had gained a network of churches, chapels, schools and missions for its inhabitants. Having experienced rapid growth during the first half of the nineteenth century, the population levelled out as trade depression forced many workers to seek employment elsewhere. The reduced rate of foundations in the latter half of the century reflected both this factor and the onset of a decline in religious fervour that was to continue into the twentieth century.

The Silk Manufacturers and the Macclesfield Religious Institutions

As might be expected, Macclesfield silk manufacturers were able to play a part in the development of the various religious institutions in the town during this period. Their contributions varied considerably between institutions and depended on factors such as their religious beliefs and the amount of time that they were able to devote to the cause. Consequently, how were the silk manufacturers able to affect the way in which these religious institutions evolved? The following six case studies show the range of support offered by the silk manufacturers, starting with the least involvement and progressing through to the examples in which they were most influential.

St Alban's Church

Revd John Hall, the Catholic priest at Macclesfield from 1821, was the person behind the building of St Alban's and arranged for the purchase of land on Chester Road in 1835. He successfully approached Bishop Briggs for money towards the new venture and gained a promise of £1,000 from the Earl of Shrewsbury, on condition that Pugin would be the architect of the Macclesfield church.⁴⁴ Together with fundraising events and subscriptions, this money enabled work on the building to commence in 1839 and it was finished two years later. Apart from the occasional subscription, the Macclesfield silk manufacturers appear to have played no part in the history of St Alban's Church.

Cheshire's Catholics came under jurisdiction of the Lancashire District from 1840, but the enormity of the work in this densely populated area (which had been exacerbated by the effects of the Irish Famine) meant that a further subdivision was inevitable. In 1851,

⁴⁴ Harris, *A History of the County of Chester*, p. 94.

Cheshire was assigned to the new Shrewsbury Diocese and St Alban's acted as a temporary cathedral for five years.⁴⁵ On Census Sunday in 1851, St Alban's had an estimated total of 1,425 attendees and a further 444 Sunday school pupils, showing the demand for a Catholic place of worship in Macclesfield.⁴⁶

Figure 2.7. St Alban's Church. This shows the scale of Catholic church building in the 1840s, although the intended tower was never completed because of financial difficulties in the nineteenth century. Structural weaknesses were found in the twentieth century, which meant that the money collected for this purpose was diverted to making the building safe. (Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 359.)



St Alban's Church tended to cater for Irish silk weavers and there was an obvious majority of Irish names in the subscription list for the building.⁴⁷ The fact that congregation members were generally poor was shown by the fact that the church offered free sittings for 660 people, free standing room for a further 300 and only 140 rented sittings.⁴⁸ This meant that the guaranteed income was comparatively small, but the high numbers of attendees are likely to have cancelled out this disadvantage through collections. Collections, subscriptions and fundraising events formed the basis of the building fund and, together with the grants from the Earl of Shrewsbury and the Cheshire Fund, this meant that over £3,200 had been accrued by the opening and the remainder was borrowed to cover the £5,300 cost.⁴⁹ The opening services managed a profit of £116, collection

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 96.

⁴⁶ C.R.O., MF 11/1, Census of Religious Worship, Enumerators' Returns for Macclesfield, 1851.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, ERC 19/5240/35, St Alban's Catholic Church, Macclesfield, Donations and Subscriptions, 1821-1842.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, MF 11/1, Census of Religious Worship, 1851.

⁴⁹ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 356.

boxes were distributed around the town and events, such as tea parties, were held on a regular basis to raise money. As a result, the institution finally emerged from debt in 1875 after years of concerted fundraising.⁵⁰

Mr Hall was the key figure behind the establishment of this church and was highly respected for his contribution to Catholicism in Cheshire, receiving an honorary degree from Pope Pius IX. As well as arranging for the purchase of the site for the church, he personally paid for two stained glass windows, was active in the long process of fundraising and stayed with the church until his death in 1876.⁵¹ The greatest contributor to the building of St Alban's was the Earl of Shrewsbury whose gifts totalled £1,000, in addition to the purchase of the organ from St Michael's Church. Part of this money was used to pay for a stained glass window in the chancel and he retained a particular interest in the church's progress.

Other contributors included subscribers from as far afield as Ireland, Edinburgh and London. Within Macclesfield, there is no evidence of any silk manufacturers contributing towards St Alban's before the main building campaign, when there are occasional small subscriptions. For example in July 1840, Joseph Brunt and Josiah Potts Junior both gave 2s 6d, while Josiah Potts gave 1s.⁵² This indicates that there were no obvious Catholic silk manufacturers in the town and that those who did contribute to St Alban's were nonconformists. Therefore, the support for the church seems to have come almost exclusively from other Catholics and implies that the extension of their faith was the primary aim for supporters.

St Alban's Church was a product of the newly gained respectability that Catholics experienced following the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act. This enabled them to consider expansion on a larger scale and was reflected in other new Cheshire foundations, such as Stalybridge, as well as the flagship church in Macclesfield. Catholicism continued to increase in importance within Cheshire, and by the end of the nineteenth century, it was estimated that there were 45,000 Catholics in the county.⁵³ St Alban's Church also flourished throughout the century, due jointly to Mr Hall's popularity and the number of Irish immigrants who settled in Macclesfield. However, other than the occasional small subscription, there is no evidence that silk manufacturers were involved with St Alban's and so they were unable to affect its progress in any way.

⁵⁰ *A Walk*, p. 180.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁵² C.R.O., ERC 19/5240/35, S.A.C.C.M., Donations and Subscriptions.

Beech Lane Chapel

Beech Lane Chapel was the first permanent Primitive Methodist place of worship in the town and opened in 1830 with accommodation for 350 people.⁵⁴ A separate Sunday school was built in 1834, because its numbers had 'so increased that the Chapel had become too strait'.⁵⁵ In the 1851 Ecclesiastical Census, the chapel had an attendance of 350 at its two services, plus a further 180 pupils from its Sunday school.⁵⁶ Other than occasional financial help, the silk manufacturers were not active in the development of Beech Lane Chapel.

The primary aim of the Primitive Methodists was to preach the gospel of salvation and save the souls of sinners. This was achieved through public preaching, praying, testifying and singing, which meant that they were clearly visible to the population.⁵⁷ The denomination's beliefs centred on the Bible but they were open to other inspiration, such as dreams and magical events. Its accessibility, simplicity and incorporation of existing traditions meant that it was an attractive prospect for the poor, who could also rise through the ranks comparatively easily. In later years, the evangelical tendencies of the denomination were beginning to fade and it promoted the importance of service to the community and good behaviour.⁵⁸ Beech Lane remained a revivalist congregation throughout the nineteenth century and this is borne out by the Circuit reports, which stated that increased congregations in 1883 were due to a combination of camp meetings, open air preaching services and missioning in the streets.⁵⁹ In addition to its educational role, the school started a Band of Hope and Temperance Society from the 1850s and offered pupils a range of other social activities.⁶⁰

Beech Lane Chapel opened during a period of trade depression in 1830. The combination of this factor and the working class nature of its congregation meant that funding was always difficult. Of the chapel's total cost of £510, £143 was collected from Macclesfield inhabitants before the opening and loans were necessary to make up the remainder.⁶¹ Further expense was incurred by the building of the school and a concerted fundraising

⁵³ Harris, *A History of the County of Chester*, pp. 93, 97.

⁵⁴ C.R.O., EMS 116/8/2, Beech Lane Chapel, Macclesfield, 150th Anniversary Booklet, 1980, unpaginated.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, MF 11/1, Census of Religious Worship, 1851.

⁵⁷ Malmgreen, *Silk Town*, p. 155.

⁵⁸ McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class*, p. 27.

⁵⁹ C.R.O., EMC 1/19, Macclesfield Primitive Methodist Circuit, Reports and Schedules, 3 March 1883, p. 3.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, EMS 116/8/2. B.L.C.M. Booklet, unpaginated.

effort was made in 1835. They identified all the ‘influential gentlemen’, clergy and



Figure 2.8. Beech Lane Chapel. Described in 1888 as ‘a dingy square building’, its fortunes were strongly linked to the fortunes of the Macclesfield silk trade. (*A Walk* p. 189)

tradesmen and sent them information on the school to generate subscriptions. Half of the building costs were raised at this stage and the income collected from the opening services meant that only £200 was borrowed.⁶² By 1863, the debt had escalated to £760, which exceeded the chapel’s estimated value of £700.⁶³ A bazaar raised funds for the institution in 1880, but the debt increased to £898 in 1888 because of the 1876 renovations.⁶⁴ For long periods of time, the interest on the loans was the largest item of expenditure for the chapel and this illustrates the uphill struggle for solvency that the congregation faced throughout the nineteenth century.⁶⁵

The five men who originally leased the land for the Beech Lane Chapel were the stalwart members of the congregation and remained closely involved during their lifetimes. Their occupations were: a machine worker; a joiner; a broker; a confectioner; and a baker.⁶⁶ Beech Lane did attract primarily working class members which is consistent with Primitive Methodist chapels elsewhere. The only obvious silk connections are that John Brocklehurst donated two guineas in 1850 towards chapel funds and a request was made to retain John Tristram as preacher in 1873, because he was ‘well known to the silk masters and gentry of Macclesfield’ and could therefore approach them for funding.⁶⁷

In the early years, Primitive Methodists attracted a degree of hostility that was common to most new sects. There was also a high turnover of members who could not sustain their

⁶¹ Whomsley, *Methodism in Macclesfield*, p. 34.

⁶² C.R.O., EMS 116/8/2. B.L.C.M. Booklet, unpaginated.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, EMC 1/19, M.P.M.C., R.S., Chapel Schedule, 1863.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1888.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, EMS 116/8/2. B.L.C.M. Booklet, unpaginated.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, C.R.O., EMC 1/19, M.P.M.C., R.S., Macclesfield Station Report, 1873, p. 5.

In the early years, Primitive Methodists attracted a degree of hostility that was common to most new sects. There was also a high turnover of members who could not sustain their initial enthusiasm for the cause and meet the expected standards of conduct.⁶⁸ In the late nineteenth century the prolonged bouts of trade depression meant that the chapel lost many members and those who were left were often 'reduced to the lowest state of suffering and poverty'. For example, some members stated that they would like to attend services 'if they had clothing in which they could appear'.⁶⁹ Long illnesses of successive ministers in the 1860s did not help and the appeal of the Salvation Army from the 1880s enticed members away from the chapel.⁷⁰ The Sunday school suffered from other establishments offering inducements to pupils 'to draw our children away', which resulted in heavy losses in 1886.⁷¹ However, the greatest problem was that of financial security and 12 Bibles, purchased for the Sunday school in the 1830s, were supplied with loose pages because the bound versions were too expensive.⁷² Similarly, the long running debt problems meant that maintenance was neglected, leaving the chapel in a 'dilapidated state' in 1850.⁷³

Despite these problems, the chapel managed to sustain its position as the primary Primitive Methodist chapel in Macclesfield. Amidst the gloomy reports, there were more optimistic notes, as in 1876 the minister reported that the 'station is now in a prosperous condition, congregations are increasing, finances improving...and our societies are labouring earnestly for still greater prosperity'.⁷⁴ Beech Lane was successful in attracting a greater proportion of working-class members than most other chapels and overcame financial difficulties to attain solvency in 1923.⁷⁵ Apart from some external financial assistance, the silk manufacturers do not appear to have played any part in Beech Lane Chapel's history.

St Michael's Church

St Michael's Church (also known as All Hallows, All Saints, St Michael and All Angels or the Old Church) was built in 1278 and replaced an earlier chapel. The institution operated as a chapel of the parish of Prestbury until 1835, when it became the head church of the newly formed Macclesfield ecclesiastical parish. The silk manufacturers were not obviously involved in the history of St Michael's until the nineteenth century, but they did subsequently play an important part in financing the restoration project.

⁶⁸ McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class*, p. 28.
⁶⁹ C.R.O., EMS 116/8/2. B.L.C.M., Booklet, unpaginated.
⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, EMC 1/19, P.M.C., R.S., M.S.R., 1884, p. 4.
⁷¹ *Ibid.*, Sunday School Report, 1886.
⁷² Malmgreen, *Silk Town*, p. 155.
⁷³ C.R.O., EMS 116/8/2. B.L.C.M., Booklet, unpaginated.
⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, EMC 1/19, M.P.M.C., R.S., M.S.R., 1876, p. 4.
⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, EMS 116/8/2, B.L.C.M., Booklet, unpaginated.

In the mid-eighteenth century, St Michael's had a prime curate appointed by the mayor and an assistant curate selected by the Corporation, which meant a strong identification

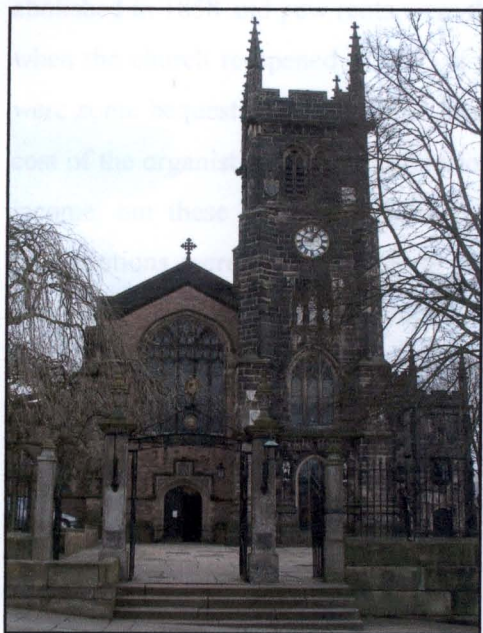


Figure 2.9. St Michael's Church. The nineteenth-century restoration was effectively a complete rebuilding of the church and it remained relatively unchanged until further extension in 2003-2004.

between the church and the town's ruling bodies. By 1779, the average number of communicants at St Michael's was 130, increasing to around 300 at Easter, which was relatively low out of a population of about 7,000 (representing 1.85 to 4.28 per cent).⁷⁶ Even with the advent of a more dynamic Anglican response in the nineteenth century, the church was still in a similar position by the time of the 1851 Ecclesiastical Census, when the total number of attendants at the three services was 1,258, out of a population of 39,048, or 3.22 per cent.⁷⁷ This illustrates both the strength of nonconformity in Macclesfield and the fact that the primary church was still unable to reach large sections of the community.

The fabric of the building changed considerably during the period and it was renovated and enlarged in the mid-eighteenth century, at a cost of £1,000.⁷⁸ Major building work in 1819 created a new chancel, installed two new pulpits and re-ordered the pews for £1,950.⁷⁹ The urgent need for new church accommodation diverted funds away from St Michael's for most of the nineteenth century and it became apparent that drastic action was needed to ensure the safety of its congregation. Preliminary work began in 1883 to address the worst of the structural weaknesses, such as filling in the vaults. A further restoration committee was formed in 1895 and the main reconstruction began three years later, including the rebuilding of the nave, the south porch, the east window and the tower, lowering the floor of the nave and the replacement of the roof. The restored church was re-opened in April 1901.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Laughton, *The Church in the Market Place*, p. 100.

⁷⁷ C.R.O., MF 11/1, Census of Religious Worship, 1851.

⁷⁸ J. Aikin, *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles Round Manchester* (London, 1795), p. 435.

⁷⁹ Macclesfield Silk Museum, I. A. Finney, 'A Lecture on the Old Church, Macclesfield', 1877, p. 15.

⁸⁰ Laughton, *The Church in the Market Place*, p. 129.

The church's main income came from the church rates that covered maintenance and incidental expenses. After sustained resistance from nonconformists, these rates were abolished in 1858 and pew rents were then introduced to make up the shortfall. However, when the church re-opened in 1885 it was decided that all seats would be free.⁸¹ There were some bequests, such as Revd Lawrence Heapy's £600 that contributed towards the cost of the organist, singers, and interior decoration.⁸² Collections were another source of income, but these tended to fluctuate according to attendance and trading conditions. Subscriptions were utilised to fund all the renovation work on the church and special interim appeals were raised whenever necessary, like the churchyard improvements from 1837.⁸³ The Corporation made payments of £100 to assist with the replacement of the east window and the clock in 1820.⁸⁴ During the late nineteenth-century restoration, donations and subscriptions were solicited from local inhabitants and special events were held to assist with the fundraising effort, such as the £1,113 raised by the 1888 bazaar, while collections were made in other churches in the Diocese.⁸⁵

The main indications of the identity of lay people involved with St Michael's prior to the nineteenth century are the list of benefactors and tablets erected in the church. None of the people on the charity list was a silk manufacturer, but there was a tablet erected in 1786 for John Etchells (a silk throwster) and another from the Brocklehurst family in 1870.⁸⁶ The 1820 renovation was funded by a loan of £1,800 from the Daintry and Ryle Bank and the Ryles, despite their Methodist sympathies, were described as supporters of the church prior to their business failure in 1841.⁸⁷ Similarly, the Unitarian Brocklehursts were prominent in the renovation, which was described as 'an undertaking that drew support from every part of the town, and from adherents of practically every denomination'.⁸⁸ Charles Brocklehurst gave £1,100 for a new organ in 1884 and other family members followed his example.⁸⁹ W. C. Brocklehurst and P. P. Brocklehurst gave £500, F. D. Brocklehurst donated £1,000 (and the cost of the East window), W. W. Brocklehurst gave £200 and

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁸² C.R.O., P 85/2913/7/1, St Michael's Church, Macclesfield, Annual Statements of Accounts of Various Charities, 1860-1924.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, P 85/13/1, St Michael's Church, Macclesfield, Register of Charitable Donations, c. 1794-1841.

⁸⁴ Loughton, *The Church in the Market Place*, p. 106.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁸⁶ J. P. Earwaker, *East Cheshire: Past and Present; or A History of the Hundred of Macclesfield in the County Palatine of Chester, Vol. 2* (London, 1870), p. 500.

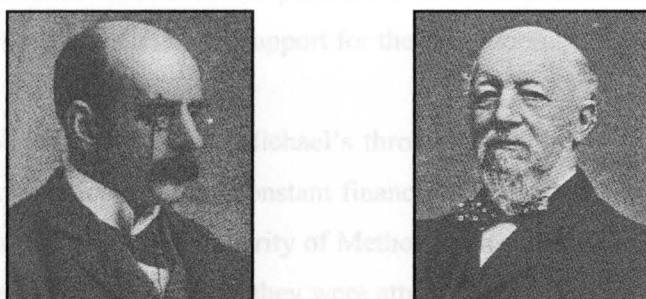
⁸⁷ Whomsley, *Anglican Churches*, p. 64.

⁸⁸ G. Ormerod, *History of the County Palatine and City of Chester, Vol. 3* (London, 1882), p. 751; *Pen Pictures of Macclesfield's Public Men of Today* (Macclesfield, 1907), p. 32.

⁸⁹ *M.C.H.*, 1 June 1901, p. 3.

Emma Dent sent £100.⁹⁰ Other silk manufacturers were well represented in the venture as Thomas Wardle and J. W. H. Thorp both paid for windows, while donations came from William Whiston, Thomas Crew, Joseph Smale, George Heath, William Barnett and Henry Birchenough.⁹¹ The largest donations were made by the vice chairman, James Kershaw, who contributed £2,500 towards the project, in addition to covering the costs of the tower (estimated at £3,000).

Figure 2.10. J. W. H. Thorp and William Whiston.
(*Pen Pictures*, pp. 18, 237.)



Despite all this evidence in favour of the silk manufacturers, a visitor noted at the time that the ‘whole town takes great interest in the work, and outside help from the Duke of Westminster and others is given with a liberal hand’.⁹² In addition to the Duke’s interest, the county families were represented by Sir William Cunliffe Brooks, William Bromley Davenport and the Earl of Derby.⁹³ Other prominent townsmen were involved such as the mayor, Frederick Hill. Despite his Wesleyan beliefs, he donated two sums of money and personally assisted the vicar in the collection of subscriptions. The working classes were also active in the campaign and it was estimated that 24,805 shillings had been collected throughout the town. This concerted effort by all the inhabitants meant that the church opened free of debt, despite costs of £21,000.⁹⁴

James Kershaw’s decision to contribute handsomely to the church was said to have been prompted by the ‘dilapidated state of the Old Church’ in 1864; when he arrived in Macclesfield he had vowed that should his fortune be made there, he would assist financially with its renovation.⁹⁵ At the opening ceremony he gave his reason for these actions as a desire to do ‘good works’, while the Bishop of Exeter added that the

⁹⁰ M.S.M., *The Last Days of the Old Church* (Macclesfield, 1898), p. 65.

⁹¹ S. A. Boyd, *The History, Antiquities and Present Restoration of Macclesfield Parish Church* (Manchester, 1901), 72; M.S.M., *The Last Days*, p. 65.

⁹² Sturdee, ‘A Town of Silk’, *Church and People*, 11, 1899, p. 158.

⁹³ M.S.M., *The Last Days*, p. 65.

⁹⁴ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 312.

⁹⁵ *M.C.H.*, 4 April 1908, p. 8.

of religion'.⁹⁸ Even if the Church of England had been successful, the two Anglican churches were still totally inadequate for the growing population of Macclesfield. This was a common situation elsewhere, as St Peter's Church was the only option for Congleton's 11,000 Anglican worshippers in the eighteenth century.⁹⁹ It was not until the 1840s that the Church of England became more proactive in the town and, ironically, this had the effect of diverting funds away from St Michael's to new foundations. The church also suffered from its long association with the Establishment and the town's élite, particularly during the incumbencies of the prominent Tories, Laurence Heapy and William Cruttenden.¹⁰⁰ The combined effects of all these problems on St Michael's was to reduce the income available to the churchwardens, leaving insufficient money available for maintenance and difficulties in attracting support for additional appeals. This downward spiral was only addressed by the major renovation project at the end of the nineteenth century.

Despite its chequered history, St Michael's Church became the head church for Macclesfield parish and was considered an important institution for the town. This was reflected by the way in which the whole population supported the renovation project and the public rejoicing at the re-opening of the church. An 1898 article stated that St Michael's had provided a venue where 'Christ has been worshipped by great and small, high and low, rich and poor'.¹⁰¹ This implied that it appealed to the whole spectrum of the community, but it is difficult to determine whether this was a true representation. However, the fact that the church did experience a groundswell of support at the end of the period underlines its importance for the people of Macclesfield.

There is little evidence to suggest that silk manufacturers were supporters of St Michael's before the nineteenth century. Their major donations all appeared to occur in the latter half of the nineteenth century and they were clearly visible in the statistics for the major renovation project, which drew support from the whole community. Therefore, their involvement appears to have been primarily of a monetary nature and they were prominent in ensuring that the church was re-opened free of debt in 1901.

Macclesfield Sunday School

Macclesfield Sunday School was established in 1796 to provide basic education for children in the town. David Simpson's charity schools had declined by the 1790s and his

⁹⁸ Laughton, *The Church in the Market Place*, p. 93.

⁹⁹ Calladine & Fricker, *East Cheshire Textile Mills*, p. 150.

¹⁰⁰ Laughton, *The Church in the Market Place*, p. 103.

assistant, John Whittaker, resolved to start his own nondenominational Sunday school. He began to teach a class of 40 children in Pickford Street and the numbers increased rapidly which necessitated several moves to larger buildings.¹⁰² By the end of the first year, 582 children were in attendance, and this had doubled by 1800. In 1812, five different venues were needed for the 2,149 scholars and it became obvious that large purpose-built premises were necessary to meet demand. After a major fundraising campaign, the Sunday school building in Roe Street was completed in 1814 and remained its permanent base.¹⁰³ The dramatic growth slowed from 1814 as other Sunday schools came into existence, but it still remained the largest in the town and educated 1,566 scholars in 1865.¹⁰⁴ Silk manufacturers became involved with the Sunday school in a variety of ways and were therefore instrumental in its development.

The aims of the school were 'to lessen the sum of human wretchedness by diffusing religious knowledge and useful learning amongst the lower classes of society'.¹⁰⁵ The committee was keen to ensure that the Sabbath should not become a 'day of pleasure and dissipation', that the children be 'habituated to restraint and discipline', should attend public worship twice a month and be taught to read the Bible.¹⁰⁶ The teachers were unpaid and came from different religious backgrounds. They were expected to communicate to their pupils 'ordinary and divine knowledge, without force to the conscience, or bias to the judgement, or the slightest reference to the wishes or designs of any sect'.¹⁰⁷ Pupils were predominantly children, but adults who had received no schooling were also encouraged. Overall responsibility for the running of the school lay with the superintendent who was aided by a team of visitors and teachers. Classes were divided according to proficiency and the school offered additional evening lectures and a lending library.¹⁰⁸ A sewing class for female factory workers was started in 1806 to 'enable them to become more useful domestics' and to encourage economy in the home.¹⁰⁹ A later innovation was the Sunday school outing, which became an annual highlight for Macclesfield people, along with other social events. The Roe Street building could accommodate 2,000 people on its upper floor (also used as a place of worship for eight

¹⁰¹ *M.C.H.*, 8 October 1898, p. 5.

¹⁰² Macclesfield Public Library, *Christ Church, Macclesfield: Bicentenary, 1775-1975* (Macclesfield, 1975) p. 23.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, R. F. Mellor, *Macclesfield Sunday School: 150 Years, 1796-1946* (Macclesfield, 1946), unpaginated.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, J. Wootton, 'Macclesfield Past' (Prize Essay for the Useful Knowledge Society, 1866).

¹⁰⁵ C.R.O., SP 2/31/26, Macclesfield Sunday School, Annual Report, 1872, p. 1.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, SP 2/29, M.S.S., A.R., 1800, p. 15.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 1815, p. 80.

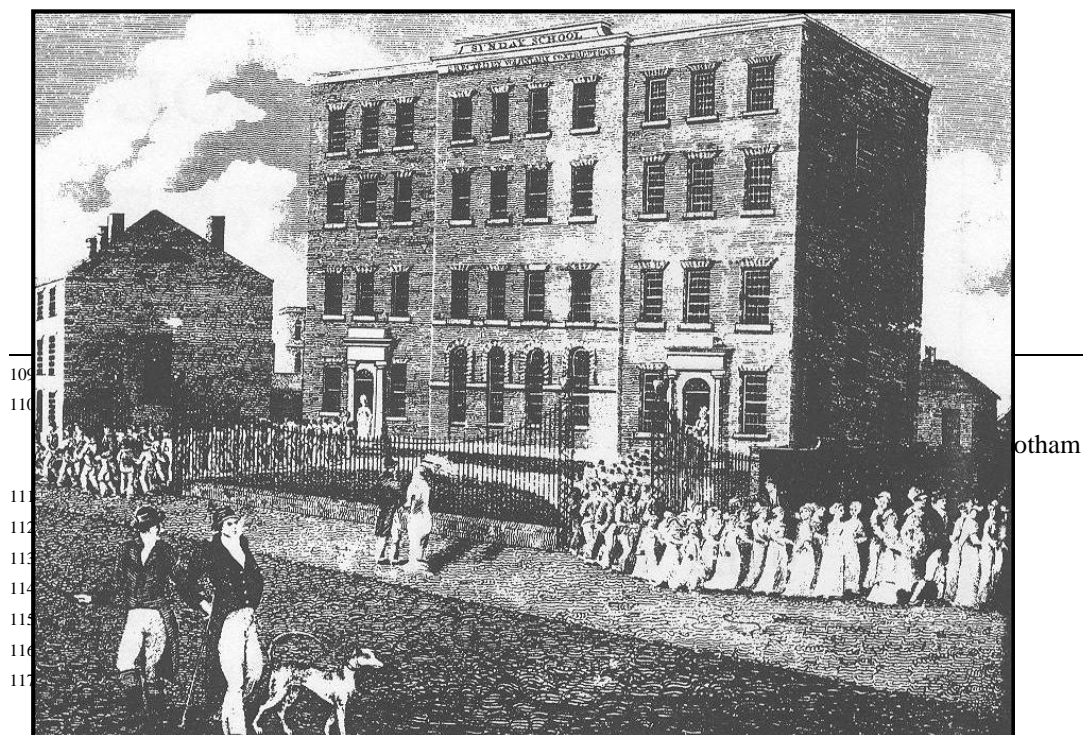
¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, SP 2/31/35, M.S.S., A.R., 1899, p. 2.

years) and had a further 16 rooms which were rented out to a number of organisations, some of which were affiliated to the Sunday School, such as the Sick and Burial Society and the Medical Aid Society.¹¹⁰

During its early history the institution was funded by subscriptions and in 1806, when two additional rooms were built, the income came from a legacy, the sale of hymn books, general fundraising and a mortgage.¹¹¹ From 1800, it was decided to have an annual public collection at each of the churches in the town, which provided the bulk of the revenue for running costs and special appeals were made whenever necessary.¹¹² For example in 1818, an organ was purchased by the teachers and scholars and their subscriptions also amounted to £100 of the initial £3,000 raised for the Roe Street building.¹¹³ During this appeal, friendly societies gave donations and collections were made in workplaces throughout the town.¹¹⁴ A number of legacies were subsequently received for the institution; these were invested and the dividends added to the annual income. In addition, there were donations given for specific purposes, such as W. C. Brocklehurst's £20 towards the staircase fund.¹¹⁵ The school received income from social and fundraising events, like the 1879 bazaar that raised £600 towards the liquidation of the debt.¹¹⁶ Municipal penalties and forfeitures in workplaces were also given to the school, as in Critchley, Brinsley & Company's £7 from their silk weavers in 1812.¹¹⁷

Figure 2.11. Macclesfield Sunday School.

This large building on Roe Street could accommodate 2,500 pupils and now houses part of the Macclesfield Silk Museum. (Macclesfield Museums Trust)



In common with many other nondenominational Sunday schools, like Horton Lane Sunday School in Bradford, the Macclesfield version owed its existence primarily to the Methodists.¹¹⁸ This is illustrated by the fact that at one stage in its early history, every teacher in the school was a Methodist, along with a number of donors and the superintendent.¹¹⁹ The 1812 list of trustees featured a number of prominent Wesleyans, such as George and Samuel Pearson, John Ryle and Samuel Higginbotham (Whittaker's nephew who acted as superintendent for many years). Independents such as Thomas Critchley and Daniel Brinsley were also evident and there was a strong bias towards silk manufacture, with only two trustees having no association.¹²⁰ Over the school's history, there were many silk manufacturers involved from the Established Church, such as Jeremiah Clarke and William Barnett, in addition to the smaller sects like the Methodist New Connexion, the Unitarians and the Quakers. Their representatives included David Oldham, John Brocklehurst and Samuel Thorp respectively. The dominance of silk manufacturers was still strong in the 1864 trustee list, with a ratio of 11 to four, and the other occupations ranged from a warehouseman to a cabinetmaker.¹²¹

There were certain silk manufacturers who occupied positions of responsibility over a long period of time. Joseph Wright was a trustee from 1864 until his death in 1892 and held the position of treasurer for 27 years, showing 'an untiring interest in the welfare of the institution'. Various members of the Mellor family held the position of secretary from 1876 for over 70 years and took on extra responsibilities, such as the collection of subscriptions at various stages.¹²² The silk manufacturers were also responsible for some of the financial backing which was necessary to keep the school running. George Pearson, who owned the land on which the school was built, loaned in excess of £1,200 to the institution at a low rate of interest in 1824.¹²³ Others who donated sums of money were W. C. Brocklehurst who left a legacy of £200, George Swindells and John Brocklehurst who both gave £100 and the American Ryle family who forwarded \$300 'in remembrance of their father's early association with the School'.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Mathews, *Methodism and the Education of the People*, p. 115.

¹¹⁹ M.S.M., PH 288, Correspondence between Methodists and Trustees/Managers of the Large Sunday School, Macclesfield, 1814, p. 4.

¹²⁰ C.R.O., SP 2/1/1, M.S.S., M.C.M., 16 December 1812.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 13 April 1864.

¹²² M.S.M, PH 312, Macclesfield Sunday School.

¹²³ C.R.O., SP 2/31/26, M.S.S., A.R., 1872, p. 2.

¹²⁴ M.S.M., Macclesfield Sunday School, 176th Annual Report, 1972, List of Donors.

Despite all this evidence, there were many non-silk manufacturers who were heavily involved with the school. The most obvious example is John Whittaker, about whom David Simpson stated that ‘He had become a father, a friend, a school-master, and a minister to all the young people you see around you, insomuch that I really believe he is likely to be a greater instrument in the hands of God to precious souls than all we, the clergy and preachers of the town, put together.’¹²⁵ Both he and Samuel Higginbotham were lawyers, as was one of the principal benefactors P. P. Brocklehurst, despite his family silk connections. The body of teachers necessary to run the institution came from all walks of life and gave their time and money in order to keep the school operating, while the scholars also donated money towards improvements.

Indications of the reasons for the support of the Sunday school are apparent in its records. The evangelicals were keen to gain as many conversions as possible and Sunday schools were seen as the ideal vehicle to achieve this aim. As a result, the clergy constantly emphasised the necessity to rescue the poor from their dissolute state and to enable them to attain salvation. Law and order was a particular concern for townspeople at times of heightened tension. For example, in 1841 the committee highlighted the increase in taverns and public-houses, seen as ‘nurseries of vice’, which encouraged ‘evening revelry’ and disorderly behaviour among the poor.¹²⁶ Instead, it was felt that the institution could provide ‘elementary learning and such moral and religious instruction as will qualify them for the duties of the present life’, without recourse to crime and disorder.¹²⁷ The Stockport Sunday School cited the non-participation of their scholars in the 1852 Anti-Catholic riots as evidence of their school’s civilising influence and Macclesfield inhabitants would have been aware of this example.¹²⁸

The social responsibility of the wealthy for the working classes was stressed in the 1854 annual report: ‘although you have been elevated in society by the blessing of God on your own industry and on that of your ancestors you are, on that very account, under obligation to the people’.¹²⁹ Similarly, the benefits of the institution were strongly emphasised to factory masters to whom it was felt ‘a little attention to this matter would certainly evince a concern for the welfare of the rising generation, and could not fail of being productive of good to the interests of the master’.¹³⁰ The fact that Sunday schools did not require any attendance within working hours was another reason why they were so popular with

¹²⁵ M.P.L., Mellor *Macclesfield Sunday School*, unpaginated.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, SP 2/3/14, M.S.S., A.R., 1841, p. 1.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, SP 2/3/15, M.S.S., A.R., 1843, p. 1.

¹²⁸ Steele, ‘A Study of the Education’, p. 162.

¹²⁹ C.R.O., SP 2/3/14, M.S.S., A.R., 1854, p. 4.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, SP 2/29, M.S.S., A.R., 1798, p. 6.

manufacturers. Likewise, the Sunday schools were seen as a cost effective means of imparting education and were an example of local enterprise, which imposed ‘no burden on the State’.¹³¹ The institution was perceived as a respected and historically important establishment that was Macclesfield’s answer to the famous Stockport Sunday School and enhanced the town’s reputation. The fact that the school appealed ‘to the whole Christian church for supplies’ and aimed ‘to do good to all irrespective of denominational distinction’ meant that everyone, regardless of their religious background, was encouraged to support the school. Finally, the reports outlined how the wealthy could expect to become ‘rich in good works’ in return for their involvement with the institution.¹³²

The major problem to face the institution was the dispute between the school committee, the Methodists and the Anglicans. In 1813, when the new building was first proposed ‘a suspicion was propagated among some very respectable and Cordial Friends of the Charity, that the design was undertaken with a view to separate the School from all connection with the Established Church’.¹³³ Conversely, the Methodists believed that the Anglicans were planning to affiliate the new school to the National Society, meaning that it would lose its nondenominational status. Other issues to surface simultaneously included the management of the school, non-attendance at Anglican services and the teaching of writing on Sundays. After the Anglicans had established their own Duke Street National School, the committee was resolute in adhering to the original principles of the school, despite continued arguments between the remaining Methodists.¹³⁴ This dispute was indicative of the religious rivalry that was at its height in the early nineteenth century.

The institution also had to contend with the variance in income faced by most charities. The annual collections did not provide a guaranteed source of funds and this was evident in 1827 when it became necessary to solicit annual subscriptions and donations in order to supplement the diminished amounts.¹³⁵ The sermons were not always held regularly, and in 1833 they were omitted completely, ‘severing the Institution from its legitimate and most successful mode of supplying its funds’.¹³⁶ In 1870, it was found that the building was ‘much dilapidated’ and major repairs were needed. During such times of exceptional expense, additional appeals were made to the town to secure sufficient funds.¹³⁷

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, SP 2/3/15, M.S.S., A.R., 1843, p. 1.

¹³² *Ibid.*, SP 2/31/13, M.S.S., A.R., 1840, p. 1.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, SP 2/29, M.S.S., A.R., 1815, p. 85.

¹³⁴ Malmgreen, *Silk Town*, p. 173.

¹³⁵ C.R.O., SP 2/1/1, M.S.S., M.C.M., 5 July 1827.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, SP 2/31/7, M.S.S., A.R., 1833, p. 2.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, SP 2/31/25, M.S.S., A.R., 1870, p. 2.

There is no evidence to suggest that there was overt opposition to Sunday schooling in this institution, although this was definitely present in the town. For example Revd James Raban, the founder of Townley Street Sunday School, had to fund his 'superfluous innovation' personally due to lack of support and, even as late as 1828, some people were still attributing juvenile delinquency to the diffusion of knowledge among the working classes.¹³⁸ The recruitment of dedicated teachers was a problem and in 1873 the committee felt that 'the want of zealous and devoted Teachers is deeply to be deplored' as it was linked to the attendance of pupils: 'where teachers are devoted to their work scholars are not wanting to appreciate their self denying efforts'.¹³⁹ The continuing decline in the silk industry meant reduced numbers of both pupils and teachers. For example, the 1897 report stated that the school 'has suffered great loss by the removal of many young men and women to other countries and towns in search of employment'.¹⁴⁰

The main achievement of the Macclesfield Sunday School was that it was the first permanent institution to provide basic education for the working classes. Its importance was reflected by the fact that in 1827 Samuel Higginbottom indicated to the Bishop that 'in this Institution we have had upwards of 20,000 on the books', in just over 30 years.¹⁴¹ The numbers of scholars exceeded any other educational institution in Macclesfield by some margin and Charles Brocklehurst recognised that 'it had done a great deal of good, and educated a great many who had become very useful members of society'.¹⁴² There are examples of former pupils expressing their gratitude to the school, such as an Antipodean resident, who wrote to express 'his indebtedness to the School for the instruction and training he received in it as a youth, and to their permanent value to him through life'.¹⁴³ Most scholars remained attached to the institution in later life, acting as teachers and visitors, and it also provided a community function through affiliated clubs, societies and social events.

The silk manufacturers were strongly represented in the trustee lists and the honorary positions in the institution, in addition to making donations and legacies. There were also examples of some who were clearly active in the Sunday school, but the vast majority of the teachers and scholars were members of the working class. The institution was

¹³⁸ *Historical Sketches of Nonconformity in the County Palatine of Chester* (London, 1864), p. 11; C.R.O., ECU 6623/17, Macclesfield United Reformed Church, Collected Commemorative Pamphlets, Centenary Booklet.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, SP 2/31/2/28, M.S.S., A.R., 1873, p. 2; SP 2/31/35, M.S.S., A.R., 1899, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, SP 2/31/33, M.S.S., A.R., 1897, p. 1.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, P 208/6/6, S.G.C.S., Letter, 1827.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, LBM 2703/62/1, Macclesfield Borough Council, Newscuttings, 1878-1879, p. 63.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, SP 2/31/32, M.S.S., A.R., 1895, p. 1.

therefore a product of a town-wide effort, initiated by John Whittaker, to which most silk manufacturers offered their financial support and some of these individuals remained actively involved over long periods of time.

King Edward Street Chapel

The Calvinist style King Edward Street Chapel was completed in 1690 and provided accommodation for up to 450 Presbyterian worshippers. William Stonehewer and Humphrey Higginbotham, of Sutton, appear to have been the driving force behind the building of the chapel and contributed towards the £250 costs. By 1715, it was estimated that there were around 100 members at the 'Presbyterian Meeting House' in Macclesfield and in 1764, John Brocklehurst (I), who was a regular attendee, purchased the chapel.¹⁴⁴ He was also instrumental in inviting John Palmer to become the minister at King Edward Street, which sparked a disagreement within the congregation. The Calvinist section of the congregation objected to Palmer's Unitarian views and eventually seceded to form the Townley Street Independent Chapel. This meant that, along with its sister chapels at Knutsford and Dean Row, the Macclesfield chapel became Unitarian in the 1770s and the support of the Brocklehurst silk manufacturing family continued until the early twentieth century.¹⁴⁵

During the nineteenth century, the Brocklehurst influence was dominant as they appointed the ministers, paid their salary, cleared the overdraft and collected the pew rents. By this time, it was commonly known as Brocklehurst's Chapel but the congregations were comparatively small, due to the competition from the evangelical movements. Under the ministry of George Vance Smith from 1843, the chapel experienced a revival in numbers and the Sunday school was founded. By 1851, the average Sunday attendance had reached 400, including 150 Sunday school pupils.¹⁴⁶ Following a dispute with the minister, the congregation divided in the 1850s when a group seceded to worship at Parsonage Street Chapel under the patronage of Samuel Greg junior. The Brocklehurst connection waned in the 1880s as family members 'through deaths, removals and other causes ceased to worship there'.¹⁴⁷ As a result, the chapel went through a period of decay before merging again with Parsonage Street Chapel.¹⁴⁸ The amalgamation of the congregations, and the eventual sale of the latter building, safeguarded the future of the older chapel.

¹⁴⁴ *Historical Sketches of Nonconformity*, p. 230.

¹⁴⁵ Harris, *A History of the County of Chester*, p. 108.

¹⁴⁶ C.R.O., MF 11/1, Census of Religious Worship, 1851.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, EUC 3/25/15, Statement of Accounts to Charity Commissioners from King Edward Street Chapel, Macclesfield.

¹⁴⁸ D. Whomsley, *Three Hundred Years of King Edward Street Chapel, Macclesfield, 1690-1990*

and in 1764, John Brocklehurst (I), who was a regular attendee, purchased the chapel.¹⁴⁴ He was also instrumental in inviting John Palmer to become the minister at King Edward Street, which sparked a disagreement within the congregation. The Calvinist section of the congregation objected to Palmer's Unitarian views and eventually seceded to form the Townley Street Independent Chapel. This meant that, along with its sister chapels at Knutsford and Dean Row, the Macclesfield chapel became Unitarian in the 1770s and the support of the Brocklehurst silk manufacturing family continued until the early twentieth century.¹⁴⁵

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Unitarian congregations tended to be skewed towards the professional classes and especially the ruling elites in urban areas. This was certainly the case with King Edward Street Chapel where the Brocklehursts also dominated Macclesfield affairs. This situation was replicated in many cities, such as Liverpool and Manchester, whose Renshaw Street and Cross Street Chapels saw a disproportionate number of their congregations holding powerful positions in their communities.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ *Historical Sketches of Nonconformity*, p. 230.

¹⁴⁵ Harris, *A History of the County of Chester*, p. 108.

¹⁴⁶ C.R.O., MF 11/1, Census of Religious Worship, 1851.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, EUC 3/25/15, Statement of Accounts to Charity Commissioners from King Edward Street Chapel, Macclesfield.

¹⁴⁸ D. Whomsley, *Three Hundred Years of King Edward Street Chapel, Macclesfield, 1690-1990* (Macclesfield, n.d.), p. 42.

¹⁴⁹ M. Simey, *Charity Rediscovered: A Study of Philanthropic Effort in Nineteenth-century Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1992), p. 18; J. Seed, 'Unitarianism, Political Economy and the Antinomies of Liberal Culture in Manchester, 1830-1850', *Social History*, 7, 1982, p. 4.

The original chapel building was financed by subscriptions, ranging from £10 to 2s 6d. The pews were rented to worshippers and they were also expected to contribute towards the chapel's maintenance. By 1851, the chapel had 250 rented sittings compared to 100 free sittings and the Brocklehurst financial assistance meant that it was not necessary to generate income exclusively from pew rents.¹⁵⁰ Once this cushion of support was removed, the onus was back on the congregation to fund the chapel, although large bequests from the Brocklehurst family eased the transition. In contrast to many other chapels, the Unitarians did not make public appeals for funds and relied wholly on members for income. The records show a strong Brocklehurst influence throughout,

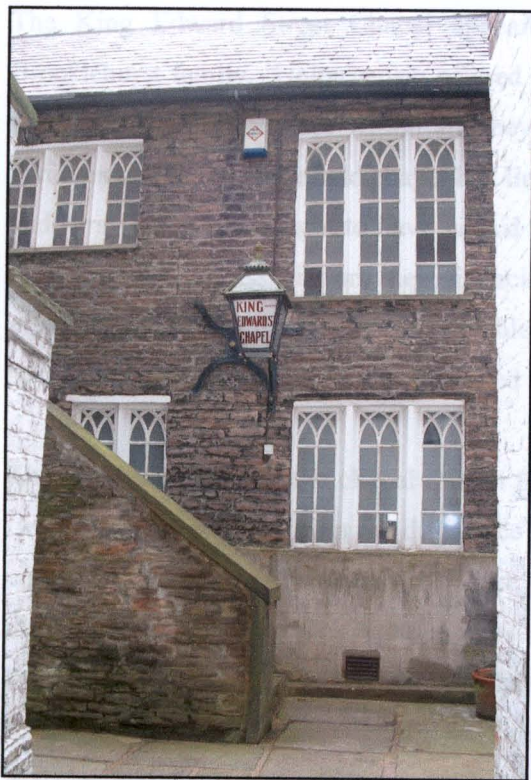


Figure 2.12. Entrance to King Edward Street Chapel. Its barn-like structure reflects the simplicity of Presbyterian chapels built in the 1690s and the fact that it ‘nestles from public gaze’ indicates how its early worshippers had to avoid persecution. (*A Walk*, p. 181.)

beginning with the invitation to John Palmer to become minister in 1764, written and signed by John Brocklehurst (I). Among the other 23 signatories were John Acton and Joseph Street who were Brocklehurst's business partners.¹⁵¹ The list of charities for the chapel shows donations to the poor from William, John (III), Mary and Charles Brocklehurst.¹⁵² Family members also contributed towards items for the chapel such as silver communion plate and a large Bible.¹⁵³

Charles Brocklehurst stated in 1873 that the trustees ‘are and have been for many years exclusively members of the Brocklehurst family’.¹⁵⁴ This is borne out by the 1887 trustee list, which consisted of W. C. Brocklehurst, P. P. Brocklehurst and P. L. Brocklehurst.¹⁵⁵ However, this dominance was to recede, as T. U. Brocklehurst stated in his diary that ‘Charley still residing at

¹⁵⁰ Whomsley, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 41.

¹⁵¹ H. L. Short, ‘Macclesfield's First Unitarian Minister’, *Transactions of the Unitarian Historical Society*, 15, 1951, p. 143.

¹⁵² C.R.O., EUC 3/25/27, King Edward Street Chapel, Macclesfield, Correspondence and List of Charities; EUC 3/9/17, 20, K.E.S.C.M., Miscellaneous Financial Memoranda.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, EUC 3/26/7, K.E.S.C.M., List of Benefactors read out on 250th Anniversary.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, EUC 3/25/15, Statement of Accounts to Charity Commissioners from K.E.S.C.M.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, EUC 3/25/20, K.E.S.C.M., Correspondence.

contingency plan for such an eventuality and the congregation could not intervene without the agreement of the remaining trustees. As a result, a period of limbo ensued for the chapel that was only ended by further Brocklehurst financial support and the merging of the congregations.

The middle-class nature of Unitarianism meant that the King Edward Street Chapel was never likely to attract a wide or numerous cross-section of the community. The only evidence available on the social composition of the worshippers is from the early eighteenth century when there were only 44 labourers out of a congregation of 500, the remainder of whom were mainly tradesmen, yeomen, women and children.¹⁶⁰ Therefore, the silk manufacturers, in the form of the Brocklehurst family, had a major impact on the history of this chapel and were able to shape its history for nearly 200 years.

Christ Church

Charles Roe's Christ Church opened in 1775 and its first minister was the renowned preacher, David Simpson. His suspension from St Michael's led to the invitation from Roe to become minister of his new church in Macclesfield. The land was purchased from the Grammar School governors, an Act of Parliament was passed and Christ Church was built in seven months to accommodate 1,600 people. It was consecrated on 31 December 1775 and a tower was added in the following year, bringing the total cost to £6,000.¹⁶¹ Charles Roe died in 1781 and was buried in the churchyard. David Simpson remained as minister until his death in 1799, having determined the evangelical nature of the church and forged close links with the Methodist community. This institution was a donation from Charles Roe and therefore owed its existence exclusively to a Macclesfield silk manufacturer.

Christ Church provided a platform for Simpson, who had gained a reputation as an inspiring preacher with a strong belief in helping the poor. During his time at Christ Church, he assisted the needy with basic legal and medical problems, set up the first charity schools in the town, was heavily involved in the founding of the Macclesfield Sunday School and encouraged a Female Friendly Society for silk workers.¹⁶² Without the founding of Christ Church, it is likely that his qualities would have been utilised outside Macclesfield, particularly as he spent time at Hazel Grove during his suspension. Under Simpson's control, the church provided the opportunity for Macclesfield Methodists to remain within the Church of England without compromising their beliefs. The service

¹⁵⁹ Whomsley, *Three Hundred Years*, p. 41.

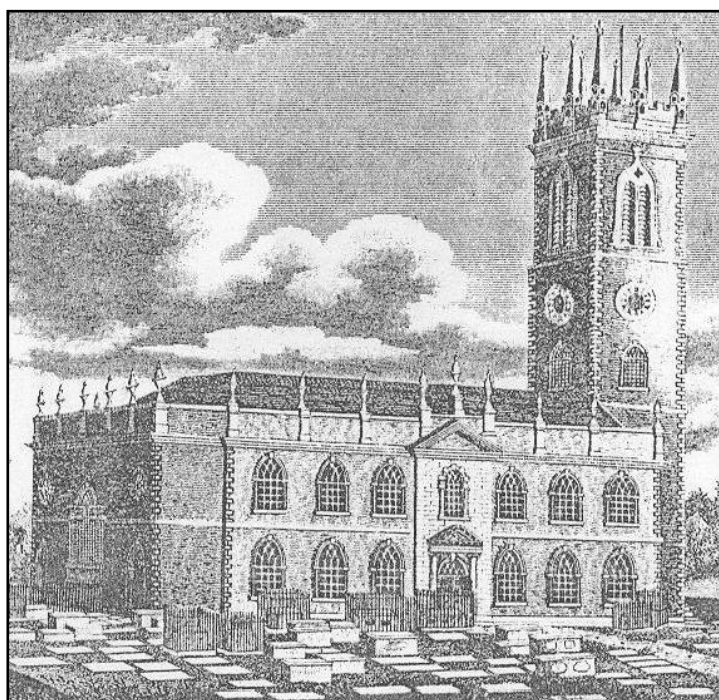
¹⁶⁰ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 234.

¹⁶¹ *A Walk*, p. 165.

times were fixed to allow the congregation to attend both Christ Church and Methodist services and Simpson often accompanied members of his congregation to Sunderland Street Chapel. This is in direct contrast to Congleton parish church where Richard Sandbach refused to administer the sacrament to Methodists.¹⁶³ This cooperation with the Methodists is illustrated by the fact that Christ Church was the only Anglican church in Cheshire where John Wesley was invited to preach and he was a regular visitor from 1777.¹⁶⁴ Following Simpson's lead, the later ministers were instrumental in establishing a number of different institutions within the community such as Christ Church Schools, St John's Church and St Andrew's Church. By the end of the nineteenth century a system of district visitors existed for the parish, alongside smaller organisations such as the Band of Hope, the Mothers' Meeting and Clothing Club and an Institute for Young Men and Women.¹⁶⁵

Figure 2.13. Christ Church. (Macclesfield Museums Trust)

John Wesley described it as 'the most elegant I have seen in the Kingdom', but Ormerod, writing around 100 years later, felt that it was 'erected in a very tasteless style of architecture' and its tall tower 'flared upon the eye in most of the general views of Macclesfield'. (Malmgreen, *Silk Town*, p. 148; Ormerod, *History of the County Palatine*, p. 756.)



¹⁶² M.P.L., *Christ Church, Macclesfield*, p. 9.

¹⁶³ E. A. Rose, 'Methodism in Cheshire to 1800', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 78, 1975, p. 30.

¹⁶⁴ W. H. Chaloner, 'Charles Roe of Macclesfield (1715-1781): An Eighteenth-century Industrialist, Part 2', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 63, 1952, p. 81.

¹⁶⁵ M.P.L., *Christ Church, Macclesfield*, p. 12.

By 1889, the church's income of £618 (excluding pew rentals) was made up from offertories, endowments and donations. Roe's grandson, Christopher Shaw Roe, had continued the family involvement by leaving an endowment of £1,500 in 1853 for maintenance costs, payments to the vicar and relief of the poor.¹⁶⁶ In 1851, there were 600 free sittings for the poor and Sunday scholars, while the remaining 1,000 pews were rented out to congregation members. At this stage, the average Sunday attendance was 1,300, which exceeded the total for the town's main church.¹⁶⁷ This was achieved despite the fact that the Methodist members had left the congregation by the turn of the century and that 'a considerable desertion of the people' had taken place in 1810 due to a theological dispute between the curate and congregation.¹⁶⁸

The largest memorial in Christ Church is dedicated to the founder, Charles Roe, and outlines his contribution to Macclesfield. It describes how Roe, 'a gentleman who with slender Portion on his Entrance into Business carried on the Button and Twist Manufacture in this Town with the most active industry, ingenuity and integrity'.¹⁶⁹ This echoes the inscription in St Peter's Church, Congleton, which commemorates the way in which Samuel Pattison established the first silk throwing mill in the town.¹⁷⁰ The Roe Memorial Window was erected in 1856 'as an affectionate tribute' to Christopher Shaw Roe by the 'inhabitants of Macclesfield and other friends' for his contribution to the church.¹⁷¹ In the churchyard there are tombs for both David Simpson and the Roe family, while the strong Methodist connection is illustrated by the presence of John Ryle's tomb at Christ Church. He was the town's first Methodist mayor and also held a pew at Christ Church.¹⁷² Other silk manufacturers are evident in the records as active church members, such as William Pownall and Josiah Bradley Smale, who were churchwardens in the nineteenth century.¹⁷³

There has been much speculation surrounding Charles Roe's decision to establish Christ Church. David Simpson gave his opinion during his first sermon at the church which was 'to advance the glory of God, the furtherance of the Gospel, the reformation of his fellow creatures and the salvation of souls', a suitably charitable view of his donor's actions.¹⁷⁴ Roe's friendship with Simpson, and his desire to retain his services within Macclesfield,

¹⁶⁶ Charity Commission, 253289, Charles Shaw Roe's Charity.

¹⁶⁷ C.R.O., MF 11/1, Census of Religious Worship, 1851.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, P 208/6/6, S.G.C.S., Letter, 1827.

¹⁶⁹ R. Richards, *Old Cheshire Churches* (Didsbury, 1973), p. 214.

¹⁷⁰ W. F. Castle, *An English Parish Church of 1740; Before and Since: History and Description of St Peter's, Congleton* (Gloucester, 1933), p. 37.

¹⁷¹ *M.C.H.*, 18 October 1856, p. 4.

¹⁷² C.R.O., P 84/3349/8/8, Christ Church, Macclesfield, Terrier, 1932, p. 9.

¹⁷³ *M.C.H.*, 25 September 1886, p. 5; 3 January 1914, p. 7.

¹⁷⁴ *M.P.L.*, *Christ Church, Macclesfield*, p. 8.

dovetailed with a long-standing vow to build a church with his fortune. At the time when building work commenced, Roe was recovering from a serious illness which could have provided the catalyst for action.¹⁷⁵ The complacency apparent at St Michael's Church at this time, and its identification with the Establishment, meant that the more dynamic Christ Church was able to challenge the supremacy of the older institution. Revd S. A. Boyd of St Michael's emphasised this in 1899, stating that Christ Church was built 'with the idea of rivalling that of the Parish Church'.¹⁷⁶ The most visible sign of Charles Roe's desire to match St Michael's was his stipulation that Christ Church's tower should reach the same height as the original church, despite the fact that the new building was sited on lower ground.¹⁷⁷

The donor was a lifelong Anglican but numerous members of his family converted to Methodism, including his second wife, his niece (Hester Ann Rogers) and six of his children. In spite of this connection, and his evangelical beliefs, Roe refused to let members of his family attend Methodist services in the town and disowned them if they defied him. The building of Christ Church made a statement to Macclesfield about the family's religious allegiance and gave him an ideal opportunity to assert his authority over this matter. Roe was able to exercise complete power over the running of the church during his lifetime and also managed to raise considerable amounts of money from the sale of graves, both of which would have appealed to this successful businessman.¹⁷⁸

Christ Church was a welcome addition to Macclesfield's Anglican provision and offered a more evangelical style of worship. It remained a popular institution throughout its history and was 'an object of much reverence' within the town, because of its historical importance.¹⁷⁹ Through the efforts of its clergy, Christ Church also fostered a range of new institutions, which increased the religious, educational and recreational facilities in the town. Charles Roe's initial decision to establish a silk throwing mill in Macclesfield led directly to his gift of Christ Church. Although he was later noted for his copper business, it was his silk enterprise that made the core of his fortune and enabled him to finance the building and endowment of the church. Therefore it was a silk manufacturer who was wholly responsible for the foundation of Christ Church and wielded ultimate power and influence over the institution during his lifetime.

¹⁷⁵ Chaloner, 'Charles Roe, Part 2', p. 80.

¹⁷⁶ Sturdee, 'A Town of Silk', p. 158.

¹⁷⁷ *A Walk*, p. 165.

¹⁷⁸ Chaloner, 'Charles Roe, Part 2', p. 80.

¹⁷⁹ Sturdee, 'A Town of Silk', p. 159.

Discussion

These examples show the degree to which the silk manufacturers influenced specific religious institutions in Macclesfield. Taking a broader view of their actions, were there any distinct patterns to emerge from this range of organisations? It is evident from the surviving records that many silk manufacturers supported multiple religious institutions in Macclesfield. Twenty-two members of this occupational group either gave financial aid or held positions of responsibility in five or more of these organisations, with the same number of people assisting three or four institutions. (Full details of the Macclesfield silk manufacturers who aided three or more charitable institutions are given in Appendix Two.) David Holland appears to have been the most prolific individual and had connections with 11 institutions, followed by W. C. Brocklehurst and Joseph Brunt with nine and then John Birchenough, John Brocklehurst, George Cox and Josiah Smale who all aided eight. David Holland held active positions in five organisations, was a subscriber to three and held the honorary position of trustee in the remaining three. Five of the other six individuals were also actively involved with their selections and held between two and six positions of responsibility. Their ability to undertake this amount of commitment indicated that they were at the more successful end of the spectrum and had the time available to devote to these causes. However, there were also many silk manufacturers who concentrated virtually all their efforts into one organisation, such as George Pearson (I). He initially persuaded John Wesley to start visiting Macclesfield, was a founder of Sunderland Street Wesleyan Chapel, remained involved with the institution for 60 years, was still taking two classes a week at the time of his death and displayed 'much generosity in relieving the needy'.¹⁸⁰ These illustrations show the range of commitment displayed but, because these illustrations have been derived from the surviving records, they are likely to be an underestimate of the contributions that this group made to religious organisations.

The other patterns to emerge from a comparison of the silk manufacturers' support were that many individuals tended to offer help to organisations within their chosen denomination. For example, James Kershaw supported six institutions, five of which were Anglican and the other nondenominational. Similarly, David Holland was a Wesleyan and so his choices showed a strong bias towards their causes, although education appears to have been another major influence. He therefore assisted schools run by the Baptists,

¹⁸⁰ B. Smith, *Methodism in Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, 1875), p. 252.

Anglicans, Independents and Wesleyans, as well as the nondenominational Macclesfield Sunday School and the Y.M.C.A. Another factor to cut across the denominational boundaries was the area in which the silk manufacturer had his factory. For example, Thomas Allen supported a range of religious institutions in Sutton and the Brocklehurst family aided most of the organisations in Hurdsfield.

There was a strong family identification with particular institutions and successive generations often held positions of responsibility. For example, five members of the Smale family were active in Townley Street Sunday School during the nineteenth century and nine members of the Brocklehurst family aided the Macclesfield Sunday School. In addition, James Jackson was one of the quartet of silk manufacturers who founded Lord Street Sunday School and he acted as superintendent for over 54 years. During this time ‘upwards of 18,000 scholars had been brought under the moral and religious training imparted by the school’ and he was succeeded by his brother, Ferdinando Jackson.¹⁸¹ This tradition of long service seems to have been a family trait as Ferdinando Jackson was also treasurer to the Park Street Chapel for over 50 years, before handing over to his son William.

In general, the silk manufacturers who were active in particular institutions tended to sit on committees and some acted as chairman, secretary or treasurer. These were the more visible positions and their names appeared in annual reports and newspaper reports for the institution. Similarly, subscription lists were published in both formats and so the silk manufacturers’ actions had the added benefit of enhancing their public profiles. There were also many roles that required a greater commitment of time and did not carry the same kudos, such as Sunday school teachers. Despite this factor, there were still some silk manufacturers who undertook these duties over a prolonged period of time. For example, George Swindells taught at the Macclesfield Sunday School throughout his adult life and also acted as a visitor and trustee to the institution.¹⁸²

The extent to which an institution was affected by the silk manufacturers often fluctuated considerably over time. Higher Hurdsfield Sunday School’s original trustees in 1811 were a cordwainer, a stonemason and two yeomen, with only two out of the 16 named subscribers being silk manufacturers at this stage.¹⁸³ By the mid-nineteenth century this

¹⁸¹ *M.C.H.*, 22 August 1874, p. 5.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 24 November 1893, p. 5.

¹⁸³ M.P.L., E. Orme, *Hurdsfield Sunday School: A Brief Centenary History of the Hurdsfield Sunday School, Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, 1908), pp. 16-17.

situation had changed, as the people identified as generous supporters of the institution were three members of the Clarke family, eight members of the Brocklehurst family, Benjamin Broome and a further three individuals with no silk connections.¹⁸⁴ Overall there was a general decline in silk manufacturer participation within these institutions towards the end of the century as the silk industry contracted. For example in 1836, five out of the six original trustees for Park Street Methodist New Connexion Chapel were silk manufacturers.¹⁸⁵ By 1901, this proportion had diminished to two silk manufacturers out of 13 trustees.¹⁸⁶ The Ebenezer Wesleyan Chapel demonstrates this trend over a shorter period of time. Its 1877 trustees consisted of three farmers, a coal merchant, a silk weaver, a cotton spinner, a smallware dealer, two warehousemen and five silk manufacturers.¹⁸⁷ By 1903, there were no silk manufacturers on the trustee list, which consisted of a store manager, tanner, coal merchant, photographer, builder, machinist, commission agent, card cutter, clerk and boot maker.¹⁸⁸

Having explored the general nature of the silk manufacturers' role in the religious institutions, the obvious question is how far were other people instrumental in founding and supporting this group of organisations in Macclesfield? The clergy are the obvious starting point as they were often the key individuals in the history of particular institutions. At a higher level, the various Bishops of Chester were influential in deciding on the distribution of funding for new churches when grants became available for Cheshire. Revd John Thornycroft, the Rural Dean, was particularly active in campaigning for new churches around the periphery of Macclesfield, such as Holy Trinity in Hurdsfield, St James's in Sutton, St Thomas's in Henbury and St Peter's and St Paul's on the Common. He was also prominent in the subscription lists for all these institutions and was one of the main driving forces behind the establishment of these churches in the 1840s.

An example of an Independent counterpart is Captain Jonathan Scott, who resigned his army commission in order to become an Independent minister and devoted the rest of his life and fortune to the cause. He was recognised as having been involved with the establishment of over 20 chapels in the North West, including the Congleton chapel which he financed outright. He preached at Macclesfield on an occasional basis, gave £100 for

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁸⁵ C.R.O., EMC 1/14, Macclesfield Methodist New Connexion Circuit, Minutes of Quarterly Meetings, 5 June 1836.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, EMS 5/4648/1, Park Street Methodist New Connexion Chapel, Macclesfield, Trustees' Minute Book, 29 August 1901.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1877.

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The ability of the clergy and their length of office was another influence to affect progress. Revd Henry Briant was the first vicar of St Paul's Church when it opened in 1844 and

¹⁸⁵ C.R.O., EMC 1/14, Macclesfield Methodist New Connexion Circuit, Minutes of Quarterly Meetings, 5 June 1836.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, EMS 5/4648/1, Park Street Methodist New Connexion Chapel, Macclesfield, Trustees' Minute Book, 29 August 1901.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1877.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 3 March 1903.

¹⁸⁹ *A Walk*, p. 9.

stayed in the position for a further 40 years. He oversaw the continuing development of the church, founded the associated schools and was also responsible for the establishment of the Ragged and Industrial School in 1858.¹⁹⁰ Loyalty to a particular minister or clergyman was often a factor in the establishment of churches or chapels. In addition to Christ Church and David Simpson, Roe Street Chapel was another case where this factor was critical. The Independent section of the congregation at St George's Chapel had offered the vacant position of minister to a Mr Kidd in 1827, without the approval of the shareholders who were mainly Anglican. This caused the withdrawal of the Independents who went on to build Roe Street Chapel specifically for Mr Kidd, who was a strict Calvinist. He remained loyal to the institution for over 50 years and it was known locally as 'Kidd's Chapel'.¹⁹¹

The local county families had traditionally contributed towards religious foundations in the town and certain members maintained this practice in Macclesfield during this period. Their efforts were generally channelled toward Anglican organisations, as shown by the Duke of Westminster's support of five such institutions in the town, as well as the Ragged and Industrial School, to which he donated £900.¹⁹² He was actively involved in the renovation of St Michael's and was president of the Ragged and Industrial School. In the latter institution, Lord Egerton of Tatton and Sir William Cunliffe Brooks acted as his vice presidents in 1893.¹⁹³ Therefore, this group of people were occasional contributors to the Anglican versions of this group of institutions and there were a few instances where they took a more prominent role.

Figure 2.14. Ragged and Industrial School. (Calladine & Fricker, *East Cheshire Textile Mills*, p. 148.) Built in 1866 to accommodate up to 200 children (girls were excluded in 1870). In its Industrial School phase, 40 beds were reserved for Cheshire pupils and the remainder used for children from all over the country. (Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 272.)



¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 169-170.

¹⁹¹ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 341.

¹⁹² C.R.O., SL 77/1/1, Macclesfield Industrial School, Minute Book, 12 December 1864.

¹⁹³ *M.C.H.*, 18 February 1893, p. 6.

Britain and this was especially the case with Anglican and Catholic churches. For example, St Peter's and St Paul's Churches received all their subscriptions from external sources because of 'the utter incompetency of the District itself to furnish the necessary funds'.²⁰⁰

These examples show that the silk manufacturers were involved with most of the religious institutions in Macclesfield, along with representatives from other backgrounds. As the silk manufacturers were numerically dominant in the town, they could often form a majority group on the various church, chapel and school committees. However, were there other factors unrelated to the silk manufacturers that affected the progress of these organisations? The preceding examples have illustrated the importance of the clergy in shaping these institutions and the detrimental effects of differences arising between the congregation and their leader. There is little evidence in the records of internal disputes within the managing bodies of churches and chapels, other than the various secessions. The organisational structure of these organisations meant that problems had to be resolved through the specified channels and these rarely featured in the minute books. An exception is Fence School Chapel, which was run on more informal lines than most organisations and was not represented at Methodist New Connexion Circuit meetings. This meant that it occasionally experienced difficulties, such as in 1832 when two Circuit representatives were sent to investigate allegations of improprieties in the election of their superintendent.²⁰¹ Apathy was another problem with which committees had to contend. For example, at St James's Schools all the trustees failed to attend a meeting called in 1852 to apply for grant aid for the master's salary.²⁰²

The histories of the early sects in Macclesfield were characterised by persecution from people who saw these movements as a threat to the Established Church. In the case of the Wesleyans, George Pearson was often 'beset by disruptive mobs' who damaged his house windows and threatened arson.²⁰³ John Ryle also 'lived through the slights passed upon him by reason of his connections with the Wesleyans'. During the building of the 1764 Sunderland Street Chapel, the 'walls put up by day were ruins by the next morning', but Pearson and Ryle persevered and the opposition gradually lessened as the Wesleyans became more established.²⁰⁴ Similarly, the Independents at Townley Street Chapel were 'outrageously insulted as they passed through the streets on their lawful business; they

²⁰⁰ *M.C.H.*, 12 July 1845, p. 1.

²⁰¹ C.R.O., EMC 1/14, M.M.N.C.C. Minutes, 9 January 1842.

²⁰² Higgins, 'Anglican Provision', p. 249.

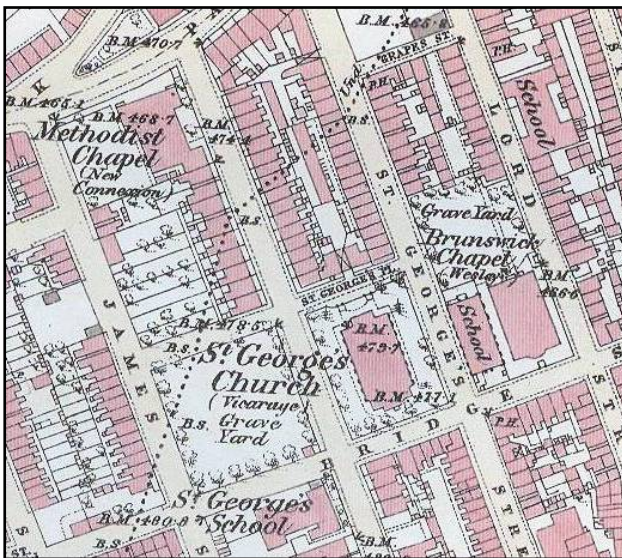
²⁰³ Malmgreen, *Silk Town*, p. 145.

²⁰⁴ C.R.O., EMS 6/7/1, Sunderland Street Wesleyan Chapel, Trustees' Minutes, 29 January 1881.

were a byword of derision as “Calvinists” and “Jacobins” and their meetings for religious worship were liable to perpetual interruption’.²⁰⁵

The fragmentation of the Methodist sects resulted in a rapid increase in the number of religious institutions and some duplication of effort. Similarly, the intense rivalry between denominations in the early nineteenth century meant that there was little cooperation and many foundations were established specifically to challenge existing institutions. For instance, in 1840 Revd William Pollock explained that his reason for founding Christ Church Schools was that the Dissenters were educating 4,110 Macclesfield children, the Roman Catholics 560 and other Sunday schools 2,100, making a total of 6,270 children. In comparison, the Anglican Duke Street National Schools had only 673 children in attendance, which was a very small proportion, and he believed that this school was under-performing.²⁰⁶ This example also demonstrates that there was inter-denominational rivalry in addition to the competition between different religious groups.

An example of a dilution of effort due to internal and external divisions was Bethel Baptist Chapel. As a comparatively small sect, it faced problems in attracting sufficient members



Map 2.1. Map showing the concentration of religious and educational institutions in northern Sutton. (Extract from Ordnance Survey Map, Sheet 36/12, First Edition, 1873.)

and generating enough income to sustain the institution. These problems were exacerbated by internal squabbles that hindered initial progress and the existence of further Baptist groups in the town provided additional competition. This was a common situation for Baptists in other northern towns such as Leeds.²⁰⁷ An illustration of the consequences of religious rivalry in Macclesfield was that by the mid-nineteenth century Sutton had two Anglican churches, a Wesleyan chapel and a Primitive

Methodist chapel, in addition to further nonconformist chapels outside the borough

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, D 5299, Nicholson, ‘Macclesfield Past’, p. 73.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, SL 328/3, Christ Church, Macclesfield, National Day, Infant and Sunday School Reports, William Pollock, Letter to Editor of *M.C.H.*, 4 September 1840.

²⁰⁷ N. Yates, ‘The Religious Life of Victorian Leeds’, in D. Fraser (Ed.), *A History of Modern Leeds* (Manchester, 1980), p. 265.

boundary. (Map 2.1 illustrates the close proximity of religious and educational institutions in a small area of Sutton.) As a result, there was much competition between denominations to attract the highest number of worshippers and scholars. A prime example of this was the day of the 1851 Census, when inducements were offered by some institutions to ensure good attendance figures.²⁰⁸

The emergence of new denominations meant that their day and Sunday schools were dependent on the success of each congregation. Where the movement could not sustain its initial enthusiasm, the associated schools tended to be a casualty of this decline and this was a common feature in Cheshire towns such as Stockport, Stalybridge and Macclesfield.²⁰⁹ Similarly, in the latter half of the nineteenth century the nonconformists established day schools precisely to address the Anglican dominance and these often proved to be shortlived. For instance, Townley Street Day School was run willingly by the Independents until the Anglican threat had lessened and they then tried unsuccessfully to hand it over to the School Board.²¹⁰ By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the religious rivalry was starting to diminish and there was evidence of increasing cooperation. For example, in 1894-1895 the Church Street West United Methodist Free Sunday School received anniversary service collections from Brunswick Wesleyan Chapel, St George's Street Baptist Chapel and the Bourne Primitive Methodist Chapel in Newtown.²¹¹

Most of the religious institutions suffered from financial problems at some time during their history. Reliance on voluntary subscriptions, collections and donations meant that there was little guaranteed income. The large number of causes vying for support within the town also had an effect on the amount of revenue that certain religious institutions were able to attract. Times of trade depression were particularly difficult for predominantly working class congregations, such as the Primitive Methodist chapels, as their sources of income were severely curtailed through reduced attendance. The wealthier organisations, such as Christ Church and Sunderland Street Wesleyan Chapel, were able to weather times of financial shortfall more easily. However, even the latter institution experienced a decline in revenue by the nineteenth century as income from seat rents had fallen back to

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, MF 11/1, Census of Religious Worship, 1851.

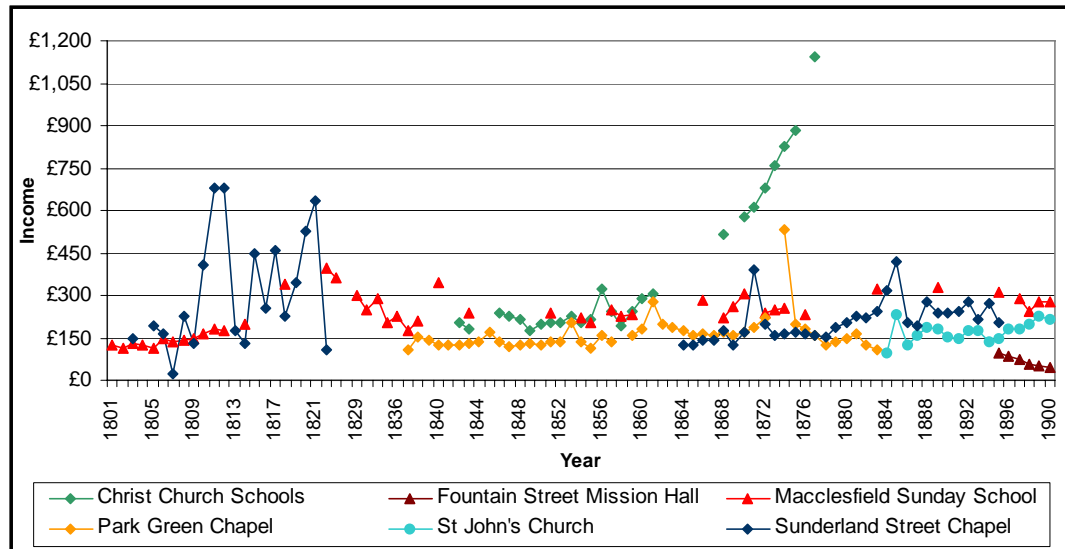
²⁰⁹ B. F. Chadwick, 'Educational Provision in the Macclesfield Hundred of Cheshire During the Nineteenth Century', unpublished M.Ed. thesis (University of Manchester, 1965), p. 36.

²¹⁰ C. D. Rogers, 'The Case Against the School Boards of Cheshire, 1870-1902', *Journal of the Chester Archaeological Society*, 5, 1970-1971, p. 59.

²¹¹ C.R.O., EMS 1/6/1, Church Street West Wesleyan Chapel, Macclesfield, Sunday School Treasurers' Accounts, 1887-1909.

eighteenth-century levels.²¹² Figure 2.15 gives a comparison of income (excluding special appeals) over the nineteenth century for six institutions.

Figure 2.15. Income for six Macclesfield religious institutions, 1801-1900 (where available).



This graph shows that most of the incomes stayed reasonably consistent over time with slight variances due to internal and external circumstances. The exceptions are Sunderland Street Chapel, which experienced fluctuations during the early nineteenth century and had a consistently higher income at this stage than most of the other organisations; Christ Church Schools received increased government funding for its expansion in the 1870s, while Fountain Street Mission's declining income in the late 1890s reflected the competition with other missions in the town.

Denominations which insisted on high standards of conduct from their followers often jeopardised income as a result. The Quakers were particularly keen to maintain standards and thus deviances, such as George Foden Hill's practice of 'many Gross Evils' in 1765, meant that he was barred from meetings.²¹³ The Primitive Methodists had a high turnover of members, as people were often unwilling to commit to their ideals for long periods of time and this added to the congregation's financial problems. For instance, in 1836 Beech Lane Chapel gained 260 new members, but lost a further 128 who had been expelled, had died or moved away.²¹⁴

²¹² *Ibid.*, EMS 6/7/1, Sunderland Street Wesleyan Chapel, Macclesfield, Trustees' Minutes, 4 February 1898.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, EFC 10/1/2, Society of Friends, Macclesfield Preparative Meeting Minutes, 26 January 1766.

²¹⁴ Malmgreen, *Silk Town*, p. 155.

The availability of grants for the Anglican religious institutions enabled more rapid progress to be made in increasing church provision in Macclesfield. The nonconformists had to manage without this source of income and resented the fact that they were forced to pay twice for the town's religious institutions (through the church rates and in the support of their own chapels). It was a similar situation in day schooling until grants were extended to nonconformist schools. This meant that the Anglican institutions had a definite advantage over their nonconformist counterparts in both areas of provision in Macclesfield.

The Wesleyan Centenary Day School was unique in Macclesfield in not receiving any government grants until 1873-1874, and then only a small amount of their entitlement.²¹⁵ This reflected a continuance of the Wesleyan distrust of state funding which was common earlier in the nineteenth century. By this stage, it had largely disappeared as the costs of providing educational facilities were a considerable drain on chapel resources. This desire to stay independent from State control elicited a degree of suspicion from the Anglicans, until the committee relaxed its stance and joined the rest of the town's schools in utilising the full complement of grant aid.²¹⁶

The major problem that faced most of the churches and chapels was their inability to attract sufficient numbers and specifically the working classes. The 1851 Ecclesiastical Census revealed that over 70 per cent of the Macclesfield population did not attend a place of worship on that day and this was typical in many other industrial centres such as Bradford, Leeds and the Lancashire cotton towns.²¹⁷ In 1844 Engels observed that 'among the masses there prevails almost universally a total indifference to religion' and all the subsequent attempts to remedy this situation met with little success.²¹⁸ In general, the barriers to working class participation, such as complex services, unfriendly congregations, the need for smart clothes and the prevailing secularism, meant that it was unlikely that many working people would want to give up their precious free time for religious purposes.²¹⁹ As a result, it was generally the middle classes who formed the backbone of the congregations and were active in church and chapel affairs.

²¹⁵ *Reports of the Committee of Council on Education, 1873-1874* (London, 1874), p. 304.

²¹⁶ N. L. Pole, 'Elementary Education in Macclesfield, 1833-1918', unpublished M.A. thesis (University of Sheffield, 1975), p. 73.

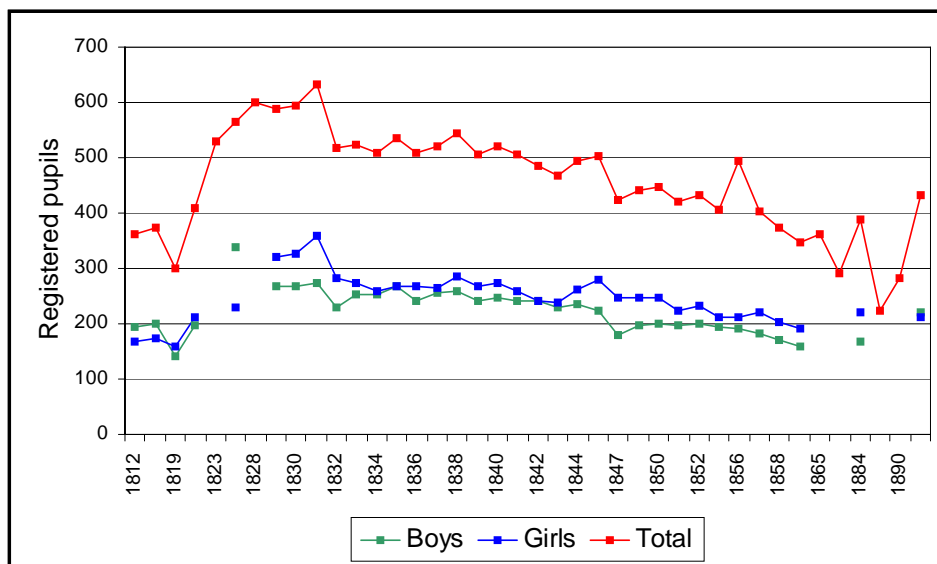
²¹⁷ Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes*, p. 1.

²¹⁸ F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (London, 1987, originally published in 1844), p. 146.

²¹⁹ J. Smith, 'Urban Elites, c. 1830-1930 and Urban History', *Urban History*, 27, 2000, p. 268.

Many of the Sunday schools did reach the working classes in Macclesfield and demand often outstripped the resources of these voluntary institutions. For example, the Fence Methodist New Connexion School had to introduce a selection process because there were so many parents in the relatively poor area of Hurdsfield who wanted their children to attend.²²⁰ Figure 2.16 shows the attendance at Townley Street Independent Sunday School during the nineteenth century and the large numbers of children who were educated there. It is significant that the numbers in this school were greater than the congregation of the parent chapel and showed that the lure of education for their children was more important for parents than their own religious beliefs, if they had ever existed.

Figure 2.16. Attendance figures at Townley Street Sunday School, 1812-1893 (where available). (C.R.O., ECU 6623/15, Townley Street Chapel, Scrapbook of Miscellaneous Papers.)



In the popular day schools, overcrowding often occurred because of the difficulties in raising sufficient funds before extending the premises. An illustration of this was Christ Church Schools, which in 1861 were described as ‘crippled by the need of enlargement, repairs and apparatus’.²²¹ Once school attendance was made compulsory, this added to the problem as the voluntary schools struggled to accommodate all the additional children. For example, in 1903 the inspector of Mill Street Wesleyan Day School concluded that either reorganisation, or the reduction of numbers, was imperative and that the infants were being taught under ‘disadvantaged circumstances’ because of the crowded conditions.²²²

²²⁰ Malmgreen, *Silk Town*, p. 154.

²²¹ C.R.O., SL 328/3, C.C.M., N.D.I.S.S., Reports, 1861, p. 2.

²²² *Ibid.*, CED 7/48/1, Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Schools, Report on Mill Street Higher Grade Wesleyan School, 1903.

The education given by the Sunday schools was necessarily basic, particularly in the early nineteenth century. For instance, out of the 4,262 pupils who were admitted to Townley Street Sunday School up to 1828, only 1,865 were recorded as being able to read the scriptures, which was the primary aim of the institution at this time.²²³ Some of the contributory factors to this situation were the common lack of punctuality and attendance of Sunday school pupils. They were deterred by factors such as bad weather, poor clothing and the need to help in the home. Consequently, Sunday schools attempted to overcome these problems by offering prizes for good attendance.²²⁴

Likewise, the standard of education offered to those who attended day schools was often low due to factors such as absenteeism, lack of money for school fees and poor punctuality. This had a detrimental effect on the quality of education and in 1843 an inspector visiting the new Christ Church Schools described how 50 of the pupils were half-timers, the teacher was untrained and all the children were 'lamentably ignorant'.²²⁵ From this unpromising start, Christ Church was able to improve its performance and joined Mill Street Wesleyan and Townley Street Independent Schools in gaining a reputation for higher standards. This meant that they could charge higher fees and attract children from more affluent families.

Conversely, the poverty around St Paul's Schools was such that Revd John Sinclair stated that there was not one individual in this district 'from whom a farthing may be expected' towards the building of the school.²²⁶ This meant that the institution faced a constant battle to provide the most basic education for its pupils, who were generally destined for the silk mills at the earliest opportunity. By the early twentieth century, only five of the Macclesfield schools had waived school fees and the rest had a sliding scale of charges according to the parents' financial position.²²⁷ This was an additional deterrent for school attendance in poorer areas, such as the Common. The aptitude of the teachers employed by the schools was variable, particularly in the years before school inspection. For example, the committee of St George's Schools apportioned blame to the master of the Mixed School for its 'very unsatisfactory' results in 1887 and he was informed that a rapid improvement was necessary. Likewise, the teacher at St Peter's was awarded 'the lowest

²²³ *Ibid.*, ECU 6623/15, Townley Street Chapel, Macclesfield, Scrapbook of Miscellaneous Papers, 14 September 1828.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, ECU 6623/9, Townley Street Sunday School, Macclesfield, Sunday School Minute Book, 4 October 1870.

²²⁵ *Parliamentary Papers, 1843*, cited in D. Roberts, *The Victorian Origins of the Welfare State* (Yale, 1969), p. 311.

²²⁶ C.R.O., P 225/3499/4/1-13, St Paul's National Schools, Macclesfield, Letter from John Sinclair to Committee of Council on Education, 7 October 1843.

class certificate' in 1873, which meant that she could not have any pupil teachers and this restricted her class size to 60 pupils.²²⁸

An indication of the prevailing standard of education in Macclesfield was given in 1872, when several silk throwsters estimated that a third of children employed in their factories were unable to read or write.²²⁹ Another reason for this situation was the lateness in enforcing compulsory schooling for half-timers in Macclesfield, as this only came into effect in 1844. Once in force, the large number of such students proved to be a major disadvantage for most schools, as they tended to bring down educational standards.²³⁰ Christ Church Schools were in a position to exclude such children and were thus able to maintain their reputation. Even as late as 1905, the persistence of the half-time system was still causing problems for the authorities controlling elementary education in the town.²³¹

In the field of day school attendance, Cheshire lagged behind the national average by the end of the nineteenth century and Macclesfield was singled out as being particularly poor, with accommodation for only a third of school age children.²³² However, the conclusion about Macclesfield has been disputed, with other sources indicating that the voluntary system was able to expand sufficiently for the influx of children and that Macclesfield Hundred was 'exceptionally well provided with school places'.²³³ The town's dependence on an industry that utilised child labour meant that there was always opposition to the introduction of elementary education and this situation persisted throughout the nineteenth century. In 1858-1859, the inspector stated that the below average age of girls in Cheshire schools was 'clearly due to the great demand for their labour in the cotton and silk mills'.²³⁴ Similarly, from the 1870s the School Board set deliberately low leaving standards to ensure that employers had a sufficient supply of labour and that children were able to learn their craft at a sufficiently young age to become skilled workers.²³⁵

Each denomination had hoped that Sunday and day schools would ensure a ready supply of converts to bolster congregation numbers in years to come. In reality, working-class parents generally ignored religious differences and sent their children to the most convenient school, with comparatively few maintaining any links once their education was

²²⁷ M.S.M., *The Development of Education in Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, n.d.), p. 17.

²²⁸ *M.C.H.*, 4 January 1873, p. 5.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 20 January 1872, p. 2.

²³⁰ Pole, 'Elementary Education', pp. 149-150.

²³¹ M.S.M., *The Development of Education*, p. 17.

²³² Harris, *A History of the County of Chester*, p. 210.

²³³ Pole, 'Elementary Education', p. 288; Chadwick, 'Educational Provision', p. 393.

²³⁴ *Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1858-1859* (London, 1859), p. 104.

completed.²³⁶ This was evident in the comments of the Vicar of Hurdsfield who wanted to exclude nonconformist children from the Hurdsfield National Schools in the early twentieth century, because Holy Trinity Church was subsidising their places with no hope of any return on their investment.²³⁷

All these examples demonstrate the range of influences outside the control of the silk manufacturers that determined the progress of the religious institutions during this period. What prompted the silk manufacturers to support churches, chapels, schools and missions in Macclesfield? Behind the decision of the manufacturers to offer assistance to religious institutions there must have been at least a nominal religious motive. Most of the organisations emphasised the Christian duty of inhabitants to offer their time and money for the town's churches, chapels and their associated institutions. For example, Townley Street Sunday School's 1843 annual report stated that it was 'the duty of every man, of every Christian community, to lay to his hand, either by personal effort as a teacher or by pecuniary contribution, or both, to help on the great work of instruction'.²³⁸ The evangelical clergy, in particular, also emphasised that accumulated wealth should be distributed through religious organisations, so that the spiritual and physical needs of the poor could be met and the donor could then derive satisfaction from the deed.²³⁹

For the newly established sects, the fact that their members suffered persecution indicated that their convictions had to be strong and there was a necessity for the congregation to remain cohesive under threat. This sense of belonging to a new organisation which had to fight for its existence would have stimulated loyalty amongst its followers and a desire to give personal support whenever necessary. The most obvious examples of such institutions are Sunderland Street and Townley Street Chapels. Similarly, financial problems often drew an embattled congregation closer together in their attempts to pay off large debts, as happened with Beech Lane Chapel. This example was similar to the Great Horton Primitive Methodist Chapel, which faced considerable funding difficulties, but persevered to form a particularly close-knit congregation.²⁴⁰

²³⁵ M.S.M., *The Development of Education*, p. 17.

²³⁶ Gilbert, *Religion and Society*, p. 202.

²³⁷ C.R.O., P 165/9/2, Holy Trinity Church, Hurdsfield, Charities, Letter from William Laycock, 30 July 1914.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, ECU 6623/10, T.S.C.M., Scrap Book, Annual Report of Sunday School, 1843.

²³⁹ J. Hart, 'Religion and Social Control in the Mid-nineteenth Century', in A. P. Donajgrodzki, *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1977), p. 130.

²⁴⁰ T. Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban-industrial Society: Bradford, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 284.

Some degree of humanitarian consideration was also a factor in prompting support of religious organisations at this time.²⁴¹ The churches and chapels included a network of services for the poor and the later missions and Ragged and Industrial School were specifically designed to help the most needy in the community. These institutions were therefore considered worthwhile objects for subscribers and offered a way in which the middle classes could channel contributions towards ameliorating the worst of the poverty encountered in the town.

One of the most common motives mentioned in the sources of the religious institutions was the desire to improve the particular neighbourhood and to exert a civilising influence on potentially volatile communities. In the 1840s, the Common area was known to be sympathetic to Chartism and the establishment of St Peter's and St Paul's attracted significant funding precisely because of the threat of unrest, which was a local and national concern. An illustration of this fear was the ceremonial laying of the foundation stone for St Peter's Church that took place in April 1848. Because there were Chartist meetings held daily in the area, there were 2,000 special constables, the Cheshire Yeomanry and the 60th Rifles put on standby in case of trouble on this day.²⁴²

The middle classes wanted to protect their property from damage and to ensure that the population was pacified. The churches, chapels and schools were seen as offering suitable alternatives to traditional working-class pastimes seen on Sundays, as Thomas Allen described in 1825: 'fighting themselves; fighting dogs; fighting cocks; playing at pitch and toss and every other unlawful game'.²⁴³ Another silk manufacturer, Mr Potts, highlighted that the education given in such institutions as Mill Street Wesleyan School could prevent 'young people make shipwrecks of their lives' and offered the opportunity for self-advancement to youths who were otherwise 'prowling about the streets, tumbling into public houses, and getting into all sorts of mischief'.²⁴⁴ Similarly, Charles Brocklehurst contributed to the costs of sending two Mill Street pupil teachers to study in London and said that his primary reason for this assistance was to 'offer some slight inducement' to these promising young men.²⁴⁵ The range of educational and recreational facilities provided by the Sunday schools, associated working men's institutions and the Y.M.C.A.

²⁴¹ D. Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State* (London, 1984), p. 126.

²⁴² Whomsley, *Anglican Churches*, p. 41.

²⁴³ C.R.O., D 4992/1, Thomas Allen, Address to 'Mechanics and Working Classes of Macclesfield', 1825.

²⁴⁴ *M.C.H.*, 2 February 1889, p. 2.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, LBM 2703/62/1, M.B.C., Newscuttings, 21 December 1878, p. 24.

were thus designed to attract both young people and newcomers who had no ties to the town and to provide them with activities regarded by the middle class as suitably worthy.

For aspirational manufacturers eager to attain respectability, certain churches and chapels offered the opportunity to mix with a high-ranking social group. The Church of England institutions were the beneficiaries of county families' largesse and generally attracted support from the upper echelons of the town's inhabitants. The Unitarians and Quakers were strongly weighted towards social and political leaders and gave their members the chance to meet a core of influential people in the town. Support for all these institutions underlined a person's reputation and his position in the community, while commanding a degree of deference from his inferiors.²⁴⁶ They also gave people the opportunity to influence the history of the institution and to experience power within a public organisation. In the case of King Edward Street Chapel, the rival Parsonage Street Chapel offered the opportunity for Samuel Greg to emerge from the Brocklehurst monopoly and to become the dominant figure at the newer chapel. For many middle-class families, religion provided the focal point around which their lives revolved, encompassing social activities, Sunday school teaching, committee duties and poor visiting, as well as two or three services on Sundays.²⁴⁷

The early chapels gave their nonconformist supporters the opportunity of a public role, prior to the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts in 1828, which had previously barred them from participating fully in local affairs. The fact that that major landowners had traditionally supported religious institutions in their locality meant that some silk manufacturers followed their lead in the nineteenth century. For example, when T. U. Brocklehurst purchased the Henbury Hall estate from Major Marsland, he and his successors continued to support the church and schools, paying for the church restoration in 1878.²⁴⁸ The Ryle family's ownership of land in various parts of Macclesfield meant that they were in a position to be able to donate the land for their own Sunderland Street Wesleyan Chapel and St George's Independent Chapel. John Ryle (I) was also the main benefactor for Sunderland Street Chapel in the eighteenth century, providing money for the different versions of the chapel built between 1778 and 1799. The need for the last rebuilding was made particularly urgent by the fact that six people were killed in an accident at the previous premises, which was partially due to the overcrowded conditions.

²⁴⁶ H. E. Meller, *Leisure and the Changing City, 1870-1914* (London, 1976), p. 84.

²⁴⁷ F. M. L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (London, 1988), p. 25.

²⁴⁸ C.R.O., P 253/4520/18, S.T.C.H., *Commemorative Booklet for Centenary*, p. 5.

As a result, he donated £1,000 towards the 1799 building and this allowed work to commence as quickly as possible.²⁴⁹

The religious institutions offered the opportunity to leave a permanent reminder of a person's contribution to the town and Christ Church is the prime example of this motive. Both Charles Roe and James Kershaw stated that if they were successful in business they would invest in Macclesfield's churches. Therefore these institutions were a testament to business success and gave something back to the town of Macclesfield. On a lesser scale, the evidence within institutional buildings and their written records give an indication of the identity of the main supporters of particular institutions and this illustrates the permanence of such contributions. All the religious institutions were seen as valuable additions to Macclesfield's facilities and the processions and celebrations at the opening ceremonies were evidence of the population's collective pride at their efforts. The fact that St Michael's Church was in a poor state of repair for an extended period of time was cited as a main reason for James Kershaw's actions. It was not seen as a suitably grand parish church for an important manufacturing town and Stockport's success in generating funds for its churches only underlined Macclesfield's inferiority to its larger neighbour. Therefore the restoration was seen as a way of redressing this balance and enhancing Macclesfield's civic reputation.

The nondenominational establishments such as the Macclesfield and Higher Hurdsfield Sunday Schools gained support from a wide cross-section of people specifically because they were not officially affiliated to the main religious bodies. Conversely, the rivalry between organisations also stimulated contributions from those people who wished to see particular denominational influence extended. One of the main examples of this situation was the conflict between the Wesleyans and Anglicans over the running of the Large Sunday School, which resulted in the founding of Duke Street National Schools and Mill Street Wesleyan Schools. Similarly, Charles Roe wanted to establish an Anglican church that would act as a rival to St Michael's and become a more dynamic institution than the older church. Likewise, recognition of the decline of the Church of England and the threat from nonconformists led to the spate of church building in the 1840s that gained support at both a national and local level.

The most generous benefactors were most likely to have some association with the institution concerned. However, there were many examples of both nonconformists and

²⁴⁹ *A Walk*, p. 181.

Anglicans giving to their rival religious institutions, particularly during the latter part of the period. For example, the Unitarian Brocklehursts donated consistently large amounts to Holy Trinity Church, in whose parish most of their workers lived, but some of these gifts may also have reflected the Anglican sympathies of some later family members, such as P. P. and F. D. Brocklehurst. Even John Brocklehurst (III), who was a staunch Unitarian, recognised the Church of England's role as a political and religious bulwark for the country.²⁵⁰ Samuel Oldknow of Marple is another example of a manufacturer with a Unitarian upbringing who financed the rebuilding of the Anglican church making 'an excellent road to Heaven' for the congregation, which was largely made up of his employees.²⁵¹ Another facet of the Brocklehursts' support for all the Hurdsfield institutions was that, particularly in the early years, the family all lived in the area and most retained a strong attachment once they had moved further afield, such as Emma Dent's continued gifts after she had moved to Gloucestershire.

For manufacturers, the Sunday schools offered a range of benefits for themselves and their employees. Sunday schools did not encroach into work time so there was no loss of labour, unlike the day schools. The institutions were also seen as a way of instilling discipline that would help to prepare children for the rigours of factory work.²⁵² The day schools were an extension of this movement and were perceived as a means of bringing children under religious influence, saving them from a life of idleness and enabling them to attain respectability.²⁵³ Many manufacturers in larger towns, such as Bradford and Rochdale, were forced to establish factory schools when the half-time legislation became compulsory, or to provide support to existing schools in order to accommodate their factory children.²⁵⁴

There was little evidence of any factory schools in Macclesfield, but the manufacturers were supporters of the various day schools and there must have been a correlation between these donations and the necessity to provide education for their workers. Similarly, there are no instances of manufacturers financing schools outright and it appears that they were content to let the existing agencies take responsibility for establishing schools and to give financial aid when approached. This is in direct contrast to the Horrocks family in Preston,

²⁵⁰ Pole, 'Elementary Education', p. 149.

²⁵¹ G. Unwin, *Samuel Oldknow and the Arkwrights: The Industrial Revolution at Stockport and Marple* (Manchester, 1968), p. 232.

²⁵² L. Stone, 'Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900', *Past and Present*, 42, 1969, p. 92.

²⁵³ M. Dick, 'The Myth of the Working-class Sunday School', *History of Education*, 9, 1980, p. 36.

²⁵⁴ J. Hurt, 'Landowners, Farmers and Clergy and the Financing of Rural Education Before 1870', *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 1, 1968, p. 6.

who founded a school for 200 pupils in 1823, and John Fielden, who financed a Sunday school, an elementary school and a factory school in Todmorden.²⁵⁵ Another factor that made voluntary schools attractive to manufacturers was that they did not pose any burden on the ratepayers. This was highlighted in annual reports, particularly from the 1870s. For example, in 1879 it was calculated that Christ Church Schools would cost the ratepayers £800 a year if they did not receive voluntary funding and that a similar Board school would cost a third more to run.²⁵⁶

The fact that manufacturers placed advertisements in the press for large numbers of young people at times of trade prosperity suggests that they had a degree of responsibility for providing facilities for their new employees. The influx of people in such large numbers meant pressure on existing facilities and the need to establish further institutions in order to cater for the newcomers. The continuing support of the manufacturers for the educational institutions was seen as an essential part of their role. For example, the Stockport Sunday School was keen that employers should only appoint children who were in attendance at Sunday schools and the unrest surrounding the Peterloo Massacre in 1819 was seen by the committee as evidence of masters neglecting their duty towards their staff.²⁵⁷ In addition, the qualities promoted by the religious organisations, such as temperance, punctuality and the desire for education, meant that employees who attended such establishments were likely to be good workers, which was an added incentive for manufacturers.

The silk manufacturers were able to influence day school attendance through their representation on the School Board. In the 31 years of its existence, only 13 out of 46 members came from occupations outside the silk manufacturers and clergy.²⁵⁸ They were therefore able to set an artificially low leaving standard to ensure sufficient labour for the mills. Any attempts to raise the standard was met with protest from certain silk manufacturers, such as in 1872 when they had to be reminded by J. O. Nicholson 'that they were there as an education board and not as manufacturers and they must not forget that the primary matter for their consideration was the instruction of the children of the town'.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵ W. T. Baldwin, 'The Development of Elementary Education in Preston from 1815 to 1902', unpublished M.Ed. thesis (University of Liverpool, 1970), p. 50; J. A. Hargreaves, 'Religion and Society in the Parish of Halifax, c. 1740-1914', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Huddersfield Polytechnic, 1991), p. 171.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, SL 328/3, C.C.M., N.D.I.S.S. Reports, 1879, p. 2.

²⁵⁷ R. Glen, *Urban Workers in the Early Industrial Revolution* (Beckenham, 1984), p. 79.

²⁵⁸ Pole, 'Elementary Education', p. 190.

²⁵⁹ *M.C.H.*, 20 January 1872, p. 2.

In addition to Nicholson's stance on the School Board, there is evidence that some manufacturers were keen to see their employees gain some basic education before starting employment. For example, Mr Brodrick accompanied a factory inspector in 1841 and was quoted as saying that 'the children ought to be able to read and write before they are allowed in a factory at all'. The inspector went on to say that this would 'counteract the general spread of ignorance' and 'would prepare them to meet, and more successfully grapple with, the evils by which they must, in the present state of things, be surrounded in the factories'.²⁶⁰ William Coare Brocklehurst also wrote to the local paper in 1872, outlining his views on secular education: 'It makes one's heart sink to think of how many children born in the last 33 years have grown to manhood, and for the whole of their lives have been deprived of the chance of gaining a useful or honourable position. It is sad to think of how many thousands have had to accept the doom of ignorance and neglect, with their consequences of crime, penury, punishment and misery – a pest to society, a blot and a cost on their country. And at this present moment there are hundreds of thousands of children, the future men and women of England, waiting for that help of which each day's postponement makes it too late – too late to be saved from the already over-charged calendar of criminals.'²⁶¹ These examples show that in contrast to the School Board's insistence on an artificially low leaving standard, there were some manufacturers who at least professed the desire to see an educated workforce in Macclesfield.

All these examples show the range of motives that appear to have influenced the decisions of the silk manufacturers to support the Macclesfield religious institutions. To what extent were their original expectations of the religious organisations met during this period? The records of the various institutions illustrate the amount that they were able to achieve within Macclesfield. However, it should be borne in mind that the majority of the information available was designed to attract support and so probably represents an idealised view of progress. In spite of this caveat, it appears that various organisations were able to introduce some change within their communities. For example, the effect of St Paul's on the surrounding area was described as follows: 'dens of vice and filth were cleaned up and an orderly and industrious congregation of neatly dressed operatives' were attending services.²⁶² In 1899, Revd Sydney Porter spoke 'highly of the spirit and heartiness of its services' and underlined that the best members of his congregation 'are

²⁶⁰ W. Dodd, *The Factory System Illustrated* (London, 1968 originally published in 1842), p. 188.

²⁶¹ *M.C.H.*, 16 March 1872, p. 5.

²⁶² Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 317.

those who toil hardest during the week'.²⁶³ This indicates that St Paul's was able to reach a proportion of the working classes and had some beneficial effect on the surrounding area.

The effects of religious institutions on law and order were cited in the mayoral speech of David Oldham at the laying of the foundation stone of Park Green Chapel in 1857. He stated that 'they had full proof that Sunday school teachers are a great less expense to the nation than policemen', thus stressing the benefits of Sunday schools for all Macclesfield inhabitants in the reduction of crime.²⁶⁴ The gradual lessening of the threat of revolution and major unrest in this decade probably contributed to this view, but the fact that working-class children did flock to the various Sunday schools would have reduced the opportunity for disorder on Sundays, which was one of the primary concerns expressed by supporters of the religious institutions. Similarly, the Ragged and Industrial School was seen as exerting a strong influence in the prevention of crime. For example, in 1869 the managers stated that there were a number of children who 'having passed through the schools, are now getting their own living, the moral and religious training of those who but for such an asylum would certainly have ranked among the criminals in our prisons, the honest and wealthy career opened up for the restless, roaming and disaffected portion of our youth; these and such like results have induced so many, and may well induce more to become the liberal patrons and promoters of institutions, which are confessedly among the most successful of modern enterprises, having for their object the amelioration of the condition of the lowest and most neglected grade of our community'.²⁶⁵

The need to provide some sort of infrastructure for a rapidly expanding population was helped by the establishment of the religious organisations. In addition to the main places of worship and schools, each congregation had a proliferation of associated organisations that helped to address some of the deficiencies in the town's services. These included burial societies, needlewomen's guilds, Bands of Hope, working-men's associations, mutual improvement societies and home visiting programmes. There were also many social occasions, such as fundraising events and outings, which provided additional recreational options for participants. All these opportunities provided a parallel world open to both the middle and working classes who wanted to commit to a different way of life and to progress in various ways. Likewise, the Y.M.C.A. offered its members the chance for advancement and in 1888 it was recognised as supplying 'to our various

²⁶³ Sturdee, 'A Town of Silk', p. 160.

²⁶⁴ M.S.M, PH 261, Laying the Foundation Stone of a New Wesleyan Free Church at Macclesfield, 1857.

²⁶⁵ M.C.H., 6 March 1869, p. 5.

business establishments of a respectable, intelligent and trustworthy class of men, who otherwise might have held other and inferior positions'.²⁶⁶

As Macclesfield's population was constantly shifting over this period, the religious institutions provided the chance for incomers to integrate into town life and to build a new network of contacts. The need to develop a sense of community was helped by the fundraising campaigns and the public processions at the opening of new public institutions. The building of St James's Church in Higher Sutton was an example of a community drawing together towards a common goal. Everyone in the area was approached to see what they could offer the project and this resulted in donations of land, money, stone from a local quarry and the transport of materials by farmers.²⁶⁷ Similarly, financial difficulties and persecution also drew people together in an attempt to surmount the many difficulties to face these voluntary organisations. The Sunday schools were institutions that elicited strong loyalty from the majority of their scholars and many former pupils became teachers, as illustrated by the Bethel Baptist Sunday School that had a total of 221 scholars and 37 teachers in 1867, all of whom were former pupils themselves.²⁶⁸

There were some Macclesfield institutions that were particularly successful in their field. For example, Christ Church Day School was considered by the inspectors to be within the top five per cent of schools nationally at one stage in the nineteenth century.²⁶⁹ Some Christ Church pupils continued their education with success, illustrated by the fact that in 1871, seven former pupils gained prizes at the town's Modern School.²⁷⁰ In 1897 Mr Bromley Davenport outlined how the 'schools have now run their distinguished course of 55 years', educating successive generation of children, 'some of whom in the afterlife have attained most high and honourable positions in the borough'. At the same meeting Henry Birchenough spoke of the 'high position which Christ Church Schools held in the voluntary education of the town, and of the fact that when a boy or girl was seeking employment their having attended Christ Church Schools was always an absolute passport to employment with respect to the firm with which he was connected'.²⁷¹ The Ragged and Industrial School also gained national recognition and it had a constant stream of visitors from other areas keen to gain an insight into how such a school should be run. Its success

²⁶⁶ *A Walk*, p. 83.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

²⁶⁸ C.R.O., EBC 4/5077, Macclesfield General Baptist Chapel, Sunday School Minutes, 27 January 1867.

²⁶⁹ M.P.L., *Christ Church, Macclesfield*, p. 17.

²⁷⁰ C.R.O., SL 328/3, C.C.M., N.D.I.S.S., Reports, 1871, p. 2.

²⁷¹ *M.C.H.*, 27 February 1897, p. 2.

rate was illustrated by the fact that by 1888 it was estimated that during the past 20 years, 90 per cent of children had 'by their character and conduct had proved the incalculable benefit they had received'. The inspectors also gave the institution much praise as in the same year the inspector stated that 'my visit has afforded me unqualified success'.²⁷²

There is no doubt that Macclesfield did extend its range of religious institutions considerably during this time. At the start of the period there was just one church and two nonconformist places of worship and Table 2.1 (on pages 105-106) shows the number of institutions that were established in the ensuing 150 years. In terms of education, there were no public schools in 1750 and by the end of the nineteenth century there were 16 day schools, together with a number of other educational institutions affiliated to the various places of worship.²⁷³

The preceding examples have shown that the churches and chapels were built according to the middle class expectations of attracting large numbers of the working classes. The fact that only a small proportion did attend meant that there was spare capacity in most of the institutions by the end of the nineteenth century. The continued decline in church- and chapel-going in the twentieth century caused the merger of many congregations and surplus buildings were either demolished or used for different purposes. However, the churches and chapels did succeed in providing places of worship for many Macclesfield people and the continuing popularity of St Alban's Church shows that there were congregations who were successful in attracting a predominantly working-class clientele, in contrast to the middle-class bias of most of the organisations. The associated functions of the religious institutions also provided a range of services that filled a vacuum in this industrialising town. Therefore the churches and chapels did meet some of the expectations of their founders, but were not able to fulfil the hope that most Macclesfield people would be regular attendees at religious worship.

In contrast, the Sunday schools were popular institutions that succeeded in attracting working-class children and they were the primary source of education for many working people in the nineteenth century. However, most working-class parents used them solely as a means of educating their offspring and rejected the religious overtones that accompanied these institutions. The standard of education given in these schools was unable to progress beyond the most basic tenets until day schooling became a reality for

²⁷² *A Walk*, p. 27.

²⁷³ Brunner & Hammond, *Public Education in Cheshire*, p. 70.

children in the town. Most of the Macclesfield Sunday schools survived into the twentieth century and there are still some in existence today, despite the wholesale changes in the educational system.

The day schools were reorganised following the 1902 Education Act and came under the County Council control. Some of the nineteenth-century day schools have survived, such as St Alban's and Hurdsfield Primary Schools, while others were closed or absorbed into new schools. The voluntary day schools were an initial attempt to provide a system of public education for Macclesfield children. They faced many disadvantages and could not realistically achieve their targets until sufficient government funding was made available. However, in the absence of any other educational initiatives, they represented a local answer to the problem of delivering full-time education and would have met some of the expectations of their founders.

Having investigated the involvement of the Macclesfield silk manufacturers in the town's religious institutions, was their contribution consistent with that of industrialists in other urban areas? In terms of religious affiliation, a survey of Manchester middle-class families in the mid-Victorian period (including industrialists, professionals and public officials) revealed that Anglicans were always in the majority, although most of the wealthy families were nonconformists. Congregationalism was the other major denomination, having overtaken Unitarianism, and their share combined with the Anglicans represented around 75 per cent of the people surveyed.²⁷⁴ In comparison, from a sample of 45 Macclesfield silk manufacturers who entered the field of local politics in the nineteenth century and had definite religious affiliations, 23 were Anglican, six were Congregationalist, five were Wesleyan, five were Unitarian, four Methodist New Connexion, one Methodist Free and one Quaker. The same combination of Anglicans and Congregationalists made up 64 per cent of the Macclesfield sample, showing that while Anglicanism was strong, Congregationalism appeared to be less prominent in Macclesfield than in its larger counterpart, although the differing time scales may explain some of this discrepancy.

Nationally, there were many leading Congregational industrialists who invested in chapels, such as W. H. Lever who built Blackburn Road Congregational Chapel in Bolton and the Crossley family who donated the Square Congregational Chapel in Halifax.²⁷⁵ In contrast,

²⁷⁴ S. Gunn, 'The Ministry, the Middle Class and the 'Civilizing Mission' in Manchester, 1850-1880', *Social History*, 21, 1996, p. 24.

²⁷⁵ J. Munson, *The Nonconformists: In Search of a Lost Culture* (London, 1991), pp. 15, 20.

Townley Street Chapel and Park Green Church in Macclesfield did not have any major industrial patronage. However, there were silk manufacturers involved with both institutions. For example, the 18-strong building committee of Park Green Church in 1876 had six silk manufacturers, including Joseph Wright, J. O. Nicholson and R. J. Bradbury.²⁷⁶ Similarly, of the eight officers appointed to the church in 1881, Joseph Brunt, Josiah Smale and Joseph Wright were the three silk representatives, with the latter serving as treasurer.²⁷⁷

The Manchester study and Macclesfield's history both reveal the donation of churches by industrialists, albeit on a totally different scale. For example, Charles Roe paid for Christ Church in Macclesfield, while the Birley family built seven churches, costing in excess of £100,000, in the period up to 1875.²⁷⁸ There was also a perceptible shift in allegiance on the part of some of the nonconformist Manchester middle class towards Anglicanism in the late nineteenth century and this correlates with members of the Brocklehurst and Thorp silk manufacturing families who made the same move towards the Church of England.²⁷⁹ This trend was perhaps indicative of a family's consolidation of their respectability, growing identification with the Establishment and the move away from the bitter denominational divisions that had characterised the early nineteenth century.

Lancashire as a whole benefited from the success of its textile masters and many Anglican churches were built in the nineteenth century with the proceeds of their endeavours. Donations of the whole cost of churches accounted for around 25 per cent of all the money spent on the building and restoration of these institutions and this figure demonstrates how important this type of funding was to the Anglican programme of church extension.²⁸⁰ Similarly, around Halifax, the Church of St Mary, Cotton Stone, was built by the silk and cotton manufacturers, John Hadwen & Sons, while the Rawson family gave £6,000 to build the Church of St John the Divine, Thorpe Triangle.²⁸¹

The Dissenting manufacturers also channelled their wealth into places of worship, such as the £35,835 given by the Fielden Brothers for Todmorden Unitarian Church.²⁸² This is similar to the support of the Brocklehurst family to the King Edward Street Chapel,

²⁷⁶ *A Walk*, p. 186.

²⁷⁷ C.R.O., ECU 6623/14, Park Green Congregational Chapel, Macclesfield, Register of Services and Texts, 1881 Officers.

²⁷⁸ Gunn, 'The Ministry', p. 32.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁸⁰ A. Howe, *The Cotton Masters, 1830-1860* (Oxford, 1984), p. 280.

²⁸¹ Hargreaves, 'Religion and Society', pp. 175, 274.

²⁸² Howe, *The Cotton Masters*, p. 280.

although the Macclesfield congregation continued to use its existing modest premises. The manufacturing Illingworths and Thomas Dewhirst in Bradford were prominent supporters of the Baptist cause, but there is little evidence of Macclesfield manufacturers following the same pattern until the building of George Street Chapel.²⁸³ Its trustee list contained one silk manufacturer, William Hilton, and nine others.²⁸⁴ Hilton was also present on the building committee, alongside Josiah Smale senior who acted as treasurer, and 10 other non-silk representatives.²⁸⁵ In addition to Smale's large loan in 1874, he paid for the costs of the tea meeting in 1875 and donated £100 towards the extinction of the mortgage.²⁸⁶ These examples show that their input into the new chapel seemed to be greater than in the original Bethel Chapel and was more consistent with Baptist industrialists elsewhere.

The Akroyds in Halifax were the primary supporters of the Salem Methodist New Connexion Chapel and it was rumoured that they coerced their workers to attend services there.²⁸⁷ There were many silk manufacturers in Macclesfield who were loyal to this denomination, including David Holland and David Oldham, but there is no evidence to suggest that they encouraged their workforce to attend their Macclesfield chapels. Edward Akroyd was one of those who converted to Anglicanism in the 1850s 'in order to insist on the importance of Christianity as a social stability and morality for the working people' and his comments resonate with John Brocklehurst's view of the Anglican Church (see page 93).²⁸⁸ Akroyd subsequently built All Souls Anglican Church, presumably in the hope that it would attract a proportion of his workers, and the correlation between the support of religious institutions and the benefits of these organisations to a manufacturer's workforce is a common one in the industrial north.

In Blackburn, there was some disparity in the amount of funding that churches and chapels were able to gain from manufacturers. Some were relatively wealthy and others received little support from mill owners and faced uncertain financial futures. For example, Joseph Eccles was the main benefactor of Mill Hill Congregational Church and St Philip's Church was funded by the Dugdales, specifically for themselves and their workers. In contrast, St Thomas's Church, in the poor area of Bottomgate, was financed entirely by door-to-door collections in the locality and it took ten years to raise the amount needed to commence

²⁸³ Koditschek, *Class Formation*, p. 257.

²⁸⁴ EBC 4/5077, Macclesfield General Baptist Chapel, Committee Minutes, 1 May 1872.

²⁸⁵ Whomsley, *Baptist*, p. 38.

²⁸⁶ C.R.O., EBC 4/5077, M.G.B.C., C.M., 5 June 1875; 24 May 1876.

²⁸⁷ Hargreaves, 'Religion and Society', p. 157.

²⁸⁸ T. Iwama, 'The Middle Class in Halifax, 1780-1850', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Leeds, 2003), p. 280.

building.²⁸⁹ Despite the investment in churches and chapels, Blackburn also experienced problems in attracting worshippers with only 20 per cent attending churches in 1880 and this is consistent with other industrial towns.²⁹⁰

In Oldham, large employers played a decreasing part in religious affairs in the nineteenth century as the old mill churches that had been dominated by employers suffered lower attendances, while Methodist congregations with a high proportion of artisans, tradesmen and clerks proved more popular.²⁹¹ In general, Lancashire churches and chapels were dependent on the support of the textile manufacturers in the period from 1840 to 1875, but in Halifax they continued their support until 1914.²⁹² The decline of the silk industry meant that the Macclesfield silk manufacturers decreased in numbers and wealth towards the end of the nineteenth century and this coincided with increasing secularisation. Therefore, although the more affluent manufacturers continued to aid their chosen institutions, their collective contributions could not remain at the levels seen earlier in the century.

Educational institutions that grew up alongside the churches and chapels were more successful in attracting pupils than their parent institutions. In Oldham, around 40 per cent of children aged between four and fourteen years were believed to have attended a Sunday school on Census Sunday in 1851. In common with Macclesfield, the Methodists dominated Sunday schools and they taught over 40 per cent of Oldham's children.²⁹³ In Manchester the working classes generally remained impervious to the values disseminated by the middle classes and used the institutions to gain some form of education for their children, a factor that was consistent with Macclesfield.²⁹⁴ In comparison with the churches and chapels, the amount invested in Sunday schools by their patrons in Lancashire was relatively small.²⁹⁵ Once the initial outlay was made on the building, these institutions were reasonably self-supporting, through annual sermons and occasional public appeals, and their overall costs were low. In contrast, the Macclesfield Sunday School did receive occasional large donations from silk manufacturers throughout the nineteenth century, but this was a significantly larger institution than its counterparts and therefore

²⁸⁹ D. Beattie, *Blackburn: The Development of a Lancashire Cotton Town* (Halifax, 1992), p. 134.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

²⁹¹ J. Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three Towns* (London, 1977), pp. 214-215.

²⁹² Hargreaves, 'Religion and Society', p. 397.

²⁹³ Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, p. 215.

²⁹⁴ M. Hewitt, *The Emergence of Stability in the Industrial City: Manchester, 1832-1867* (Aldershot, 1996), p. 121.

²⁹⁵ Howe, *The Cotton Masters*, p. 280.

represented an atypical case. The remainder fell into a similar category to the Lancashire institutions.

The wide range of organisations supported by manufacturers during the nineteenth century was also a common phenomenon. Edward Akroyd was a member of over 20 voluntary societies based in Halifax and West Yorkshire during his lifetime and this echoes the multiple religious organisations supported by the Macclesfield silk manufacturers, again on a smaller scale.²⁹⁶ Likewise, many Lancashire manufacturers subscribed to a variety of causes that were spread across the denominations and this is similar to the wide range of institutions supported by many Macclesfield silk manufacturers.²⁹⁷

In terms of motives, many of the reasons emerging from other studies of industrial towns are similar to the Macclesfield examples. For middle-class people in Lancashire, church and chapel building represented a duty of wealth that had the added benefit of promoting self-help. The Dissenters often felt that they owed their rise in station to the qualities promoted by religion and therefore wanted to give something back to the community.²⁹⁸ In Manchester the religious institutions were seen as instruments of social control, which would address the problems of social dislocation endemic in the town through the generation of a sense of civic pride.²⁹⁹ They also acted as a site of class formation where the Manchester middle classes could enhance their social status and underline their dominance over their subordinates.³⁰⁰

At the time, there was national suspicion of the way in which industrialists supported churches and their reasons behind their actions. For example, in 1839 Pugin felt that churches were viewed in the same light as mortgages and railway investment by their patrons which devalued their real meaning.³⁰¹ Similarly, a newspaper article in 1832 stated that the rich ‘donated money “for the spiritual good of the poor, while they leave their bodily care so entirely to other hands, that want and starvation are almost as abundant as bibles”. They are charitable merely that they be sure of salvation as a sure means of booking their place to heaven.’³⁰² Whatever their motives and the efficacy of their efforts,

²⁹⁶ Hargreaves, ‘Religion and Society’, pp. 82, 222.

²⁹⁷ Howe, *The Cotton Masters*, p. 305.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 283.

²⁹⁹ Hewitt, *The Emergence of Stability*, p. 121.

³⁰⁰ Gunn, ‘The Ministry’, p. 23.

³⁰¹ Howe, *The Cotton Masters*, p. 281.

³⁰² *Figaro in London*, 8 September 1832, cited in P. Hollis (Ed.), *Class and Conflict in Nineteenth-century England* (London, 1973), p. 329.

there is no doubt that the investment of industrialists in these institutions was a fundamental part of urban life in the long nineteenth century.

These examples, together with those cited previously, show that Macclesfield was reasonably typical of a northern industrial town in the role that its industrialists played in the development of its religious institutions. Its smaller size meant that there were fewer large industrialists who could afford to finance churches and chapels outright. However, the silk manufacturers were prominent in most of the Macclesfield religious organisations and replicated much of the industrial patronage that was evident elsewhere at this time. In common with other towns, the success of their ventures was variable, but there is no doubt that they did establish some institutions which were of genuine benefit to the middle and working classes within this industrial settlement. James Kershaw was one such silk manufacturer who was clearly visible in the development of Macclesfield's religious institutions and the following description outlines the way in which he was able to play a key role in improving the town: 'The Church in Macclesfield has no more earnest, conscientious, and liberal member...And, like the catholic-minded Churchman that he is, he has not withheld his influence and financial help from any religious body doing solid work for the spiritual and moral elevation of his fellow-townsmen...May Macclesfield never lack such worthy citizens, ready to spend and be spent in the promotion of its welfare.'³⁰³

³⁰³ *Pen Pictures*, pp. 31-32.

Table 2.1. Chronological List of the Religious Institutions Serving the Borough of Macclesfield*

Institution	Date of Commencement	Denomination
St Michael's Church	1278	Anglican
King Edward Street Chapel	1690	Unitarian
Mill Street Meeting House	1705	Society of Friends
Christ Church	1775	Anglican
Sunderland Street Chapel	1779	Wesleyan Methodist
Townley Street Chapel	1788	Independent
Macclesfield Sunday School	1796	Nondenominational
Townley Street Schools	1801	Independent
Parsonage Street Chapel	1806	Methodist New Connexion
Hurdsfield Sunday School	1811	Nondenominational
Broken Cross Chapel	1811	Wesleyan Methodist
St Michael's Chapel	1811	Roman Catholic
Duke Street National Schools	1813	Anglican
Mill Street Schools	1814	Wesleyan Methodist
Lord Street Schools	1820	Methodist New Connexion
Bethel Chapel	1822	General Baptist
St George's Chapel	1824	Independent
Brunswick Chapel	1824	Wesleyan Methodist
Zion Chapel	1826	Independent Methodist
St George's Church	1828	Anglican
Roe Street Chapel	1829	Independent
Beech Lane Chapel	1830	Primitive Methodist
Parsonage Street Chapel	1836	Church of Latter Day Saints
Park Street Chapel	1837	Methodist New Connexion
St George's National Schools	1836	Anglican
Holy Trinity Church	1839	Anglican
Wesleyan Centenary Schools	1839	Wesleyan Methodist
St James's Church	1840	Anglican
Christ Church National Schools	1841	Anglican
St James's National Schools	1841	Anglican
St Alban's Church	1841	Roman Catholic
St Alban's Schools	1841	Roman Catholic
Fence School Chapel	1841	Methodist New Connexion
Hurdsfield National Schools	1841	Anglican
St Paul's Church	1841	Anglican
Church Street West Chapel	1842	Wesleyan Methodist Association
Bourne Chapel	1844	Primitive Methodist
St Thomas's Church	1845	Anglican
St Thomas's Schools	1846	Anglican
St Peter's National Schools	1846	Anglican
St Peter's Church	1849	Anglican
St Andrew's National Schools	1849	Anglican
St Andrew's Church	1850	Anglican
St Paul's National Schools	1852	Anglican
Y.M.C.A.	1856	Nondenominational
Parsonage Street Chapel	1857	Unitarian
Park Green Chapel	1858	Free Methodist (United)
Ragged and Industrial School	1858	Anglican
Mount Tabor Chapel	1862	Methodist New Connexion

Institution	Date of Commencement	Denomination
Ebenezer Chapel	1865	Wesleyan Methodist
St John's National Schools	1870	Anglican
South Park Road Chapel	1873	Primitive Methodist
George Street Chapel	1874	General Baptist
Trinity Chapel	1874	Wesleyan Methodist
Park Green Church	1877	Congregational
Cumberland Street Chapel	1879	Free Methodist
Mill Street Citadel	1883	Salvation Army
St John's Church	1884	Anglican
Mill Street Mission	1889	Manchester City Mission
Cumberland Street Chapel	1889	Spiritualist
Fountain Street Mission Hall	1893	Wesleyan Methodist

* Sunday schools have only been included in this list if they became distinct institutions from the church/chapel to which they were affiliated.

CHAPTER THREE

Secular Education Institutions and the Influence of the Silk Manufacturers

Introduction

This chapter will explore the growth of educational institutions in Macclesfield that were established outside the control of the religious bodies. The history of these institutions will be investigated in order to assess the silk manufacturers' influence and any obvious patterns in their involvement. Their contribution will then be compared to those from other vocational groups, together with any external factors that affected progress. An attempt will be made to determine the main reasons for the silk manufacturers' actions and the extent to which the original hopes for these institutions were realised. Macclesfield's experience will then be compared to other industrial towns to see if this support was similar to that of businessmen elsewhere.

The sixteenth century saw an increase in the establishment of educational institutions for the poor and this resulted in many grammar school endowments. By the early Stuart period they represented 58 per cent of educational bequests and the donors were often wealthy merchants who saw education as a means of tackling poverty.¹ Stockport Grammar School was an early example of this type and was founded in 1488 by a leading member of the Goldsmiths' Company.² Macclesfield's Grammar School was established in 1502 when Sir John Percival left lands for a chantry and school. He had been a prosperous Merchant Taylor and became Lord Mayor of London in 1498.³ By the beginning of the eighteenth century, most of these grammar schools catered exclusively for middle-class boys and there was a dearth of voluntary educational initiatives for the rest of the population.

During the eighteenth century, scientific lectures aimed at a middle-class audience became increasingly common and grew up alongside literary and philosophical societies, which were founded in most major towns. In the early nineteenth century George Birkbeck, a Glasgow lecturer, started to teach classes of workmen who wished to learn more about their trades. By the early 1820s, the classes had spread to many large urban areas, such as

¹ W. K. Jordan, *Philanthropy in England, 1480-1660: A Study of the Changing Pattern of English Social Aspirations* (London, 1959), p. 282.

² B. Varley, *The History of the Stockport Grammar School* (Manchester, 1957), p. 15.

³ C. S. Davies, *A History of Macclesfield* (Manchester, 1961), p. 210.

Sheffield and Manchester, and the establishment of mechanics' institutes was a natural progression from these beginnings.⁴ Birkbeck and Henry Brougham were the main people behind the first phase of mechanics' institutes from 1823 to 1831 and they publicised the benefits of these organisations for workers and employers.⁵ The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge was established in 1826 as a parent organisation for the 104 mechanics' institutes, but prolonged trade depression meant that the total number had contracted to 101 by 1831.⁶ Stockport Mechanics' Institute, which existed from 1825 to 1827, was one of the failures along with those in Bury and Huddersfield.⁷

The second phase of mechanics' institutes took place between 1832 and 1841 and this process was helped by the factory legislation of 1833-1834, which reduced the hours for workers under 18 years of age. In Stockport, a new version of the mechanics' institute opened in 1834 and was more successful than its predecessor. In the Macclesfield area, awareness of the movement had been raised in 1833 by a debate in the local newspaper.⁸ Two groups of Sunday school leavers had formed their own mutual improvement society and they approached John Brocklehurst in 1835 for financial support. He responded by calling a public meeting to discuss an institution for 'the operatives connected with the town and trade of Macclesfield'.⁹ The Society for Acquiring Useful Knowledge (also known as the Useful Knowledge Society, Mechanics' Institute or U.K.S.) was founded under the auspices of the S.D.U.K. and aimed to impart useful knowledge, without political or religious bias, to all classes. The strong correlation between industrial areas and the growth of mechanics' institutes is illustrated by the fact that in 1850 there were 44 institutes in Lancashire and eight in Cheshire, with 12,405 and 1,781 members respectively.¹⁰

At this stage, there was increasing demand within the movement for the provision of technical education and specifically arts and sciences. The catalyst for the establishment of British art and design schools was the institution of a Parliamentary Select Committee in 1835 'to inquire into the best means of extending a knowledge of the Arts and of the

⁴ M. Argles, *South Kensington to Robbins: An Account of English Technical and Scientific Education Since 1851* (London, 1964), p. 7.

⁵ M. Tylecote, *The Mechanics' Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire Before 1851* (Manchester, 1957), p. 22.

⁶ T. Kelly, *George Birkbeck: Pioneer of Adult Education* (Liverpool, 1957), p. 223.

⁷ I. J. D. Steele, 'A Study of the Education of the Working Class in Stockport During the Nineteenth Century', unpublished M.Ed. thesis (University of Sheffield, 1968), p. 64.

⁸ R. C. Wilson, 'The Objectives and Achievements of the Chester Mechanics' Institution and the Macclesfield Society of Acquiring Useful Knowledge', unpublished M.Ed. thesis (University of Manchester, 1968), p. 110.

⁹ *A Walk Through the Public Institutions of Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, 1888), p. 59.

¹⁰ J. W. Hudson, *The History of Adult Education* (London, 1851), p. 183.

principles of design among the people (especially the manufacturing population) of the country'. This resulted in the foundation of the first school of design at Somerset House in 1837 and in 1852 the annual grant amounted to £15,000.¹¹ The Department of Science and Art was established in 1852 to encourage education in the applied sciences and to



Figure 3.1. This early nineteenth-century Macclesfield silk pattern shows the complexity of silk weaving and why design was of such importance to the silk industry. (Macclesfield Museums Trust)

administer this funding.¹² To become eligible for grant aid, institutions had to be charitable trusts, or have an endowment, and the majority of those that took advantage of the grants were mechanics' institutes and their associated organisations. For example, in 1865 there were 94 centres holding the Department's classes and over 60 per cent of their pupils were attending mechanics' institutes.¹³ In Macclesfield, the main instigator of the movement to found a school of design was John Brocklehurst. Together with another silk manufacturer, William Cornes, he lobbied Parliament for funds to found a new institution to take over the art classes of the U.K.S. They successfully raised enough subscriptions to meet the qualification criteria, gained a grant for £300 and the new institution opened in 1851.¹⁴

The Public Library was the next major development in Macclesfield. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century there was only a limited system of subscription and society libraries available for urban populations. The 1834 Select Committee investigated the causes of intoxication among the working classes and recommended that there should be open spaces for exercise and indoor facilities, such as libraries, reading rooms and museums, to offer alternatives to the public house.¹⁵ The Museums Act was passed in 1845 and this allowed towns of over 10,000 people to impose a halfpenny rate for the establishment of scientific or artistic museums. A few towns, such as Warrington and Salford, used a loose interpretation of this act to establish joint libraries and museums in 1848 and 1849

¹¹ Argles, *South Kensington to Robbins*, p. 8.

¹² G. W. Roderick & M. D. Stephens, *Education and Industry in the Nineteenth Century: The English Disease?* (London, 1978), p. 61.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

¹⁴ *A Walk*, p. 74.

¹⁵ T. Kelly, *A History of Public Libraries in Great Britain, 1845-1965* (London, 1973), p. 27.

respectively.¹⁶ The 1850 Public Libraries Act closed this loophole by giving councils the power to levy a halfpenny rate to fund public libraries. However, the difficulty in persuading two thirds of the ratepayers to contribute more for library facilities proved to be restrictive and, although the 1853 Act allowed the library rate to be increased to one penny, progress remained slow.¹⁷

The greatest expansion in public libraries followed the 1867 Reform Act, which stimulated debate about the education of the newly enfranchised members of the working class. As a result, the number grew rapidly from 21 in 1859, to 81 by 1880.¹⁸ Their concentration in industrial areas is shown by the fact that of the 125 public libraries existing in 1886, Lancashire had 18 and Cheshire had seven. Even at this late stage, eight counties were entirely without such facilities showing the uneven pattern of distribution.¹⁹ In Macclesfield, a joint campaign to raise support for a Public Park and Free Library was initiated in 1850. West Park was successfully opened in 1854, but the library project lapsed until David Chadwick, an accountant, offered personal funding. As a result, the Public Library opened in 1876 and provided the first free access to reading material for Macclesfield's inhabitants.

Another institution to evolve from the U.K.S. was the Girls' High School, which opened in 1880. The Taunton Commission, which examined endowed secondary schools between 1864 and 1868, found that the majority of grammar school endowments were used exclusively for boys. These conclusions, together with the establishment of the first girls' secondary schools in London, led to the formation of the Girls' Public Day School Company in 1872 to promote female education. By 1901, there were 38 girls' high schools throughout the country, which welcomed girls of any class or religion.²⁰ In Macclesfield, the U.K.S. began to provide female classes in general instruction and sewing, which ran from 1852 until the 1870s. John Dale, the U.K.S. secretary, was the first to raise the idea of a girls' high school for the town and W. C. Brocklehurst enthusiastically embraced the cause.²¹ They felt that the Society had the resources to create a new institution and the committee agreed that such a change would be within their constitution.²² When the School of Art vacated the U.K.S. building in 1879, it provided an

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁷ H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c. 1780-c. 1880* (London, 1980), p. 105; B. Brill, *Macclesfield Library: The First 100 Years* (Macclesfield, 1978), p. 4.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Kelly, *A History of Public Libraries*, p. 25.

²⁰ J. Kamm, *Hope Deferred: Girls' Education in English History* (London, 1965), p. 216.

²¹ *M.C.H.*, 24 July 1931, p. 4.

²² *Ibid.*, 20 September 1878, p. 2.

opportunity to establish a middle-class girls' school 'to meet the great need of the town and neighbourhood, by furnishing a superior class of instruction for girls'.²³ The Girls' High School remained the sole public provider of secondary education for Macclesfield girls until the twentieth century.

Technical schools were the last offshoot from the mechanics' institutes and many took over the scientific and technical subjects from their parent institutions. This was true in Cheshire's industrial towns, such as Hyde and Stalybridge, whose institutes transferred their classes to the new technical schools.²⁴ The Technical Instruction Acts of 1889 and 1891 marked the start of state funding for technical education and the 1890s saw the foundation of many dedicated schools. The trade depression of the 1870s was the main reason for the foundation of the Macclesfield Technical School. In 1880 Charles Brocklehurst, speaking at the Society's annual meeting, emphasised that Macclesfield lay behind its foreign and national competitors in technical education and warned that unless action was taken 'we shall find ourselves completely distanced in the competition of silk manufacture'.²⁵

In response, the Chamber of Commerce sent two representatives to Crefeld, Zurich and Lyons to see how their silk industries operated and their 1883 report revealed the advanced techniques in manufacture and design used by Continental silk workers.²⁶ The Chamber voted unanimously to start a technical school and formed a technical committee to oversee the project. They secured a room in the Society's building and the classes commenced in silk weaving, dyeing and throwing.²⁷ The Technical School inherited the U.K.S.'s technical classes and the School of Art's science classes. New premises were built on Park Green in 1900 and it was then able to expand its range of vocational subjects. All these examples show how access to education was widened in Macclesfield during this period, with different voluntary institutions targeting specific sectors of the population

²³ C.R.O., D 4908/2, Macclesfield Society for Acquiring Useful Knowledge, Annual Reports, 1879, p. 1.

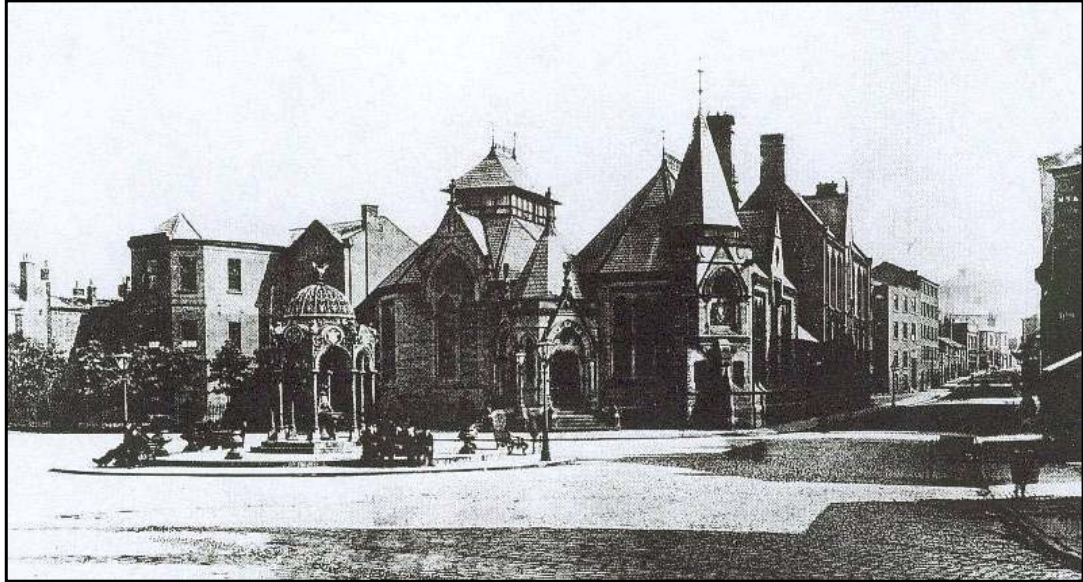
²⁴ B. F. Chadwick, 'Educational Provision in the Macclesfield Hundred of Cheshire During the Nineteenth Century', unpublished M.Ed. thesis (University of Manchester, 1965), p. 397.

²⁵ C.R.O., D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1880, p. 3.

²⁶ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, pp. 202-3.

²⁷ *M.C.H.*, 29 September 1900, p. 6.

Figure 3.2. Park Green, Macclesfield. This shows the conglomeration of nineteenth-century educational buildings, from left to right, the U.K.S. building (which also housed the School of Art, the Technical School and the Girls' High School at various times), the Technical School and the Public Library. The School of Art building is also around the corner from the Public Library in Park Lane. (Macclesfield Museums Trust)



The Silk Manufacturers and the Macclesfield Secular Education Institutions

As can be seen from the introductory section, the Macclesfield silk manufacturers were involved with the majority of these organisations during the nineteenth century. To what extent were their contributions crucial to the establishment and growth of such institutions in Macclesfield? The following case studies illustrate the range of support offered to these institutions, beginning with those having the least involvement through to those that saw the greatest amount of support from silk manufacturers.

Public Library

The campaign to establish a public library in Macclesfield originated in the 1850s, but it finally opened in May 1876. David Chadwick, an accountant and M.P. for Macclesfield, was responsible for this new facility and it was therefore a product of philanthropic effort that had little input from the silk manufacturers. Throughout the original fundraising campaign, the working classes were heavily involved and weekly collections were made around the town. The local press emphasised the imbalance between classes, declaring that 'such zeal on the part of the industrious poor to better their condition, we trust will not be lost upon the higher and wealthier classes of the town'.²⁸ Most of the money raised in

²⁸ *Macclesfield Mirror*, May 1851, p. 141.

this campaign went towards West Park and the library project lapsed. Henry Brocklehurst revived the idea in 1861, but the Council decisively rejected it.²⁹ Thus, Macclesfield had libraries associated with the educational institutions and friendly societies, plus one funded by private subscription, leaving unaffiliated people with no free access to reading material.³⁰

David Chadwick, a native of Macclesfield, had been instrumental in the establishment of the Salford Public Library through his role as borough treasurer. He subsequently started his own accountancy business in London and Manchester, became a Liberal M.P. for Macclesfield in 1865, and was re-elected twice. He also had business interests in the town as a partner in the Globe Cotton Spinning Company, employing around 1,000 people.³¹ Chadwick exhibited a particular interest in working class progress and his experiences in Salford led him to believe that the Macclesfield would benefit from such an institution. He approached the Council about the possibility of financing a library in 1865, but it was felt that the poor trade situation, combined with the fundraising campaigns for other institutions, would make the rate increase unpopular. He tried again in 1874, but Parliament was dissolved and he felt that his gift could unfairly prejudice the electorate.³² Following a positive response later that year, he proceeded to purchase the land on Park Green for £800, donated £4,340 to cover building costs and then provided 10,000 books.

The library and reading room facilities were open on weekdays and Saturdays, but Sunday opening was always resisted on religious grounds.³³ In addition to Chadwick's books, the library received reading material from a mixture of individuals, clubs and societies. Prominent among these were the religious organisations, such as the Church Missionary Society, and this abundance of religious material led Revd C. A. J. Smith to remark that it 'possessed one of the best collections of theological works' that he had seen in a public institution.³⁴ Most of the donated items were aimed at encouraging respectable behaviour in Macclesfield inhabitants and the committee screened all the accessions to ensure that they were suitable.³⁵

²⁹ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 285.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

³¹ *M.C.H.*, 21 September 1895, p. 8.

³² Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 286.

³³ C.R.O., LBM 2703/21/1, Macclesfield Borough Council, Library Committee Minutes, 14 November 1892, p. 333.

³⁴ *M.C.H.*, 21 September 1895, p. 8.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 19 June 1876, p. 27.

Chadwick's enthusiasm for the library project, together with his extensive contacts, meant that the Council had little obvious involvement in its early stages. The Library Committee was formed in April 1876 and then took responsibility for the institution's finance and management.³⁶ As the silk manufacturers were well represented on the Council, it was inevitable that some served on this committee, such as David Clarke and John Willott White. However, their participation was an extension of their public role as elected members and there is little evidence to suggest that they had any specific interest in the institution. In contrast, David Chadwick appears to have been genuinely concerned to remedy Macclesfield's lack of educational facilities, through his support of institutions like the U.K.S. and his tenacity in pursuing the library project. The fact that he had seen the benefits of the Salford Library meant that he had the vision to ensure that the project reached completion. Although he made the majority of his money elsewhere, he may have also been anxious to leave a tangible reminder of his contribution to his native town.

The main problem to face the library project was the competition with other institutions. The early 1850s saw the opening of the School of Art, the Baths and Washhouses and West Park, in addition to the other Macclesfield institutions that relied on subscription income. Against the backdrop of trade depression at this time, it is hardly surprising that the library was relegated down the order of priorities and, to put this into context, Stockport did not open its public library until 1875, despite its larger population.³⁷ There may also have been fears that the library would usurp some of the functions of existing institutions in the town and the U.K.S.'s library collection was donated to the Public Library in 1886.³⁸ However, the library did pass on unwanted books and periodicals to other institutions and stocked textbooks for scholars at the School of Art and Technical School.³⁹ The committee appears to have encountered few problems and it was fortunate to have had its initial costs covered, which gave it a head start over many of its contemporaries. Public libraries in other towns, such as Norwich and Bradford, had to struggle to cover the costs of procuring land, building and accumulating stock out of their rateable income.⁴⁰

The main indicator of the library's success was its usage by townspeople. Detailed figures exist on a monthly basis from 1890 and Figure 3.3 shows the figures for June in the years between 1890 and 1900. This comparison emphasises the success of the Reading Room,

³⁶ C.R.O., LBM 2703/13/1, M.B.C., General Purposes Committee Minutes, 12 January 1876.

³⁷ W. Astle, *History of Stockport* (Wakefield, 1971), p. 42.

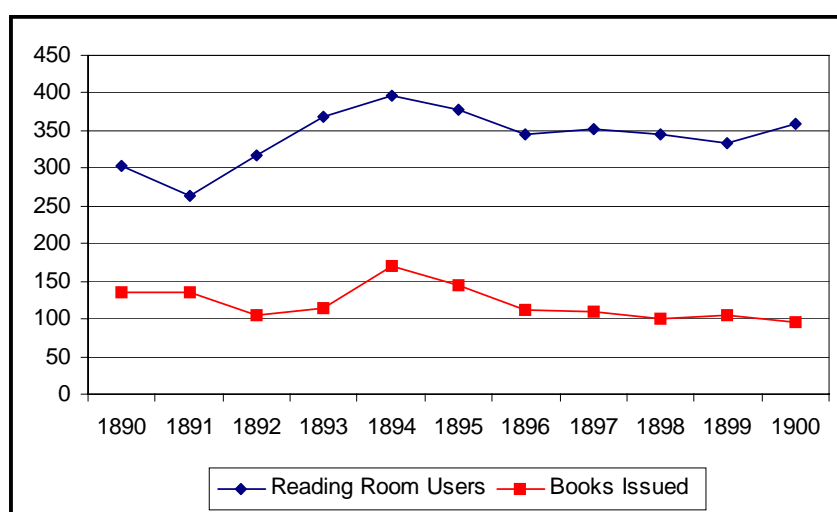
³⁸ C.R.O., LBM 2703/21/1, M.B.C., L.C.M., 29 November 1886, p. 216.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 31 January 1887, p. 219; 28 January 1889, p. 249.

⁴⁰ Kelly, *A History of Public Libraries*, p. 36.

which was seen as the most valuable asset of the institution.⁴¹ The Macclesfield version could also be seen to meet the functions outlined by Martin Hewitt in his study on the Manchester Public Library, albeit on a lesser scale. He identified the institution as providing an academic library for scholars, an educational resource for students, a patent library for businessmen, a research facility for those involved with municipal affairs, a means of publicity for campaigning groups and a crude labour exchange through the newspaper job advertisements.⁴²

Figure 3.3. Macclesfield Public Library usage between 1890 and 1900 (June figures). (C.R.O., LBM 2703/21/1-2, M.B.C., L.C.M., 1890-1900.)



A more detailed picture of the institution's activities was given by the annual report for the year ending April 1894 when there were 1,512 borrowers and 45,957 books issued. The most popular classification was fiction with 38,634 issues, followed by biography and travel with 2,825.⁴³ These illustrations show the demand for such an institution and the population's taste in reading material. The amount of fiction borrowed demonstrates that most people did not seek the heavy intellectual and moral works that were the favoured donations in the early years and suggests that the original expectations of the library's readers were at odds with the library's usage by the end of the century. However, this does not detract from the fact that the Macclesfield people made good use of the institution and shows that David Chadwick's identification of the latent demand was justified. The Macclesfield Public Library was perceived as a successful institution aimed primarily at the working classes and was seen to exert a positive effect on its users. This is illustrated

⁴¹ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 287.

⁴² M. Hewitt, 'Confronting the Modern City: The Manchester Free Public Library, 1850-1880', *Urban History*, 27, 2000, p. 73.

⁴³ C.R.O., LBM 2703/1, M.B.C., L.C.M., 9 April 1894, p. 360.

by a newspaper comment in 1878 'the Free Library continues to be a highly appreciated boon to the community and is doubtless exercising an important educational influence upon large numbers, especially of the youth of the town'.⁴⁴

The influence of the silk manufacturers in the establishment of the Macclesfield Public Library was minimal. This was because David Chadwick took the initiative and provided his own money and expertise to ensure that it started on a sound basis. In contrast, the silk manufacturers' contribution was limited to book donations, the raising of the library question in 1861 and their presence on the committee. As a result, this is an example of a popular educational institution in which some of the most prominent and wealthy businessmen in the town had little involvement.

Grammar School

The Grammar School is the oldest educational establishment in Macclesfield. After the dissolution of the monasteries, Edward VI re-endowed the school with alternative lands and tenements. As a result, it became known as the 'Free Grammar School of King Edward the Sixth'.⁴⁵ The large endowment meant that the school had a steady source of income for most of its history and therefore the silk manufacturers had little involvement until the nineteenth century, when their support gradually increased.

The Grammar School building was originally sited beside St Michael's Church but moved to King Edward Street in 1748. By 1774, its curriculum of grammar and the classics was proving too restrictive and the governors successfully applied for a private Act of Parliament to employ masters for additional subjects.⁴⁶ Even with these changes, there was increasing demand for commercial subjects by the 1830s because of the importance of trade to the town. There was also a national rise in private schools aimed at the commercial classes and it became obvious that the Grammar School should expand its curriculum. A further Act of Parliament was secured in 1838 and the Modern School was founded in 1844.⁴⁷

Throughout the nineteenth century the two schools remained under the same management. The Grammar School continued with a broadly classical curriculum for boys of eight years

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, LBM 2703/62/1, M.B.C., Newscuttings, 16 November 1878, p. 6.

⁴⁵ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 215.

⁴⁶ British Parliamentary Papers, *Schools' Inquiry Commission Vol. 17, North Western Division, Special Reports of Assistant Commissioners and Digests of Information Received, Session 1867-1868* (Shannon, 1968), p. 53.

⁴⁷ C.R.O., The Commissioners for Enquiry, *Charities in the City of Chester and the County Palatine of Chester, 1819-1837* (n.p., 1841), p. 522.

and over, while the Modern School's emphasis was on: 'teaching modern languages and arts and sciences...to promote the trade and commerce of Macclesfield'. The innovation was popular and in 1854 there were 112 boys in the Modern School, compared to 86 in the Grammar School.⁴⁸ The two schools relocated to Cumberland Street in 1856 and remained separate entities until the twentieth century.

Figure 3.4. Macclesfield Grammar School in about 1900. (Macclesfield Museums Trust)



The governors were responsible for the efficient management of the school and its estate. Most were country gentlemen, such as members of the Legh and Davenport families, but this gradually decreased during the nineteenth century as more businessmen became involved. This process was accelerated when, in response to suggestions by the Taunton Commission, the constitution of the Board changed in 1879 to include Council members 'to lead to a more vigorous and practical management of the schools'.⁴⁹

There is little evidence to suggest why the governors sought office. Prior to 1879, most were former pupils and their service could be construed as giving something back to an institution that had prepared them for adult life, while the opportunity to mix with an influential section of the community could also have been attractive. As representatives of a major landowner in Macclesfield, they were able to make decisions on where public and private developments, such as the Infirmary, should be sited and also donated land to St Paul's Church and the Industrial School free of charge, as both of these institutions faced particular difficulties in raising funds.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ B.P.P., *Schools' Inquiry Commission, 1867-1868*, pp. 54-56.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

⁵⁰ C.R.O., SP 3/1/2, King's School, Macclesfield, Governors' Minutes, 20 June 1843; C.R.O. SP 3/1/3, K.S.M., G.M., 16 January 1865.

Another facet of the governors' role was to provide additional funding for scholarships, to donate prizes for pupils and to contribute subscriptions towards the expansion of facilities. The first major instance of this was in 1886, when Thomas Unett Brocklehurst bequeathed

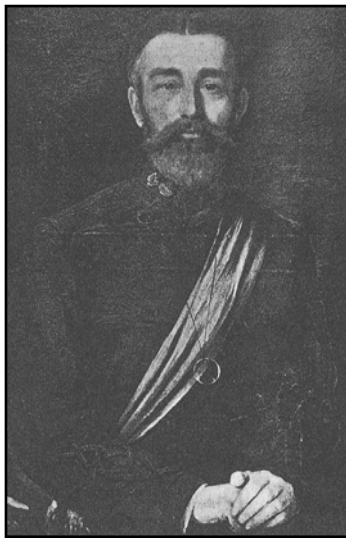


Figure 3.5. Thomas Unett Brocklehurst. (Macclesfield Museums Trust)

£1,000 'for the purpose of establishing an Exhibition'.⁵¹ Following his lead, scholarships and exhibitions were established for the benefit of pupils in higher education, such as F. D. and W. B. Brocklehursts' bequests of £1,000 each for a scholarship and an exhibition respectively.⁵² Furthermore, J. O. Nicholson established a prize fund for languages and art and W. B. Brocklehurst donated a Challenge Bowl for athletics.⁵³ Nevertheless, there were also other contributors, notably the apothecary who gave £3,000 to establish the Pearson Scholarship.⁵⁴

The records show that by the late 1880s, the increasing costs of modernising the school could no longer be met exclusively from its assets. This prompted the governors to become more proactive in seeking funds and in 1889 they contacted the executors of a wealthy silk manufacturer to see if any charitable funding could be obtained from his estate.⁵⁵ A contributory factor to this change could have been the skills of the incoming businessmen, gained through their working life and other charitable involvement. Consequently, the meetings became monthly and there is a noticeable increase in detail within the minutes. A fundraising committee was also formed in 1889 to seek voluntary contributions for new buildings, which opened in 1890.⁵⁶

As with any educational institution, the Grammar School was dependent on the qualities and enthusiasm of its teachers. Occasional staffing problems did lead to a drop in standards, as in 1837 when the new headmaster found that a death and two resignations meant that 'the boys have been very much neglected'.⁵⁷ Despite this incident, there

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, MF 91/36, Will of Thomas Unett Brocklehurst, 1886.

⁵² Charity Commission, 525921-3, Francis Dicken Brocklehurst Exhibition Fund; 525921-5, William Brocklehurst Brocklehurst Scholarship Fund.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 525921-19, Joshua Oldfield Nicholson Prize Fund; D. Wilmot, *A Short History of the Grammar School, Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, 1910), p. 83.

⁵⁴ C.R.O., SP 3/1/4, K.S.M. G.M., 17 January 1900.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 15 November 1889.

⁵⁶ *Kelly's Directory of Cheshire, 1896* (London, 1896), p. 353.

⁵⁷ M.P.L., J. Wootton, 'Macclesfield Past' (Prize Essay for the Useful Knowledge Society, 1866), unpaginated.

appears to be a general consensus that the teaching up to the end of the nineteenth century was of reasonable quality, although limited in the subjects studied and the numbers of students educated.

Following the Taunton Commission results, the local paper ran a series of editorials stating that ‘the National and British Schools are incomparably better in style and accommodation’ than the grammar schools, and that many middle-class parents ‘have the galling reflection that the children of their poorer neighbours are supplied with better schools than can be had for their own children’.⁵⁸ Macclesfield Grammar School was one of the few to escape serious criticism from the Commissioners, but its middle-class bias and failure to reach the working classes were negative points. To address this issue, they suggested that grants be made available for evening classes and exhibitions for elementary school boys to attend the Grammar School ‘but the governors didn’t think such an infusion of a lower class be desirable’.⁵⁹ As a result, there was debate in the Council about the school’s ‘absolute want of usefulness to the Town compared with its handsome endowment’.⁶⁰ Understandably, there was resentment that these wealthy schools reached only a small proportion of the population and that poorer children were being educated in voluntary schools. However, there were later examples of elementary school pupils attending the Modern School, which indicates that the governors did yield to popular pressure. The Commission also criticised the school’s male bias, and in 1881 the governors agreed to an annual grant towards the G.H.S., but this project was initiated by the U.K.S. and the Grammar School had no further involvement.⁶¹

Despite these criticisms, the Macclesfield school fared comparatively well against other grammar schools. Mottram in Longdendale suffered continual decline from the 1770s and the Charity Commissioners were forced to intervene in the late 1820s.⁶² Similarly in Coventry, an 1833 inquiry revealed that only one boy was attending the school.⁶³ The Stockport Grammar School received funding from the Goldsmiths’ Company until a religious controversy in 1860. This led to the complete withdrawal of their revenue and signalled a decline in the school’s fortunes.⁶⁴ These examples show the common

⁵⁸ *M.C.H.*, 13 January 1869, p. 4.

⁵⁹ B.P.P., *Schools’ Inquiry Commission*, pp. 55-56.

⁶⁰ C.R.O., LBM 2703/13/1, M.B.C., G.P.C.M., 24 February 1865.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, SP 3/1/2, K.S.M., G.M, 12 March 1852.

⁶² S. Harrop, ‘Community Involvement in Education in North-east Cheshire in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries’, *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, 80, 1980, p. 6.

⁶³ J. Roach, *A History of Secondary Education in England, 1800-1870* (Harlow, 1986), p. 27.

⁶⁴ Varley, *The History of the Stockport Grammar School*, p. 215.

problems faced by grammar schools, which were mitigated in Macclesfield's case by its financial resources and the actions of the governing body. Although they were often relatively slow to react to problems, their participation in the school's affairs meant that the primary aims were carried out within their limited sphere. The applications for the three bills showed that they were prepared to take action when the governing rules were proving too inflexible and this pre-empted many of the problems that restricted change in other schools, such as the Eldon judgement and the Leeds Grammar School.⁶⁵ The best example of the Macclesfield governors' foresight was the establishment of the Modern School to provide commercial education.

Prior to 1850, a small number of silk manufacturers did act as Grammar School governors, such as Charles Roe in 1765 and John Ryle II in 1811. From 1850, there was an increase in their participation and the 1879 constitutional change brought in Council representatives, such as the silk manufacturers J. O. Nicholson, James Kershaw and J. B. Wadsworth.⁶⁶ The school's high status and the prospect of exerting some power within the town meant that the school was a popular choice for middle-class supporters. Until funding from external sources became necessary in the 1880s, the role of the governors was limited to attendance at meetings and public occasions. When the situation changed, it was the silk manufacturers who contributed a significant amount of this private funding and the list of scholarships and exhibitions bear testament to their donations. Thus the silk manufacturers had little effect on the Grammar School for nearly 300 years, but they did play a visible role in its later history.

Society for Acquiring Useful Knowledge

The Macclesfield Society launched its programme of lectures and classes in 1835. The need for expansion led to the purchase of a building on Park Green in 1848 and this became the focal point for further education in the town throughout the nineteenth century. From the 1850s, repeated slumps in the silk trade caused a gradual decline in membership figures and competition from other educational institutions led to its closure in 1891.⁶⁷ In addition to John Brockehurst's key involvement, the institution saw strong support from silk manufacturers throughout its history.

⁶⁵ Roach, *A History of Secondary Education*, p. 72.

⁶⁶ C.R.O., SP 3/1/2-4, K.S.M., G.M., 1773-1903.

⁶⁷ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 227.

The Society's activities consisted of classes, lectures, library access and social events. The classes were the most popular activity and the subjects ranged from drawing to languages. However, the elementary subjects of literacy and numeracy attracted the highest attendance and reflected the prevailing educational standard. The founders had envisaged a concentration on scientific subjects, which they felt would be 'useful' to the mechanics in their field of work but only a few reached advanced levels.⁶⁸ The classes catered predominantly for males over 15 years, although female classes were established in 1852 and classes for younger males (over 12 years) began in 1853.⁶⁹

Misconceptions about the prevailing level of education throughout the mechanics' institute movement meant that early lectures proved to be too complicated for workers with a basic Sunday school education. Macclesfield was no exception, but its committee was relatively quick to lower the standard and managed to maintain reasonable attendances. In contrast, the Preston Mechanics' Institute persisted with its 'erudite lectures' and suffered a loss in working class support.⁷⁰ During the declining years of the U.K.S., when membership levels and income were low, the lectures were often suspended to give precedence to the classes. The library was open to all members and in 1850 it had around 2,000 books, 22 periodicals and eight newspapers.⁷¹ In addition to fundraising events, social events such as excursions and tea parties were introduced for members. However, these always remained a subsidiary function, in contrast to other institutes, such as Chester, for whom it became virtually the sole activity.⁷²

The Society was managed by its committee, which made all the day-to-day decisions and held regular meetings. There were also honorary positions available for people who added status to the organisation and provided financial backing. During the building appeal, revenue from fundraising events supplemented donations and an interest-free loan from the silk manufacturer, John Wright, made up the shortfall. Its evening classes received Committee of Council on Education grants from 1876-1877 and were therefore open to government inspection.⁷³

⁶⁸ I. Inkster, 'The Social Context of an Educational Movement: A Revisionist Approach to the English Mechanics' Institutes, 1820-1850', *Oxford Review of Education*, 2, 1976, p. 279.

⁶⁹ *A Walk*, p. 69.

⁷⁰ M. Whittle, 'Philanthropy in Preston: The Changing Face of Charity in a Nineteenth-century Provincial Town', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Lancaster, 1990), p. 218.

⁷¹ C.R.O., D 4908/1, M.S.A.U.K., Committee Minutes, 29 October 1849.

⁷² Wilson, 'The Objectives and Achievements', p. 311.

⁷³ *Report of the Committee of Council on Education, 1876-1877* (London, 1877), p. 744.

As expected, the silk manufacturers dominated the Society, although two of its early supporters were Revd Edward Stanley of Alderley (until he became Bishop of Norwich) and Samuel Greg. John Brocklehurst's role in establishing the institution was followed by his election as president from 1835 to 1870. His daughter alluded to the strength of his support by stating that he attended 30 out of 36 annual meetings during this time, despite his numerous commitments.⁷⁴ Many other family members also became involved, such as William Coare Brocklehurst who took over his father's position in 1870. This dominance was carried through to the subscription list, which featured eight to ten Brocklehurst subscribers up to 1871, when they were replaced by a consolidated company payment.⁷⁵ There were representatives from most of the leading silk manufacturing families on the committee and subscription lists, such as successive members of the Brodrick, Birchenough and Smale families. Certain silk manufacturers, such as Thomas Brocklehurst, Thomas Unett Brocklehurst and John Wright, also lectured on a range of subjects. The mixture of other supporters included other businessmen, professionals, local landowners and the clergy, as in William Carr (a tallow chandler), John May, Lord Stanley of Alderley (brother of Edward) and Samuel Bowen of Townley Street Chapel. Finally, there were silk workers and other tradesmen who progressed from membership to positions of responsibility like Thomas Kelly, a silk weaver, who became honorary secretary and then curator.⁷⁶

In 1851, John Brocklehurst stated that his primary motives for founding the U.K.S. were 'to improve the manufactures of the town' and to enhance the 'welfare of its inhabitants'.⁷⁷ He admitted to indecision about whether the institution should serve his own workers or be open to all Macclesfield people. He had 'finally come to the conclusion that what was good for him, must be good for the town'.⁷⁸ He therefore represented the utilitarian view of many silk manufacturers that through the education of their workers, they could improve the standard of design, increase technical knowledge and become more competitive in business. Samuel Greg echoed his secondary consideration, emphasising that the institution would improve life for the working classes and give them greater opportunities for advancement. Greg was also the instigator of the social activities, viewing them as a means of 'civilising' working men for their mutual benefit.⁷⁹

⁷⁴ *M.C.H.*, 17 April 1897, p. 6.

⁷⁵ C.R.O., D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1871, p. 5.

⁷⁶ G. Longden, 'Further Education in Macclesfield, 1835-1945', unpublished M.Ed. thesis (University of Manchester, 1980), p. 24.

⁷⁷ C.R.O., D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1851, p. 11.

⁷⁸ *M.C.H.*, 15 November 1851, p. 7.

⁷⁹ Longden, 'Further Education', p. 12.

The promoters of the mechanics' institute movement hoped that it would provide a moral framework for the lower classes and would reduce crime and encourage temperance. E. Wilmot from the Congleton Mechanics' Institute voiced these hopes, stating that Congleton's young men should follow Macclesfield's example and then 'party strife would end, their Mechanics' Institute would prosper, the public houses would be empty'.⁸⁰ Similarly, Revd W. R. B. Arthy, speaking at an annual meeting in the midst of trade depression, pointed to the combined influences of religion and education in explaining the 'exemplary patience shown by the working class in Macclesfield'.⁸¹ As the town became the leading centre for silk production in England, civic leaders wanted to demonstrate their pride in the town and to show that it was worthy of its reputation, illustrated by Revd W. A. Osborne's comments that the new building would act as 'proof that this is the metropolis of the silk trade'.⁸²

The U.K.S. suffered from most of the problems associated with the mechanics' institute movement. It was fortunate to avoid the failure of some early institutions, but trade depression was always a negative factor in the institution's history.⁸³ In addition to the overestimation of educational standards, the movement's originators thought that workers would have an interest in scientific, philosophical and literary subjects. There was a great discrepancy between what the promoters saw as 'useful knowledge' and knowledge which was of practical benefit to the working classes.⁸⁴ The fact that employers controlled many of the institutes led some workers to view the organisations as a vehicle for social control that imposed middle class values on its pupils.⁸⁵ An example was the Preston Mechanics' Institute, which experienced leadership from working-class radicals in the early 1830s but lost working class support when the middle classes took control.⁸⁶

Even after the Factory Acts of the 1830s, Macclesfield silk workers were still expected to work around 12 hours a day, which limited their available time to study. The silk industry's continued use of child labour also greatly reduced the opportunities for educational progress. Adam Rushton, a former silk worker and U.K.S. pupil, gave a vivid

⁸⁰ C.R.O., D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1856, p. 14.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1861, p. 8.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 1842, p. 9.

⁸³ Steele, 'A Study of the Education', p. 67.

⁸⁴ R. Johnson, 'Really Useful Knowledge: Radical Education and Working-class Culture 1790-1848', in J. Clark, C. Critcher & R. Johnson, *Working-class Culture: Studies in History and Theory* (London, 1979), p. 84.

⁸⁵ R. Johnson, 'Educational Policy and Social Control in Early Victorian England', *Past and Present*, 33, 1970, p. 119.

⁸⁶ Whittle, 'Philanthropy in Preston', p. 220.

idea of the difficulties he faced. When asked how he managed to fit in reading with work, he said ‘by rising at four o’clock in the morning in summer, and at five o’clock in winter, and sitting up two hours before midnight I secure three to four hours each day for reading and making notes of what I read’.⁸⁷ Even as late as 1879, it was acknowledged that there was a special need for evening classes in Macclesfield, because the exemptions from day school attendance were so high in the town.⁸⁸

As the mechanics’ institutes forbade any religious instruction, the Anglican clergy viewed them with suspicion and the first Bradford Mechanics’ Institute was an early casualty of Anglican and Methodist opposition.⁸⁹ In Macclesfield’s case, the majority of the founder members were nonconformist and this was seen as an additional deterrent to Anglicans. However, the Society had become sufficiently well respected by 1844 to earn the approval of the Anglican Tory, Revd W. C. Cruttenden, who said that he ‘was satisfied of the usefulness of the Society and would do all in his power to promote its interests’.⁹⁰ Similarly, Mr Arthy stated in 1854 that ‘I think no secular institution in the town is doing more good’.⁹¹ Even though the mechanics’ institute movement was non-political, the Society was perceived by some as a ‘political and party engine’. Mr Smith later admitted that this was an unfair allegation, but this notion could have deterred some potential supporters.⁹²

In order to assess how successfully the U.K.S. overcame these problems, Figure 3.6 shows the surviving total membership figures from this period, demonstrating the increase in members to the 1850s and the gradual decline thereafter.

⁸⁷ A. Rushton, *My Life as a Farmer’s Boy, Factory Lad, Teacher and Preacher (1821-1909)* (Manchester, 1909), p. 52.

⁸⁸ *A Walk*, p. 73.

⁸⁹ J. P. Hemming, ‘The Mechanics’ Institute Movement in the Manufacturing Districts of the North of England after 1851’, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Leeds, 1968), p. 29.

⁹⁰ C.R.O., D 5299, J. O. Nicholson, ‘Macclesfield Present and Future’ (Prize Essay for the Useful Knowledge Society, 1866), p. 62.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1854, p. 5.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 1853, p. 7.

Figure 3.6. Total membership figures for the U.K.S., 1836-1881 (where available). (*M.C.H.; A Walk; C.R.O., D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R.*)

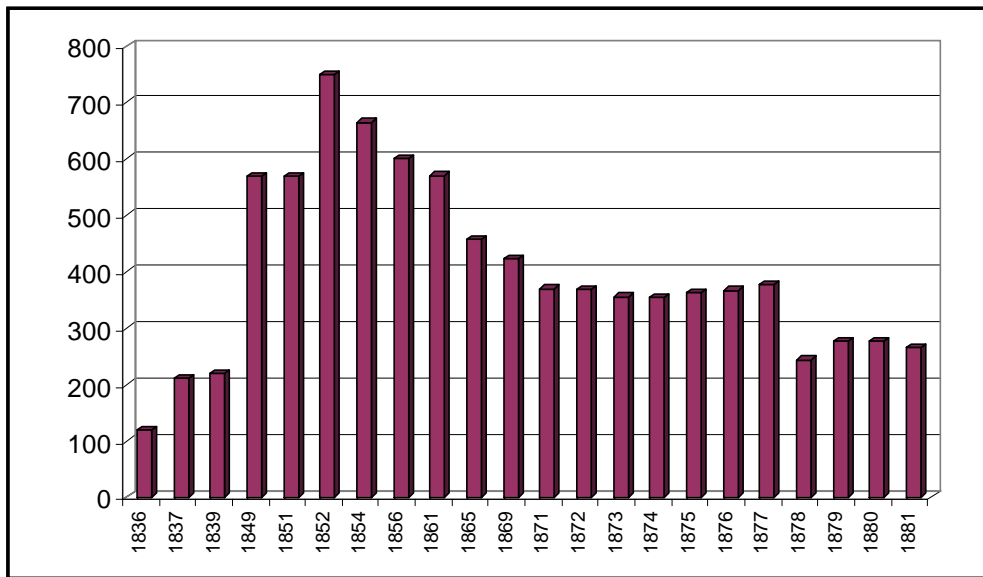
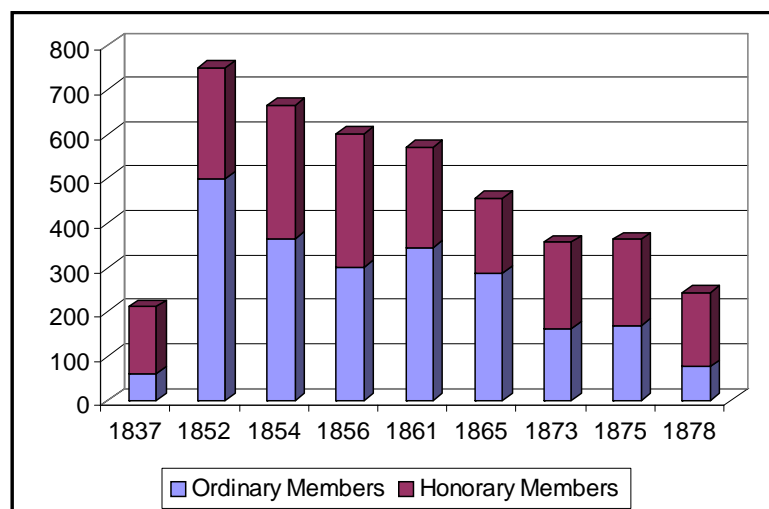


Figure 3.7 shows the breakdown between honorary and ordinary membership (where it exists) and demonstrates that the Society had a strong honorary membership list through to its eventual demise. This is similar to the other success stories of South Lancashire and West Yorkshire, which received significant support from manufacturers and leading townspeople.⁹³ If we accept Thomas Kelly's view that most mechanics' institutes had ordinary membership totals below 200 in 1851, this shows that the Macclesfield figures seem to be above the national average.⁹⁴

Figure 3.7. Breakdown of membership figures for the U.K.S., 1837-1878 (where available). (*M.C.H.; A Walk; C.R.O., D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R.*)



⁹³ Tylecote, *The Mechanics' Institutes*, p. 224.

⁹⁴ Kelly, *George Birkbeck*, p. 261.

In the same vein, John Brocklehurst compared Macclesfield and Manchester’s institutions in 1854, stating that while the U.K.S. had ‘300 honorary members and between 300-400 pupils...he found that the Manchester Institute had only 900 pupils and 1,600 members; although Manchester had a population of about 300,000 and Macclesfield 40,000’. He concluded that the U.K.S. was therefore ‘in a better position relatively than the Manchester institution’.⁹⁵ This evidence concurs with Table 3.1, which gives membership data on mechanics institutes from other textile towns and shows that Macclesfield’s version appears to compare favourably with those in larger settlements.

Table 3.1. Mechanics’ Institute membership figures for selected textile towns, 1851. (J. W. Hudson, *The History of Adult Education* (London, 1851), pp. 222-36.)

Textile Town	Membership Numbers
Bradford	876
Coventry	450
Derby	392
Halifax	551
Macclesfield	570
Preston	602
Stockport	445

Despite the difficulties that faced the mechanics’ institute movement, the U.K.S. did succeed in providing continuing education for members and created new opportunities for progression. Many of its students went on to become designers, clerical workers, teachers and reporters, helped by the introduction of external examinations in the 1860s. An indicator of its reputation was given in 1877 when the U.K.S. gained four out of eight prizes in elementary subjects, despite competition from other Lancashire and Cheshire mechanics’ institutes.⁹⁶ The Society’s work often extended well beyond its catchment area; for instance, a survey in Paterson, New Jersey, revealed that nine out of ten silk workers there had received instruction from the U.K.S.⁹⁷ This also underlined the way in which Paterson became the ‘Macclesfield of America’, attracting significant numbers of skilled workers who had been educated in Macclesfield.⁹⁸

The Society’s leaders were always careful to stress its beneficial effect on law and order. John Brocklehurst stated in 1854 that ‘although between 5,000 and 6,000 youths had

⁹⁵ C.R.O., D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1854, p. 6.

⁹⁶ Wilson, ‘The Objectives and Achievements’, p. 290.

⁹⁷ Longden, ‘Further Education’, p. 45.

⁹⁸ R. D. Margrave, ‘The Emigration of Silk Workers from England to the United States of America in the Nineteenth Century With Special Reference to Coventry, Macclesfield, Paterson New Jersey and South Manchester Connecticut’, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of London, 1981), p. 134.

passed through the books of the institution; never on any occasion had one of these young men had to appear on any charge before a magistrate'.⁹⁹ One of the criticisms levelled at the mechanics' institutes was that they failed to attract working people, as in E. Royle's assertion that only 43 of the 204 mechanics' institutes in 1849 were supported primarily by the working classes.¹⁰⁰ It is difficult to assess Macclesfield's performance on this issue, but A. B. Reach stated in the same year that 'the great majority of the members are silk weavers', indicating that these were primarily skilled artisans.¹⁰¹ Another indication is the Society's 1875 list of prizewinners, which included 17 silk workers and six from other occupations.¹⁰² Nationally the northern textile belt tended to perform better on this criterion and a former U.K.S. member stated in 1866 that he believed that the Society had 'been beneficial to every class in the town'.¹⁰³ In 1850 Mr Fletcher, a government inspector visiting the U.K.S., said that 'I have never observed one so well conducted as the one I have just examined; it does great credit to the town'.¹⁰⁴ Despite competition from other local mechanics' institutes, the Y.M.C.A. and mutual improvement societies, the U.K.S. was always acknowledged as the most successful institution for providing further education in Macclesfield at this time.

There is little doubt about the integral role of the silk manufacturers in the Society, as illustrated by John May's comments on John Brocklehurst: 'no person could ever charge him with shortcomings in this institution'.¹⁰⁵ The financial support of the silk manufacturers kept the U.K.S. afloat and enabled expansion. They were dominant in numbers and influence and therefore controlled its direction and growth. They were also the driving force behind the institution's development and success, but their support was primarily linked to its benefits for the silk industry and thus their business concerns.

Girls' High School

The Macclesfield Girls' High School (G.H.S.) was another organisation to grow out of the activities of the U.K.S. and became a separate entity in 1880. John Dale's suggestion of a girls' school was discussed in 1878 and John Brocklehurst stated that there was a need for 'an education which would run more parallel with the standard of education given to boys

⁹⁹ C.R.O., D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1854, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰ E. Royle, 'Mechanics' Institutes and the Working Classes, 1840-1860', *The Historical Journal*, 14, 1971, p. 305.

¹⁰¹ A. B. Reach, *Manchester and the Textile Districts in 1849* (Helmshore, 1972), p. 96.

¹⁰² N. L. Pole, 'Elementary Education in Macclesfield 1833-1918', unpublished M.A. thesis (University of Sheffield, 1975), p. 123.

¹⁰³ M.P.L., Wootton, 'Macclesfield Past', unpaginated.

¹⁰⁴ C.R.O., D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1850, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 1861, p. 12.

at places like the Modern School'. He recognised a class of girls who wished 'to launch out into occupations and engagements of various kinds which hitherto may have been confined to the other sex, such as clerks in banks and in the post office &c.' and felt that the U.K.S. could meet those needs.¹⁰⁶ The committee agreed that the change would be within the constitution and could improve the U.K.S.'s prosperity, which was declining by this stage. The Society's building was modified to accommodate the new school and it opened in 1880 with 44 pupils. From 1895 to 1899 it had an average attendance of 108 pupils and the curriculum was described as 'modern' with subjects including English grammar, book-keeping, domestic science, history, drawing, music and Latin.¹⁰⁷

Initially, the school was run by a sub-committee of the U.K.S. and eight of the 11 governors appointed in 1882 were silk manufacturers.¹⁰⁸ One of the longest serving governors was the silk manufacturer, J. O. Nicholson, who served from 1895 until his death in 1929.¹⁰⁹ The dominance of the silk manufacturers in the early history of the school stemmed from the fact that it inherited its governors from the U.K.S. The contribution of the Brocklehurst family, and particularly William Coare, is illustrated by his obituary which stated that he was the 'president of the managing body of the Girls' High School – which indeed was brought into existence chiefly through his exertions...In this institution he always took a very special interest, and every year contributed largely to its funds.'¹¹⁰

The records give little indication of why the governors became involved with the school. On the part of the Brocklehurst and Greg families, it could have been their Unitarian beliefs in the universal extension of education, especially for females, but there is no evidence relating to this factor.¹¹¹ Some governors could have benefited personally, as it gave them an alternative to sending their daughters to private schools. Otherwise, participation in establishing a prestigious new institution in Macclesfield could have been sufficient incentive for governors to invest in the school. Their effectiveness was shown by the comments of a Board of Education inspector who stated that 'The School is

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 20 September 1878, p. 2.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, SL 76/1/1, Macclesfield High School for Girls, Governors' Minutes, June 1899, p. 44; Chadwick, 'Educational Provision', p. 27.

¹⁰⁸ C.R.O., SL 76/1/1, M.H.S.G., G.M., 1882-1883.

¹⁰⁹ *M.C.H.*, 24 July 1931, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9 June 1900, p. 6.

¹¹¹ R. Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians in England, 1760-1860* (London, 1998), p. 8.

fortunate in the possession of a voluntary body of Managers interested in its welfare who have devoted much time and energy to its development.’¹¹²

The intention was that the institution would be self-funding through school fees and grants. In 1879 Joseph Arnold (a silk manufacturer) and others secured the annual endowment of £100 from the Grammar School governors as their contribution towards female education.¹¹³ A further sum of £1,000 was secured from the Charity Commission in 1882.¹¹⁴ The school occupied existing buildings, but the modifications exceeded expectations and the governors had to make up the shortfall. As a result, it was Charles Brocklehurst who provided the new entrance and W. C. Brocklehurst who financed the new front staircase.¹¹⁵ The latter also left a legacy of £1,500 and similar concern was shown by his son, William Brocklehurst Brocklehurst, who served on the committee from 1886, took his father’s place as chairman until 1929 and left a legacy of £1,000 for a university scholarship.¹¹⁶

A major limitation of the G.H.S. was that it was aimed at middle-class girls. By the end of the century, most Macclesfield girls had access to some form of elementary education, but the demand for female labour excluded most working-class girls from gaining a secondary education and school fees were a further deterrent. There is evidence of one pupil receiving a scholarship from the governors in 1899, but this appears to be an isolated example.¹¹⁷ As a result, the school was realistically aimed at middle-class girls where the demand for secondary education lay.

Despite occasional staffing and funding problems, the G.H.S. achieved much in its first 20 years and Revd Darwin Wilmot, headmaster of the Grammar School, acknowledged that it was ‘a daughter of whom the Grammar School has every reason to be proud’.¹¹⁸ In 1893 the school’s first three pupils gained university degrees and the first open scholarship was awarded.¹¹⁹ These examples show how the school had expanded from its small beginnings to a well-respected institution. The evidence points to the fact that the silk manufacturers,

¹¹² C.R.O., CED 7/59/9, Report of the Board of Education on the Inspection of the Girls’ High School, Macclesfield, 1904.

¹¹³ *M.C.H.*, 15 November 1879, p. 4.

¹¹⁴ Longden, ‘Further Education’, p. 101.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 24 July 1931, p. 4.

¹¹⁶ *M.C.H.*, 9 December 1904, p. 137.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 27 November 1899, p. 51.

¹¹⁸ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 215.

¹¹⁹ *M.C.H.*, 24 July 1931, p. 4.

and especially the Brocklehursts, were the primary players in the school's early history and exerted considerable influence on its development in the nineteenth century.

School of Art

The School of Art was founded in 1851 by a group of silk manufacturers who hoped that it would be an asset to Macclesfield in its quest to retain dominance in the silk trade. The aim of the institution was to provide 'means for the cultivation of a taste for the beautiful and for the promotion and advancement of skill in design...with an implied intention of educating practical designers for the manufacture of silk'.¹²⁰ The first headmaster was initially forced to concentrate on elementary art education because of low educational standards and restrictive government rules.¹²¹ Subsequently, the teachers offered a more practical approach to art education and the school gradually gained a reputation for producing high quality work.

During the 1870s, it became apparent that the school's rented rooms in the U.K.S. building were inadequate for the growing number of students. As a result, the Council granted land in Old Park Lane and a building grant, supplemented by £500 in subscriptions, enabled the project to be completed by 1879.¹²² In 1883 the new School of Science opened in the new building and took over the Society's science classes. The two departments co-existed under the same management until the School of Science became the responsibility of the T.I.C. in 1893.¹²³ Despite this administrative change, both schools retained strong links and continued to hold joint annual meetings until 1900.

The institution was initially funded by voluntary subscriptions and occasional grants from the Department of Science and Art. It received a boost to its finances when the technical education rate was levied in Macclesfield in 1893. The T.I.C. could then use this revenue, and surplus customs and excise (or 'whisky') money, for technical education in the town.¹²⁴ This 'whisky' money was a direct result of the 1890 Local Taxation (Customs and Excise Act) that gave certain duties to local authorities for the purposes of rate relief or technical education; in 1900-1901 a total of £863,847 was distributed nationally from this source.¹²⁵ The subjects offered by the combined school in Macclesfield varied over time and ranged from design to building construction. The implementation of a national

¹²⁰ C.R.O., D 5299, Nicholson, 'Macclesfield Present and Future', p. 67.

¹²¹ *Macclesfield School of Art* (Macclesfield, 2001), unpaginated.

¹²² *A Walk*, p. 75.

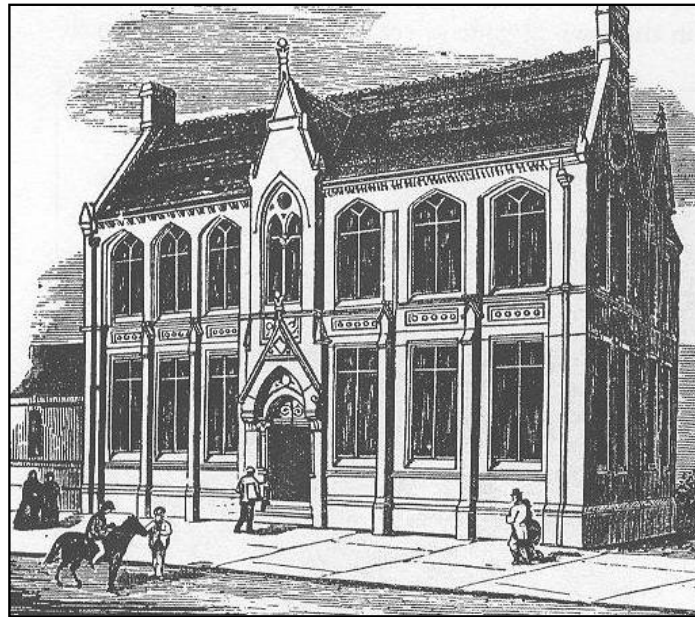
¹²³ C.R.O., LBM 2703/34, Macclesfield Borough Council, Technical Instruction Committee Minutes, 20 April 1893.

¹²⁴ Roderick & Stephens, *Education and Industry*, p. 73.

¹²⁵ Argles, *South Kensington to Robbins*, p. 35.

examination system meant that both individual art schools and students' work could be compared on a national basis.¹²⁶ The school also established the town's first museum, which exhibited students' work and loaned items from London museums.

Figure 3.8. Macclesfield School of Art building on Park Lane. This was designed as an impressive institution that would enhance Macclesfield's superiority in the silk trade. (Macclesfield Museums Trust)



At the outset, the managing committee consisted of the U.K.S. committee, the mayor and seven other subscribers, which expanded to a total of 35 people in 1861.¹²⁷ There were many silk manufacturers on the committee and they represented 18 of the 21 trustees in 1877.¹²⁸ They were also the main contributors of funding and in 1884 four silk firms headed the subscription list.¹²⁹ Obviously this aspect of the role became less critical as state funding increased, but even at the end of the century silk manufacturers still contributed to the prize fund.¹³⁰

The presence of the silk manufacturers on the school's committee was even more pronounced than that of the U.K.S., due to its direct links to the silk trade. Despite this heavy concentration, there were other supporters, ranging from the Unitarian minister Revd Joseph Freeston to John May (a solicitor) who was president for 16 years.¹³¹

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹²⁷ Longden, 'Further Education', p. 158.

¹²⁸ *A Walk*, p. 74.

¹²⁹ C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, M.S.A, M.B., 28 January 1885, p. 28.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 17 January 1898, p. 5.

¹³¹ *M.C.H.*, 3 December 1904, p. 2.

However, it was the manufacturers who tended to dominate both the committee and subscription lists and appeared to be the most active individuals. For example, the school's minutes described J. O. Nicholson's dedication: 'there was no man in Macclesfield who had worked harder or longer or given more time' to technical and art education in his many capacities, including president of the institution.¹³²

The most obvious motive for their support was for business reasons. By the 1850s, there was recognition of the need for a skilled workforce in industries nationwide. This was

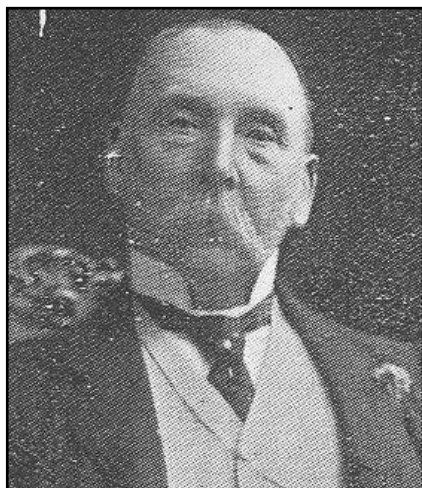


Figure 3.9. Joshua Oldfield Nicholson.
(Macclesfield Museums Trust)

particularly evident in the silk industry, which needed a variety of specialist workmen, such as designers for the Jacquard looms and those with knowledge of chemistry for the dyeing process. As a result, many manufacturers were eager to address this deficiency and saw the institution as an opportunity to close the gap with foreign competitors. Mr Condron illustrated the seriousness of the situation in 1860 by stating that unless the Macclesfield weavers 'changed their manipulation they would soon have nothing to do'.¹³³

Improved technical education was therefore seen by many manufacturers to be the only way in which Macclesfield's trade could survive the relaxation of protective measures on silk. In addition to this commercial motive, there was also the general civilising benefit of educational institutions; for example, in 1896 the institution was seen to have been a 'great agent' in temperance terms.¹³⁴ Other possible considerations range from civic pride to association with a respected institution. However, from the available records, the overriding motivation for involvement seems to have been the creation of a highly skilled workforce in order to improve Macclesfield's silk trade.

The problems faced by the school were numerous, particularly during its early years. Many silk manufacturers were opposed to the institution, believing that such education was the responsibility of the government. Others were reluctant to allow their employees to attend the school in case they betrayed any trade secrets.¹³⁵ The effects of these attitudes are shown by the fact that the pupils who attended the school came from a wide variety of

¹³² C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 17 January 1898, p. 5.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1861, p. 13.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 27 February 1897, p.14.

¹³⁵ Longden, 'Further Education', p. 150.

backgrounds. Table 3.2 shows a sample of students' occupations, where those employed in the silk trade are fewer than might be expected, given the original objectives of the school.

Table 3.2. The occupations of the School of Art pupils in 1863.
(C.R.O., D 5299, Nicholson, 'Macclesfield Present and Future', pp. 69-70.)

Occupations	Pupil Numbers
Brushmaker	1
Builders	2
Carpenters	3
Clerks	8
Cotton Spinner	1
Drapers	2
Florist	1
Glazier	1
Grocer	1
Hardware Dealers	5
House Painters	2
Mechanic	1
Mechanical Engineer	1
Merchants	2
Printer	1
Silk Designers	7
Silk Dyer	1
Silk Manufacturers	6
Silk Weavers	6
Teachers, Governors	15
Pupil Teachers	6
No Occupation	32
TOTAL	107

Of the silk manufacturers who were involved, there was much discontent with the early teaching. It was believed to be too theoretical and of little practical use to the silk industry, while the headmasters felt that the students received scant encouragement from their employers.¹³⁶ Consequently, there was always friction between the teaching staff and committee, culminating in the headmaster's resignation in 1888.¹³⁷ Even as late as 1892, W. B. Brocklehurst stated that in terms of technical education 'they did not make that progress in the staple trade of the town which one would wish', compared to France and Germany who were 'were working to the very utmost stretch possible'.¹³⁸

Outside the silk trade, the institution was viewed with suspicion and suffered from its association with the U.K.S. As a result, the school faced similar prejudices, illustrated by

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 January 1869, p. 5.

¹³⁷ C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 8 February 1888.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 27 February 1893, p. 21.

William Smith's comment that it was 'the pet child of the Messrs Brocklehurst'.¹³⁹ This meant that many were unwilling to contribute, because they were the largest employers in Macclesfield and stood to gain the most from its activities. The committee's domination by silk manufacturers also led to the assumption that the school was not of any relevance to other trades, although the committee continually tried to dispel this illusion.¹⁴⁰

The most obvious result of this lukewarm reception for the school was its precarious financial situation. This was evident at the outset, when the original subscription list was abandoned at the opening dinner in the hope that a new one would stimulate more interest.¹⁴¹ The committee and the headmasters were responsible for raising funds and the extent of their difficulties was shown in 1871, when they were forced to close the school for a few weeks to 'recruit its financial resources'.¹⁴² The system of payment by results, supplemented by school fees, meant that with low pupil numbers it could not hope to attract the funding of larger institutions. As a result, they had to rely on voluntary contributions until sufficient public funding became available. The committee did try to secure the school's survival by proposing to levy a rate in 1868, but they failed to gain the approval of two thirds of the town's ratepayers. After the passing of the 1889 Act the financial position did improve, but there were still problems with the new system. For instance, Mr Staniforth said that Cheshire County Council 'seemed to squander no end of money...but so far as helping their School of Art...they were altogether apathetic'.¹⁴³ Consequently, it was not until the twentieth century that the school reached a period of relative security.

Both divisions of the School of Art and Science suffered from recruitment problems. This stemmed from reasons ranging from the attitude of employers to competition with other institutions. Figure 3.10 shows the number of pupils attending the School of Art and gives a comparison between its day and evening classes.

¹³⁹ *M.C.H.*, 2 March 1867.

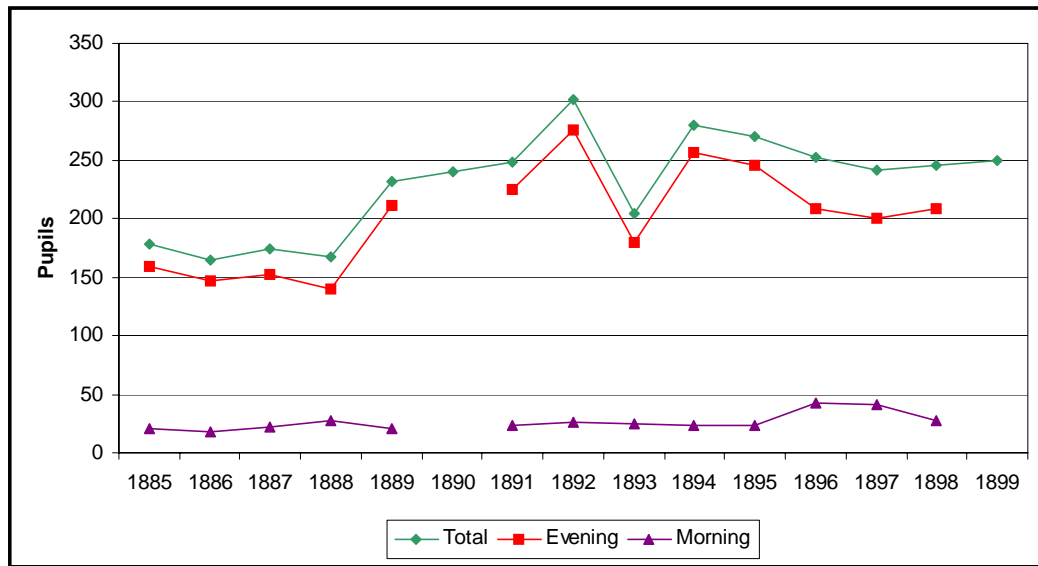
¹⁴⁰ C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 28 January 1885, p. 10.

¹⁴¹ *M.C.H.*, 13 November 1851, p. 7.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 14 January 1871, p. 4.

¹⁴³ C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 27 February 1897, p.16.

Figure 3.10. Attendance at the School of Art, 1885-1899.
(C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., January 1885-October 1902.)



This graph shows that the majority of the students attended evening classes after work, as few people could afford to attend the day classes. In total, the attendance at the art classes fell short of the numbers anticipated by the committee and the annual reports are peppered with requests for more students. Likewise, the Science School suffered from poor attendance and Mr Wilmot stated in 1891 that there was ‘no doubt that the School of Science was a little bit crippled’.¹⁴⁴ Despite this pessimistic picture, the numbers did show some progress with 53 pupils in 1884, growing to 180 by the time the classes transferred to the Technical School.¹⁴⁵ However, these numbers never matched the available facilities and in 1891 Mr Freeston used the chemistry class as an illustration, saying that they had a ‘well fitted up laboratory for 16 pupils and a well trained and qualified teacher and yet last session there was not sufficient pupils to run the class’.¹⁴⁶ The reasons cited for the disappointing performance were the existence of other institutions giving science tuition, such as that at the Y.M.C.A. and the Macclesfield Scientific Association, together with the loss of pupil teachers to training colleges to finish their studies.¹⁴⁷

Despite its close identification with the silk trade, the tuition given at the School of Art prepared its students for a variety of alternative occupations. This diversity is shown by the comments of James Ford in 1866, about nine of his pupils: ‘five gaining admission to the National Art Training School, London’, two ‘Masters of Schools of Art’, two

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2 March 1892, p. 15.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 28 January 1885, p. 4; 13 February 1894, p. 10.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2 March 1892, p. 16.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 27 February 1888, p. 15.

‘ornamental glass designers, and one...in training’, two silk designers, one architect and one sculptor.’¹⁴⁸ This contrasted markedly with the expectations of the silk manufacturers who hoped that the school would provide them with qualified workers to raise artistic standards. The opportunities for pupils to move away from Macclesfield on scholarships and offers of employment elsewhere meant that many left the town.¹⁴⁹ This movement of people and skills was also contrary to the hopes of the founders who wanted pupils to use their knowledge for Macclesfield’s benefit, rather than subsidising industry in other towns.

Despite all the problems to beset the two departments during the nineteenth century, they were able to achieve some success. The School of Science was in an improved situation when it transferred to the Council’s Technical Instruction Committee (T.I.C.) and become an integral part of the Technical School. Macclesfield School of Art students were able to win over 90 per cent of the art evening class scholarships offered by Cheshire County Council in 1893.¹⁵⁰ In 1886, the school came seventh among the national provincial schools of art and in design it was second to Manchester.¹⁵¹ By the end of the century, Macclesfield was described as fifth in the national list of schools of art and ‘first when the percentage of the population and the number of students are considered’.¹⁵²

Given the vocational nature of the school, it was not surprising that it was a core of Macclesfield silk manufacturers who were its main supporters in the nineteenth century. They were responsible for its foundation and its continued existence against a background of continual problems. However, their support can be balanced against the fact that they were also the most likely beneficiaries of the institution’s activities.

Technical School

The Technical School was founded in the 1880s by the Macclesfield Chamber of Commerce to improve the standard of technical knowledge in the town’s silk trade. As a result, the silk manufacturers were the main supporters and were involved in all phases of its development. The Chamber’s Technical Committee ran its evening classes, supported by subscriptions and City & Guilds’ grants, until the adoption of the Technical Instruction Act in 1889. The school then officially transferred to the new T.I.C. in 1893 and it sought to establish a permanent home for its activities.¹⁵³ A protracted ‘battle of the sites’ ensued

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1866, p. 11.

¹⁴⁹ *M.C.H.*, 21 January 1869, p. 5.

¹⁵⁰ C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 13 February 1894, p. 8.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 17 January 1887, p. 8.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 29 January 1900, p. 3.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, LBM 2703/34, M.B.C., T.I.C., Minutes, 3 February 1893.

which caused acrimony between members and delays in progress. Eventually the U.K.S. buildings were purchased for £2,000 and work commenced to create new facilities between the old building and the Public Library.¹⁵⁴ Therefore, it took until October 1900 for the new building to be opened and it was then known as the ‘Macclesfield Technical and Science School’.¹⁵⁵

The main focus of the Technical School was silk manufacture, but provision was also made for the teaching of other vocational subjects.¹⁵⁶ The classes and lectures were predominantly held in the evening for workers who wished to enhance their skills. Most of the attendees at the silk classes were weavers, but there were also designers, overseers and a few manufacturers.¹⁵⁷ The aim of the school was ‘to give to the artisan, the designer, the teacher, and to those desirous of learning any particular industry, the best and most adequate instruction and to assist all who are desirous of deriving benefit from the classes’.¹⁵⁸

The school’s income consisted of grants, donations and private subscriptions. In its early days, the institution was reliant on subscriptions and donations and in 1883 Henry Birchenough and others secured a grant of £500 from the Goldsmiths’ Company, which temporarily eased the financial pressure.¹⁵⁹ As ‘one of the first towns in the United Kingdom’ to take advantage of the 1891 Technical Instruction Act, Macclesfield immediately levied a halfpenny rate. These local funds, and the ‘whisky money’ that followed, signalled the start of significant funding for technical education.¹⁶⁰ However, the school still suffered from the Department of Science and Art’s refusal to fund practical subjects, which limited their grants to theoretical science teaching.¹⁶¹

Funding for the new building came from a variety of sources. The Council paid the £2,000 purchase price for the U.K.S. buildings and gave a further £1,672 for building and equipment costs.¹⁶² The Chamber of Commerce donated £976 towards the building and £415 for furnishing and equipment.¹⁶³ Despite these grants, the committee still had a deficit

¹⁵⁴ *M.C.H.*, 29 September 1900, p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ C.R.O., LBM 2703/34, M.B.C., T.I.C., Minutes., 17 August 1900.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 16 March 1893.

¹⁵⁷ Longden, ‘Further Education’, p. 220.

¹⁵⁸ *M.C.H.*, 29 September 1900, p. 6.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 17 February 1890, p. 15.

¹⁶¹ S. Cotgreave, *Technical Education and Social Change* (London, 1958), p. 36.

¹⁶² C.R.O., LBM 2703/34, M.B.C., T.I.C. Minutes, 23 April, 17 December 1897.

¹⁶³ *M.C.H.*, 29 September 1900, p. 6.

and made an appeal to the local inhabitants for the remainder, showing that voluntary contributions were still critical to any major fundraising effort.

As the school was founded primarily to improve Macclesfield's silk industry, it was no surprise that many silk manufacturers were involved from the outset. An example of this dominance is shown by the fact that at both the initial meetings of the Chamber of Commerce and its Technical Committee, there was present only Benjamin Pierpoint (a bank manager) who was not involved with the silk trade.¹⁶⁴ This was due to the fact that the Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1867, partially as an employers' organisation to negotiate prices with silk weavers.¹⁶⁵ However, once the school moved into Council control, the net did widen to include a physician (George Bland) and a newspaper editor (Robert Brown) at the inaugural committee meeting, and this trend continued.¹⁶⁶

The form of support given to the school by silk manufacturers varied between those who campaigned actively, such as J. O. Nicholson, who laboured 'most assiduously on its behalf', to others who only subscribed at times of particular need.¹⁶⁷ The 1883 and 1900 subscription lists show a clear majority in the ratio of silk manufacturers to other contributors, with 12 to five at the first timepoint and eight to three at the second. The largest donation was £500, given by W. C. Brocklehurst to the building fund.¹⁶⁸ Manufacturers also loaned or donated machinery, such as Thomas Crew's gift of a French Loom, although the school still had to offset its dearth of equipment by arranging visits to local mills.¹⁶⁹

The main motives for the silk manufacturers' involvement appear to have been business related. Charles Brocklehurst pointed out in 1880 that the French and German trade schools were well established and had assisted their silk industries with theoretical and practical teaching. Bradford and Huddersfield were cited as having successful technical schools and he hoped that their silk class would 'develop into a similar establishment for Macclesfield and the silk trade'.¹⁷⁰ Many of the school's promoters, such as Henry Birchenough, believed 'that the only way of saving the silk industry was by means of technical education'.¹⁷¹ Other possible reasons for support ranged from the associated

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Longden, 'Further Education', p. 210.

¹⁶⁶ C.R.O., LBM 2703/34, M.B.C., T.I.C., Minutes, 3 February 1893.

¹⁶⁷ *M.C.H.*, 29 September 1900, p. 6.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *M.C.H.*, 29 September 1900, p. 6; Longden, 'Further Education', p. 219.

¹⁷⁰ C.R.O., D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1880, p. 3.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 17 January 1898, p. 19.

general benefits of educational institutions to creating an impressive technical institution for Macclesfield. At the opening ceremony, the mayor also highlighted ‘the great importance of giving the youth of this country a thorough instruction in the arts and sciences which are likely to be serviceable to them’ throughout their working life.¹⁷²

The Technical School faced many difficulties and the main one, particularly in the Chamber of Commerce era, was the apathy of many silk manufacturers towards technical education. Some believed that protection was the only way in which the English silk trade could survive and others blamed the unions for their difficulties. Therefore, this group viewed improvements in technical education as insignificant in business terms.¹⁷³ In 1886 one of Benjamin Pierpoint’s reasons for resigning as chairman was the silk manufacturers’ lack of interest in the institution.¹⁷⁴ This was a recurring theme in the annual reports and, even as late as 1897, remarks were made on the ‘apathy of the silk manufacturers on the subject’.¹⁷⁵ Other reasons to inhibit support concerned its close relationship with the U.K.S. Both institutions were dominated by a particular group of silk manufacturers and this was reinforced by Pierpoint’s comments that he felt ‘an outsider’ on the Technical Committee.¹⁷⁶ The strong bias towards the silk industry meant that those outside the silk trade felt little desire to contribute to an institution, which appeared to offer them little in return. The committee were keen to dispel this illusion and frequently emphasised the school’s broader appeal in order to generate more support.¹⁷⁷

Nationally, the haphazard development of technical education meant that there was some duplication of effort between the Department of Art and Science and the Education Department.¹⁷⁸ In addition, the English apprentice system suffered from motivational and attendance problems compared to their German counterparts, which adversely affected such schools.¹⁷⁹ Overall, the expectations of the Macclesfield school were lower than its main foreign competitors and the committee stated that its new building ‘is undoubtedly a modest effort; not one that would satisfy the ambitions of centres like Lyons or Zurich, or even Crefeld’.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷² *M.C.H.*, 6 October 1900, p. 2.

¹⁷³ Longden, ‘Further Education’, p. 211.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

¹⁷⁵ C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 17 January 1898, p. 19.

¹⁷⁶ Longden, ‘Further Education’, p. 217.

¹⁷⁷ *M.C.H.*, 25 August 1900, p. 4.

¹⁷⁸ Roderick & Stephens, *Education and Industry*, p. 73.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁸⁰ C.R.O., LBM 2703/34, M.B.C., T.I.C., Minutes, 16 December 1899.

The specialised nature of the Macclesfield silk industry meant that there were problems in making the silk classes and examinations of relevance. In 1895, the poor performance of students in the silk weaving and throwing exams was explained by the fact that some of the questions related to ‘details considered out of the range of the requirements of the Macclesfield silk trade’.¹⁸¹ The most serious problem to affect the Technical School was its financial status. The T.I.C. compared Stockport’s version, which had benefited from significant funding from local industrialists (including a donation of £10,000 from Joseph Whitworth) and became the town’s most successful educational institution, with Macclesfield’s difficulties in attracting support and poor facilities.¹⁸² For example, the pupil numbers had dropped back to 201 in 1899 and the committee attributed this to ‘the chaos which had prevailed in respect to the accommodation’.¹⁸³ Another factor was ‘the lure of better facilities at larger institutions such as the Manchester and Stockport schools’, while schools at Northwich and Leek offered further competition.¹⁸⁴

Despite all these negative aspects, the institution did manage to achieve some success. From the outset, the school was fortunate to have a number of enthusiastic teachers, such as David Walmsley a former U.K.S. pupil, and an examiner stated in 1893 that the standard ‘was distinctly above average’.¹⁸⁵ In 1896 the examinations in silk weaving were described as ‘very successful’ and the students ‘having taken all the prizes awarded by the City & Guilds of London Institute’.¹⁸⁶ The science classes had recovered from the relatively low attendance during the 1880s and formed the greater part of the Technical School’s work during this period. The institution worked closely with other Macclesfield schools, but its most obvious connection was with the School of Art. Work created by pupils of both institutions was exhibited at the 1899 Arts and Crafts exhibition in Oldham, after achieving notable success in the National Competition.¹⁸⁷

These examples demonstrate that the Technical School did manage to achieve some success in the nineteenth century, despite all the disadvantages it faced. Due to the strong silk industry bias, it was inevitable that the silk manufacturers both founded and dominated the management of the institution. They were also responsible for providing the majority

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 2 March 1895, pp. 7-8.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, LBM 2703/34, M.B.C., T.I.C., Minutes, 23 March 1893; Steele, ‘A Study of the Education’, pp. 235, 246, 327.

¹⁸³ C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 27 February 1897, p. 4; 29 January 1900, p. 4; *M.C.H.*, 29 January 1900, p. 6.

¹⁸⁴ *M.C.H.*, 29 January 1900, p. 6; Longden, ‘Further Education’, p. 235.

¹⁸⁵ C.R.O., LBM 2703/34, M.B.C., T.I.C., Minutes, 17 August 1893.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 27 February 1897, p. 5.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 29 January 1900, p. 5.

of the voluntary funds and equipment, which kept the institution viable before the introduction of state funding. Even after the system of grants eased the financial situation, their donations and subscriptions were still an integral part of its operation. Therefore, the silk manufacturers were primarily responsible for the initiation, management and funding of the Technical School throughout the nineteenth century.

Discussion

All these illustrations show the extent to which the silk manufacturers were able to influence the Macclesfield secular education institutions. What do their actions across these establishments reveal about the nature of their contributions? The silk manufacturers were prominent in the secular education field and 28 of them aided three or more of these institutions. Within that group there were a further ten who supported four institutions and five who assisted five organisations. For example, J. O. Nicholson played an active role in all these institutions, except the Public Library, and participated variously as a governor, chairman, president, secretary, trustee, committee member and subscriber. Thomas Unett Brocklehurst, William Coare Brocklehurst, William Bullock and David Clarke acted as subscribers, lecturers, trustees, governors and committee members to four institutions, in addition to being committee members for the library, or donating books to its collections. J. O. Nicholson's contribution to this group of organisations appears to have been significant in all five cases and this reflected his desire to improve educational standards in Macclesfield.

Within the three institutions closely linked to the silk industry, there was a cluster of seven silk manufacturers who supported all three and a further 12 who aided two. The 50-year gap between the establishment of the U.K.S. and the Technical School meant that there was a limited number of silk manufacturers who could realistically be involved during the active phases of these institutions. Of the two institutions to pass into Council control, the silk manufacturers remained well represented on the committees. For example, there were 17 silk manufacturers who sat on the Library Committee and 12 on the T.I.C. Although the Grammar School and the G.H.S. were run as completely separate entities, ten silk manufacturers did support both schools.

Some family silk manufacturing concerns displayed considerable support for this group of institutions; the most prolific of these were the Brocklehursts, followed by the Smales and Birchenoughs. Nine members of the Brocklehurst family aided the U.K.S., four helped the

School of Art, the Grammar School and the Technical School, while a further three supported the Girls' High School and the Public Library. Five members of the Smale family and three members of the Birchenough family assisted the School of Art. Another way in which they financed the vocational institutions was through company subscriptions. For example, J. & T. Brocklehurst, J. Birchenough & Sons and three different versions of the Smale companies subscribed towards the Technical School and the School of Art. In general, the silk manufacturers' support for these institutions remained constant over time, with the exception of the Grammar School, where the number of silk manufacturers increased in the late nineteenth century. The nature of the silk manufacturers' support tended to vary according to their financial reserves, available time and other commitments. The Brocklehurst family, although the driving force behind the vocational institutions, generally had little to do with daily operations and tended to act as influential figureheads and financial supporters. This was a common approach, but others did become more closely involved, such as J. O. Nicholson with the School of Art.

Apart from the silk manufacturers, who were the other main players in Macclesfield's secular education institutions? There was a range of people from different backgrounds who supported multiple institutions. John May subscribed towards the U.K.S., the Girls' High School and the Technical School, in addition to acting as the president, a committee member and trustee for the School of Art. William Bromley Davenport also supported four institutions, acting as a governor for the Grammar School, vice-president of the U.K.S. and subscriber to the School of Art and Technical School. A further three people supported three of these organisations, David Chadwick, Samuel Greg and Thomas Stringer (a timber merchant). The county families were prominent in many of these institutions, through honorary positions and subscriptions; for example four members of the Davenport family supported the U.K.S. in this way. Professional men, such as the solicitor William Mair, were committee members alongside the silk manufacturers, while the clergy were clearly visible in the U.K.S. and the School of Art.

Despite the fact that the U.K.S., the School of Art and the Technical School had a close relationship with the silk industry, there were other businessmen who participated on the various committees. These ranged from builders to the proprietors of the local newspaper and there were also silk workers who had progressed to higher levels within their field. For example, William Thompson (a silk designer) and Robert Snow (an overlooker) were both involved with the School of Art and the Technical School, in addition to their council duties. There were very few women represented on the committees before the late

nineteenth century and their input was limited to subscriptions and fundraising activities until this time.

Representatives of the clergy, professional men and businessmen also acted as governors for the Grammar School, which diluted its traditional reliance on the local gentry. The working classes were heavily involved in the early campaign for the Public Library, but there is no evidence to suggest that they contributed towards any of the other institutions, as their small contributions would not have appeared on subscription lists. Therefore, the sources suggest that it was predominantly the middle classes, supported by the county families, who invested their time and money into these Macclesfield facilities.

Having covered the main people involved, were there any other issues (outside the scope of the silk manufacturers) that affected the development of these institutions? The U.K.S. was the trailblazer for the vocational organisations in Macclesfield and came up against ‘much bitter opposition’ because of the exclusion of religious instruction.¹⁸⁸ This caused difficulties in attracting sufficient people to the early annual meetings and John Brocklehurst described an occasion when Mr Kelly had to ‘go into the market place to get an audience of some half dozen’.¹⁸⁹ The Anglican clergy felt strongly that science teaching should be under their control to prevent dangerous theories from circulating among students. As a result, they established their own versions, such as the Society for Acquiring Christian Knowledge at St George’s Church.¹⁹⁰ However, they had to concede that by mid-century the U.K.S. was the most successful institution of its kind in Macclesfield. Nationally, the mechanics’ institutes also suffered from political distrust. Working-class radicals were often the most likely attendees and this led to initial Tory opposition. Conversely, radicals often became disillusioned with the movement’s careful exclusion of political debate and saw institutes as a means of subduing workers and improving their skills for the benefit of their employers.¹⁹¹ In Macclesfield, the Liberal and nonconformist allegiance of many of its leaders would have added to these differences.

The gradual introduction of state funding for art, science and technical education did bring attendant problems for some of these institutions. The silk manufacturers were adamant that their School of Art would offer education tailored to the needs of the staple trade, but

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, D 5299, Nicholson, ‘Macclesfield Past’, p. 75.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1851, p. 11.

¹⁹⁰ Longden, ‘Further Education’, p. 216.

¹⁹¹ Kelly, *George Birkbeck*, p. 226.

the imposition of a standard curriculum meant that this was not possible. John Brocklehurst was particularly vocal on the subject, stating that ‘the education which was suited for a seaport like Liverpool, would not do for Macclesfield’.¹⁹² The first headmaster recognised that his teaching was ‘to a certain extent antagonistic to the wants of the locality’, but had to yield to standards set by the Department of Art and Science.¹⁹³ This balance between national control and local needs proved to be an ongoing problem for the institution. The system of payment by results meant that the majority of the available funding was directed to larger institutions and poor attendance yielded little reward. Similarly, the inequalities in grant aid meant that practical subjects lost out to theoretical classes. Many local people also believed that these two institutions should be government funded and so the institutions lost out in all directions.

The number of other institutions that were founded in the nineteenth century meant that there were always many demands on Macclesfield’s inhabitants for voluntary funding. This was particularly difficult at times of trade depression; for example Mr Smith (from St Michael’s Church) refused to contribute towards the U.K.S. building fund because he felt that an aid programme for Macclesfield’s unemployed workers was far more urgent than educational facilities.¹⁹⁴ This intense competition for funds meant that popular causes, such as the Infirmary, tended to gain the lion’s share and the delays to the library scheme and the School of Art’s funding difficulties were both consequences of such competition. Similarly, the U.K.S.’s demise can also be attributed to the rivalry from other institutions, such as St Peter’s Working Men’s Institute and the Working Men’s Total Abstinence and Mutual Improvement Society, while the move towards compulsory education lessened the demand for elementary instruction. The combination of these factors, and the progress of its three associated institutions, meant that the U.K.S. eventually outlived its purpose.

All these examples illustrate that most of the secular education institutions did experience some external problems that affected their development to varying degrees. Having explored how far the silk manufacturers were able to influence these institutions, what apparent motives lay behind their actions? The strongest motive to emerge from the records was the potential benefit of the three vocational institutions for the Macclesfield silk industry. In 1835 the fact that the original nucleus of Sunday scholars who formed the U.K.S. came from the Macclesfield and Hurdsfield Sunday Schools suggests a strong

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1860, p. 6.

¹⁹³ *M.C.H.*, 2 January 1869, p. 5.

¹⁹⁴ Pole, ‘Elementary Education’, p. 142.

probability that some were John Brocklehurst's employees. Therefore, their decision to approach him must have been related to the fact that he was the largest employer of labour in the town. Brocklehurst's initial intention that it should cater exclusively for his workers implied that he did expect to derive exclusive benefits for his company through a more skilled and tractable workforce. Having subsequently decided to establish a town-wide institution, he was keen to emphasise that it could help all manufacturing firms. For example, at the second annual meeting he stressed that manufacturing interests were becoming aware of 'the necessity of these establishments, so as to enable themselves and their dependants to maintain a successful competition with their rivals'.¹⁹⁵

The School of Art and the Technical School were linked even more closely with the silk trade and the evidence indicates that the improvement of Macclesfield's artistic and technical expertise was the primary concern. Such education was viewed as potentially beneficial to a high proportion of those involved in the silk trade, not just to artisans who were the primary targets. Thomas Unett Brocklehurst admitted to his own lack of design knowledge, stating that he often found it difficult to give an educated opinion when asked by his employees. He felt that this was a common situation among silk manufacturers and that they could all benefit from such education.¹⁹⁶ However, the 1885 annual report stated that the students were 'chiefly of the artisan class' and that they 'required more students of the higher classes'.¹⁹⁷

The economic considerations were clearly uppermost in the manufacturers' minds at the inaugural meeting when Mr Hammersley hoped that pupils could produce patterns to lift the reliance on continental imports, which cost Manchester around £30,000 annually.¹⁹⁸ On the science side, John Brocklehurst highlighted the poor standard of scientific knowledge by recounting his experience with a dye from Egypt, which he had to send to Germany for extraction because nobody in England could process it.¹⁹⁹ Similarly, Charles Brocklehurst offered justification for the new Technical School by citing the remarks of a fellow silk manufacturer: 'if he wanted a manager to conduct his business, he did not know where to look for a man who was thoroughly qualified'.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ *A Walk*, p. 68.

¹⁹⁶ *M.C.H.*, 13 November 1851, p. 7.

¹⁹⁷ C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 28 January 1885, p. 14.

¹⁹⁸ *A Walk*, p. 68.

¹⁹⁹ Pole, 'Elementary Education', p. 121

²⁰⁰ C.R.O., D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1880, p. 3.

Against the context of increasing foreign competition, the loss of protection and a declining silk trade, many silk manufacturers saw these institutions as a panacea for their problems. This is illustrated by John Brocklehurst's comments during a trade depression: 'On all hands the cry to technical education is raised as a remedy for the almost stagnant condition of the staple trade.'²⁰¹ These comments reflected the silk manufacturers' desire to improve standards and to maximise the benefits for their businesses. This shows that while they could have shown concern for the town's welfare, there was a strong element of self-interest involved with their support.

The silk manufacturers might also have hoped that by supporting working-class institutions they could improve industrial relations. Philanthropy was supposed to encourage deferential behaviour from the working classes and may have been seen as a way of improving the reputation of employers.²⁰² Throughout the nineteenth century, many weavers publicly attacked the large manufacturers, emphasising the discrepancy between their privileged situation and the lack of concern they showed to their weavers.²⁰³ The silk manufacturers' participation in these institutions may therefore have been an attempt to address some of this criticism.

Another motive to appear in the various reports was the desire of participants to help their fellow inhabitants. The educational institutions for the working classes were portrayed as a way in which workers could improve their chances of progression and thereby enhance their quality of life. They were also seen as an opportunity to bring the working and middle classes closer together and to promote understanding.²⁰⁴ Genuine altruism represented the most idealised reason for participation and there could have been elements of this in the actions of supporters. This is consistent with other studies on philanthropy, but it is difficult to determine whether it was a useful by-product, or a main motivating principle, for those associated with these establishments.²⁰⁵

The civilising effects of education on the working classes were repeatedly emphasised in the records of the U.K.S., the Technical School and the School of Art. This type of organisation was seen as encouraging moral improvement through self-help, which was a

²⁰¹ A Walk, p. 68.

²⁰² R. H. Trainor, 'Urban Elites in Victorian Britain', *Urban History Yearbook*, 12, 1985, p. 1.

²⁰³ K. Austin, *Troubled Times: Macclesfield, 1790-1870* (Leek, 2001), p. 70.

²⁰⁴ A. Jordan, *Who Cared? Charity in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast* (Belfast, 1992), p. 236.

²⁰⁵ B. Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 224-5.

particularly popular cause with the Victorian middle classes.²⁰⁶ In addition, they were perceived as a positive influence in the temperance campaign and there were prominent campaigners, such as J. O. Nicholson, at the forefront of managing these institutions in Macclesfield.

Against the backdrop of social unrest in the first half of the nineteenth century, educational institutions were seen to help in averting revolution through a degree of social control.²⁰⁷ For instance, Leeds Mechanics' Institute appeared to experience increased middle class support in direct response to peaks of working class radicalism and Chartist activity.²⁰⁸ This factor was probably instrumental in the establishment of the Macclesfield U.K.S. and it could have helped in dissipating the unrest of the 1830s and 1840s. Owing to its comparatively late establishment, it is difficult to detect any such trends in the subscription levels, as there was a gradual increase for the first 15 years. However, the annual reports do contain frequent references to its positive effects on law and order, showing the concern of the committee on this issue.

Although these establishments do not have any formal links with the religious institutions, religion could have been a general influence on the supporters. The obvious example is the Unitarian identification with educational causes, especially female education.²⁰⁹ This factor could have been contributory to the Brocklehurst and Greg support for the Girls' High School and the other three U.K.S. institutions. These organisations were also seen as a means of healing the religious and political divisions that split the middle classes in Victorian society.²¹⁰ They provided a forum to bring together people of all persuasions to work towards a common cause. This is illustrated by the fact that there were representatives of the main political parties and religious denominations on the governing bodies of all the secular education examples in Macclesfield, despite some initial sectarian fears.

²⁰⁶ L. Gribble, 'Metropolitan Philanthropy: Popular Education and Political Culture in Early Nineteenth-century England, 1800-1830', unpublished D.Phil. thesis (University of Oxford, 1999), p. 210.

²⁰⁷ E. C. P. Lascelles, 'Charity', in G. M. Young (Ed.), *Early Victorian England, Vol. 2* (London, 1951), p. 319.

²⁰⁸ R. J. Morris, 'Voluntary Societies and British Urban Elites, 1780-1850: An Analysis', *The Historical Journal*, 26, 1983, p. 98.

²⁰⁹ Watts, *Gender, Power and the Unitarians*, p. 8.

²¹⁰ Morris, 'Voluntary Societies', p. 110.

The institutions provided a platform for the middle classes to expand their horizons, to increase their range of contacts and to enhance their personal status.²¹¹ The most obvious Macclesfield example was the Grammar School, which had always been dominated by the most respectable families in the area. In general, the publication of subscription lists and donations gave an indication of a person's social standing and reinforced the donor's reputation.²¹² This was also true of obituaries, which gave strong precedence to a person's good works within their community.²¹³

Participation in such institutions was also seen as an integral part of a person's suitability for leadership, particularly for parliamentary candidates.²¹⁴ The only obvious example of political gain associated with these institutions was David Chadwick's successful candidacy as M.P. for Macclesfield and his gift of the public library. He opted to defer the announcement until after the 1874 election, but his gift was public knowledge and could have influenced the electorate at that stage.²¹⁵ However, in common with the Brocklehursts who opted for parliamentary careers, he already had a pedigree of good works and so the patronage of such institutions would have had less impact than for those who were attempting to amass suitable credentials.

The management of these institutions also gave leaders the opportunity to exercise a degree of power in the community and to influence the development of an organisation. They were believed to engender a sense of identity for their participants and an attachment to the local community.²¹⁶ This was especially important in rapidly industrialising towns with large immigrant populations. The middle-class leaders also saw the institutions as an extension of their class identity and took pride in the range of civic buildings that grew up during the Victorian period.²¹⁷ In the annual reports of the Macclesfield institutions there were also references to the enhancement of the town's reputation as the silk centre of England, through the addition of the U.K.S., the School of Art and the Technical School.

²¹¹ J. Walvin, *Victorian Values* (London, 1987), p. 100.

²¹² F. K. Prochaska, 'Philanthropy' in F. M. L. Thompson (Ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950, Vol. 3, Social Agencies and Institutions* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 384.

²¹³ Walvin, *Victorian Values*, p. 100.

²¹⁴ P. Shapely, 'Voluntary Charities in Nineteenth Century Manchester: Organisational Structure, Social Status and Leadership', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Manchester Metropolitan University, 1994), p. 3.

²¹⁵ Brill, *Macclesfield Library*, p. 10.

²¹⁶ R. Sweet, *The English Town, 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture* (Harlow, 1999), p. 103.

²¹⁷ A. J. Kidd, *Manchester* (Keele, 1993), p. 75.

As can be seen from these illustrations, there were many motives that could have encouraged the participation of the silk manufacturers. How far were these secular education institutions able to meet the hopes of their founders during this period? The U.K.S., which was founded to ‘serve the manufactures of the place by affording the means of science education to the artisans’, was not able to reach the standards expected by its originators.²¹⁸ In common with other mechanics’ institutes, it had to focus on providing basic education to the detriment of the advanced learning proposed by its supporters. Lord Stanley of Alderley admitted this in 1849, stating that ‘perhaps they had raised their expectations too high’ and that they should ensure that ‘the instruction afforded be of a palatable, as well as useful, nature’.²¹⁹ The introduction of social activities indicated that it had to broaden its appeal to attract sufficient members and this represented a move away from the core educational role. The business-orientated aims of the institution and the fact that the Brocklehursts were its main supporters meant that there was scepticism regarding their involvement and a degree of alienation present. However, in terms of its ability ‘to meet and minister to the aspirations of its intelligent and intellectual youth’, the institution did provide the first opportunity for Macclesfield Sunday school leavers to further their education, even if the majority attained only basic proficiency. John Brocklehurst described its positive effect on Macclesfield saying that ‘it has brought around a great amelioration of social feeling and party spirit in this town’ and promoted social mixing, providing the ‘only newsroom in Macclesfield where Gentlemen of all creeds and politics meet together for general information’.²²⁰ Nevertheless, these illustrations from the annual reports were designed to attract support and so concentrated on the institution’s positive attributes. For instance, the U.K.S. was one of the more successful mechanics’ institutes, but Brocklehurst’s view that ‘the Macclesfield Institute stands unrivalled in the Empire’ was a definite exaggeration of its achievements.²²¹

The School of Art was viewed by a number of silk manufacturers (especially John Brocklehurst) as ‘the foundation of the staple trade of our town’.²²² They were always adamant that the institution should be exclusively orientated towards silk manufacture but, given the declining nature of the industry and the necessity of providing a broader curriculum, this was probably an unrealistic aim. The suspicion displayed by other silk manufacturers and businessmen meant that it never received town-wide support. However, the institution was believed to have ‘relieved’ its pupils from ‘grosser temptations’, and

²¹⁸ C.R.O., D 4908/2, M.S.A.U.K., A.R., 1851, p. 6.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1849, p. 6.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, 1855, p. 6.

²²¹ *Ibid.*

²²² *Ibid.*, 1859, p. 6.

placed 'them on 'a higher plane', illustrating its beneficial effects on students.²²³ It did succeed in raising the standard of design in the town and gained a reputation as a leading provincial art school. This may have helped in the efforts to prolong Macclesfield's dominance in the silk trade, but the expectation that art education would enable Macclesfield to compete on level terms with its continental neighbours proved to be an overestimation of the influence that it could exert on the town's fortunes.

The Technical School suffered from the same problems as its predecessors. Its piecemeal development meant that it had to operate within space and funding constrictions and it was not until 1900 that it could expand properly. By this time, the silk industry had contracted considerably and so there was less opportunity for the institution to improve trade. Nevertheless, it did provide vocational education for its pupils and had received positive testimonials to its educational standards.

The G.H.S. and Grammar School both provided secondary education for middle-class pupils and were well-respected institutions. The Grammar School had moved away from its original aim of providing education for the poor and maintained its middle-class bias, with the exception of some elementary school pupils who progressed to the Modern School. At the opening of the Public Library, the Council's address to David Chadwick stated that 'it will place within the reach of this community the means of obtaining an intellectual training of the highest and most comprehensive character'.²²⁴ The library became a popular institution for inhabitants, but the type of material borrowed reflected the appetite for more accessible texts instead of more advanced works, which had been the expected reading material for library users. This indicates that many members saw the library as a recreational facility, rather than a way in which they could attain the high levels of achievement projected at the outset.

All these examples illustrate that the founders' hopes for these institutions tended to be idealised in comparison to what was achieved. Nevertheless, these organisations did extend the educational facilities in Macclesfield and formed the basis on which secondary and further education could develop in the twentieth century. Was the support of its silk manufacturers for these institutions consistent with that of businessmen in other industrial centres? The mechanics' institute movement was generally well patronised by textile manufacturers and they were often the founders of such establishments. As a result, some

²²³ *Ibid.*, SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 27 Feb 1897, p. 14.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, LBM 2703/21/1, M.B.C., L.C.M., 1876, p. 21.

of the most successful examples occurred in the northern textile belt, which saw ongoing financial and managerial support from this group.²²⁵ Another common trait of the early promoters was their Unitarian beliefs. In common with John Brocklehurst in Macclesfield, Joseph Strutt was the founder of the Derby Mechanics' Institute and they both shared the desire to expand educational facilities for their workers.²²⁶ Professional men were another sub-group who featured prominently in the history of such institutions and the prime example was Benjamin Heywood, a banker, who was largely responsible for the Manchester Mechanics' Institute, despite the considerable support from cotton manufacturers.²²⁷

Most early mechanics' institutes had started off as mutual improvement societies for working-class members and became more middle class in nature. For example, the Halifax Mechanics' Institute, founded in 1825, was originally managed and patronised by lower middle-class members and artisans. During the 1830s, there was a shift towards management by wealthy manufacturers, merchants and professionals and they dominated the organisation for the remainder of its history. This was particularly evident during the merger with the Halifax Mutual Improvement Society, when its working members saw their decision-making powers eroded by their superiors.²²⁸ In Macclesfield's case, the fact that the U.K.S. was founded in 1835 meant that such middle-class control was always in evidence.

The reasons for the foundation of mechanics' institutes and their associated organisations tended to be similar in northern textile areas. In Halifax, the middle classes believed that they could maintain social order in the town through the education of the lower classes and their mantra was 'useful knowledge is power'.²²⁹ Lancashire employers hoped for industrious workers who were educated to a higher standard, while town leaders wanted responsible members of the community who did not pose a threat to law and order.²³⁰

The common perception of the organisations as a means for instilling middle-class values often worked against the aims of the founders in attracting working-class members. For example, Preston's Institute for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge saw the working

²²⁵ Howe, *The Cotton Masters*, p. 284.

²²⁶ R. S. Fitton & A. P. Wadsworth, *The Strutts and the Arkwrights, 1758-1830: A Study of the Early Factory System* (Manchester, 1958), p. 186.

²²⁷ C. P. Darcy, *The Encouragement of the Fine Arts in Lancashire, 1760-1860* (Manchester, 1976), p. 105.

²²⁸ T. Iwama, 'The Middle Class in Halifax, 1780-1850', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Leeds, 2003), pp. 260-261, 264.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 262.

²³⁰ Darcy, *The Encouragement of the Fine Arts*, p. 105.

classes opting for their own alternatives or rejecting provided education of all forms.²³¹ Henry Solly criticised the mechanics' institutes for setting unrealistic standards and not providing recreational facilities, which meant that 'such institutions are now generally given up to the trading and middle classes'.²³² As the institutes were subscriber-driven, this failure to attract members meant that the original aims had to be relaxed to include social activities. In this way, the Leeds Mechanics' Institute was able to lure workers away from more informal organisations.²³³ These lower expectations were reflected in the fact that many factory masters chose to support Solly's working men's clubs, in addition to their traditional involvement with the mechanics' institutes.²³⁴ In Macclesfield, the silk manufacturers seem to have remained faithful to the U.K.S., but it did introduce recreational and social activities, in common with institutions elsewhere.

Three of the most successful mechanics' institutes were those in Keighley, Halifax and Bradford. They were aided by the area's expanding worsted industry and slower mechanisation, which resulted in fewer trade depressions than with cotton or silk. This meant that its manufacturers were in a better position to offer sustained patronage to their mechanics' institutes.²³⁵ The Bradford version, which had around 900 members, received strong municipal support from the élite, whose combined efforts paid off the mortgage in 1850.²³⁶ Macclesfield's U.K.S. was also patronised by many élite members whose collective influence helped to ensure the survival of the institution into the 1890s.

The evolution of the schools of art and design was characterised by financial difficulties and lack of support from all except a core of enthusiastic people, who were often manufacturers. For instance, the Manchester School of Design had been established through the aid of individuals such as Benjamin Heywood and the cotton manufacturer, Edmund Potter. However, it soon ran into financial difficulties when it failed to gain continued aid from bankers and manufacturers. It had been seen as a potential boon to calico printers (who also purchased continental patterns), but printers like James Thomson of Clitheroe, who had shown early interest, refused to give generously towards the institution.²³⁷ This is similar to the attitude of some silk manufacturers to the Macclesfield School of Art, despite its potential benefits for their businesses. The Liverpool School of

²³¹ Whittle, 'Philanthropy in Preston', p. 262.

²³² H. Solly, *Working Men's Social Clubs and Educational Institutes* (London, 1904), p. 31.

²³³ R. J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: The Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds, 1820-1850* (Manchester, 1990), p. 315.

²³⁴ Howe, *The Cotton Masters*, p. 285.

²³⁵ Tylecote, *The Mechanics' Institutes*, p. 224.

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

²³⁷ Darcy, *The Encouragement of the Fine Arts*, p. 114.

Science also received little help from either merchants or industrialists and was in perpetual financial difficulty.²³⁸ Conversely, the School of Science and Art in Oldham received considerable support from the Platt engineering family, which ensured its longevity.²³⁹

The technical schools also faced financial difficulties, but external funding did become available towards the end of the century. The Manchester Mechanics' Institute had sunk into debt during the 1870s, but the incentive of an annual grant of £200 from the City & Guilds Institute allowed its conversion into a technical school. In Bradford, £3,500 was awarded for the building of a new technical school and the Clothworkers' Company of London also gave an annual grant of £500.²⁴⁰ This is similar to the Council funding and Goldsmiths' grant for the Macclesfield Technical School in the 1890s. However, it took until the twentieth century for the onus to move away entirely from voluntary funding. Nationally, the vocational institutions suffered from the fact that most of their students attended evening classes, which meant that the high standards projected by the founders were rarely achieved. Nevertheless, the support of particular manufacturers meant that institutions for art, science and technical education became the forerunners of today's further education institutions in industrial towns.

Grammar schools had traditionally been the bastion of the county families, clergy and professionals. The absorption of manufacturers into the urban élite meant that some manufacturers had been appointed as trustees in various Lancashire grammar schools by the 1850s. However, Anthony Howe found only five examples of major patronage by cotton manufacturers for Manchester Grammar School between 1830 and 1860, which indicates that their support for this cause was limited.²⁴¹ This is consistent with the Macclesfield silk manufacturers, whose financial assistance for the Grammar School occurred mainly in the late nineteenth century.

The public library movement was characterised by its working-class popularity. In Preston, a working-class committee was set up in 1850 to campaign for such facilities and it collected money from a large proportion of the population over a seven-year period. However, the backing from the middle classes failed to materialise and the project was postponed until 1879, when a large amount of money was donated from the Harris Trust

²³⁸ M. D. Stephens & G. W. Roderick, 'Science, The Working Classes and Mechanics' Institutes', *Annals of Science*, 29, 1972, p. 360.

²³⁹ Roderick & Stephens, *Education and Industry*, p. 79.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ Howe, *The Cotton Masters*, p. 291.

(founded by a solicitor). This history echoes that of the Macclesfield institution in its strong working class support, the same period of inactivity and a large donation from a professional that enabled the institution to open.²⁴² However, some Lancashire cotton manufacturers did donate large sums of money for public libraries, such as George Heginbottom who bequeathed funds for a technical school and public library in Ashton-under-Lyne. Similarly, the Hargreaves family in Accrington left an endowment for the public library, although its major funding came from the Carnegie Foundation.²⁴³

John Potter was the mayor responsible for initiating the appeal for Manchester's public library and over 20,000 working people gave their shillings and pence towards the project. Again, this illustrates the strength of the working class support for the movement, which was matched by the user numbers. For instance, in 1875 Manchester Public Library's borrowers had reached a total of 36,146 (excluding the users of the Reference Library and newsrooms), which compares favourably to Liverpool's 8,823 borrowers in the same year.²⁴⁴ Manchester's library system continued to grow and in 1895 there were 11 branch libraries and 49,516 registered users.²⁴⁵ Therefore the achievement of the Macclesfield Public Library in attracting users appears to have been similar to that of other northern industrial towns. The overall success of British public libraries is illustrated by the fact that by the end of the nineteenth century they were widely regarded as the inspiration for Continental countries, such as Holland and Germany, to establish their own library networks.²⁴⁶

All these examples show that Macclesfield's experiences with the secular institutions were broadly typical of other northern textile towns. A core of Macclesfield silk manufacturers, along with some other members of the élite, were heavily involved with the foundation and management of the U.K.S., the School of Art, the Girls' High School and the Technical School. In the constant battle to gain enough funding to keep these institutions afloat, it was usually the silk manufacturers who provided most of the funding and ensured that they survived the problematic early years. Their lesser participation in the Grammar School was based on the fact that the managing body was largely drawn from other occupational groups until the silk manufacturers became clearly visible in the second half of the

²⁴² Whittle, 'Philanthropy in Preston', p. 220.

²⁴³ A. Howe, *The Cotton Masters, 1830-1860* (Oxford, 1984), p. 286.

²⁴⁴ Hewitt, 'Confronting the Modern City', p. 72.

²⁴⁵ Kidd, *Manchester*, p. 196.

²⁴⁶ L. S. Jast, 'Public Libraries', in H. J. Laski, W. I. Jennings & W. A. Robson, *A Century of Municipal Progress, 1835-1935* (London, 1935), p. 245.

nineteenth century. The Public Library saw the least involvement and it was an accountant who eventually provided the money to enable the institution to open.

The most obvious motives to emerge from the records of these institutions were the benefits of the vocational institutions to the silk trade, the preservation of public order and the improvement of educational facilities. Therefore there was a strong element of self-interest on the part of the silk manufacturers, both in their roles as businessmen and as civic leaders. The original hopes of the manufacturers for the working-class institutions generally had to be tempered over time in response to changing circumstances. This meant that the high standards envisaged were rarely achieved. However, all these institutions increased educational opportunities for specific sectors of the community and were responsible for the way in which secondary and further education has developed in Macclesfield. This pattern of growth in secular education, and the participation of local industrialists, appears to have been mirrored on a larger scale throughout the northern textile districts.

A Macclesfield silk manufacturer who was especially conspicuous in the educational field was J. O. Nicholson, and the following description outlines his role in Macclesfield's institutions: 'Close upon five decades back, as a very young man, he undertook responsibilities in public work which increased with the years, until at one time there was scarcely a social, religious or philanthropic organisation of a progressive kind that he was not either actively associated with or a generous supporter of. Education has ever been his forte, and as a natural consequence he was elected one of the members of the first School Board in 1871, upon which he did excellent work for many years, and it may be said in passing that many of the principles advocated by him in those far-off days, and which were treated at that time often with scant courtesy, have long since become concreted in the law of the land...he has been invaluable to the initiation and development of our School of Art and Science (than whom it has never had a more deservedly honoured or more devoted head)...To his credit also must be placed the practical commencement of technical instruction in Macclesfield.'²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ *Pen Pictures of Macclesfield's Public Men of Today* (Macclesfield, 1907), p. 22.

CHAPTER FOUR

Public Service Institutions and the Influence of the Silk Manufacturers

Introduction

This chapter will outline the development of the Macclesfield voluntary public service institutions and explore the extent to which the silk manufacturers were influential in these organisations. This contribution will be compared to the actions of people from other occupational backgrounds and the factors to affect the institutions outside the silk manufacturers' control will then be considered. Any apparent motives for the silk manufacturers' actions will be examined and also the extent to which the institutions matched up to the founders' original expectations. These results will then be measured against the experiences of other towns to see if the participation of this group was similar to that of other industrialists in the charitable field.

Macclesfield was a prime example of an industrial town where the concentration of large numbers of people had caused severe problems. For example, the Union's medical officer described the Orchard in 1842: 'the houses are chiefly small, damp and dark...the fumes of contagion spreads itself periodically in the neighbourhood, and produces different types of fever...The people inhabiting these abodes are pale and unhealthy.'¹ Economic fluctuations also caused difficulties and the number of families receiving relief between 1821 and 1831 rose from 73 to 511, which put further pressure on overstretched services.² As clerk to the Board of Guardians, and Superintendent Registrar of Births, Marriages and Deaths, John May collected a raft of annual statistics during the 1840s, which raised general awareness of the plight of Macclesfield's people. For instance, in 1850 44 per cent of children died before their fifth birthday, half of these without any form of medical assistance.³

Until the passing of the 1848 Public Health Act, which marked the beginning of a national programme of reform, public services were initiated at a local level. The first of these Macclesfield institutions was the Dispensary, which was opened in 1814. Traditionally, medical care for the poor had been the responsibility of the Overseers of the Poor,

¹ Macclesfield Silk Museum, PH 235, Extract from British Parliamentary Papers, *The Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population, 1842*, p. 17.

² British Parliamentary Papers, *Report from the Select Committee on the Silk Trade with Minutes of Evidence, Appendix and Index, 1831-1832* (Shannon, 1968), p. 782.

³ Cheshire Record Office, LBM 5211/1, J. Smith, *Report to the General Board of Health on a Preliminary Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage and Supply of Water and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of the Borough of Macclesfield* (London, 1850), p. 14.

alongside services provided by religious charities.⁴ The first London dispensary was established in 1770, and by 1800 the capital had 16, treating around 50,000 people annually.⁵ Stockport was the first local town to start a dispensary in 1792⁶ and, around that time, a society was formed in Macclesfield to complement relief for the sick and distressed poor. A public meeting was then called in March 1814 to establish a permanent dispensary for the town and it opened later that year in Mill Street.⁷

By the end of the eighteenth century, the system of poor relief established by the 1601 Act was coming under increasing pressure as towns enlarged. Family and community resources were the first port of call for the unemployed and the charities run by the religious institutions offered further limited help to the most needy.⁸ The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act was introduced to address the problem of spiralling expenditure on poor relief. It introduced a centralised administration to minimise costs and the principle of less eligibility. This made workhouse conditions deliberately harsh to deter people from relying on public funds. In addition, out-relief payments, which had been widely distributed to supplement low incomes, were actively discouraged under the new regime.⁹ However, both poor relief systems proved to be inadequate for the scale of cyclical economic depressions that affected industrial towns during the nineteenth century. Therefore, in the face of extreme distress, voluntary funds were initiated to provide emergency assistance to the unemployed. Macclesfield's Relief Association was first established in 1826 and was revived whenever necessary until 1891, when it became a permanent institution.

The Baths and Washhouses movement, which gathered pace during the 1840s, was an early attempt to combat the effects of poor sanitation in urban areas and to improve the health of their citizens.¹⁰ Liverpool saw the opening of the first municipal baths and washhouses in 1842, although it was originally a product of private initiative.¹¹ In 1844 the Royal Commission into the Sanitary State of Large Towns and Populous Districts concluded that the lowest admission rate for public baths was 6d per person and that there

⁴ C. S. Davies, *A History of Macclesfield* (Manchester, 1961), p 253.

⁵ I. S. L. Loudon, 'The Origins and Growth of the Dispensary Movement in England', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 55, 1981, p. 324.

⁶ J. V. Pickstone, *Medicine and Industrial Society: A History of Hospital Development in Manchester and its Region, 1752-1946* (Manchester, 1985), p. 68.

⁷ *A Walk Through the Public Institutions of Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, 1888), pp. 33-35.

⁸ P. Thane, *Foundations of the Welfare State* (Harlow, 1996), p. 19.

⁹ K. B. Smellie, *A History of Local Government* (London, 1957), p. 27.

¹⁰ E. H. Gibson, 'Baths and Washhouses in the English Public Health Agitation, 1839-1848', *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, 9, 1954, p. 392.

¹¹ S. Sheard, 'Nineteenth Century Public Health: A Study of Liverpool, Belfast and Glasgow', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Liverpool, 1994), p. 189.

were no municipal washhouses in the country.¹² As a result, the Association for the Establishment of Baths and Washhouses for the Labouring Poor was founded to promote the movement and to establish facilities in London.¹³ Awareness of the lack of provision, coupled with the positive experiences of Liverpool and London, resulted in the Public Baths and Washhouses Act of 1846, which empowered local authorities to impose a rate to build these institutions.¹⁴ John May was the main protagonist in the Macclesfield baths and washhouses campaign during the 1840s. His evidence clearly demonstrated major differences in mortality rate between rural and urban areas and established that class was a strong determining factor in life expectancy. He used his statistics to highlight the need for effective drainage, ventilation and cleanliness within Macclesfield and saw baths and washhouses as an integral part of sanitary improvement.¹⁵ The Macclesfield Baths and Washhouses opened in January 1850 and it was one of the first provincial towns after Liverpool to provide such facilities.

The early nineteenth century saw the first phase of measures to deal with fires in urban areas. Fire engines became increasingly commonplace and local authorities began to address the problems of finding men to operate them.¹⁶ By mid-century, volunteer brigades were becoming increasingly popular and in the 1870s over 100 volunteer forces were established.¹⁷ Macclesfield's Volunteer Fire Brigade was in existence by 1864 and assisted the main Corporation Brigade.

Voluntary hospitals were founded from the eighteenth century, but it was during the following century that the majority of these institutions came into being. By 1850, around 250 voluntary hospitals existed alongside local authority medical services in workhouses and lunatic asylums.¹⁸ Manchester and Chester were the first in the region to provide such facilities in the 1750s and Stockport followed in 1832.¹⁹ However, the main phase of hospital building took place between 1850 and 1880 and this expansion was reflected in the fact that there were around 14,800 beds in voluntary hospitals in 1861, rising to 29,500

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 187.

¹³ Gibson, 'Baths and Washhouses', p. 402.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 406.

¹⁵ *A Walk*, p. 103.

¹⁶ G. V. Blackstone, *A History of the British Fire Services* (London, 1957), p. 94.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹⁸ H. Richardson, (Ed.), *English Hospitals, 1660-1948* (Swindon, 1998), p. 1.

¹⁹ *Chester Royal Infirmary, 1756-1956* (Chester, 1956), p. 7; W. Astle, *History of Stockport* (Wakefield, 1971), p. 29.

by 1891.²⁰ Macclesfield gained its version after Joseph Tunnicliffe, a Macclesfield silk manufacturer, left a bequest on his death in 1859. After many delays, the Macclesfield Infirmary opened in 1872 on Cumberland Road.

Prior to 1850, one of the major functions of a hospital was to provide an environment conducive to recovery, along with appropriate medical care.²¹ From 1861, there was a tendency to discharge patients at an earlier stage, which meant that they returned to face all the problems of working-class accommodation.²² To prevent the recurrence of ill health, there was appreciation of the need to give certain patients a period of convalescence. From the 1880s, a number of institutions were established for this purpose and many were linked directly to hospitals, such as the Parkgate Sanatorium for Chester Infirmary's male patients.²³ The Fence Hospital was built by Thomas Unett Brocklehurst and opened in 1883 as a day centre for Macclesfield Infirmary patients.

The Fence Almshouses, opened in 1895, represented the final nineteenth-century public services institution in Macclesfield. Traditionally the monastic foundations had provided accommodation for the elderly poor, but from the sixteenth century there was growing involvement from private individuals. This resulted in the number of British almshouses rising from 55 in the sixteenth century to 220 in the seventeenth century.²⁴ There was a decline in new eighteenth-century almshouses, but foundations increased again during the nineteenth century.²⁵ Macclesfield's existing stock of almshouses saw some expansion during this period and the Fence Almshouses, provided by F. D. Brocklehurst, supplemented the existing accommodation available for elderly residents.

²⁰ J. Woodward, 'Medicine and the City: The Nineteenth-century Experience', in R. Woods & J. Woodward (Eds), *Urban Disease and Mortality in Nineteenth-century England* (London, 1984), p. 71.

²¹ Pickstone, *Medicine and Industrial Society*, p. 138.

²² S. Cherry, *Medical Services and the Hospitals in Britain, 1860-1939* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 47.

²³ *Chester Royal Infirmary*, p. 12.

²⁴ B. Bailey, *Almshouses* (London, 1988), pp. 16, 99.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

The Silk Manufacturers and the Macclesfield Public Service Institutions

The silk manufacturers showed support for all these Macclesfield institutions, but how crucial was their role? The following case studies illustrate the scope of their actions, beginning with organisations having the least involvement through to those that owed their existence primarily to silk manufacturers' philanthropy.

Baths and Washhouses

The Macclesfield Baths and Washhouses opened in 1850 and offered a range of baths and a laundry. These new facilities were immediately popular with Macclesfield people and in 1857 the establishment was described as being 'of great service' for the 'large number of bathers and washers'.²⁶ The Washhouses closed in 1862 and the Baths were transferred into municipal control in 1871. The silk manufacturers were involved in various ways with this institution, but it was primarily an initiative led by John May and supported by the whole town.

The General Board of Health's inspector recommended in 1850 that the Baths and Washhouses 'should be of the plainest possible structure...without ornament or redundancy' and should cost around £2,000, reflecting the financial constraints and utilitarian nature of this venture.²⁷ The voluntary committee relied on subscriptions, donations and entrance fees to pay for its construction and operation. The buildings were extended in 1879 to provide a total of 18 private baths for men, six for women and two swimming baths. The swimming baths also had an important leisure function with regular swimming lessons, galas and exhibitions.²⁸

The main people behind the project came from a variety of backgrounds. John May's early allies in the campaign came predominantly from the county families and the clergy. The original idea was attributed to Mrs Davenport, of Capesthorpe Park, who suggested that such facilities would be of benefit to Macclesfield.²⁹ In support of May's statistical evidence, clergymen and ministers added their own qualitative descriptions of working-class conditions through a series of lectures on the sanitary state of Macclesfield. They were predominantly Anglican and included the Revds Edward Weigall, Charles O'Neill

²⁶ *Post Office Directory of Cheshire* (London, 1857), p. 139.

²⁷ C.R.O., LBM 5211/1, Smith, *Report to the General Board of Health*, p. 50.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, LBM 2703/4/1, Macclesfield Borough Council, Baths Committee Minutes, 27 October 1873; 26 May 1879; 19 April 1877.

²⁹ *M.C.H.*, 3 December 1904, p. 2.

Pratt and C. A. J. Smith, while Samuel Bowen was a nonconformist representative.³⁰ Their participation was carried through to the Baths project, as four of the original 28 members of the 1848 committee were clergymen. The medical men also made up three of this body and there were 12 silk manufacturers.³¹

Although no members of the county families were present on this committee, they clearly supported the project. At the second of the 1848 meetings, the Marquis of Westminster presided, 'Capesthorpe and the other country houses brought hosts of guests' and other attendees included 'Bishop Stanley, five peers of the realm, a large number of distinguished ladies and many persons of note interested in the health and welfare of the working classes'.³² Despite subscriptions and donations, such as the £100 from Mrs Davenport, there was a debt of over £900 in 1850 and William Davenport hosted a 'Fête Champêtre', which raised £473.³³ The remaining debt was whittled down over the years, largely through May's efforts, but £350 still remained at the municipal takeover. He approached the Marquis of Westminster who 'most generously sent a cheque for £350', which enabled the Baths to be transferred to the Corporation without liability.³⁴

Of the other people who donated large sums of money in the early stages of the institution's history, there were two silk manufacturers, John Brocklehurst and William Potts, who both gave £100.³⁵ John Williams M.P. (a London silk merchant and draper) gave the largest donation of £400, but contributions were also made down to denominations of 6d 'from all classes of people'.³⁶ An indication of working-class support was that of the 1,450 people who used the facilities during one week in June 1856, 367 of them were subscribers.³⁷

John Wright and John Brocklehurst were named on the foundation stone plaque, together with John Williams, F. F. Lallemand (a surgeon) and John May.³⁸ In addition to the silk

³⁰ P. McBride, 'The Struggle for Sanitary Reform in Mid-nineteenth Century Macclesfield', unpublished M.A. assignment (Manchester Metropolitan University, 1997), p. 13.

³¹ Macclesfield Public Library, *Then and Now - Macclesfield Baths* (Macclesfield, c. 1924), p. 2.

³² Macclesfield Silk Museum, PH 290, *Visit to Macclesfield of Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Teck* (Reprinted from *M.C.H.*, 20 April 1895).

³³ C.R.O., D 5299, J. O. Nicholson, 'Macclesfield Present and Future' (Prize Essay for the Useful Knowledge Society, 1866), p. 90.

³⁴ *M.C.H.*, 3 December 1904, p. 2.

³⁵ *A Walk*, p. 103.

³⁶ C.R.O., LBM 5211/2, R. Rawlinson, *Report to General Board of Health on a Further Inquiry into the Sewerage, Drainage and Supply of Water, and the Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of the Borough of Macclesfield* (London, 1851), p. 18.

³⁷ *M.C.H.*, 5 July 1856, p. 8.

³⁸ M.P.L, *Then and Now*, p. 2.

manufacturers' presence on the committee, this indicates that they were involved in the institution's early history. The municipal committee also included a number of silk manufacturers, such as Councillor Frost who was praised for his 'ability and zeal' as chairman.³⁹ However, it was John May who was the main driving force behind the establishment of the institution. He was responsible for raising awareness of Macclesfield's urban problems and undertook to clear the debt at the opening of the institution. May maintained his interest thereafter and it was universally acknowledged that the town owed him a 'debt of gratitude for all the energy and interest in establishing the Macclesfield Baths and Washhouses'.⁴⁰ In addition, a government inspector outlined in 1851 how 'Mr May and others have laboured hard to accomplish the means of benefiting their poor neighbours' through this project.⁴¹

There were many potential motives for patronage of this institution and the Baths and Washhouses movement received much support from prominent figures. Lord Shaftesbury indicated that the political discontent in the 1840s was a consequence of poor living conditions, while churchmen, such as Bishop Blomfield in London, believed that such an environment hindered their efforts in working class areas.⁴² Thus, the quest for cleanliness became associated with the middle-class crusade for moral and social order. The emergence of national reports showing the link between dirt and disease was also a stimulus for action, as the spread of disease was a serious concern for all.⁴³

The desire to improve conditions for Macclesfield's inhabitants must have been a motivating factor for supporters and the scheme was initially approved at the inaugural public meeting after hearing that the only free bathing facilities were the river and canal. The public meetings and accompanying lecture series in 1848 and 1849 coincided with outbreaks of cholera and typhoid, which accentuated the need for immediate action.⁴⁴ The endorsement of the county families for the institution, particularly at the early public meetings, may also have encouraged participation. The fact that these facilities were a local initiative and were self-supporting may have attracted some funding from those who feared rate rises and the threat of central control.⁴⁵ Civic pride was almost certainly a factor in the campaign, as the committee was keen to publicise the fact that Macclesfield received

³⁹ C.R.O., LBM 2703/4/1, M.B.C., B.C.M., 20 October 1879.

⁴⁰ T. H. Worrall, *Reminiscences of Early Life Spent in My Native Town of Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, 1897), p. 24.

⁴¹ C.R.O., LBM 5211/2, Rawlinson, *Report to the General Board of Health*, p. 18.

⁴² F. B. Smith, *The People's Health, 1830-1910* (London, 1979), p. 218.

⁴³ Sheard, 'Nineteenth Century Public Health', p. 199.

⁴⁴ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 277.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

its facilities well in advance of other larger towns. For example, in 1865 Manchester, Sheffield and Halifax still lacked public baths.⁴⁶ In general terms, the Baths and Washhouses movement was an interim and achievable measure before major investment was available to improve urban services.⁴⁷

The main problems facing the committee included the 'long and laborious work' to free the institution from debt.⁴⁸ The popularity of the swimming baths caused overcrowding, particularly during its early years. For example, in 1851 there were about 1,000 people using the baths during one week in January and this figure doubled during the summer.⁴⁹ Even with subsequent improvements, overcrowding was still a problem at the end of the nineteenth century and Macclesfield Swimming Club was refused dedicated time, because there was no spare capacity.⁵⁰ Therefore, the institution was always battling to provide adequate facilities and the evidence of overcrowding indicates that it was not always successful in this respect.

The closure of the Washhouses in the 1860s proved a disappointment to many who had hoped that the facilities would improve conditions within working-class homes. For women, a visit to the Washhouses meant the added work of carrying the washing and they were unable to do other jobs simultaneously, as they could in their homes.⁵¹ In common with other areas, the Macclesfield facilities were used predominantly by washerwomen doing middle-class laundry 'to the detriment of the families of the working classes'.⁵² This factor and low usage resulted in its closure.

Although the Baths proved popular with males, female users were significantly fewer. For example in the month ending 16 December 1895, there were 276 male users and 86 females.⁵³ One reason for this discrepancy was their lack of free time, as women had household duties, child care and work commitments that would have limited their participation. Respectability was another issue as 'respectable' women preferred to take baths in their own homes rather than in a public facility.⁵⁴ One further discouragement was

⁴⁶ A. S. Wohl, *Endangered Lives: Public Health in Victorian Britain* (London, 1983), p. 74.

⁴⁷ Gibson, 'Baths and Washhouses', p. 405.

⁴⁸ *M.C.H.*, 3 December 1904, p. 2.

⁴⁹ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 278.

⁵⁰ C.R.O., LBM 2703/4/2, M.B.C., B.C.M., 18 June 1900.

⁵¹ J. Reynolds, *The Great Paternalist: Titus Salt and the Growth of Nineteenth-century Bradford* (Bradford, 1983), p. 277.

⁵² *A Walk*, p. 108.

⁵³ C.R.O., LBM 2703/4/2, M.B.C., B.C.M., 16 December 1895.

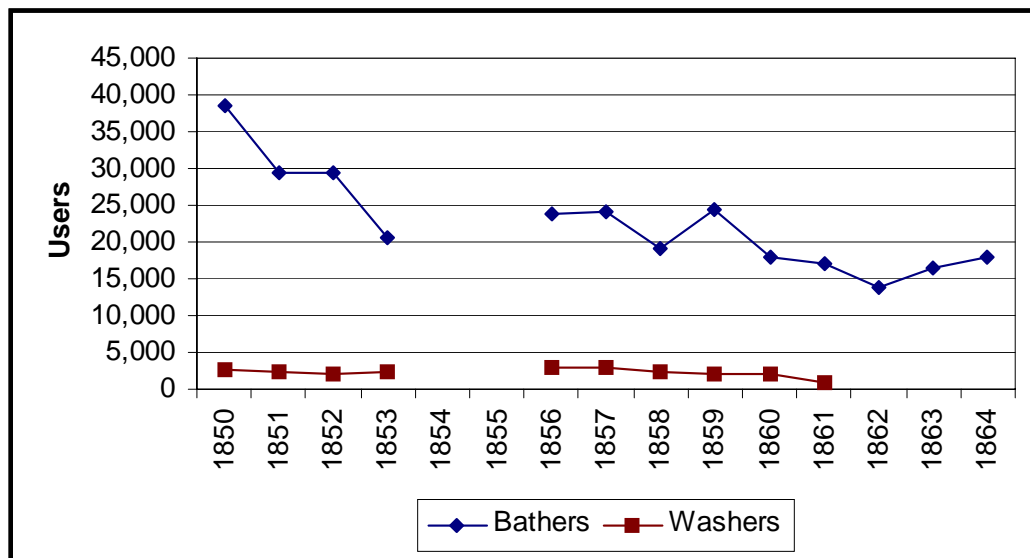
⁵⁴ Reynolds, *The Great Paternalist*, p. 277.

that a girl drowned in the ladies' swimming bath during the 1860s, which left it 'almost entirely deserted'.⁵⁵

The fact that the institution was run as a going concern meant that the entry fee was a deterrent to the poorest in the town. In addition, during periods of depression the numbers paying the lowest rate declined, as in 1858 when the penny bathers fell by 34 per cent.⁵⁶ Although there is no evidence that the committee deliberately raised the fees to reduce demand, as in Liverpool and Glasgow, neither did they reduce prices when the town was experiencing hardship.⁵⁷ The issue of providing free bathing was raised in 1891, when the committee felt that 'apart from the want of bathing accommodation for the purpose, the proposal is impracticable and not likely to be appreciated after the novelty is worn off'.⁵⁸ As a result, the Baths was unable to reach the whole community.

One of the main achievements of the Macclesfield institution was its popularity with townspeople. The attendance figures for the first 15 years of its existence are shown in Figure 4.1, and demonstrate how quickly it became an established feature, despite a subsequent decline due to trade depression.

Figure 4.1. Usage figures for the Macclesfield Baths and Washhouses, 1850-1864. (C.R.O., LBM 2703/4/2, M.B.C., B.C.M., 1850-1864.)



⁵⁵ *A Walk*, p. 109.

⁵⁶ C.R.O., D 5299, Nicholson, 'Macclesfield Present and Future', p. 92.

⁵⁷ Sheard, 'Nineteenth Century Public Health', pp. 189, 195.

⁵⁸ C.R.O., LBM 2703/4/1, M.B.C., B.C.M., 16 March 1891.

Early reports on the institution's progress indicate that the working classes did utilise the facilities, as described in the *Macclesfield Mirror* in 1850: 'It appears to us that the Baths are used by the right class of persons – by those who work in our mills'.⁵⁹ This was corroborated by a later account, which stated that the users were 'mainly from the working classes'.⁶⁰ In 1850, employers described 'a manifest improvement in the personal appearance of their workpeople', while stewards and managers described how 'there were hundreds who never did more than simply wash their faces and hands, and who now show necks as white as snow'.⁶¹

The physical benefits of swimming were seen as means of improving the health of the working classes and it was a relatively affordable type of recreation.⁶² However, it was the institution's contribution to the progress of sanitary reform that was its greatest accomplishment. It represented a step forward in the establishment of public services for the town, prior to large-scale municipal improvements driven by central government. Therefore, while the Medical Officers of Health wrestled with measures to reduce disease, and the problems of sewage disposal persisted until the twentieth century, the Baths provided immediate benefits for Macclesfield.

This institution appears to have been supported by the whole town. As a project allied to the sanitary movement, its early advocates tended to be religious leaders, medical men and others with knowledge of working class conditions. It was John May who galvanised these people into action and ensured that the idea became a reality, maintaining his involvement for the rest of his life. The silk manufacturers were clearly involved with the institution's finance and management, along with people from a variety of other backgrounds. Therefore, although largely the result of one man's enthusiasm for the cause, the entire town and its surrounding area contributed to the Baths during the nineteenth century.

Relief Association

Prior to 1834, official support for Macclesfield's poorest inhabitants consisted of outdoor relief for workers below the poverty line, the apprenticeship of children to silk mills and the admittance of the elderly and destitute to the Workhouse. This institution housed 220 inmates in severely overcrowded conditions, with few facilities for the sick and little

⁵⁹ *Macclesfield Mirror*, September 1850, p. 13.

⁶⁰ C.R.O., D 5299, Nicholson, 'Macclesfield Present and Future', p. 94.

⁶¹ *M.M.*, September 1850, p. 13.

⁶² H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c. 1780-c. 1880* (London, 1980), p. 154.

segregation.⁶³ The Relief Association provided additional voluntary support for the mass unemployed and the silk manufacturers were involved with this organisation throughout its history.

The end of the French wars caused economic depression for the Macclesfield silk industry and in 1817 the poor rate had increased to over four shillings in the pound for ratepayers. This trend continued into the 1820s and workers, who had previously been self-sufficient, were forced to seek aid whenever trade was adversely affected. Concurrently, the level of poor relief had fallen from a high of 2s weekly per head, to 10d in 1826.⁶⁴ In the same year, matters reached crisis point and one manufacturer estimated that there were 11,893 people unemployed and a further 5,860 working half-time.⁶⁵ John Brocklehurst gave evidence to the Select Committee on the Silk Trade, stating that in 1826 millworkers were 'reduced to a state of destitution, hundreds of them without a change of clothes, and in many instances without any thing like a bed left in their cottage, sleeping on straw, covered with the clothes worn during the day, huddled together for the sake of warmth...Demoralization of every kind has been the result, and the once respectable and well-conducted artisan is now broken-hearted and reduced to pauperism'.⁶⁶

In January 1826 the mayor convened a public meeting to address the situation and subscriptions were collected to relieve those 'in extreme want'.⁶⁷ The new charity provided bread and soup for unemployed workers and their families over a six-month period.⁶⁸ Thereafter, it was raised whenever economic conditions caused exceptional distress and its activities were broadened to include the provision of clothing and fuel. For example, in March 1842 5,682 cases had received 830 tons of coal, 1,282 pairs of sheets, foodstuffs and £20 for medical care over the winter period.⁶⁹ In the Macclesfield Union, as in many other northern manufacturing areas, the Guardians of the Poor continued to pay outdoor relief throughout the century, despite the efforts of the Poor Law Commissioners.⁷⁰ The difficulties for the Macclesfield poor were compounded by the decline in the silk trade, which meant that economic depression became more frequent in the town. For instance, in 1863 a *Morning Herald* reporter stated that 'instead of suffering their unhappy

⁶³ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 262.

⁶⁴ G. Malmgreen, *Silk Town: Industry and Culture in Macclesfield, 1750-1835* (Hull, 1985), pp. 104-5.

⁶⁵ *M.C.H.*, 11 February 1826, p. 3.

⁶⁶ B.P.P., *Report from the Select Committee, 1831-2*, p. 782.

⁶⁷ *M.C.H.*, 21 January 1826, p. 2.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 10 June 1826, p. 2.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 12 March 1842, p. 1.

⁷⁰ G. A. Oliver, 'The Process of Poor Law Reform in the Macclesfield Union, 1834-1845', unpublished B.Ed. thesis (Manchester Polytechnic, 1981), p. 43.

fate for nine or ten months, like their Lancashire brethren, the miserable workers of this town have been on the extreme verge of famine for the last seven years'.⁷¹ In 1891 it was decided to form a permanent relief charity and this operated until 1922, when it was decided that it had 'outlived its usefulness'.⁷²

At the outset, the committee included the mayor, magistrates, religious leaders, medical men, overseers of the poor and prominent townsmen. Inevitably, some were silk manufacturers, such as John Ryle, John Brocklehurst, Henry Critchley and Thomas Allen.⁷³ The clergy and medical men maintained their involvement with the charity during each phase of activity and the 1857 committee included three clergymen and one surgeon.⁷⁴ The local gentry tended to provide monetary assistance; for example, both Mr Davenport and Lord Stanley of Alderley subscribed in 1842.⁷⁵

Silk manufacturers served on the committee, led the efforts as part of their mayoral duties, became visitors to the poor and were prominent subscribers. For instance, in 1862 the silk firm of Messrs Brocklehurst and Henry Brocklehurst gave the largest donations of £100 each.⁷⁶ Some silk manufacturers were singled out for special praise for their contribution; for example, at William Coare Brocklehurst's funeral, the Association alluded to 'their grateful appreciation of the help he has rendered them during the 10 years of their work'.⁷⁷ Similarly, William Frost was honorary secretary and was responsible for making the arrangements to end the Association in 1922, for which 'the town was indebted to him'.⁷⁸

There were many possible reasons for supporting this charity. Few could have remained ignorant of the predicament of the silk workers following press coverage, even if they had little contact with the poor themselves. Similarly, religious leaders emphasised the Christian duty of the middle class to help the unemployed in their time of need. The harsh nature of the New Poor Law and its inadequate provision for mass unemployment may have prompted some to subscribe. For the silk manufacturers themselves, there could have been an element of making amends for their business decisions, which resulted in employees facing starvation. Their monetary and organisational support may also have

⁷¹ *M.C.H.*, 10 January 1863, p. 4.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 28 February 1891, p. 3; 13 May 1922, p. 10.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 21 January 1826, p. 2.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 31 October 1857, p. 1.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 20 December 1862, p. 5; 12 March 1842, p. 1.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1 February 1862, p. 4.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 9 June 1900, p. 6.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 13 May 1922, p. 10.

been an attempt to keep skilled workers within Macclesfield, so that when trade revived they had a workforce ready to resume their labours.

The committee was always keen to emphasise the conduct of the poor during times of depression. For example, in 1858 they stated that 'it is but justice to the thousands of sufferers to add that their privations have been borne without any addition to the records of crime and with all patience and resignation'.⁷⁹ This emphasised that economic distress was not a catalyst for unrest and that social order was being maintained through charity, which was also the case in Coventry.⁸⁰ The honesty and industriousness of the workers was another element cited in much of the coverage which, along with measures to ensure that only deserving cases received aid, meant that subscribers were reassured that their money would help suitable recipients.⁸¹

The system of visitation offered the opportunity for direct contact with the poor and the gradual professionalisation of community services.⁸² These efforts could have been seen as evidence that the unemployed had not been ignored and some hoped that aid would engender a sense of gratitude from recipients.⁸³ For instance, in 1862 the visitors reported that the poor had 'expressed their earnest gratitude to their kind benefactors for the assistance that had been rendered to them by the distribution of food and fuel, in the season of their severest poverty'.⁸⁴ All these factors could have been contributory in attracting supporters.

The institution faced many difficulties. Its ephemeral nature meant that it was raised only at times of severe distress and could not capitalise on better trade conditions to build up monetary reserves. The Association relied primarily on subscriptions, donations and collections, which meant that the income varied considerably. For example £6,362 was raised in 1826 compared to £444 in 1842.⁸⁵ The fact that the periods of depression coincided in most textile towns resulted in competition for charitable funds and in 1826 the work of Congleton Soup Kitchen was publicised alongside the Macclesfield version in the

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 9 January 1858, p. 4.

⁸⁰ P. Searby, 'The Relief of the Poor in Coventry, 1830-1863', *The Historical Journal*, 20, 1977, p. 359.

⁸¹ *M.C.H.*, 31 October 1857, p. 4.

⁸² F. K. Prochaska, 'Philanthropy' in F. M. L. Thompson (Ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950, Vol. 3, Social Agencies and Institutions* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 387.

⁸³ T. Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban-industrial Society: Bradford, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 399.

⁸⁴ *M.C.H.*, 5 April 1862, p. 4.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 10 June 1826, p. 4; 12 March 1842, p. 1.

Courier.⁸⁶ Similarly, the Lancashire Cotton Famine in the 1860s may have diverted funds away from Macclesfield. However, Macclesfield did receive some external assistance; for instance, in 1826, the City of London Tavern committee gave £1,000 for the appeal and there was a royal donation for the same amount.⁸⁷ In 1863 the Central Relief Fund Committee gave £1,000 and clothing, while the London Mansion House Committee made several donations of £500.⁸⁸ In the later years of its existence the Relief Association received some larger donations, such as the £500 from Peter Pownall Brocklehurst in 1903, which put the institution on a more secure footing.⁸⁹

The problem of ensuring that relief went to deserving people was a national concern. In 1826 a system of soup tickets had been established whereby purchasers could buy a quantity for distribution to the poor and others could buy the food for a penny. This practice meant that the system could be abused and by 1857 the practice of begging soup tickets was seen to 'promote habits of vagrancy, while it but inadequately meets the pressing wants it was intended to supply'.⁹⁰ The committee divided the Borough into 14 districts and the visitors allocated all tickets. This ushered in a more stringent regime to ensure that donations were 'applied to objects worthy of their charity'.⁹¹ However, in 1893 the committee noted that there were a number of 'idle and drunken persons' who made their living by begging and 'thus we have been developing in our midst a race of professional mendicants and frittering away our alms on the idle and dissolute'.⁹² The permanent version of the Association was designed to counter these activities, but it is not clear whether they were successful.

Even with visitation, there were times when needy cases failed to receive aid. During the 1850s, there were districts that were ignored by visitors, possibly because of pressure on resources. Similarly, inhabitants of well-kept houses were often overlooked in favour of those in more unkempt dwellings. The visitors also discriminated against those who were known for a predilection for alcohol and people who had been profligate with their money during prosperous times.⁹³ The committee was keen to emphasise the need for workers to take some responsibility for their predicament, stating that it was a 'necessity that the

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 22 April 1826, p. 2.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 6 May 1826, p. 2; 29 April 1826, p. 2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 31 January 1863, p. 4; 10 January 1863, p. 4.

⁸⁹ Sudeley Castle Archives, F8, Newscuttings Book compiled by T. U. Brocklehurst, 12 September 1903.

⁹⁰ *M.C.H.*, 7 November 1857, p. 1.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 31 October 1857, p. 4.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 4 March 1893, p. 4.

⁹³ K. Austin, *Troubled Times: Macclesfield, 1790-1870* (Leek, 2001), p. 160.

working class should learn providence and self-dependence; and that, until they do so, suffering, anxiety and even occasional starvation, are evils which no political wisdom, no social changes, can avert from them'.⁹⁴ However, the general decline in the silk industry from the 1850s meant further periods of unemployment for silk workers and the gradual erosion of their living standards. For example, by 1862 one visitor reported 'he could not have imagined such scenes as he was witnessed, nor have been convinced but by actual visitation, that their houses could have been so completely stripped of the few things they had about them on previous visits'.⁹⁵ Consequently, in 1893 the committee was forced to acknowledge that the prolonged deterioration in economic conditions made it impossible for people to be 'thrifty under such conditions'.⁹⁶

One of the main failings of the Association was the inadequacy of its response to distress in Macclesfield. With no powers of compulsion, it had to depend on charitable contributions and the income was never sufficient for the needs of the poor. A working-class meeting held in 1857 concluded that 'private charity was insufficient to meet the requirements of the working classes in Macclesfield' and that 'not one-fourth of the rich men of Macclesfield had subscribed anything yet'.⁹⁷ The newspaper reports often referred to the exhaustion of the funds during times of peak demand and this meant that operations had to be limited. Even in 1897, the Handloom Weavers' Association criticised the institution's ability to deliver effective relief and the committee replied that 'it was not perfect' and 'they cannot relieve all who apply, and there must of necessity appear incongruous cases'.⁹⁸

Despite all these negative aspects, the institution did manage to achieve some success. Because it was a charity there was less stigma attached to receiving relief from this source, compared to Poor Law provision. In order to receive the latter, many were subjected to hard labour, such as stone breaking, which was unpopular with silk weavers who relied on dexterity for their work. For instance, in 1855 the conditions for weavers working in a quarry were considered 'as bad as sending them to work in the trenches of the Crimea'.⁹⁹ The Relief Association provided alternative support and was the only option for many respectable workers who had fallen on hard times. In 1857 the *Manchester Guardian* described how the road to the soup kitchen was 'traversed by a train of women and

⁹⁴ *M.C.H.*, 12 December 1857, p. 6.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 13 December 1862, p. 4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4 March 1893, p. 4.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7 November 1857, p. 4.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 30 January 1897, p. 5.

⁹⁹ Austin, *Troubled Times*, p. 158.

children, many of them evidently of a class certainly not wont to seek its bread from charity' who testified that 'But for the soup kitchen...we must have died of hunger'. The same source stated that between a quarter and a third of the population of 40,000 were dependent 'upon this charity for their daily bread'.¹⁰⁰ Innovations, such as the appointment of a district nurse (employed jointly with the Infirmary) also enhanced the network of services for the poor in Macclesfield. These examples illustrate the fact that the charity did make a difference for many people in Macclesfield and helped them to survive the harsh realities of industrial decline.

The silk manufacturers were prominent in the initiation, funding and operation of the Relief Association as part of a town-wide effort to ameliorate the effects of economic depression. Therefore, they were able to influence the relative success of the institution, but the range of people involved with the charity over its history mean that its efforts cannot be credited to a particular profession.

The Dispensary

Dispensaries were established from the late eighteenth century to provide free medical services on an outpatient basis.¹⁰¹ The Workhouse hospital had always been the only public medical facility in Macclesfield and this catered predominantly for the elderly poor.¹⁰² The new Dispensary was able to reach a larger proportion of the population and was the main medical institution in the town between 1814 and 1872. Silk manufacturers were clearly visible throughout the institution's history and provided financial and managerial support.

Most northern textile towns gained dispensaries in the early nineteenth century, such as Preston in 1809 and Bolton in 1814, but others like Oldham had to wait until the second half of the century.¹⁰³ By this time, the voluntary hospitals had become increasingly common in manufacturing towns and were starting to take over many of the dispensaries' functions. As a result, many were absorbed into their larger counterparts and continued their work as an outpatients' division. In the first year of its existence, the Macclesfield Dispensary treated 652 patients, of which 371 were deemed to be cured on discharge.

¹⁰⁰ *M.C.H.*, 12 December 1857, p. 6.

¹⁰¹ Loudon, 'The Origins and Growth', p. 322.

¹⁰² C.R.O., LGM 3169/4, Typescript Account, p. 31.

¹⁰³ M. A. Cruickshank, *Children and Industry: Child Health and Welfare in North-West Textile Towns During the Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 1981), p. 43.

These numbers rose to 934 and 628 in the following year.¹⁰⁴ The institution continued to provide medical care until 1874 when it was absorbed into the new Infirmary.

An elected committee of governors ran the Dispensary, but there is limited information available on their identities. The original officers included the silk manufacturers George Pearson, John Ryle and J. S. Daintry, along with Sir Edward Stracey and Charles Wood (a cotton manufacturer). A similar bias was apparent in the six subscribers who gave the largest donations at the inaugural meeting, as four of these had strong silk connections.¹⁰⁵ In 1871, the committee of 14 included eight silk manufacturers and the annual report alludes to ‘the death of two of their oldest and most generous benefactors, namely John and Thomas Brocklehurst’.¹⁰⁶ The interest in dispensaries by Macclesfield manufacturers is similar to that in other industrial areas, such as Huddersfield and Stockport, where they were prominent in their establishment and operation.¹⁰⁷ As with other dispensaries, the clergy featured strongly in the affairs of the institution as part of their role in the community. By mid-century, seven clergymen were automatically elected as vice-presidents, but the allocation was changed in 1851 (in recognition of nonconformist sensibilities) to include only the minister of Macclesfield (the incumbent at St Michael’s), freeing up more places for elected subscribers, such as the Marquis of Westminster.¹⁰⁸

There is no direct evidence available about why people became involved with the Macclesfield version. However, the dispensaries did represent a new structured version of charity, which still maintained the contact between donor and recipient apparent in traditional almsgiving.¹⁰⁹ Christian duty figured highly in many reports of dispensaries at this time, while the threat of epidemic disease could affect the whole population and any measures to minimise the spread of disease were likely to have been popular.¹¹⁰ During the campaign for the Macclesfield Dispensary there was much press coverage about the need for such an institution in the town. For example, a letter in 1814 stated that ‘The laborious poor are exposed to disease peculiar to themselves, arising from changes in weather, from their confined and crowded habitations, from unhealthy and sedentary

¹⁰⁴ J. Earles, *Streets and Houses of Old Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, 1915), p. 65.

¹⁰⁵ *A Walk*, p. 34.

¹⁰⁶ *M.C.H.*, 28 January 1871, p. 8.

¹⁰⁷ H. Marland, *Medicine and Society in Wakefield and Huddersfield, 1780-1870* (Cambridge, 1987), p., 127; Pickstone, *Medicine and Industrial Society*, p. 68.

¹⁰⁸ *M.C.H.*, 1 February 1851, p. 5.

¹⁰⁹ K. A. Webb, ‘*One of the Most Useful Charities in the City*’: *York Dispensary, 1788-1988* (York, 1988), p. 2.

¹¹⁰ E. J. Campbell, ‘The Liverpool Dispensary, 1778-1850’, unpublished M.Phil. thesis (University of Liverpool, 1991), pp. 54-55.

employments and accidental injuries...to such persons *Dispensaries* are necessary establishments.’¹¹¹

Dispensaries held many attractions for manufacturers, which explains why they were often to the fore in their establishment. The institutions were perceived as cost-effective means of addressing the problems of healthcare for the poor. As there were no inpatients, the costs for the Macclesfield Dispensary were limited to providing premises, one salary (£100 for Thomas Slack who acted as joint surgeon and dispenser) and medicines.¹¹² The rest of the medical staff held honorary positions and also had private practices, which provided their income.¹¹³ In return, the dispensaries could help to maintain a healthy population, which had direct benefits for businessmen. Many employers could have seen the institution as a cheap alternative to private treatment of accidents and illness caused by factory work. The manufacturers’ contributions could also have given them a sense of insuring their workforce against such eventualities, without the need to implement costly safety precautions or improved working conditions.¹¹⁴

This institution offered opportunities for the reinforcement of social status through publication of subscription lists and fraternisation with other distinguished supporters.¹¹⁵ Patients were expected to express gratitude towards their patron on completion of treatment and this acknowledgement may have been attractive to those wishing to see some return on their investment.¹¹⁶ The managers were keen to emphasise the benefits that the subscribers would experience through their financial support: ‘that gratification which all must experience in being made the happy instruments, under PROVIDENCE, of restoring to health and comfort, if not rescuing from death, numbers of the more distressed and suffering Poor of this large and flourishing Town’.¹¹⁷ Civic pride was another possible motive as competing industrial towns, even at this early stage, were keen to show that they were starting to amass a range of facilities. It is perhaps significant that the Dispensary committee was also prominent in the campaign for sanitary improvements.¹¹⁸

¹¹¹ *M.C.H.*, 16 April 1814, p. 3 (italicisation in source).

¹¹² Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 255.

¹¹³ Loudon, ‘The Origins and Growth’, p. 329.

¹¹⁴ Marland, *Medicine and Society*, p. 134.

¹¹⁵ M. Whittle, ‘Philanthropy in Preston: The Changing Face of Charity in a Nineteenth-century Provincial Town’, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Lancaster, 1990), p. 87.

¹¹⁶ Marland, *Medicine and Society*, p. 150.

¹¹⁷ *M.C.H.*, 23 March 1815, p. 1 (capitalisation in source).

¹¹⁸ McBride, ‘The Struggle for Sanitary Reform’, p. 12.

The Macclesfield institution faced many difficulties during the nineteenth century. Dispensaries were entirely reliant on the enthusiasm and professionalism of their staff and managers. As a result, most went through phases when the standard of care and management fell below the expectations of their founders. For example, the Stockport Dispensary suffered a loss of interest by much of its committee, because of permanent debt problems and criticisms of poor financial management.¹¹⁹ Macclesfield Dispensary did not escape scrutiny of its accounts and in 1869 the committee admitted that a surgeon had exhibited ‘extravagance’ in ordering drugs that caused the costs to escalate to £125 in 1867 (from £87 in the previous year).¹²⁰ Another general problem was that some of the medicines were of dubious value and there was scope for remedies to be ordered with little evidence of their efficacy.¹²¹ There was evidence of internal discord over the appointment of Dr Meyer to the Macclesfield Dispensary in 1863, which sparked off a flurry of correspondence in the *Courier* over his suitability for the position and the validity of his qualifications.¹²² However, there was no obvious conflict between the new manufacturing élite and the old order, which occurred in the Preston Dispensary in the early nineteenth century.¹²³ This may have been because the silk manufacturers were heavily involved with the Macclesfield institution from the start, but the sparse evidence on the workings of the institution means that it is difficult to glean a true picture of the dynamics involved.

Treatment by the Dispensary was dependent on the recommendation of a subscriber who had to be satisfied that the applicants were ‘proper and deserving objects’, were ‘really in a necessitous state, and unable to pay for medicines, otherwise the real object of the charity will be greatly frustrated’.¹²⁴ One exception to this rule was accident cases, for which there was automatic treatment, but all other patients had to find a subscriber willing to recommend them, which became increasingly difficult as the pool of subscribers diminished. Figure 4.2 (overleaf) shows the subscription income between 1845 and 1865.

¹¹⁹ Pickstone, *Medicine and Industrial Society*, p. 68.

¹²⁰ *M.C.H.*, 30 January 1869, p. 5.

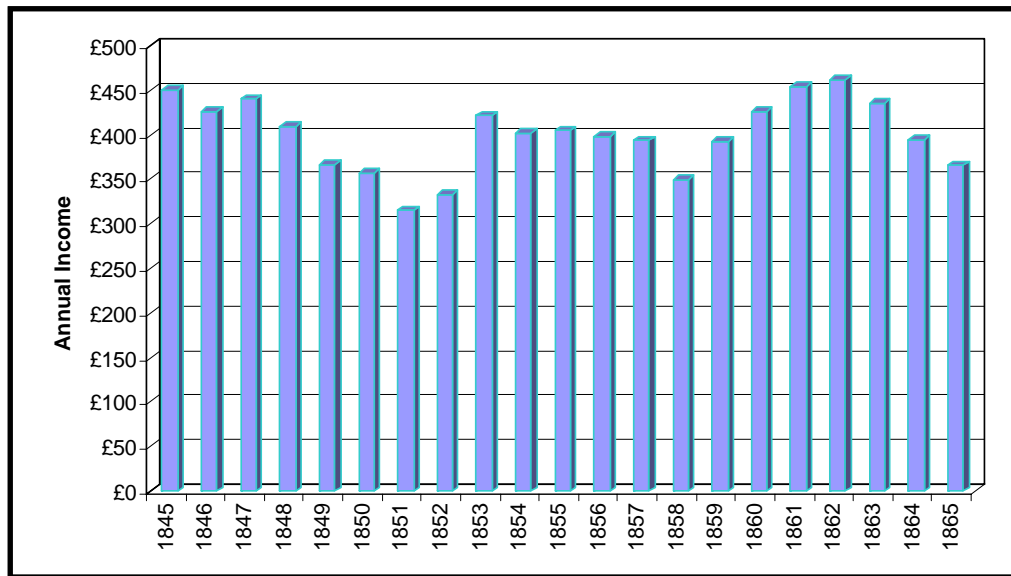
¹²¹ Cherry, *Medical Services and the Hospitals*, p. 42.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 25 April 1863, p. 4.

¹²³ Whittle, ‘Philanthropy in Preston’, p. 89.

¹²⁴ *M.C.H.*, 23 March 1815, p. 1.

Figure 4.2. Macclesfield Dispensary's subscription income, 1845-1865.
(C.R.O., D 5299, Nicholson, 'Macclesfield Present and Future' p. 65.)



As dispensaries were reliant on voluntary donations, there was little guaranteed income and they often faced financial deficits. The problems in prompting Macclesfield inhabitants to contribute were evident in 1871, when the committee stated that ‘Disease is as rife as ever, and the poor have not ceased out of the land. The population is large, trade is good, many are making money, yet numbers of well-to-do people have never contributed to the funds’.¹²⁵ The dispensaries were far less visible than hospitals and this contributed to their financial difficulties.¹²⁶ Macclesfield’s version was no exception, particularly in the latter stages of its existence. For example, in 1871 the committee revealed that subscriptions had fallen by £100 over the previous 40 years, causing the number of patients to decline from 2,263 to 1,436.¹²⁷ There were other smaller sources of income such as congregational collections, educational and social events and a donation of £133 from the Lancashire and Cheshire Cotton Relief Fund in the 1860s.¹²⁸ However, an endowment fund was started in 1834 (to which £2,172 was donated up to 1862) and this did provide some security for the institution in the face of declining income.¹²⁹

Despite these problems, dispensaries were able to achieve much during the nineteenth century. Their main success lay in the fact that they reached a large number of patients for whom there was little other medical provision. Figure 4.3 gives an outline of the

¹²⁵ *M.C.H.*, 28 January 1871, p. 8.

¹²⁶ Webb, “*One of the Most Useful Charities*”, p. 1.

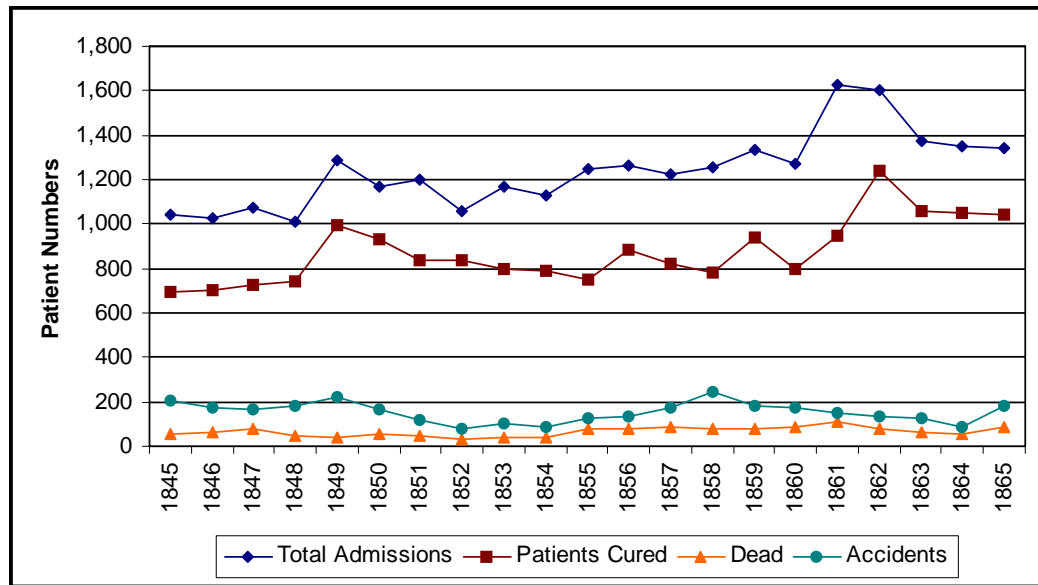
¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28 January 1871, p. 8.

¹²⁸ *M.C.H.*, 30 January 1869, p. 5.

¹²⁹ M.S.M., Royal Commission on Historical Monuments in England, ‘Macclesfield Infirmary, Cumberland Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire’, 1991, p. 2.

Dispensary's caseload over a 20-year period and shows that the number of patients admitted remained broadly similar (apart from periods of trade depression) having stabilised from the years of particularly high demand, as in 1820 when an additional 1,500 typhoid cases were treated.¹³⁰

Figure 4.3. Statistics of the Macclesfield Dispensary, 1845-1865. (C.R.O., D 5299, Nicholson, 'Macclesfield Present and Future' p. 65.)



An important feature of dispensaries was the practice of home visiting. Not only did this enable medical attention to be given to those who were incapacitated, but it also revealed the true extent of poverty and squalor. There was widespread ignorance of how the working class lived and the evidence of the medical men was important in raising awareness and in confirming the link between poor living conditions and disease.¹³¹ Physicians were also faced with the full range of medical conditions through their dispensary work and became experts in the treatment of chronic illnesses and epidemic fever, thus furthering medical knowledge in the town.¹³²

Dispensaries also offered treatment for a range of conditions that was excluded from hospitals, such as epidemic disease. The 1834 cholera outbreak was 'averted from Macclesfield by the prompt actions of local physicians/surgeons and the presence of the Dispensary staff', illustrating that preventative measures could prove critical in such

¹³⁰ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 255.

¹³¹ R. Porter, *Disease, Medicine and Society in England, 1550-1860* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 32.

¹³² Pickstone, *Medicine and Industrial Society*, p. 16.

cases.¹³³ Similarly, the institution was responsible for extending vaccination programmes, which helped in the reduction of diseases such as smallpox.¹³⁴ At times of great distress, the institution was an integral part of the relief efforts for the unemployed in the town and the increased demand during these times showed the negative effects of economic hardship on health.¹³⁵ On the eve of the transfer to the Infirmary, the committee reflected on the fact that for 56 years the institution ‘has pursued its quiet and useful career’ and that during this time the inhabitants had ‘felt its benign influence among them’. They believed that ‘since its foundation above 100,000 sufferers in all their ghastly variety of human misery have been more or less benefited by it’.¹³⁶

The Macclesfield silk manufacturers were heavily involved in the Dispensary’s management and funding, along with a cross-section of other local committee members. This group played an important part in ensuring that the institution was managed effectively and had sufficient funds to operate. However, the dedication and expertise of the medical men cannot be ignored, especially Thomas Slack who was the mainstay for over 50 years, and thus the Dispensary was a collective effort on the part of many Macclesfield people.¹³⁷

The Infirmary

In the 1850s, Joseph Tunncliffe, a retired silk manufacturer, indicated to John May that he would like to leave a large benefaction for almshouses or a retirement home in Macclesfield. May persuaded him to use the endowment for an infirmary and Tunncliffe stipulated that a portion of his estate would be allocated to the trust on the death of his wife. Mrs Tunncliffe died in 1865, but legal difficulties stalled progress until 1868 when an endowment of £30,000 became available.¹³⁸ Tunncliffe’s sizeable donation marked the strong relationship between the silk manufacturers and the Infirmary in the nineteenth century.

In the meantime, a committee was formed in 1859 to solicit subscriptions and to purchase the site, which was achieved in 1860.¹³⁹ Concerted fundraising efforts meant that Earl Grosvenor was able to lay the foundation stone of the building in 1867, ‘in the presence of

¹³³ *A Walk*, p. 35.

¹³⁴ *M.C.H.*, 16 April 1814, p. 3.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 21 January 1826, p. 1.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 28 January 1871, p. 8.

¹³⁷ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 255.

¹³⁸ C.R.O., LBM 2703/13/1, M.B.C., General Purposes Committee Minutes, 21 October 1867.

¹³⁹ *M.C.H.*, 5 October 1872, Supplement, p. 3.

a brilliant assembly of county families, neighbours and townsmen, rich and poor'.¹⁴⁰ Progress on the building work was dependent on the committee's ability to raise sufficient funds and there were often delays when money was not forthcoming. At the Infirmary's official opening in October 1872, the building had the capacity for 116 beds, but a shortage of funds meant that only a limited number were equipped and ready for use.¹⁴¹ The Infirmary opened to patients in March 1873 and the Dispensary transferred its operations to the new building in the following June.

Figure 4.4. Macclesfield Infirmary, showing the scale of the buildings that necessitated a ten-year fundraising campaign and cost nearly £30,000. (Macclesfield Museums Trust)



As a large institution, Macclesfield Infirmary required the support of many people, but John May and Joseph Tunnicliffe were the initiators of the project and Thomas Wardle (Tunnicliffe's business partner) was executor for his estate and remained involved with the project. May's key contribution was highlighted in his obituary: 'The Infirmary is one of Mr May's most magnificent achievements, and we of this generation speak of him appropriately and proudly as the "Father of the Infirmary"'.¹⁴² His interest in the institution was maintained for the rest of his life and he was largely responsible for cajoling wealthy people to donate sizeable amounts for the project. Tunnicliffe provided the initial capital to enable the Infirmary to become a reality and this significant sum was the first of many large donations made by people in the area. For example, Thomas

¹⁴⁰ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/3, M.G.I., A.R., 1899, p. 5.

¹⁴¹ *M.C.H.*, 5 October 1872, Supplement, p. 3.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 3 December 1904, p. 2.

Swanwick, a surgeon, left £1,500 in 1859, William Barnett, a silk manufacturer, bequeathed £2,000 in 1873 and William Coare Brocklehurst bestowed £1,000 in 1900.¹⁴³

Many people contributed lesser sums and W. C. Brocklehurst stressed the importance of contributions from the working classes saying that 'Large sums have been given but they are not half so prized as ... the sixpences given by the Polly Perkinses and the little Sallys who live in our alleys and the threepences from small boys.'¹⁴⁴ Similarly, the Infirmary supplement stated that 'upwards of 20,000 persons' had subscribed 'amounts varying from pounds to pence'.¹⁴⁵ This was a common situation in other northern manufacturing areas where support came from individuals with widely differing backgrounds.¹⁴⁶

During the nineteenth century, there were a number of people who appeared to be particularly active. Revd John Thornycroft, the Rural Dean, was one of the original trustees and governors and a large subscriber to the building fund. Mrs Thornycroft established the Thornycroft Convalescent Fund and the family occasionally entertained patients at their home.¹⁴⁷ The Duke of Westminster was described as 'one of the distinguished Patrons and great benefactors of our Infirmary' on his death in 1899, having officiated at the ceremony to lay the foundation stone, donated £1,000 in 1869, endowed a bed in the children's ward and made other monetary gifts.¹⁴⁸

In Macclesfield, there was a strong contingent of manufacturers involved with its Infirmary. Apart from Joseph Tunnicliffe, W. C. Brocklehurst and William Barnett, there were many who donated money or took an active part in the running of the institution. For example, the original building committee had six silk manufacturers, two members of the clergy and six from other occupations.¹⁴⁹ Two of these committee members were Charles and William Coare Brocklehurst and the whole family was prominent in its support. In 1879, Charles paid £320 to reconstruct the clock tower and chimneys and on his death, 'his constant personal interest in the daily welfare of the Infirmary' was described and that 'Anything that could add to the comfort and well-being of the patients and the household...found in him a cheerful, unobtrusive giver.'¹⁵⁰ John May related how William

¹⁴³ G. Ormerod, *History of the County Palatine and City of Chester* (London, 1882), p. 743; C.R.O., NHM 3/6/3, 1900, M.G.I., A.R., p. 5.

¹⁴⁴ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 258.

¹⁴⁵ *M.C.H.*, 5 October 1872, Supplement, p. 4.

¹⁴⁶ Marland, *Medicine and Society*, p. 114.

¹⁴⁷ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/1, M.G.I., A.R., 1884, p. 8; 1885, p. 9.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, NHM 3/6/3, 1899, M.G.I., A.R., p. 5; Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 258.

¹⁴⁹ *M.C.H.*, 5 October 1872, Supplement, p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/1, M.G.I., A.R., 1879, p. 6; 1883, p. 11.

Coare had persuaded the family to contribute when they needed £4,500 to ensure the opening of the Infirmary. May contacted Mr Brocklehurst and ‘the result was that he never left the Brocklehurst family until the money was subscribed’. William Coare was treasurer of the institution before handing over to his brother, Peter Pownall Brocklehurst, who also left a bequest of £5,000.¹⁵¹ Other members of the family who supported the institution, despite having moved away from Macclesfield, were Emma Dent and Ernest Brocklehurst.¹⁵²

Other silk manufacturers who were involved in the Infirmary’s management included David Clarke, a governor and one of the original committee members. Along with his father and brother, they were described as ‘generous supporters of the institution, and among the active and useful managers’.¹⁵³ George Robert Oldham was a governor, a member of the finance and house committees and bequeathed £500 to the endowment fund.¹⁵⁴ Thomas Bullock, Joseph Wright and Ferdinando Jackson were singled out as governors who had taken on a number of additional duties and retained a strong interest in the institution.¹⁵⁵

There were many possible reasons for support of the Infirmary. Joseph Tunnicliffe’s professed motives for endowing the Infirmary were that he had ‘many years ago conceived a desire of founding, in this town, where his early life had been spent and his fortune made, an institution peculiarly adapted for ministering to the wants and necessities of the deserving sick and infirm poor’.¹⁵⁶ The humanitarian desire to help the poor by leaving such bequests was emphasised in the 1879 annual report: ‘the generous desire to leave something to alleviate the sufferings and misfortunes of others is a growing one and it is the duty of all to direct this desire where it can best be fulfilled’.¹⁵⁷ The sense of duty, both to humanity and to God, was frequently emphasised in sermons, newspaper reports and in the annual reports of these establishments.¹⁵⁸ As a result, people were left in no doubt that local medical institutions were ideal candidates for charitable support.¹⁵⁹ In addition, those

¹⁵¹ S.C.A., F8, Newscuttings, 6 June 1903.

¹⁵² *M.C.H.*, 13 March 1900, p. 5; 12 January 1889, p. 5.

¹⁵³ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/1, M.G.I., A.R., 1894, p. 6.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, NHM 3/6/2, M.G.I., A.R., 1889, p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, NHM 3/6/1, M.G.I., A.R., 1881, p. 7; NHM 3/6/2, M.G.I., A.R., 1889, p. 6; 1892, p. 7.

¹⁵⁶ C.R.O., LBM 2703/45/2, M.B.C., General Purpose Committee Minutes (within Water Committee Minute Book), 12 May 1859.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, NHM 3/6/1, M.G.I., A.R., 1879, p. 6.

¹⁵⁸ R. Porter, ‘The Gift Relation: Philanthropy and Provincial Hospitals in Eighteenth-century England’, in L. Granshaw & R. Porter (Eds), *The Hospital in History* (London, 1989), p. 162.

¹⁵⁹ Waddington, “Grasping Gratitude”, p. 198.

who had experienced family losses through illness or accident were often more likely to support medical charities as a result.¹⁶⁰

Civic pride was also important, as a hospital of this size was considered a prestigious addition and its relatively late acquisition may have stimulated some action to catch up with other manufacturing towns. The involvement of the county families, and other leading people, presented the chance for people to enhance their status and the newspaper coverage of subscriptions meant immediate public recognition for contributors. The fact that donations and legacies remained on the institution's records was a way of ensuring perpetuity and memorial tablets bore 'the names of the donors to the building fund, and legacies of those pious persons who, in their lifetimes were impressed with the beneficence of this lifetime's work'.¹⁶¹ For Tunnicliffe, the fact that he had made his money in Macclesfield was an obvious factor in founding such an institution there. All his workers would have been drawn from the Macclesfield area and this act could therefore be construed as giving something back to the community that had enabled him to prosper.

The system of recommendation for hospital treatment implied a degree of reciprocity in the relationship between donor and patient. Patients were expected to display some gratitude to the donor and this procedure also underlined the social divisions in Victorian society, particularly in the context of manufacturer and employee. For businessmen, the charity represented a cost-effective method of dealing with the problem of the sick and injured poor. Sickness and accidents affected a family's ability to support itself and often resulted in reliance on the Poor Law. This increased the burden on taxpayers and effective treatment was seen as a way of circumventing this downward trend, without increasing rates.¹⁶² Rate rises were a subject close to many Macclesfield manufacturers' hearts, because of expensive public improvements carried out during the 1860s (such as the Cemetery) that increased taxation.

Increased mechanisation in the textile industry resulted in large numbers of accident victims in many industrial areas and affected the numbers presenting both at the dispensaries and infirmaries. Both Wakefield and Huddersfield cited the dearth of facilities to cope with such incidents as a major reason for founding their infirmaries.¹⁶³ Similarly, the Macclesfield version was aimed at the needs of its 'manufacturing

¹⁶⁰ Prochaska, 'Philanthropy', p. 361.

¹⁶¹ *A Walk*, p. 33.

¹⁶² J. Mohan & M. Gorsky, *Don't Look Back? Voluntary and Charitable Finance of Hospitals in Britain, Past and Present* (London, 2001), p. 36.

¹⁶³ Marland, *Medicine and Society*, p. 130.

population, where sickness and disease are always rife and accidents are of daily occurrence'.¹⁶⁴ For some manufacturers, a subscription to the Infirmary could have been seen as a form of medical insurance, which might have been deemed sufficient to deal with the effects of poor working conditions and could have retarded progress in safety improvements. The cost of treating a subscriber's recommended patients in a hospital was usually higher than the original outlay, meaning that the economic balance was weighted in favour of the subscriber, which made it an attractive financial prospect for employers.¹⁶⁵

The problems faced by the Infirmary were legion and most persisted throughout the nineteenth century. The time lapse between the original idea and the actual opening reflected the difficulties in raising such a large amount of money on a voluntary basis. The most critical time was in 1871, when *The Builder* described the Infirmary's empty buildings and suggested that there was talk of appropriating them to some other purpose.¹⁶⁶ At this time, there was some indifference towards the project and a 'paucity of attendance' at meetings caused by the seemingly insurmountable obstacles.¹⁶⁷ This crisis was averted, but financial problems were a recurring theme.

In 1873, the select nature of the subscription list meant that recommendations were 'scarce and difficult to get' for prospective patients.¹⁶⁸ In other towns, many people who could afford to subscribe were not always forthcoming, leaving a core of subscribers to shoulder the burden.¹⁶⁹ In Macclesfield there was a 'large number of prominent townsmen' who committed to give £5 annually in 1873. By the end of the century, these people 'gradually died out and others have not been found to take their place' which meant that the income of the institution 'has suffered proportionately'.¹⁷⁰ The other main sources of income were Hospital Sunday and Hospital Saturday, which were introduced in the 1860s.¹⁷¹ The collections from religious institutions on one Sunday a year were pooled for the benefit of the Infirmary, while Hospital Saturday replaced the earlier sporadic workplace collections with a set day annually for employees to contribute to the cause.¹⁷² By the 1880s, weekly contributions from workers were commonplace and employers administering the

¹⁶⁴ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/1, M.G.I., A.R., 1879, p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ Woodward, *To Do the Sick No Harm*, p. 21.

¹⁶⁶ M.S.M., R.C.H.M.E., 'Macclesfield Infirmary', p. 12.

¹⁶⁷ *M.C.H.*, 14 October 1871, p. 2.

¹⁶⁸ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/1, M.G.I., A.R., 1873, p. 6.

¹⁶⁹ M. Gorsky, 'Charity, Mutuality and Philanthropy: Voluntary Provision in Bristol, 1800-1870', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Bristol, 1995), p. 214.

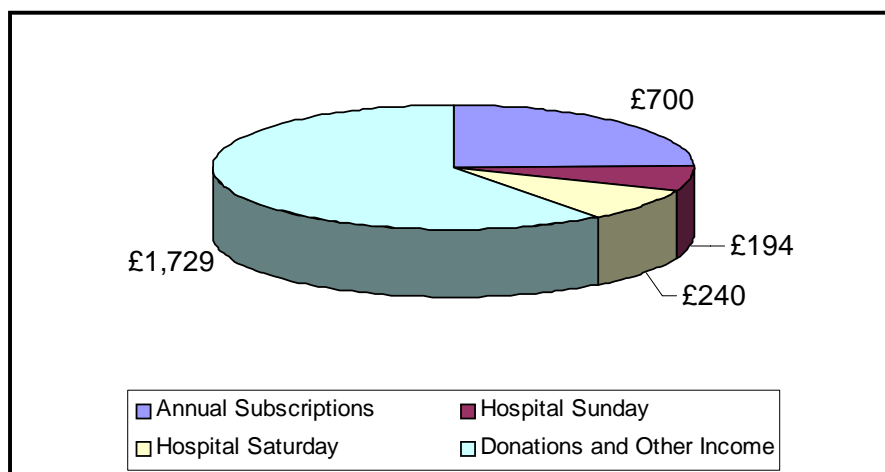
¹⁷⁰ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/3, M.G.I., A.R., 1901, p. 4.

¹⁷¹ M. Gorsky, *Patterns of Philanthropy: Charity and Society in Nineteenth-century Bristol* (Woodbridge, 1999), p. 212.

¹⁷² *M.C.H.*, 11 February 1871, p. 5; J. Woodward, *To Do the Sick No Harm: A Study of the British Voluntary Hospital System to 1875* (London, 1974), p. 18.

collections were given recommendation tickets for distribution to staff.¹⁷³ In Macclesfield a total of £301 was raised in 1891 and the secretary attributed this success to the fact that ‘all the Employers and contributors without an exception give a ready cheerful assistance in organising the collections to make the most of them’.¹⁷⁴ Figure 4.5 shows the relevant proportions of the different types of income for the Infirmary in 1884.

Figure 4.5. Macclesfield Infirmary’s income in 1884.
(C.R.O., NHM/1, M.G.I., A.R., 1884, p.5)



These different sources of income were all adversely affected by trade depression. For instance, in 1892 the Hospital Saturday collection was reduced because one of the largest mills was operating on short time and its workers could not afford to contribute.¹⁷⁵ The Hospital Sunday collections also suffered, with the income falling from a peak of £305 in 1874 to £118 in 1897.¹⁷⁶ This form of funding was also dependent on the cooperation of the town’s religious institutions, which did not always materialise.¹⁷⁷ Balanced against these funding difficulties was the growing cost of providing medical treatment. As medical knowledge increased and treatments became more complex, the rising costs and greater patient numbers meant that it was a constant battle for the governors to ensure the institution’s solvency. For example, in 1891 the report stated that ‘the increasing claims upon the resources of the Infirmary have continued for seven years in succession’, causing debt of £135.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, the Leeds Infirmary was always full and often operated at a loss, because of the high demand.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷³ Pickstone, *Medicine and Industrial Society*, p. 140.

¹⁷⁴ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/2, M.G.I., A.R., 1891, p. 5.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1892, p. 4.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1897, p. 4.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1886, p. 6.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1891, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ R. J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: The Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds, 1820-1850* (Manchester, 1990), p. 283.

One factor of direct relevance to the Infirmary's income was the ability to adapt the service to the available funds. At times of economic difficulty, additional efforts were made to minimise spending, such as in 1879, when 'a careful and wise economy in every possible department forced itself upon the House Committee and the officials all round'.¹⁸⁰ Likewise, in 1882 a female superintendent was appointed to address the problems of the 'increasing debit balance' and to apply 'watchful supervision and firmness' in the management of the institution. Consequently, the expenditure was kept within the income during the following three years, despite a large increase in the number of inpatients.¹⁸¹

Other difficulties included the fact that hospitals were often seen as 'gateways of death', which inhibited some people from seeking medical help, as did the social stigma of disease.¹⁸² In addition, some found it humiliating to have to approach subscribers for recommendations and to accept charitable help.¹⁸³ There were only a few reported incidents of management problems in the Macclesfield institution. In 1893, the house committee was forced to dismiss the matron because 'some serious irregularities have been discovered' and there was some internal politics involved with the 1897 governors' election, when a 'Radical Whip' was applied to secure election of their candidates, leaving the Conservatives to 'play second fiddle'.¹⁸⁴

Nineteenth-century infirmaries had strict rules regarding the admittance of inpatients. Children under the age of six were not normally treated, unless they were accident cases or needed surgery. In addition, no pregnant women, infectious disease cases, people with incurable diseases or those with mental illness could expect treatment.¹⁸⁵ Despite these restrictions, overcrowding was a common problem. The combination of population growth and the prevalence of accident cases and illness meant that there were times when hospital facilities were stretched to the limit. The effects of overcrowding also increased the risks of hospital infection and this contributed to higher mortality rates.¹⁸⁶ There is little indication in the Macclesfield reports of the mortality rate for inpatients, other than in 1896 when there were 31 deaths out of 606 inpatients, representing a mortality rate of 5.11 per

¹⁸⁰ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/1, M.G.I., A.R., 1879, p. 5.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 1885, p. 6.

¹⁸² K. S. M. Göschl, 'A Comparative Study of Public Health in Wakefield, Halifax and Doncaster, 1865-1914', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Cambridge, 1999), p. 177.

¹⁸³ Gorsky, 'Charity, Mutuality and Philanthropy', p. 361.

¹⁸⁴ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/2, M.G.I., A.R., 1893, p. 6; *M.C.H.*, 27 February 1897, p. 5.

¹⁸⁵ S. Cherry, 'The Hospitals and Population Growth, Part 2: The Voluntary General Hospitals, Mortality and Local Populations in the English Provinces in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries', *Population Studies*, 34, 1980, p. 252.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, Part 1, p. 75.

cent.¹⁸⁷ This compares favourably to the Wakefield Infirmary inpatient figures for 1854 to 1870, which gave an average mortality rate of 9.94 per cent.¹⁸⁸ However, the overall decline in mortality rate towards the end of the century, and the lack of further supporting data, mean that it is difficult to draw direct comparisons.

The main failure of the Macclesfield Infirmary was its inability to reach large sections of the community. In the early days, its facilities were extremely limited, particularly when compared with the size of the town. Although they were later expanded, they were still inadequate and were unable to provide treatment for groups such as the elderly and disabled. This was a national problem as voluntary efforts could only have a limited effect on the multitude of problems causing poor health in urban areas. Ultimately, it was only through state intervention that the root causes of ill health could be addressed and real improvement could become a possibility.¹⁸⁹

Despite these limitations, the Infirmary did achieve some progress. In 1887 the governors congratulated their subscribers who had ‘enabled them to maintain such a thorough and efficient administration of the charity, as to relieve much innocent suffering and sorrow...preserving many lives which without this aid would have been lost’.¹⁹⁰ In 1890, a grateful parent enclosed a cheque and expressed his ‘admiration of the manner in which the institution seems to be conducted’.¹⁹¹ Similarly, in 1894 Revd J. B. Green preached a sermon for the Infirmary, in which he stated that ‘I have no hesitation in stating in this public manner that your Infirmary is well managed, kept in splendid order, is a real benefit to the suffering poor, and a credit to your town.’¹⁹² However, all these examples came from the annual reports (designed to attract subscriptions from subscribers) and so were not necessarily representative of patients’ experiences.

Rising demand was another indicator of success for hospitals nationwide.¹⁹³ Macclesfield’s increased patient numbers were evident by 1882, when the governors reported the ‘enormous extent to which the resources of the Infirmary and the Dispensary are demanded by the sick and suffering poor’.¹⁹⁴ Figure 4.6 shows the ratio of inpatients to

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, NHM 3/6/2, M.G.I., A.R., 1896, p. 10.

¹⁸⁸ Marland, *Medicine and Society*, p. 107.

¹⁸⁹ Koditschek, *Class Formation*, p. 403.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, NHM 3/6/2, M.G.I., A.R., 1887, p. 5.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 1890, p. 7.

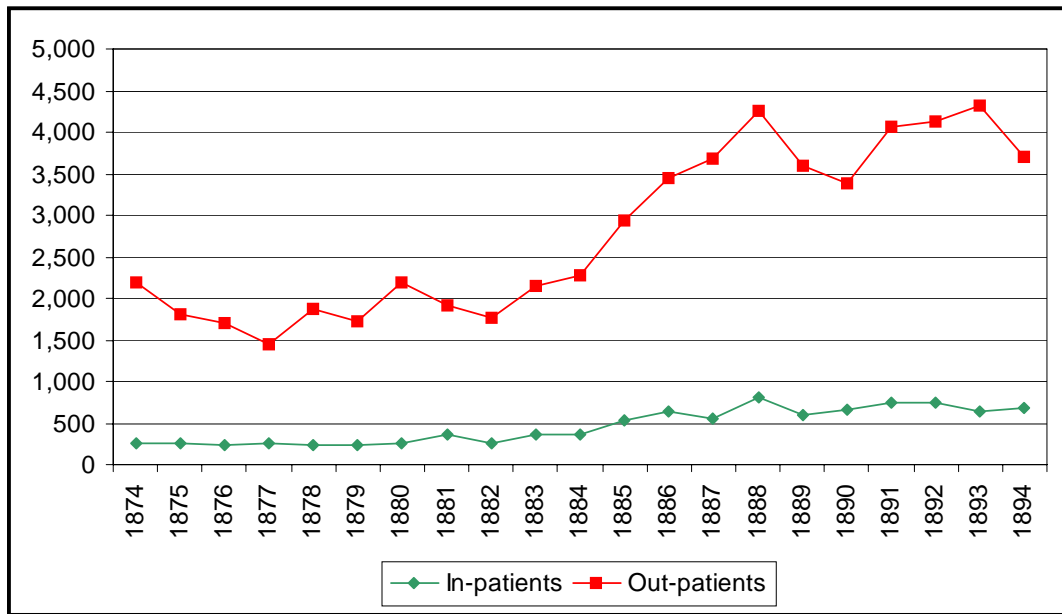
¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 1894, p. 6.

¹⁹³ Gorsky, ‘Charity, Mutuality and Philanthropy’, p. 223.

¹⁹⁴ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/1, M.G.I. A.R., 1882, p. 5.

outpatients and demonstrates the gradual increase in numbers as the facilities were expanded over a 20-year period.

Figure 4.6. Macclesfield Infirmary patients, 1874-1894.
(C.R.O., NHM/1-2, M.G.I. A.R., 1874-1894)



In 1888, a survey of patients revealed that all were eligible for treatment and that a fifth were entitled to see a medical club doctor, but had opted for the Infirmary as ‘they imagined the Infirmary medicine was the best’.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, its services were portrayed as being of a sufficiently high standard that ‘even the affluent sick would find it hard to match’.¹⁹⁶ For those living on the poverty line, timely treatment for injuries and illnesses could mean the difference between people remaining in employment or whole families being forced into the Workhouse.¹⁹⁷ Therefore, the Infirmary was able to achieve some measure of success, in spite of the many difficulties it faced.

The Macclesfield silk manufacturers were clearly instrumental in the establishment, funding and operation of the institution, especially with the large benefaction that started the project. However, the importance of working class contributions and the wide range of other people who offered support, mean that it can be portrayed as an effort on the part of the whole town rather than any particular group. If one person could be singled out as the activist for the Infirmary it would be John May, who persevered in the face of extreme

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, NHM 3/6/2, M.G.I., A.R., 1888, p. 5.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, NHM 3/6/1, M.G.I., A.R., 1882, p. 5.

¹⁹⁷ Cherry, ‘The Hospitals and Population Growth’, Part 2, p. 265.

difficulty and ensured that it became a reality. Consequently the achievements of the Infirmary can be attributed to the silk manufacturers of the town, along with the rest of the community.

The Fence Almshouses

The Fence Almshouses were opened in 1895 and were a gift to Macclesfield from F. D. Brocklehurst, a member of the silk manufacturing Brocklehurst family. The three purpose-built houses provided accommodation for four elderly people, together with a small living allowance and payment of medical costs. Mrs Stanley of Alderley had built Macclesfield's first almshouses in 1703, for three poor widows, and Mrs Brooksbank doubled the accommodation in 1863. Mr Thornycroft then provided £400 in 1871 for these six almshouses to be rebuilt in Cumberland Street.¹⁹⁸ When the Fence Almshouses were opened on Buxton Road, they provided additional accommodation for two widows and one married couple.¹⁹⁹

The original objective of the charity was to provide living quarters for elderly people 'of good character' who had resided within Macclesfield for not less than five years, who were not receiving poor relief and were unable to maintain themselves 'by their own exertions'.²⁰⁰ If a person was found to be ineligible or had succumbed to mental illness, they were automatically disqualified from the position. There were also rules regarding the conduct of the almspeople and inappropriate behaviour, such as insobriety and immorality, led to residents' removal.²⁰¹ The two single houses consisted of a combined living and bedroom, with a scullery and pantry, while the double house had a separate bedroom and living room. At the opening, the newspaper report indicated that 'everything has been done, both internally and externally, in the best possible manner', suggesting that the money provided by the donor was substantial.²⁰² There is no indication of the cost of the building, or of the size of the endowment fund from which the running costs were paid. However, in 1923 the value of the charity's investments came to a total of £7,709.²⁰³

¹⁹⁸ C.R.O., Digest of the Reports made by the Commissioners for Enquiry, *Charities in the City of Chester and the County Palatine of Chester* (London, 1841), p. 527; M.S.M., PH 361, J. Gee & A. Hayward, 'King Edward's Road Almshouses'.

¹⁹⁹ S.C.A., F8, Newscuttings, 16 November 1895.

²⁰⁰ C.R.O., LBM 2703/80, M.B.C., Copy Schemes re. Fence Hospital and Almshouses, 1923, p. 4.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁰² S.C.A., F8, Newscuttings, 16 November 1895.

²⁰³ C.R.O., LBM 2703/80, M.B.C., Copy Schemes, p. 7.

Figure 4.7. The Fence Almshouses. The inscription shows the brothers' initials, Fence Almshouses, and the date of 1895.



The main person responsible for the Fence Almshouses was F. D. Brocklehurst, who provided the money and land for the project. At the opening, he revealed that Thomas Unett Brocklehurst (his brother) had originally intended to establish almshouses, but had died in 1886 before this wish could be fulfilled. As a result, F. D. Brocklehurst continued with his brother's plans and the joint nature of the scheme is illustrated by the fact that both their initials were carved on the façade of the building.²⁰⁴ The land on which the almshouses were built was part of 'The Fence', the childhood home of the brothers. The majority of this land was donated to Macclesfield for Victoria Park, but a portion was retained and became the site of the Fence Hospital and Almshouses. Therefore, these projects may have represented a chance to use surplus land for a positive purpose.

A genuine desire to help the elderly poor in the town could have been a factor in determining the donors' actions, along with the reasonably high probability that the houses would have accommodated retired Brocklehurst workers. There were no obvious admission procedures in their favour but, as the Brocklehursts were the largest employers in the town, it would have been a likely scenario. This followed the lead of other industrialists, such as the Crossley family in Halifax, who founded almshouses in towns where they employed a significant proportion of the workforce.²⁰⁵ For mill owners,

²⁰⁴ S.C.A., F8, Newscuttings, 16 November 1895.

²⁰⁵ Bailey, *Almshouses*, p. 178.

almshouses (and housing for workers) were attractive prospects because they had the capacity to generate income from rents if the donor so wished.²⁰⁶

Other members of the Brocklehurst family were involved with the administration of almshouses and this precedent may have encouraged the founders' actions. In 1865, John Dent (husband of Emma) built the Sudeley Almshouses in Gloucestershire and Emma left £500 to these almshouses on her death.²⁰⁷ Emma's nephew, William Brocklehurst Brocklehurst, became a trustee of the Elizabeth Stanley Almshouses in 1889 when the charity was re-organised by the Charity Commission.²⁰⁸ He later became a trustee of the Fence Almshouses and continued his interest by providing money for an additional six almshouses on his death in 1927.²⁰⁹ The reputation of the Brocklehurst family would have been boosted by the gift of these almshouses and was described as 'another sign (if one was necessary) of Mr Brocklehurst's generosity and thoughtfulness for the welfare of the old town'.²¹⁰ Another possible factor was that both of the brothers had no children and, without direct descendants to benefit from their personal fortunes, the option of using their money for a worthwhile project in the town may have appeared attractive. This action also had the advantage of adding to Macclesfield's range of facilities.

One traditional problem associated with almshouses was corruption. However, the foundation of the Charity Commission meant that there was less scope for such difficulties to occur with these almshouses.²¹¹ From the available evidence, there were no apparent issues to arise from the administration of the charity during the nineteenth century. The main failing of the project was the small number of people who could benefit from the facilities. At the outset, the land that was made available for building the almshouses was described as 'very limited', which restricted the number of houses to three.²¹² This lack of space meant that accommodation was provided for a maximum of four people at any one time, which was a tiny proportion of Macclesfield's population. Despite this limitation, the Fence Almshouses did provide a service for a sector of the community for whom few facilities existed. The only alternative for the elderly poor at this time was the Workhouse, with its associated stigma and harsh conditions, while the positive benefits of providing

²⁰⁶ C. Giles & I. H. Goodall, *Yorkshire Textile Mills: The Buildings of the Yorkshire Textile Industry, 1770-1930* (London, 1992), p. 195.

²⁰⁷ J. Bray, *The Lady of Sudeley* (Ebrington, 2000).

²⁰⁸ *Kelly's Directory of Cheshire, 1923*, p. 455.

²⁰⁹ C.R.O., LBM 2703/80, M.B.C., Copy Schemes, p. 2; M.S.M., PH 361, Gee & Hayward, 'King Edward's Road Almshouses'.

²¹⁰ S.C.A., F8, Newscuttings, 16 November 1895.

²¹¹ Bailey, *Almshouses*, p. 187.

²¹² S.C.A., F8, Newscuttings, 16 November 1895.

accommodation outside an institution for elderly people contributed to improved health, a longer life and greater happiness for inhabitants.²¹³

T. U. Brocklehurst, the initiator of the almshouses, was a silk manufacturer and F. D. Brocklehurst, who took over the project, worked in the family bank. Although Francis was not directly involved with the silk business, it seemed to be a matter of chance that he ended up working on the banking side of the company. He had originally been summoned back to Macclesfield (from his three years of travel) by his father, as there was ‘some opening...in the Works’ for him, which subsequently ‘had closed again’.²¹⁴ However, as he was a member of the Brocklehurst silk manufacturing family, it is likely that a large proportion of his money would have been derived from that source. Therefore, the Brocklehurst silk manufacturing family was entirely responsible for the Fence Almshouses, and this strong silk influence was carried through to the later almshouse foundations in the town.

The Fence Hospital

The Fence Hospital was built by Thomas Unett Brocklehurst (the silk manufacturer) in memory of his parents. It opened in 1883 and offered a place where convalescing patients could receive food in quiet surroundings. This institution was complementary to the Thornycroft Convalescent Fund which had been founded in 1874 and aimed to ‘provide assistance to those who have been sick and afflicted’ by sending patients to healthy locations to convalesce. The number of people who benefited from the Fund varied according to the available finances and in 1886 ‘90 patients were rusticated at Cheadle, Buxton and other places’, compared to 53 patients in 1896.²¹⁵

Thomas Unett Brocklehurst’s parents died in 1870 and shortly afterwards he built a ‘pretty little “home”’ to honour their memory.²¹⁶ It is not clear how the house was used in the interim period, but during the 1880s he made the decision to offer it for the use of the town’s convalescent patients. The Thornycroft Fund assisted in defraying the costs of converting the property and it opened in January 1884.²¹⁷ Colonel Brocklehurst died in 1886 and left an endowment of £10,000 to safeguard its existence.²¹⁸

²¹³ W. H. Godfrey, *The English Almshouse* (London, 1955), p. 86.

²¹⁴ C.R.O., D 2455/7, Letters of F. D. Brocklehurst, 1858-1861, p. 108.

²¹⁵ *A Walk*, p. 43; C.R.O., NHM 3/6/2, M.G.I., A.R., 1896, p. 6.

²¹⁶ S.C.A., F8, Newscuttings, 1884.

²¹⁷ M.S.M., R.C.H.M.E., ‘Macclesfield Infirmary’, p. 20.

²¹⁸ S.C.A., F8, Newscuttings, 9 October 1886.

Figure 4.8. The Fence Hospital, built as a memorial to Thomas and Martha Brocklehurst.



The original objective was to supply ‘good wholesome dinners and teas for poor persons’ on discharge from the Infirmary and to help ‘their permanent and speedy restoration to health’.²¹⁹ The hospital catered for those ‘patients who do not so much require a change of air after leaving the Infirmary, as a continuance for a time of wholesome diet which their needy circumstances would not admit of their getting at home’.²²⁰ At the outset, the provision of nourishing food for the poorest patients was projected to ‘prove one of the best helps to recovery amongst those who in sickness seldom taste a nutritious meal’.²²¹ Another benefit was that it offered a restful area for patients, in contrast to the overcrowded conditions in their homes. In its first year of operation, 189 patients were supplied with six dinners each and the total annual cost was £155.²²² The institution was open on three days of the week in 1886 and meals were then being provided for 12 to 16 people weekly, who were recommended by the Infirmary surgeons.²²³ In 1888, a total of 2,424 dinners were served and the matron supervised the institution ‘with the utmost regard to cleanliness, comfort and order’.²²⁴

Apart from one refurbishment grant, Thomas Unett Brocklehurst was wholly responsible for the building and the considerable endowment. The reasons behind his decision to found the institution appear to be varied. The indeterminate nature of the original premises indicates that the hospital idea is likely to have occurred later when he was seeking a use

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1884.

²²⁰ *A Walk*, p. 43.

²²¹ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/1, M.G.I., A.R., 1883, p. 9.

²²² *Ibid.*, 1884, p. 9.

²²³ *M.C.H.*, 21 August 1886, p. 5.

²²⁴ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/2, M.G.I., A.R., 1888, p. 7.

for the property.²²⁵ The relative success of the Infirmary and Dispensary were examples of how the town could provide medical services and this institution was a natural extension of the concept. The popularity of convalescent homes nationally during the 1880s, and the work carried out by the Macclesfield Thornycroft Fund, meant that such provision would have filtered into the public consciousness. There were also examples of other industrialists donating money specifically for this purpose. For example, Charles Brook, a Huddersfield cotton and silk manufacturer, donated £30,000 in 1869 to found a convalescent home at Meltham Mills for patients of the Huddersfield Infirmary.²²⁶

The fact that the building was built in memory of Thomas and Martha Brocklehurst meant that its subsequent use for an institution of benefit to the town was a way of ensuring that their memories would be perpetuated. Colonel Brocklehurst did not have any children, which meant that a portion of his money was channelled towards projects in the town. The coverage given to the institution would have ensured that the profile of the Brocklehurst family as benevolent benefactors was reinforced. The endorsement of the scheme by the Duke of Westminster at the opening ceremony also gave the project added respectability. He was reported to have ‘predicted very eloquently the success of Colonel Brocklehurst’s charitable scheme, and its rich endowments, which His Grace had warmly approved’.²²⁷

As one of the largest employers of labour in the town, T. U. Brocklehurst would have seen the effects of discharging Infirmary patients straight back to their homes, with no supporting services. Sickness was a major problem as it resulted in a loss of productivity and skills and therefore any measures to address this problem were likely to have been attractive to employers. The cost of providing meals in a dedicated building, on specific days of the week, is liable to have been relatively low compared to the accommodation and travel costs of the Thornycroft Fund. This cost-effectiveness is likely to have appealed to Mr Brocklehurst’s business instincts and the hospital could have been seen as a way of increasing respect for the family as employers, through the provision of a service for working people. The motives detailed in the *Courier* suggested that it was to ‘help the sick poor’ and was a ‘very kindly thought’ to ‘nurse the sick and suffering back to health’.²²⁸ The subsequent utilisation of the hospital by Infirmary patients must have encouraged him to make it a more permanent fixture and the endowment of £10,000 was sufficiently large to guarantee its future into the twentieth century.

²²⁵ M.S.M., R.C.H.M.E., ‘Macclesfield Infirmary’, p. 20.

²²⁶ Marland, *Medicine and Society*, p. 110.

²²⁷ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/3, M.G.I., A.R., 1899, p. 5.

²²⁸ *M.C.H.*, 21 August 1886, p. 5; 1 June 1901, p. 3.

The main failure of the hospital was that it had limited efficacy for most Macclesfield people. The numbers who benefited from the charity suggests that it was a small-scale operation that helped specific patients on discharge from the Infirmary. Similarly, the infrequency of opening times meant that for those who did not have access to good nutrition during the rest of the week, there were still times when they could go hungry. A further difficulty was that, because of the institution's reliance on a few key staff, sickness could force operations to be suspended and this happened in 1889 when the matron was recovering from serious illness.²²⁹

Despite these shortcomings, the fact that the institution was continued after a trial period and received a large endowment from the donor indicates that it did meet a need within the town. It was described as 'a great and constant boon to convalescent patients' in 1888, while in 1897, the mayor highlighted the 'magnificent work' that both the Infirmary and the Fence Hospital were carrying out in 'treating the sick and restoring the convalescent to health'.²³⁰ Likewise, it was felt that the founder 'could not have devised a more opportune and efficacious charitable home; it commands universal gratitude'.²³¹ Therefore, the Fence Hospital was seen to be a useful addition to Macclesfield's institutions, but its limited scope meant that only a small proportion of the population were able to benefit from its facilities.

Discussion

Having seen the range of commitment shown by the silk manufacturers to these public services institutions, were there any overall patterns to emerge from their involvement? As two out of the seven institutions were private donations and little evidence survives on the Volunteer Fire Brigade, there was limited scope for people to support multiple causes in this field. Three silk manufacturers (William Barnett, Thomas Brodrick and Thomas Watts) were heavily involved with the four main town-wide appeals, namely the Baths, Dispensary, Infirmary and Relief Association. A further five silk manufacturers, William Barker, John Brocklehurst, Thomas Unett Brocklehurst, Thomas Bullock and G. R. Oldham, supported three of these institutions. In most cases, these individuals were committee members, governors, visitors and subscribers.

²²⁹ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/2, M.G.I., A.R., 1889, p. 9.

²³⁰ *A Walk*, p. 43; M.P.L., *How Loyal Macclesfield and the District Celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria*, (Macclesfield, 1897), p. 24.

²³¹ C.R.O., NHM 3/6/2, M.G.I., A.R., 1894, p. 6.

Company subscriptions were evident in the lists for the Baths and Washhouses, Dispensary, Infirmary and Relief Association, including Critchley, Brinsley & Co., J. & T.

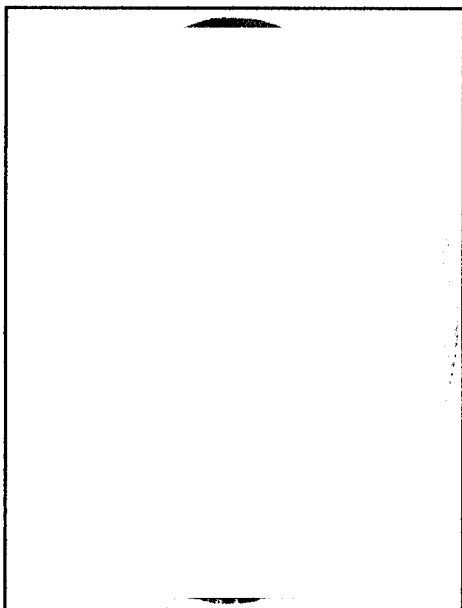


Figure 4.9. Henry and Ann Brocklehurst (née Fielden). (B. R. Law, *Fieldens of Todmorden: A Nineteenth Century Business Dynasty* (Littleborough, 1995), p. 98.)

Brocklehurst and R. Thorp & Sons. There were certain silk manufacturing families who had numerous members supporting the public services institutions, like the Clarkes, Frosts, Oldhams and Ryles. However, the Brocklehurst family tended to overshadow their counterparts as they had ten individuals who contributed in various ways to these institutions. In addition to the gifts of the Fence Hospital and Almshouses, they contributed money and acted variously as treasurers, committee members and governors for the other organisations. Henry and Charles Brocklehurst also became captain-commandants of the Volunteer Fire Brigade and the latter provided a fire engine.²³² Some of these family members, like P. P. Brocklehurst, Emma Dent and Ernest Brocklehurst, had no involvement with the family

firm, but would have received a proportion of their money through the proceeds of silk manufacture. In general, the silk manufacturers' support for these services remained constant during the first half of the nineteenth century and consisted of financial and organisational input. The following 50 years saw some significant donations from individual silk manufacturers, including Joseph Tunnicliffe's £30,000 bequest and the Brocklehurst private gifts, which reflected the wealth that some manufacturers had managed to accrue.

Apart from the silk manufacturers, how far were other people influential in the progress of the public services institutions? Ten members of the Anglican clergy were involved with this group of organisations and three of these individuals supported two institutions (the Revds Henry Briant, J. Daintry and C. A. J. Smith). Their efforts were concentrated on the Dispensary, Relief Association, Baths and Infirmary where their experience of working-class living conditions was valuable in raising awareness of the lack of facilities in the town. Medical men were present on the managing bodies of the Baths, Dispensary and

²³² *M.C.H.*, 26 January 1884, p. 5.

Infirmary, as all these facilities contributed towards health improvements in Macclesfield. These representatives included Frederick Lallemand who was active on the Baths committee and Thomas Swanwick who donated £1,000 to the Infirmary.

The county families appeared in the subscription lists for the Dispensary, Baths, Relief Association and Infirmary. For example, the Davenports, Egertons and Thornycrofts all supported two of these institutions. The original idea for the Baths was attributed to Mrs Davenport and the early meetings saw a large contingent of the local gentry in attendance. The Duke of Westminster also acted as the president of the Infirmary and gave nearly £2,000 to the cause. A proportion of committee members and subscribers came from a mixture of other professions and trades, generally in smaller numbers than the previous categories. Examples are the lawyer Samuel Higginbotham (committee member for the Baths and Relief Association) and Samuel Wright, a wine merchant, who left £500 to the Infirmary. Members of the Wood cotton manufacturing family were on the committees of the Relief Association and the Dispensary, while Thomas Stringer (a timber merchant) participated in the affairs of the Dispensary and Infirmary.

Working-class support of all the public appeals was mentioned prominently in the reports of these institutions. Their collections contributed towards the large totals need to establish such facilities and their support was integral to the success of each project. They clearly expected to contribute towards their voluntary institutions and, despite their own difficulties, Macclesfield silk workers also sent donations for relief in Lancashire during the Cotton Famine.²³³ Another indirect way in which they assisted was through donations by friendly societies and workers' associations. For example, the Ancient Order of Foresters, the Equitable Provident Society and the Silk Weavers' Association all subscribed to the Infirmary.

However, the person who made the greatest contribution to these institutions was John May. In his obituary he was described as an 'incessant worker in every cause that would tend to promote the welfare of the town' and that 'had for its object the amelioration of the condition of the poor, or the improvement of the town or district'.²³⁴ This was certainly the case with the Baths and the Infirmary where he was the prime instigator of the projects and worked tirelessly to raise sufficient money for their needs.

²³³ F. J. Williams, 'Irish in the East Cheshire Textile Industry', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 136, 1987, p. 103.

²³⁴ *M.C.H.*, 3 December 1904, p. 2.

These examples illustrate that the silk manufacturers were joined by a broad cross-section of the community in supporting those institutions that were funded by public appeals. To what extent did external factors affect the progress of these organisations? The prevailing sanitary conditions in Macclesfield had a strong effect on the medical charities and J. Smith reported in 1850 that ‘the greater portion of the excess of sickness and death’ was attributable to the absence of proper drainage and sewerage, the large number of privies and other nuisances, the lack of a constant water supply, poor ventilation and the bad construction and overcrowding of cottages and lodging-houses’.²³⁵ These conditions provided ideal breeding grounds for infectious diseases, like typhoid, smallpox and diphtheria. In addition, the Medical Officer of Health blamed the high infant mortality rate in 1874 (230 deaths of children under one year) on factors such as the large number of mothers employed in factory work, inadequate feeding and poor sanitary conditions.²³⁶ The prevalence of sickness and high mortality rate put increased pressure on the medical institutions, whose staff had to cope with the constant demand for their services. Similarly, trade depression had a deleterious effect on the general health of the working classes, with poor nutrition causing an increased susceptibility to disease.

Trade depression was also a negative factor for all charities funded by public contributions. Macclesfield’s reliance on silk meant that most employers shut down their factories simultaneously and so there was little alternative employment. This affected voluntary contributions of all kinds, but especially working-class collections. In addition, the sheer scale of unemployment overwhelmed existing services and the Relief Association was unable to reach all the needy. The implementation of the New Poor Law exacerbated some of the difficulties experienced by unemployed workers and the limited number eligible for aid meant that voluntary relief funds had to cover the remainder of the population. Prolonged trade depression meant a gradual deterioration of living standards for inhabitants, with little opportunity to recoup their losses and improve their situation. Similarly, the Relief Association was unable to build up reserves of capital between its campaigns and was always battling with a time delay between the demand for its services and the arrival of the first subscriptions. The charity also suffered from lack of local support at times. For example, in February 1861 only 17 council members (out of a possible 48) had subscribed and the committee was forced to approach London silk firms for further assistance.²³⁷

²³⁵ C.R.O., LBM 5211/1, Smith, *Report to the General Board of Health*, pp. 51-52.

²³⁶ M.P.L., Macclesfield Corporation, *Annual Reports of the Medical Officer of Health, 1873-1879* (Macclesfield, 1879), 1873, p. 18.

²³⁷ S. Ainscough, ‘Macclesfield Élités, 1832-1918’, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Liverpool, 2003), p. 170.

The lack of a nationally coordinated programme to deal with urban problems meant that local voluntary initiatives had to plug the gap until a centrally driven programme of improvement was implemented. The combination of all these factors meant that these institutions suffered from difficulties in raising funds, high demand for their services and the overstretching of their limited resources. The only exceptions are the Fence Hospital and Almshouses, which were funded privately and had physical limits on the number of people they were able to assist. Therefore, there were some issues beyond the silk manufacturers' control that negatively affected the voluntary funded institutions.

Having seen how far the silk manufacturers did affect these institutions, what prompted their support? The poor conditions in Macclesfield must have stimulated contributions from manufacturers. John May's statistics revealed how the town's environment was affecting its inhabitants and this was backed up by the clergy's experiences in poorer areas. Therefore, the lack of facilities to deal with such problems manifested itself in pressure for the initial public meetings. This was particularly evident with the Dispensary where lengthy newspaper articles were published on the need for such an institution in the town. National and local newspaper coverage was also important in raising awareness of the difficulties facing Macclesfield inhabitants during times of trade depression.

The medical charities were generally popular causes in the nineteenth century as they meshed with the evangelical responsibility to care for the sick. There was also no issue with the validity of cases, as all genuinely sick people were automatically regarded as 'deserving'.²³⁸ As a result, a wide cross-section of people offered their support and expertise to the institutions so that the medical men could carry out their work. Fund-raisers could appeal to people's sense of Christian duty and point towards the weekly newspaper statistics of Dispensary and Infirmary patients as evidence of their bounty. The containment of disease was also of prime importance to nineteenth-century urban dwellers and support for the medical charities was therefore of benefit to most people. For example, J. O. Nicholson emphasised the importance of the Baths saying that there was 'as much philanthropy and benevolence in preventing disease as curing it'.²³⁹

Many Macclesfield silk manufacturers were Poor Law Guardians and this brought them into direct contact with the problems of the poor. There is evidence of Thomas Watts

²³⁸ O. Checkland, *Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland: Social Welfare and the Voluntary Principle* (Edinburgh, 1980), p. 154.

²³⁹ C.R.O., D 5299, Nicholson, 'Macclesfield Present and Future' p. 87.

(chairman of Board of Guardians in 1842) raising awareness of the poor standards of care for the elderly and saying 'Surely to the old people better treatment is due.'²⁴⁰ Such humanitarian concern extended to their reluctance to adopt the New Poor Law, particularly with the institutionalisation of families who were separated in the Workhouse. As a result, the Macclesfield Guardians continued to pay outdoor relief, in contravention of the rules, until the end of the century. However, as this was the cheapest method of supporting large numbers of dependants and allowed manufacturers to continue paying low wages, there were other motives at play.²⁴¹ The involvement of silk manufacturers, such as Watts, Rowland Gould, George Swindells and Thomas Crew on the Board was also accompanied by their support of multiple voluntary public service institutions, indicating a special interest in this field.

For silk manufacturers who became mayors, part of their public role was to initiate charitable funds at times of need and encourage other prominent figures to contribute.²⁴² This was particularly evident with the Relief Association where the presiding mayors called the public meeting, headed the subscription list and oversaw the relief efforts. As the silk manufacturers were well represented in this position, their support for some of the causes may have been encouraged by this initial involvement. Social leaders were also keen to improve Macclesfield's status and to develop suitable institutions for their populace, particularly when compared to other rival towns.

There were a number of business considerations that could have encouraged the support of silk manufacturers for these charities. The factory system imposed certain health risks on workers and even firms considered to be good employers were guilty of dangerous working practices at times. For example, Thomas Ashton of Hyde revealed in 1832 that his firm, along with all others in Stockport, had operated outside the remit of the Factory Acts at some stage.²⁴³ Although a few companies, like Messrs Brocklehurst and Winkworth & Proctor, had voluntarily reduced their working hours to 12 by 1845, most workers still faced a 14-hour day.²⁴⁴ These long hours would have been detrimental to their health and increased the chance of accidents. The medical charities therefore provided employers with services for their staff, which would otherwise have been covered by more expensive private treatment.

²⁴⁰ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 226.

²⁴¹ Oliver, 'The Process of Poor Law Reform', p. 81.

²⁴² J. Garrard, 'The Mayoralty Since 1835, in A. O'Day (Ed.), *Government and Institutions in the Post-1832 United Kingdom* (Lewiston, NY, 1995), p. 8.

²⁴³ R. Glen, *Urban Workers in the Early Industrial Revolution* (Beckenham, 1984), p. 81.

²⁴⁴ *M.C.H.*, 4 October 1845, p. 3.

The support of silk manufacturers for the Volunteer Fire Brigade could also have had a practical reason for their actions. Mills represented high risks for fire damage, with



Figure 4.10. Charles Brocklehurst, the donor of a fire engine named ‘The Badger’ (after the family crest). (Macclesfield Museums Trust)

machinery, fabric and inflammable substances concentrated in an open area. The participation of silk manufacturers in the Volunteer Brigade might therefore have been a form of insurance in case of major factory fires. However, Charles Brocklehurst’s obituary stated that the ‘saving of life and property from destruction evidently had for him, as it has for many other original minds, a great charm’, being a more charitable view of his motivation.²⁴⁵

As described earlier, the manufacturers’ contributions to the Relief Association were not always as generous as might be expected and this may have been due to the fact that they were conserving funds at times of difficulty to safeguard their businesses. The wealthier manufacturers were better equipped to deal with slumps in trade, but even their contributions rarely approached the amount of money that they were able to save by

closing their mills. John Brocklehurst bucked the trend in 1863-1864 when he kept his mills open at a cost of £70,000, saying that he had made his money in Macclesfield and, if needs be, he would spend it there to the last sixpence.²⁴⁶ The family subsequently operated this policy whenever possible, but there were still times when disgruntled weavers objected to the family’s public gifts at times of real hardship for their workers. For example, in 1879 T. U. Brocklehurst presented cabmen with winter overcoats and Joseph Chapman felt that the company’s handloom weavers would have been far more appropriate recipients. Instead, the Brocklehursts were accused of sending any remaining work outside the town and leaving their weavers in destitution.²⁴⁷

The business element also seems to have been uppermost in Henry Brocklehurst’s participation in the Silk Weavers’ Emigration Society, which was formed in 1863 as a result of working class pressure. It lasted seven months and raised money for unemployed silk workers to emigrate. During this time, Henry Brocklehurst sat on its committee and

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 26 January 1884, p. 5.

²⁴⁶ S.C.A., F20, E. Dent, *In Memory of John Brocklehurst MP* (n.p., 1897), pp. 5-6.

²⁴⁷ C.R.O., LBM 2703/62/1, M.B.C., Newscuttings, 18 January 1879, p. 38.

implored workers to reconsider emigration. His primary role appears to have been to limit the number of skilled workers leaving Macclesfield, which had implications for the family firm.²⁴⁸ In the same way, silk manufacturers' support of the Relief Association could be seen as a way of retaining workers within the town so that demands for higher wages, which accompanied a reduced pool of skilled labour, did not occur. These actions could therefore be interpreted as preserving the profitability of silk manufacturers' businesses.

The Relief Association and the Silk Weavers' Emigration Society were also seen as ways of reducing the tax burden on middle-class ratepayers. The increased number of inhabitants claiming poor relief meant higher rates and so these schemes offered an alternative solution with no tax implications. Similarly, the medical charities reduced the likelihood of people becoming dependent on the Poor Law through sickness, which again benefited ratepayers.²⁴⁹ The opposition to the 1847 Improvement Act, for water, gas and sanitary improvements, is an indication that certain silk manufacturers did not always have the best interests of Macclesfield at heart when faced with tax rises. A group of Liberal silk manufacturers, headed by John Brocklehurst, actively opposed the adoption of this Act in spite of its potential to improve conditions. The primary objection was the fear of rate rises (along with distrust of central control) and their opposition impeded its passage for a further four years.²⁵⁰

This theme recurred with the Infirmary when a suggestion was made in 1871 that the Corporation should take over the outstanding building costs. Thomas Brodrick spoke out against the plan saying that with the exception of Messrs Brocklehurst, he was the largest ratepayer in the borough (paying over £100 a year) and that those who had heavy assessments contributed most to the public institutions. He therefore thought that it was unfair to target the manufacturers again and that the appeal should be made to all inhabitants.²⁵¹ Historically, the wealthy have often justified low taxation because of their charitable donations and it appears that the Macclesfield silk manufacturers were no exception.²⁵²

In general, charities such as the Relief Association, the Dispensary and Infirmary were seen as reintroducing personal contact between the classes. Implicit in the grant of relief or recommendations was the concept of a social bond and recipients were expected to

²⁴⁸ Ainscough, 'Macclesfield Élites', p. 177.

²⁴⁹ Mohan & Gorsky, *Don't Look Back?* p. 36.

²⁵⁰ McBride, 'The Struggle for Sanitary Reform', pp. 71, 76

²⁵¹ *M.C.H.*, 14 October 1871, p. 2.

²⁵² B. Whitaker, *The Foundations: An Anatomy of Philanthropy and Society* (London, 1974), p. 51.

adhere to certain codes of behaviour. For example, relief applicants were expected to undertake work if it was available, show gratitude for aid and behave appropriately.²⁵³ Law and order issues also ran throughout the Baths' reports and the institution was seen as a way of reducing the problems that had contributed to social unrest during the 1840s.

Involvement with these charities carried a certain cachet for participants as they attracted some high-ranking supporters and gave the opportunity to exert power over the town's development. Apart from prominent Cheshire subscribers, such as the Duke of Westminster and the Davenport family, the first Relief Fund saw a royal contribution and the popularity of volunteer fire brigades was increased as a result of the future Edward VII's involvement in the 1860s.²⁵⁴ All these public institutions represented a chance for supporters to improve their status, to participate in fashionable activities and to widen their social circle. The Infirmary and the private Brocklehurst gifts also allowed individuals to leave their mark on the town and to perpetuate their reputation as generous benefactors.

Having seen the possible reasons for the silk manufacturers actions, how far did these organisations actually meet the expectations of their founders? These initiatives were originally proposed to combat some of Macclesfield's urban problems and to improve life for townspeople. The Dispensary and the Baths were probably the most successful in achieving these aims, as they did reach a high proportion of the population and the demand for their services was clearly apparent. The Infirmary was able to provide advanced medical facilities, but had restrictions on both the number of patients it could accommodate and the type of cases it could treat. Similarly, the Fence Hospital and Almshouses had space constraints meaning that the number of people eligible for their services was always small.

The Relief Association was probably the least effective of this group as it was run on an *ad hoc* basis until the 1890s, which made long-term planning impossible. The gradual implementation of Charity Organisation Society principles in the second half of the century did lead to a more structured approach to mass unemployment, but demand was always greater than the sparse resources. Upper and middle-class assistance, which received so much publicity, also tended to mask the value of working-class networks of aid

²⁵³ P. Shapely, 'Urban Charity, Class Relations and Social Cohesion: Charitable Responses to the Cotton Famine', *Urban History*, 28, 2001, p. 49.

²⁵⁴ Blackstone, *A History of the British Fire Services*, p. 154.

that were usually the preferred choice of those in need.²⁵⁵ The practice of visiting potential candidates for aid did bring visitors into contact with the unemployed and revealed the extent of their distress. Some of the Macclesfield visitors reported visits to families over a prolonged period of time and this did enable some form of relationship to be forged between donor and recipient. However, this depended on the sensitivity and attitude of the visitors as many people felt that such visits were demeaning and invasive.²⁵⁶

The Relief Association's lasting achievement was the appointment of a district nurse, which became an essential part of Macclesfield's medical services. In the same way, the Infirmary and Dispensary provided the foundation from which the modern system of healthcare has evolved. The Baths offered an attainable step in improving the town's sanitary conditions and the Volunteer Fire Brigade increased the resources available during emergencies. The two private gifts extended the facilities available to convalescents and the elderly; both groups for whom there was little existing provision. All these examples illustrate that the voluntary institutions did expand Macclesfield's services and that many inhabitants were able to benefit from these improvements. However, the financial and organisational limitations of charities meant that while they were able to tackle some of the problems caused by rapid industrialisation, they were unable to achieve all that their founders had anticipated. Thus it was their initial efforts, combined with centrally driven improvements, which gradually improved life for the town's inhabitants during the nineteenth century.

Having examined the effect of the silk manufacturers on the Macclesfield public services institutions, was their contribution consistent with that of manufacturers elsewhere? Medical charities tended to receive their support from a cross-section of the middle and upper classes and in Halifax most of the officers and governors of the General Dispensary were merchants, manufacturers, bankers and professionals.²⁵⁷ This was common in larger industrial towns where other occupations lessened the dominance of manufacturers present in smaller towns like Macclesfield. Manufacturers were frequently prominent in the establishment of dispensaries and infirmaries, such as Richard Potter who was one of the founders of the Chorlton Row Dispensary.²⁵⁸ Individual manufacturers often supported

²⁵⁵ F. K. Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain* (London, 1988), p. 27.

²⁵⁶ B. Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1982), p. 253.

²⁵⁷ T. Iwama, 'The Middle Class in Halifax, 1780-1850', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Leeds, 2003), p. 131.

²⁵⁸ M. J. Turner, *Reform and Respectability: The Making of a Middle-class Liberalism in Early Nineteenth-century Manchester* (Manchester, 1995), p. 169.

dispensaries in the vicinity of their factories, as with James Jardine who was president of the Ancoats and Ardwick Dispensary.²⁵⁹ This paternalism was consistent with the Macclesfield Dispensary, which provided services for all factory workers in the town and thus saw strong support from manufacturers. Similarly, in Huddersfield, some of the contributors to the medical charities were those who actively supported the existing factory system and saw these institutions as a way of dealing with the problems of accidents and illnesses within their workforce.²⁶⁰

Infirmaries were more prestigious than the dispensaries and were utilised by some manufacturers, in towns like Wigan and Oldham, to enhance their local reputation.²⁶¹ The benefits of these institutions to businessmen are illustrated by the fact that towns with large employers often founded infirmaries in advance of those with a broader industrial base. This was the case in Rochdale, Bolton and Bury, although Macclesfield does seem to be an exception with its relatively late establishment and large manufacturing concerns.²⁶² Bradford saw strong support from its increasingly rich nonconformist businessmen and was in the enviable position of being able to raise £10,000 over the running costs for a new building in the 1840s.²⁶³ This contrasts with Macclesfield's catalogue of delays and financial difficulties, which was more typical elsewhere.

One area in which the Macclesfield manufacturers were conspicuously absent was in the establishment of an isolation hospital. Titus Salt contributed £5,000 towards the Bradford Fever Hospital and many other similar institutions received voluntary subscriptions.²⁶⁴ The Macclesfield Infirmary possessed purpose-built fever wards, but the governors (many of whom were silk manufacturers) refused to let the Borough Sanitary Authority use these facilities, despite their undertaking to cover all costs.²⁶⁵ As a result, a temporary isolation hospital had to be established elsewhere and this lack of cooperation suggests that the governors were not always keen to maximise the Infirmary's facilities. Convalescent homes were another facility that attracted some manufacturer support, perhaps related to

²⁵⁹ P. Shapely, *Charity and Power in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester, 2000), p. 56.

²⁶⁰ Marland, *Medicine and Society*, p. 155.

²⁶¹ M. Dupree, 'The Provision of Social Services', in M. J. Daunton (Ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain, Vol. 3, 1840-1950* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 362.

²⁶² *Ibid.*

²⁶³ Koditschek, *Class Formation*, p. 402.

²⁶⁴ Reynolds, *The Great Paternalist*, p. 76.

²⁶⁵ M.P.L., Macclesfield Corporation, *Annual Reports of the Medical Officer of Health, 1881-1889* (Macclesfield, 1889), 1880, p. 10.

the fact that some of their workers could benefit from such institutions. For example, Henry William Ripley established the Woodlands Convalescent Home in Rawdon.²⁶⁶

Many manufacturers saw almshouses as an appropriate way to leave a permanent reminder of their contribution to a town, which also had the potential to benefit their retired employees. For example, Titus Salt built 45 almshouses at Saltaire and Henry William Ripley constructed almshouses at Ripleyville.²⁶⁷ In Macclesfield, the popularity of this form of gift was illustrated by the twentieth-century addition of the Brocklehurst and Harry Turner Almshouses (both provided by silk manufacturers), which means that out of 52 almshouses in Macclesfield, only six have no silk connection.²⁶⁸

The demand for the Baths movement is illustrated by the fact that in 1912 over five million visits were made to public baths nationwide.²⁶⁹ For most employers, Baths were beneficial for their workforce and Samuel Greg stated that his Bollington facilities had ‘contributed materially to the health, comfort, and cleanliness of the people’.²⁷⁰ Macclesfield’s silk manufacturers did make some contribution to the relative success of its Baths and were able to reap some of the benefits for their workers. However, the Saltaire institution proved less successful. Salt’s primary motivation in founding the Washhouses was to prevent laundry being dried outside, which he felt spoiled Saltaire’s appearance. However, the practice continued and the Washhouses were eventually closed, in common with most other towns. Saltaire’s Baths were also hindered by the issue of respectability that resulted in poor usage by his workers, a factor that appeared to affect only female users in Macclesfield.²⁷¹

The problem of relief during times of mass unemployment occupied town leaders throughout the northern textile belt. One common factor in voluntary relief schemes was the apparent reluctance on the part of manufacturers to support these causes. During the early stages of the Cotton Famine, manufacturers were obviously slow to respond to the situation. For example in Preston, 71 millowners had only given a total of £1,800 by September 1862 and in Blackburn they accounted for £700 out of the £9,000 total.²⁷² In Belfast, there was evidence of large manufacturers withholding subscriptions to its relief

²⁶⁶ Giles & Goodall, *Yorkshire Textile Mills*, p. 195.

²⁶⁷ Reynolds, *The Great Paternalist*, 278.

²⁶⁸ C.R.O., LBM 2703/118, M.B.C., Almshouses 1927, Enrolment and Record Deed Number 1373/27; Charity Commission, 253910, Harry Turner Almshouses.

²⁶⁹ Wohl, *Endangered Lives*, p. 75.

²⁷⁰ S. Greg, *A Layman’s Legacy* (London, 1877), p. 323.

²⁷¹ Reynolds, *The Great Paternalist*, p. 76.

²⁷² N. Longmate, *The Hungry Mills* (London, 1978), p. 131.

fund because they felt that workers were becoming apathetic when they were in receipt of relief and pointed to the lack of support given by working operatives to their unemployed counterparts.²⁷³ Anthony Howe has attributed the attitude of the Lancashire manufacturers to an underestimation of the seriousness of the situation, adherence to the principles of self-help and the belief that the Poor Law provision was adequate. He cites the examples of Thomas Ashton, Hugh Mason and John Hargreaves who eventually became heavily involved with the relief committees, together with Lancashire's 24 per cent share of the national funds, as evidence of manufacturers' subsequent concern and support of the relief efforts.²⁷⁴ This scenario was also apparent in Macclesfield with an initial poor response, followed by some manufacturer involvement. However, the amounts subscribed nationally to voluntary funds paled into insignificance when compared to rateable revenue, as the voluntary sums were generally below ten per cent of the latter amount and this indicates that subscriptions to relief funds were not generous.²⁷⁵

The Cotton Districts Relief Fund was criticised for relieving the burden on taxpayers by assisting those who would otherwise have received Poor Law support. The suspicion that manufacturers were benefiting from the Fund's work, while their employees received little help, added to the public concern over manufacturers' conduct and such publicity might have stimulated later action.²⁷⁶ In Macclesfield, there were no obvious religious problems to affect the distribution of aid, in contrast to areas of Lancashire where divisions were clearly evident between Anglicans, nonconformists and Catholics. In Ashton-under-Lyne this led to two rival committees, one primarily consisting of Anglican landowners and the other nonconformist manufacturers.²⁷⁷ The proportion of manufacturers subscribing to the Leeds relief funds was considerably lower than those working in commerce or the professions.²⁷⁸ This was partially indicative of the fact that many smaller firms could not afford to contribute during trade depressions, leaving the responsibility to occupations outside the textile trade. The size of Leeds also meant that it had a wider range of businesses than Macclesfield, which gave greater leeway to find alternative sources of income.

A major factor ignored by the critics of relief efforts was the efforts of large employers to keep mills open for as long as possible and to pay reduced wages in the event of closure.

²⁷³ A. Jordan, 'Voluntary Societies in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Queen's University of Belfast, 1989), p. 130.

²⁷⁴ A. Howe, *The Cotton Masters, 1830-1860* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 256-257.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

²⁷⁶ Longmate, *The Hungry Mills*, p. 131.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

²⁷⁸ Morris, *Class, Sect and Party*, p. 219.

The Cotton Famine Relief Fund recognised the importance of these actions in keeping a proportion of workers from claiming relief.²⁷⁹ The Fieldens of Todmorden (who were related to the Brocklehursts by marriage) gained the praise of the factory inspectors, and their workers' gratitude, for having paid wages over a nine-month shutdown of their mills in 1862-1863.²⁸⁰ These actions often cost firms considerable amounts of money (as in the Brocklehurst case), but could also be interpreted as sound business sense in keeping a skilled workforce together and encouraging loyalty in their workers.

In Halifax, Toshihiko Iwama identified two approaches of manufacturers to its relief scheme. Manufacturers like the Akroyds sought to reinforce paternalistic relations through their support of the fund, while the Crossleys indicated that religious duty was at the forefront of their involvement to assist the poor, along with the preservation of harmony between the classes.²⁸¹ The transient nature of the relief efforts in Bradford meant that while there may have been some gratitude and deference from recipients consistent with the gift relationship, the lack of any ongoing support or planning by manufacturers might have led workers to interpret their efforts as an empty gesture. For example, Theodore Koditschek cites one Bradford working-class leader in condemning the self-righteous benefactors who 'subscribed a sum of money and set the combers to work at the Beck in the mud and dirt by which several of them were killed, and this they called charity'.²⁸² Similar comments were made about the unsuitability of Macclesfield work schemes and the same lack of a coordinated strategy to deal with unemployment was evident until the 1890s. However, even in larger towns with permanent institutions, the demand always outweighed the available resources. In Liverpool, despite its Central Relief Society, William Rathbone stated that 'large numbers of the poor of a great town are left to themselves, without protection, without supervision, without help, without recognition from the rich'.²⁸³

All this evidence points to the fact that Macclesfield's public services institutions had common characteristics with those in other industrial towns. The larger institutions that relied on public appeals saw many silk manufacturers subscribing and participating in their management as part of a numerically dominant occupational group. The major Infirmary bequest (which was the highest nineteenth-century donation to any Macclesfield public

²⁷⁹ Shapely, 'Urban Charity', p. 52.

²⁸⁰ B. R. Law, *Fieldens of Todmorden: A Nineteenth Century Business Dynasty* (Littleborough, 1995), p. 166.

²⁸¹ Iwama, 'The Middle Class in Halifax', p. 252.

²⁸² Koditschek, *Class Formation*, pp. 401-402.

²⁸³ M. Simey, *Charity Rediscovered: A Study of Philanthropic Effort in Nineteenth-century Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1992), p. 81.

institution) and the private gifts were instances where the silk manufacturers' largesse was especially conspicuous.

Obvious motives for support of these organisations included humanitarian concern for the poor and the opportunity to establish valuable institutions. Nevertheless, there were also many more self-interested reasons that must have been contributory in encouraging manufacturers to become involved in this field. The expectations of the founders were that these services would provide solutions to many of Macclesfield's urban problems. They did make initial improvements to the lives of inhabitants, but it was only in conjunction with the government-driven programme of reforms that real progress could be made in tackling the worst effects of industrialisation. Therefore, the actions of the silk manufacturers appeared to be generally typical of the part that other industrialists played in the establishment of voluntary public services within small and medium sized industrial towns during the nineteenth century. However, in Macclesfield the main credit has to go to the non-silk manufacturer John May who was responsible for so many of the improvements in public services. Robert Brown (the *Courier* editor) emphasised this fact in 1899 saying that 'When they took a retrospective glance along the life of Mr John May they all felt at one in this idea; that Macclesfield could never repay him for his sacrifices, his many years of industrious labour and for the incalculable amount of good that he had done in that long career. No son of old Macclesfield deserved greater honour than their venerable friend Mr May.'²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, Macclesfield School of Art, Minute Book, 29 January 1900, p. 21.

CHAPTER FIVE

Public Amenities and the Influence of the Silk Manufacturers

Introduction

This chapter will examine the growth of public amenities in Macclesfield and the extent to which the silk manufacturers were able to influence their progress. The contribution from other occupational groups will also be investigated, along with the external factors that affected the development of the institutions. The apparent reasons behind the silk manufacturers' actions will be explored and the overall success of the institutions compared to the founders' original aims. These examples will then be compared to similar institutions in other industrial towns to see if the support of Macclesfield's silk manufacturers was comparable to that of businessmen elsewhere.

Within industrialising towns many plots of common land were enclosed in the eighteenth century and used for building. This process continued into the nineteenth century and was exacerbated by the closure of footpaths and allotments. The combination of reduced space and increasing population pressure meant that public houses became the main recreational venues for the working classes.¹ The middle classes saw the resulting behaviour as cause for concern, particularly in relation to law and order, and increased leisure time was believed to give greater scope for unrest.² As a result, civic leaders were keen to discourage traditional working class activities, such as cock fighting and gambling, and sought to replace these with suitably improving pastimes or 'rational recreation'.³ In this way, leisure facilities could be used as a means of influencing the behaviour of the working classes and steering them towards the ideals of self-help and moral improvement.⁴ In addition, such amenities were seen to offer the potential for the mixing of the classes, which had become infrequent with the gradual removal of the middle classes to the suburbs.⁵

The first action to address recreational problems was the creation of a Parliamentary Select Committee on Public Walks in 1833. It recommended the establishment of public walks to

¹ H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c. 1780-c. 1880* (London, 1980), p. 76.

² R. D. Storch, 'The Problems of Working-class Leisure. Some Roots of Middle-class Moral Reform in the Industrial North: 1825-1850', in A. P. Donajrodzki, *Social Control in Nineteenth Century Britain* (London, 1977), p. 139.

³ P. Bailey, "'A Mingled Mass of Perfectly Legitimate Pleasures": The Victorian Middle Class and the Problem of Leisure', *Victorian Studies*, 21, 1977, p. 25.

⁴ F. M. L. Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', *The Economic History Review*, 34, 1981, p. 200.

⁵ Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, p. 110.

encourage exercise, to improve health, to prevent trespass and to offer an alternative to public houses.⁶ The Museums Act followed in 1845 and by mid-century there were a number of museums and parks in existence. However, the majority of these charged for admission and it was not until the second half of the century that free access to such facilities became more prevalent.

In the North West, Preston was the first town council to provide a park in 1833 when it enclosed Town Moor for public use. The 1840s saw Manchester establish three municipal parks, while Liverpool and Birkenhead used associated developments to fund their projects.⁷ The common land in Macclesfield had been enclosed in 1804 and the growing population was left with fewer opportunities to escape its urban environment. In 1850, John May was approached by a group of working men to see if he would act as chairman of a committee to erect a statue of Robert Peel. He agreed to their proposal on condition that the money was put to some practical use, instead of an ornamental memorial, and the resulting West Park was opened in 1854.⁸

An organisation that provided recreational facilities for its members was the Volunteer Force, although it was formed principally as an organisation to supplement military resources in the event of a French invasion. It saw two periods of activity, between 1797 and 1805 and from 1859 onwards. The concept proved to be popular with the working classes and by the 1870s it was attracting one man in 12 to its ranks.⁹ The later version of the Macclesfield Volunteer Force was founded in 1860 and the Drill Hall was built in 1871 as a permanent base for the organisation. In addition to its military role, the Volunteers offered a number of musical, sporting and recreational activities for its members and Macclesfield Football Club was the organisation's most notable offshoot.¹⁰

Museums and art galleries were established from the eighteenth century, but were open to a restricted audience based on its ability to pay for the privilege. Concern about working-class leisure time resulted in the 1841 Parliamentary Select Committee on National Monuments and Works of Art. Its findings were that museums could be an efficient means of 'moral and intellectual improvement for the People' and that when such facilities were

⁶ H. Conway, *Public Parks* (Princes Risborough, 1996), p. 5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸ *Macclesfield Courier and Herald*, 3 December 1904, p. 2

⁹ H. Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force: A Social and Political History, 1859-1908* (London, 1975), p. 2.

¹⁰ S. Ainscough, 'Macclesfield Élites, 1832-1918', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Liverpool, 2003), p. 318

available free of charge, they proved to be extremely popular.¹¹ This report led directly to the 1845 Museums Act and its subsequent legislation, which gradually relaxed the regulations necessary for towns to establish such institutions. In 1891, there were a total of 59 museums and art galleries under municipal control, but the 1890s saw a steep rise in museum foundations and 70 were opened between 1890 and 1899.¹²

In East Cheshire, Stockport had received its museum in 1860 through a gift to the town by James Kershaw and Benjamin Smith.¹³ In Manchester, T. C. Horsfall (who had strong links with Macclesfield) was the main instigator of the Manchester Art Museum, which opened in 1884. This institution gained its initial funding through the usual subscription method but, due to funding problems, Mr Horsfall paid for the majority of the running costs himself until it was amalgamated with the University Settlement in 1901.¹⁴ In Macclesfield, Marianne Brocklehurst offered to pay for a museum in 1894, but a disagreement with the council led to the withdrawal of the proposal. She made a revised offer in 1897 and West Park Museum opened in 1898.¹⁵ These examples illustrate how Macclesfield's public amenities developed in the nineteenth century to provide a range of recreational options for the town's inhabitants.

The Silk Manufacturers and the Macclesfield Public Amenities

The silk manufacturers were involved to some extent with all these institutions, but how far was their involvement critical to the organisations' evolution? The following four examples show the level of support offered by the silk manufacturers, ranging from amenities having the least involvement through to those with the highest level of assistance.

West Park

West Park was the first attempt within Macclesfield to provide a public area for recreational use. The opening ceremony in 1854 marked the culmination of four years of concerted fundraising and was a major cause for celebration throughout the town. West

¹¹ E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museum and Gallery Education* (Leicester, 1991), p. 13.

¹² F. Kenyon, 'Municipal Museums and Art Galleries', in H. J. Laski, W. I. Jennings & W. A. Robson, *A Century of Municipal Progress, 1835-1935* (London, 1935), p. 262.

¹³ W. Astle, *History of Stockport* (Wakefield, 1971), p. 38.

¹⁴ M. Harrison, 'Art and Philanthropy: T. C. Horsfall and the Manchester Art Museum', in A. J. Kidd & K. W. Roberts, *City, Class and Culture: Studies of Social Policy and Cultural Production in Manchester* (Manchester, 1985), p. 137.

¹⁵ *M.C.H.*, 8 October 1898, Supplement.

Park drew support from all the town's inhabitants and the silk manufacturers' involvement was limited to donations and the financing of later improvements by municipal committee members.

Once the park concept had been agreed upon, the original committee members undertook a 'systematic and universal collection throughout the borough on a scale that has never before been put into practice'.¹⁶ Within three weeks of the appeal, 17,000 subscriptions had been collected and a further boost came in the form of a government grant.¹⁷ John May had gained an introductory letter from Sir James Kay Shuttleworth enabling him to meet with Lord John Russell, a meeting that yielded a £500 contribution towards the project.¹⁸ The efforts continued until the winter of 1850, when disease and hardship forced the campaign to be suspended. It was not until March 1853 that the project was revived with a public meeting, which stimulated support from wealthier citizens and £1,100 was raised at this juncture.¹⁹ The major donations were described as '£300 from Mr E. C. Egerton M.P. and other liberal amounts from the Marquess of Westminster, John Brocklehurst, Wilbraham Egerton of Tatton Park and others'.²⁰ In the meantime, the committee continued to collect subscriptions and organised social events to boost funds.²¹

The 'Town's Field', an eight acre plot in the northern area of the town, was purchased, together with an adjoining eight acres.²² The Earl of Harrington offered his principal gardener's services to assist with landscaping and there were donations of plants and trees from local people.²³ The opening ceremony attracted many people and an estimated 10,000 people attended on the first day.²⁴ The ceremony marked the official transfer of the 'Peel Park' to the Borough Council and a municipal committee was formed to manage the facility. John May undertook to pay off the outstanding debt of £1,500 and managed to achieve this goal in 1857, after further fundraising efforts. The name was later changed to West Park and it remained the sole public recreational area for the town until the opening of Victoria Park in 1894.²⁵

¹⁶ *M.C.H.*, 31 August 1850, p. 4.

¹⁷ *A Walk Through the Public Institutions of Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, 1888), p. 116.

¹⁸ *M.C.H.*, 3 December 1904, p. 2.

¹⁹ *A Walk*, p. 116.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ C. S. Davies, *A History of Macclesfield* (Manchester, 1961), p. 280.

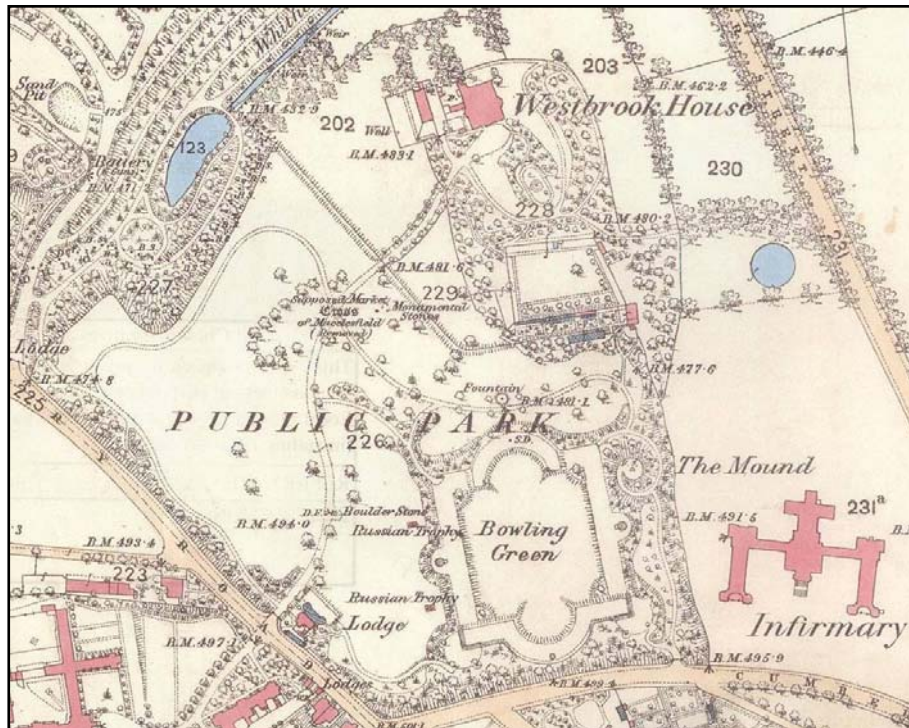
²² *A Walk*, p. 117.

²³ I. C. Laurie, *East Cheshire Parks and Gardens* (Wilmslow, 1987), p. 141.

²⁴ Macclesfield Silk Museum, *Report of the Proceedings on Occasion of the Opening of the Macclesfield Public Park on Monday October 2nd 1854* (Macclesfield, 1854), p. 12.

²⁵ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 281.

Map 5.1. The layout of West Park.
 (Extract from Ordnance Survey Map, Sheet 36/8, First Edition, 1873.)



From the available evidence, silk manufacturers appeared to have played a minimal part in the years leading up to the opening of the park. For instance, the *Macclesfield Mirror* was critical of the part that both the gentry and the local manufacturers had played in the Park's early development, stating in 1851 that they appeared to be 'less actuated by generous sympathy than the wealthier of other towns'.²⁶ Even at the opening dinner John May commented that 'not many of the manufacturers had yet subscribed to the Park'.²⁷ However, May subsequently singled out the Brocklehursts for praise over their support for the park, stating that John had given 'all that he asked for' and that the family were among those who gave 'liberal amounts' at various stages of its development.²⁸ Once West Park had moved into municipal control, the influence of the silk manufacturers increased as many of them served on the Borough Council as part of their public duties. For example, Charles Brocklehurst was chairman of the committee and made seven personal donations, such as a fountain and the repair costs for the refreshment room.²⁹ In addition, George Godwin paid for the building of the 'Godwin House' in 1873, which provided a base for bowling-green users and commemorated his mayoral year.³⁰ This showed the extent to

²⁶ *Macclesfield Mirror*, May 1851, p. 141.
²⁷ M.S.M., *Report of the Proceedings*, p. 12.
²⁸ *A Walk*, p. 116; Cheshire Record Office, D 4908/1, Macclesfield Society for Acquiring Useful Knowledge, Committee Minutes, 11 November 1861.
²⁹ C.R.O., LBM 2703/26, Macclesfield Borough Council, Parks Committee Minutes, 1876-1898.
³⁰ *M.C.H.*, 3 May 1873, p. 5.

which certain councillors were prepared to invest their own money into municipal facilities and their personal identification with the development of the town.

There were many other people involved in West Park's history. According to the commemorative booklet, the 'working classes' initiated the whole project and formed the early committee. Of this group, John Platt (the secretary) was cited as the person 'on whom the real burden has virtually fallen' and he was the only individual who was identified by name in the records.³¹ This committee was responsible for coordinating the fundraising efforts over a long period of time and had to oversee the landscaping and building work for the park, prior to the opening. The selection of John May as a figurehead proved to be fortuitous, as he was well respected throughout the town for his pioneering work in charitable and municipal institutions. Through his many contacts, May was able to solicit considerable sums of money and had the tenacity to persevere with the venture despite times of hardship for the town. He was especially successful in gaining the support of the local county families, such as the Wilbraham-Egertons and the Leghs, who appear to have readily contributed to the project.³² Similarly, Mrs Davenport at Capesthorpe Hall was able to use her friendship with Sir James Kay Shuttleworth to provide May with the opportunity to gain the government grant.³³

There were many general reasons given for the support of West Park. As early as 1840, a speech delivered to the Macclesfield Useful Knowledge Society had demonstrated that the opening of Manchester's Zoological Gardens on the day of the Queen's marriage had been a resounding success, with 70,000 visitors and 'no wanton mischief done – no property destroyed – no lions eaten up', while the 'next morning there were fewer than even the ordinary number of cases of drunkenness brought before the bench of magistrates'. This speech went on to claim that: 'If we who know how, would only provide amusements for the Lower class of people; they, who do not know how, would not have to provide for themselves; and thus, by substituting pleasures that are innocent for those that are hurtful, we might turn pleasure itself into a more powerful ally of virtue'.³⁴ These comments reflected the national preoccupation with the effects of urbanisation and the importance of introducing suitable leisure activities for the working classes. Civic pride was also a factor in the original campaign as other manufacturing towns were cited as leading the way in park development. In 1851, the Macclesfield townspeople were urged to 'let the example

³¹ M.S.M., *Report of the Proceedings*, p. 4.

³² Laurie, *East Cheshire Parks*, p. 141.

³³ *A Walk*, p. 116.

³⁴ University of Liverpool Special Collections and Archives, SPEC Y82.3.603(4), Speech delivered at the Annual Meeting of the Society of Useful Knowledge in Macclesfield, 23 September 1840, p. 6 (underlining in source).

of Manchester inflame their benevolence', drawing comparison with its acquisition of three parks and two public libraries costing nearly £50,000.³⁵ By the 1850s the popularity of such projects meant that every aspiring town sought to add these amenities to their list of municipal achievements.

Another newspaper article in 1851 described how the park project was perceived as an opportunity for classes to unite towards a common cause: 'The increased intelligence of the age has given to the several classes of society a clearer perception of their mutual difficulties and conditions; it has impressed upon each the necessities of self dependence and self elevation, without weakening the obligations of mutual help. A natural result is, that the operative classes are now found originating schemes for their true improvement of their social position and are wisely met by their richer brethren with the counsel and aid which are needful to bring these schemes to a good and successful issue.'³⁶ West Park was a prime example of this type of action as the working classes took the lead in establishing an amenity primarily for their benefit, with some help from those higher up the social scale.

The original committee believed that 'a Public Park was a great desideratum to a manufacturing population' and this echoed the expectations of speakers at the opening ceremony.³⁷ For example, Mr Tatton Egerton hoped that 'instead of frequenting the public house, the working classes would come there, and find pleasure and health'.³⁸ John May voiced the expectation that 'the working class of the community for whom and by whom the Park itself was originated will "use and not abuse" the privilege accorded them for rational and innocent employment; that they will conserve in all its integrity the boon conferred; and their hope is that the possession of such a park by the inhabitants of this town will prove to this and future generations a source of the highest physical and mental recreation'.³⁹

The particular problems faced by Macclesfield's workers were described by Joseph Wright (a silk manufacturer) who admitted that 'There were no men more in need of recreation than the inhabitants of Macclesfield, where the working men were generally confined to their workshops from six in the morning to eight at night. They would be delighted to have an opportunity to wander through the Park in search of health and recreation.'⁴⁰

³⁵ *M.M.*, May 1851, p. 141.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, June 1851, p. 156.

³⁷ *A Walk*, p. 116.

³⁸ *M.S.M.*, *Report of the Proceedings*, p. 6.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

A Local Board of Health report in 1855 also stated that the planting of flowers in the park could be useful in the 'education of taste in design' and could supplement the School of Art's teaching.⁴¹

Apart from these general themes, there is no evidence available to indicate the individual motivation behind the support of the park. The early donations and subscriptions were largely anonymous (with the exception of the larger donations cited on page 211) and the majority of the funds given in small denominations. Personal recognition was probably a factor in the donations given by local worthies and the municipal committee may have seen their personal gifts as a part of their public duty, particularly when there were insufficient funds available to carry out essential improvements.

The main problems faced by the original committee were lack of support from certain sectors of the community, times of hardship affecting progress and the burden of outstanding debt. Once these initial difficulties had been overcome, the municipal committee was left to manage the facility within its rateable income. Victorian parks were run with a strict set of rules designed to prevent any disorder or inappropriate behaviour. For example, religious or political meetings were forbidden and no games were permitted on Sundays.⁴² Problems for the municipal committee included the dismissal of an intemperate park keeper and a dispute over the sale of alcohol at a fête.⁴³ The only example of negative publicity was a letter from the headmaster of Christ Church Schools, who lamented the lack of a designated football or cricket ground. He cited Samuel Greg's gift of a cricket pitch to Bollington and compared this to the cricket ban in West Park from 1869.⁴⁴ This deficiency was addressed by the rental of additional grounds, but a permanent base was never forthcoming.

Nevertheless, West Park did offer a range of new facilities including landscaped walks, a refreshment room, a bowling green, a gymnasium and open space for sports and games.⁴⁵ It received donations of objects, including two Russian cannons and the former market cross, which were deposited at strategic places to provide historical interest. In addition to the individual usage of the park, there were many organisations that held galas and fêtes in its environs, such as the Ancient Order of Foresters and the Parks Committee themselves.

⁴¹ M.S.M., PH 28, *Third Report of the Local Board of Health* (Macclesfield, 1855) p. 11.

⁴² T. Wyborn, 'Parks for the People: The Development of Public Parks in Victorian Manchester', *Manchester Region History Review*, 9, 1995, p. 11.

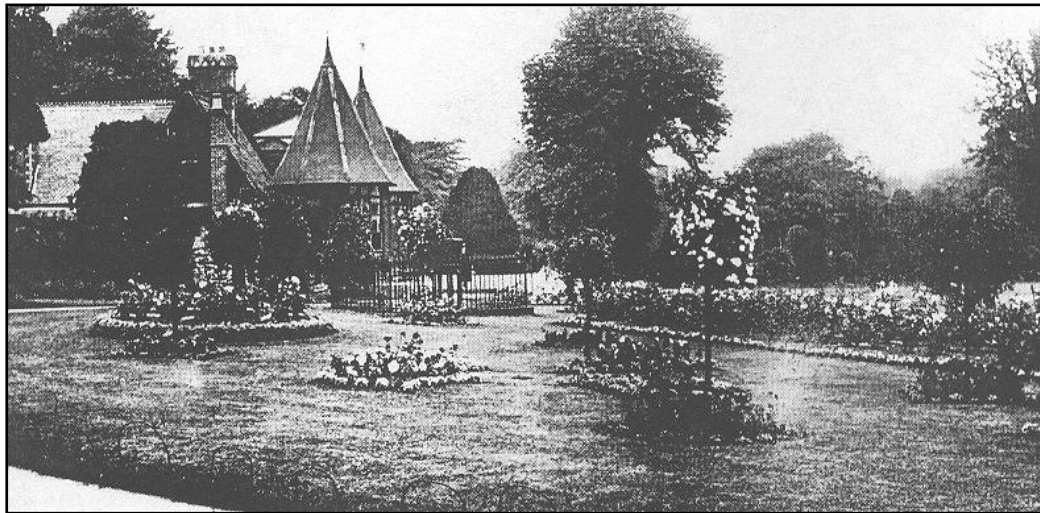
⁴³ C.R.O., LBM 2703/26, M.B.C., P.C.M., 2 September 1875; 18 September 1879.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 22 March 1889, p. 6.

⁴⁵ M.S.M., *Report of the Proceedings*, p. 2.

Highlights of the celebrations included sports competitions and large firework displays.⁴⁶ External institutions, such as the Stoke Friendly Society, were also allowed to use the park for an agreed fee.⁴⁷ The bowling-green was open to subscribers and music was provided throughout the summer months by the town's bands.⁴⁸ The park also provided a training area for organisations like the Volunteers and the Corporation Fire Brigade.⁴⁹

Figure 5.1. View of West Park.
(Macclesfield Museums Trust)



From the outset, West Park appeared to be extremely popular. In 1855, the visitor numbers were quoted as being an 'average of 19,000 a week' and, despite this heavy usage, the Local Board of Health remarked on 'how carefully the flowers and plants have been regarded and preserved'.⁵⁰ In 1855 it was estimated that in the year following the opening of the park, the incidence of drunkenness and disorderly conduct had 'decreased in the borough 23 per cent', gambling had declined by 58 per cent and 'summary charges' had been reduced by 26 per cent, demonstrating a positive effect on law and order.⁵¹ By the twentieth century, the park was described as 'a proud achievement, a great acquisition, and a noble gift to the town'.⁵² It also forged links with many local organisations and provided maintenance and building work for the unemployed during the 1870s.⁵³ These examples emphasise the fact that West Park was the first major nineteenth-century amenity to be established in Macclesfield and became a valuable resource for the townspeople.

⁴⁶ C.R.O., LBM 2703/26, M.B.C., P.C.M., 23 September 1867.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 28 July 1870; 25 July 1871.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 16 June 1884.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 9 March 1876.

⁵⁰ M.S.M., PH 28, *Third Report of the Local Board of Health*, p. 11.

⁵¹ C.R.O., D 5299, J. O. Nicholson, 'Macclesfield Present and Future' (Prize Essay for the Useful Knowledge Society, 1866), p. 96.

⁵² *M.C.H.*, 3 December 1904, p. 2.

⁵³ C.R.O., LBM 2703/26, M.B.C., P.C.M., 2 August 1873.

As the original movement to establish a park in Macclesfield was described as predominantly 'working class', the role of the silk manufacturers in its early history appears to have been restricted to occasional donations, primarily from the Brocklehurst family. Their subsequent involvement on the municipal committee did yield some more support, but West Park was the result of a collective fundraising effort by all the town's inhabitants (especially the working-class committee and John May) in which the silk manufacturers played a comparatively minor role.

The Volunteer Force

The Volunteer movement was mobilised whenever a French invasion was likely and this precaution meant that further troops would be available should large-scale military action become necessary. However, the organisation saw a definite shift towards a more recreational function in the latter half of the nineteenth century and it provided further facilities for its members. The silk manufacturers were well represented within the movement and were able to influence the organisation's development, together with a variety of other members.

In 1797, Mr Dundas (Secretary of State for War) invited citizens to form volunteer corps for their own protection and two Macclesfield troops were formed at this stage.⁵⁴ Once the French threat had receded sufficiently, these were disbanded in 1805. The 1860 version was a more permanent affair and it soon became obvious that the organisation would need a base in which members could meet and train. The Drill Hall in Bridge Street was opened in 1871 and consisted of a main hall, reading rooms, officers' and sergeants' rooms, storage and living quarters for the instructor.⁵⁵

There is little evidence available on the working-class participants in the movement, but biographical details of more prominent figures did include membership information. Some of the early members were silk manufacturers, such as John Daintry, Thomas Critchley and George Pearson. Jasper Hulley (also a silk manufacturer) led one of the detachments and Davies Davenport from Capesthorne the other.⁵⁶ A general subscription list was raised at this time and silk manufacturers were prominent contributors, with members of the Daintry, Ryle, Critchley, Pearson and Brocklehurst families heading the list.⁵⁷ In the later version, two of the other leading members were the colonels William Bromley Davenport

⁵⁴ British Library Reading Rooms, H. S. Claye, *Notes on the Establishment of Volunteers in Macclesfield in 1797; and Other Particulars of the Early Volunteer Movement* (Macclesfield, 1894), pp. 5-6.

⁵⁵ *Kelly's Directory of Cheshire, 1896* (London, 1896), p. 349.

⁵⁶ B.L.R.R., Claye, *Notes on the Establishment of Volunteers*, p. 6.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

and William Stancliffe (a brewer) who also gained the Victoria Decoration for his contribution to the organisation.⁵⁸

Three people were involved with the purchase of land for the Drill Hall and they were the silk manufacturer Thomas Unett Brocklehurst, Albert Greg from Bollington and Thomas



Figure 5.2. The Drill Hall, with T. U. Brocklehurst's clock tower.

Antrobus from Eaton Hall.⁵⁹ They were all large contributors to the building fund of the Drill Hall and Thomas Unett also paid for the furnishing costs and the celebratory opening banquet.⁶⁰ Mr Brocklehurst was one of the first to join the 1860 version of the Volunteers as a captain and rose to become a lieutenant colonel, before retirement in 1886. He also donated the money to add a clock tower to the Drill Hall in 1872, gave £5 annually towards the expenses of sending a Macclesfield representative to the rifle shooting competition at Wimbledon and was responsible for covering the costs of the instruments, music and other expenses for the drum and fife band. Mr Brocklehurst's obituary summarised his contributions, stating that 'Everything for the

welfare of the Macclesfield corps in particular, and the Battalion in general, had his most hearty support and co-operation.'⁶¹

Although the purpose of the Volunteers was military in nature, there were a number of additional benefits that could have encouraged middle-class participation in Macclesfield. It was a cause that conferred respectability and patriotism on its members, while providing the opportunity for classes to mix in a controlled environment.⁶² There were perceived political benefits, as the organisation was seen as a way of moderating political activists and of inducing loyalty to the government. The Volunteer movement embodied the concept of self-help for its members, because it required sustained commitment in order to gain access to the other benefits of the organisation. Working-class members were believed to be more obedient, receptive to discipline, were physically fit, had improved standards of

⁵⁸ *M.C.H.*, 27 October 1917, p. 5.

⁵⁹ Ainscough, 'Macclesfield Élites', p. 323.

⁶⁰ *M.C.H.*, 21 August 1886, p. 5.

⁶¹ *Kelly's Directory of Cheshire, 1896*, p. 349; *M.C.H.*, 21 August 1886, p. 5.

⁶² Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force*, p. 155.

hygiene and were less likely to pursue traditional working-class recreations, such as drinking and gambling.⁶³ These were all desirable traits for factory workers and may have encouraged textile magnates to support the movement. For example, many businessmen joined the Volunteers themselves and then encouraged their workers to participate, such as Alexander Henry in Manchester who provided equipment for 60 of his workers.⁶⁴ T. U. Brocklehurst was a partner in the largest silk manufacturing firm in Macclesfield and his participation was perhaps a way of encouraging his men to become involved in the movement for the positive benefits it conferred on both employer and employee.

In the 1870s, the Volunteer Force had to compete with other organisations providing recreational facilities and it became obvious that patriotism alone would not attract men in sufficient numbers. As a result, the organisation had to widen its aims to include additional activities such as football, cricket, chess, skittles and dominoes.⁶⁵ For instance, J. W. H. Thorp (a silk manufacturer) founded Macclesfield Football Club as the Volunteer Force team, before it went on to become an independent organisation.⁶⁶ Many brass bands came into existence in the 1870s and their popularity was recognised by the Volunteers and added to their repertoire of skills. This combination of military training and musical provision meant that the Volunteers were utilised to add dignity to many civic occasions.⁶⁷ The Drill Hall was used for a range of fundraising and social activities by the Volunteers themselves, and many other organisations in the town. For example, St John's Church held a bazaar there and Snape's Theatre used it to stage plays in direct competition with the Theatre Royal.⁶⁸ The Patriotic Association was another user and aimed to provide military drill for boys aged between 14 and 17 years. This organisation was instigated in 1900 by T. C. Horsfall and Henry Birchenough (a silk manufacturer) to act as a feeder into the Volunteer Force.⁶⁹

The Volunteer movement was an organisation that appealed to a wide cross section of the male community and its Drill Hall provided another amenity for Macclesfield that was used for a variety of purposes. It appears that silk manufacturers were involved at all stages of the organisation's development, along with the landed gentry and those from other occupations. One of the most prominent people involved in the nineteenth century was Thomas Unett Brocklehurst, whose enthusiasm manifested itself in both participatory

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁶⁵ Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, p. 182.

⁶⁶ Ainscough, 'Macclesfield Élites', p. 318.

⁶⁷ Cunningham, *The Volunteer Force*, p. 71.

⁶⁸ C.R.O., P 192/4/2, St John's Church, Macclesfield, Handbook for Bazaar, 1888, p. 5; Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 369.

⁶⁹ *M.C.H.*, 2 June 1900, Supplement.

terms and a considerable amount of funding for the Drill Hall and additional equipment. Therefore, there is strong evidence to show that silk manufacturers did play an important role in this organisation, in conjunction with other individuals.

Victoria Park

Victoria Park was a gift from Francis Dicken Brocklehurst, who donated the land and paid for its transformation into a public park. The opening ceremony in 1894 was accompanied by major celebrations and the new facility catered for people on the eastern side of the town. This was an outright gift from the silk manufacturing Brocklehurst family, although the donor pursued a career in the family's bank, which had been amalgamated with the Manchester and Liverpool District Bank in 1891.⁷⁰

The Fence House, which was bought by Thomas Brocklehurst in 1869, became the site of Victoria Park. The mansion was constructed on the site of earlier buildings, possibly dating back to medieval times, when a fence was built around part of Macclesfield Forest as a deer enclosure.⁷¹ On the death of Thomas, the estate was owned consecutively by three of his sons, Charles, Thomas Unett and then Francis Dicken Brocklehurst.⁷² In February 1893, the Council received a letter from F. D. Brocklehurst intimating that he would like to present this site in the form of a public park and recreation ground to the Borough. The result was a unanimous vote to accept the offer and to 'accord to him their most cordial thanks for his magnificent gift to the town'.⁷³ An area of 13 acres was allotted to the park and some of the materials from the demolished Fence House (which appeared to have been surplus to the family's requirements) were incorporated into the new buildings. The total cost of the land and its conversion into a recreational facility amounted to £14,000. Francis was described as having 'spared no expense in making the Park and Recreation Ground as complete as possible in every direction' and maintained his close interest in subsequent years.⁷⁴ The remainder of the land was sold for building, which would have helped to defray some of the costs involved.

Under the superintendence of Mr Brocklehurst's agent, work on the park commenced in April 1893 and the opening ceremony took place on 14 May 1894. The celebrations were marked by a general holiday in most workplaces and there was a procession, band music, bellringing, a firework display and lavish decorations around the Hurdsfield area. The

⁷⁰ L. Little, *The Parks in Macclesfield*, (Macclesfield, 1994). p. 8

⁷¹ C.R.O., D 4909/5, Papers of Walter Smith, 15 June 1928.

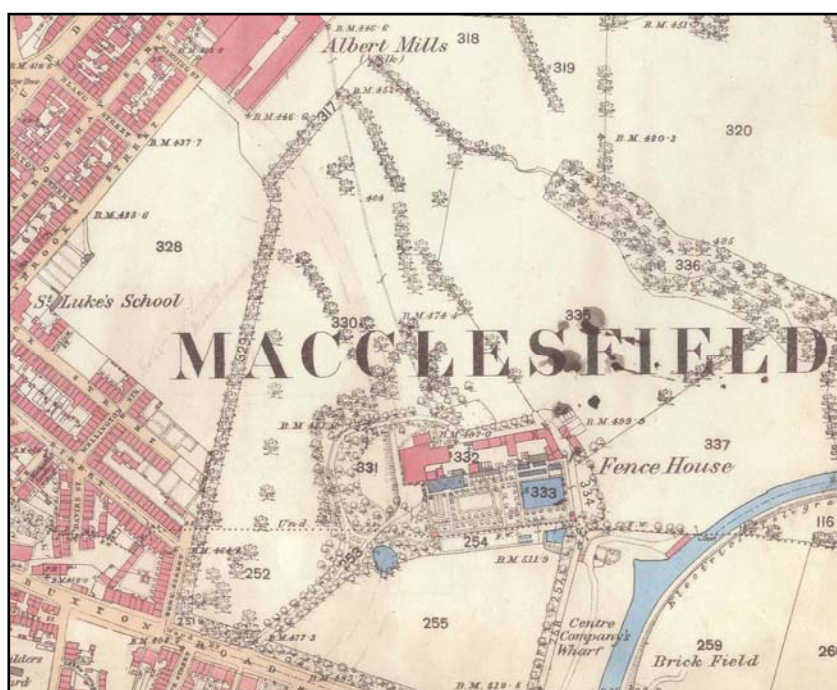
⁷² J. Earles, *Streets and Houses of Old Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, 1915), p. 168.

⁷³ C.R.O., LBM 2703/26, M.B.C., P.C.M., 15 February 1893.

⁷⁴ M.S.M., *Record of the Proceedings at the Opening of the New Victoria Park, Monday, May 14, 1894* (Macclesfield, 1894), p. 7.

success of the day and the behaviour of the crowds was commended by the mayor who thanked the attendees ‘for their loyal support in such cheering numbers, their orderly conduct throughout the day, the liberal and beautiful decorations everywhere displayed, and for their having so heartily responded to his invitation to mark the opening of Mr Brocklehurst’s new Park so nobly given, as a pleasant day long to be remembered’.⁷⁵ This marked the official transfer of the park into municipal control and thereafter it was maintained from the income of the Parks Committee.

Map 5.2. The Fence House, the site for Victoria Park.
(Extract from Ordnance Survey Map, Sheet 36/8, First Edition, 1873.)



F. D. Brocklehurst was wholly responsible for Victoria Park as he provided the necessary land and money. This followed the example of other manufacturers, such as the Messrs Sykes (proprietors of bleaching works) in Stockport who opened Edgeley Park in 1889 and gave the adjoining St Thomas’ Recreation Ground in 1892.⁷⁶ There appear to have been many reasons behind Mr Brocklehurst’s decision to donate the park. His original letter emphasised that Hurdsfield and the Common were ‘thickly covered with dwellings, and as it appears to me, very deficient in open spaces for health giving recreation’.⁷⁷ Alderman Thorp suggested that in the absence of any motive in the initial letter, ‘the memory of the benefactions of other members of his family’ might have ‘led him to take this step’.⁷⁸ On a

⁷⁵ C.R.O., LBM 2703/62/1, M.B.C., Newscuttings, May 1894.

⁷⁶ Astle, *History of Stockport*, p. 45.

⁷⁷ C.R.O., D 5299, Commemorative Album on the Opening of Victoria Park, Macclesfield, Letter to Mayor, 11 February 1893.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 18 February 1893.

practical level, once Thomas Unett had moved to Henbury Hall in 1872, the Fence House was no longer needed for the family. However, Francis appeared to have retained affection for his childhood home and purchased the property from his brother. As a site with historical connections to the town, it was apt that it should be given as an amenity and this factor was mentioned at the opening ceremony.⁷⁹ Another possible reason was that Francis had no children and this could have influenced his decision to donate the land for public use.

The Brocklehurst factories dominated Hurdsfield and the majority of the residents were employees of the family firm. Although Francis was not directly involved in silk manufacture, he could still have retained some connections to the silk firm and this act may have been seen as a way of improving facilities for the company's employees and to encourage a sense of gratitude towards the family. Similarly, it may have been a way of rewarding the Macclesfield people who had been instrumental in amassing the family fortune.

Discounting the silk connections, Mr Brocklehurst's actions could have been a genuine desire to give something back to his native town. Francis's early views on Macclesfield seem to have been overly negative, as he stated in a letter sent home during his travels that 'I have a decided aversion to settle anywhere in or near the town of Macclesfield.'⁸⁰ Similarly, at the park's opening ceremony he stated that he had 'long felt that this side of the town, covered as it is mainly with the dwellings of those who labour in the surrounding factories, was singularly deficient in anything that could pleasantly relieve the mind from the somewhat depressing dullness and monotony of its surroundings'. He continued by saying that he had the power to rectify this defect 'in some measure' and hoped that it would occupy 'a central position in the aforesaid district' providing 'a lasting source of pleasure, both active and restful to the inhabitants of this part of the town'.⁸¹ John May, who had been so influential in the establishment of West Park, echoed these sentiments, stating that it 'will add very materially to the beauty of the neighbourhood and the health of its inhabitants'.⁸²

Other general benefits associated with park development were much in evidence at the same event. For example, the mayor felt that this 'Park will supply a want long felt, by providing a recreation ground for the young and a quiet pleasure resort for the older

⁷⁹ M.S.M., *Record of the Proceedings*, p. 15.

⁸⁰ C.R.O., D 2455/7, Letters of F. D. Brocklehurst of Hare Hill, Macclesfield, 1858-1861, p. 54.

⁸¹ M.S.M., *Record of the Proceedings*, p. 27.

⁸² C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, Macclesfield School of Art, Minute Book, 27 February 1893, p. 5.

portion of our people...which will be enjoyed and appreciated by the whole of our inhabitants. Thus contributing to a healthy state both of body and mind, and will prove an untold blessing to generations to come.'⁸³ J. O. Nicholson, representing the county magistrates, hoped that this was 'something which would elevate and improve the minds of the people and would make their magisterial duties lighter'.⁸⁴ Likewise, the nonconformist ministers in the town stated that 'we are conscious of the immense amount of good to be derived from such beautiful recreation grounds and Park and place them among the first means used for elevating, inspiring and strengthening the moral and spiritual life of the rising generation'.⁸⁵

The banners lining the streets of Hurdsfield at the opening of the park displayed messages such as 'The poor are grateful to the donor of the Park' and 'Long live Mr F. D. Brocklehurst' (Figure 5.3 overleaf shows an example of these decorations).⁸⁶ Many of the speakers at the opening ceremony emphasised that the Brocklehurst family reputation would be enhanced by the gift. For example, the Mayor stated that 'Macclesfield has long held you and your family in the profoundest esteem and this feeling will be strengthened and perpetuated by your present thoughtful munificence'.⁸⁷ In 1898, the Parks Committee arranged for a permanent monument to be placed in Victoria Park to mark Mr Brocklehurst's gift to the town.⁸⁸ This carries the inscription 'Macclesfield men erected this pillar in 1898 to the memory of Francis D. Brocklehurst, on the site of his ancestral home, to commemorate his many acts of kindness and gifts to the town.'⁸⁹ The park also became the site of a sundial, erected in 1901 as a memorial to Charles Brocklehurst 'to perpetuate the memory of his untiring labours for the welfare of his fellow townsmen'.⁹⁰

The facilities offered by Victoria Park were a mixture of items adapted from the Fence House and new features created specially for the purpose. In addition to the lodges at the Daybrook Street and Buxton Road entrances, the other construction to use material from the Fence House was the octagonal bandstand. This was described as 'both ornamental and substantial' and was accompanied by seats so that visitors could listen to music in comfort.⁹¹ Items such as a fountain remained from the old house and these were complemented by a variety of plants and a rockery brought from Hare Hill, Mr

⁸³ M.S.M., *Record of the Proceedings*, pp. 28-29.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁸⁶ Davies, *A History of Macclesfield*, p. 283.

⁸⁷ M.S.M., *Record of the Proceedings*, p. 30.

⁸⁸ C.R.O., LBM 2703/26, M.B.C., P.C.M., 8 September 1898.

⁸⁹ Earles, *Streets and Houses*, p. 168.

⁹⁰ Laurie, *East Cheshire Parks*, p. 144.

⁹¹ M.S.M., *Record of the Proceedings*, p. 10.

Brocklehurst's residence.⁹² The new features included a boys' playground containing swings, a trapeze and parallel bars and it was felt that with this facility 'nothing is wanted to amuse and at the same time develop the physical faculties of our youth'.⁹³ For the girls, there was a separate playground with swings and seesaws.⁹⁴ A series of terraces were created and the lower area was used for ball games. In order to provide access to the park, a completely new road had to be constructed at Francis's expense and Fence Avenue was described as 'one of the finest roads in the borough'.⁹⁵

Figure 5.3. Banner erected to celebrate the opening of Victoria Park.
(Macclesfield Museums Trust)



Victoria Park appears to have been used predominantly by individuals and there is little evidence of the major events that characterised much of West Park's history. For example, Hurdsfield Horticultural Society approached the committee in 1895 for permission to hold its annual show in Victoria Park, but this was refused.⁹⁶ The main exception was the Diamond Jubilee celebrations that featured the planting of an oak sapling and the erection of three triumphal arches at the entrances.⁹⁷ This suggests that it fulfilled a slightly different role from its sister park in Macclesfield. The only negative evidence is one newspaper letter in which an anonymous inhabitant wrote that the swings were 'used very largely, not by children, as the kind-hearted donor intended...but by rough lads and young men, whose rude conduct and bad language at times is not what children should see or

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹⁶ C.R.O., LBM 2703/26, M.B.C., P.C.M., 14 May 1895.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 10 June 1897.

hear'. The author also indicated that accidents had occurred on this equipment in the weeks following the opening.⁹⁸

Figure 5.4. View of Victoria Park (with the bandstand in the background).
(Macclesfield Museums Trust)



Victoria Park proved to be an asset to Macclesfield in a number of ways. In the early stages of construction, the park provided employment for a large number of people and the Daybrook Street School benefited as 'a good piece of ground has been added to the playground'.⁹⁹ With the opening of the park, the amount of recreational land in the town virtually doubled, bringing the total public space of the two parks to 29 acres. The additional facilities that the 'beautiful park' provided in an area dominated by factories and housing was particularly welcome.¹⁰⁰ Likewise, from the donor's point of view, Victoria Park was described as having been 'the means of virtually transforming Hurdsfield'.¹⁰¹

The influence of the silk manufacturers on Victoria Park seems to have been slight at first appearance as the donor was a banker. However, the fact that Francis was the son of one of the founding partners of Messrs J. & T. Brocklehurst would mean that his inherited money would have been derived predominantly from silk manufacture. Therefore, Victoria Park was an example of a public park, given by a member of the leading silk manufacturing family in the town, although the benefactor did not participate directly in the silk industry.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, D 5299, Commemorative Album, Newscutting, Letter to Editor, May 1894.

⁹⁹ M.S.M., *Record of the Proceedings*, pp. 6, 9.

¹⁰⁰ *M.C.H.*, 1 June 1901, p. 3.

¹⁰¹ Little, *The Parks in Macclesfield*, p. 8.

West Park Museum

West Park Museum was opened in 1898 and was another gift from the Brocklehurst family, this time from Marianne and Peter Pownall. It took over the mantle of the School of Art's museum and was housed in purpose-built accommodation in West Park. Neither of the donors could be described as silk manufacturers, but they were the children of John Brocklehurst and so would have benefited from the proceeds of silk manufacture.

The School of Art's museum contained loans from the South Kensington and Indian Museums, students' work, textile fabrics, paintings, and 'other interesting articles from lovers of art'.¹⁰² In 1888, Abraham Hooley offered a £50 subscription towards a dedicated museum for the town if 19 other subscribers could be found to pay a similar amount. The school's committee stated 'how fully they recognise the need of a public museum in the town', but felt that it was not a suitable time to launch a fundraising campaign due to the prevailing trade conditions.¹⁰³

In February 1894, the Parks Committee received an offer from Marianne Brocklehurst to 'build, furnish and endow a Public Museum', which was projected to cost £500 for the building and a further £100 per year in running costs. The initial reaction of the committee was to accept the offer and 'to afford Miss Brocklehurst every facility in carrying out her plan'.¹⁰⁴ Her plans were passed in May 1894, but the Borough Surveyor was asked to draw up an alternative design incorporating some of the committee's suggestions. The amended version was forwarded to the donor and, in the meantime, a letter to the *Courier* signed by 'Town Councillor' heavily criticised the original plans in favour of the rival ones. The fact that the original plans had been passed by the Parks Committee, only for them to produce an alternative version, suggests a degree of indecision. The final straw was the letter to the local paper which severely criticised Miss Brocklehurst's plans and led to her decision that she 'could not for a moment think of asking the Committee' to adopt her plans.¹⁰⁵ She then withdrew her offer 'with deep regret', despite a petition of support signed by 5,000 people.¹⁰⁶ The mayor tried to appease the donor by stating that 'every member of the Town Council to whom I have spoken repudiates the authorship of the letter' but Marianne refused to change her mind until a decent period of time had elapsed.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² *A Walk*, p. 75.

¹⁰³ C.R.O., SL 262/1/1, M.S.A., M.B., 8 August 1888.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, LBM 2703/26, M.B.C., P.C.M., 8 June 1894.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Little, *The Parks in Macclesfield*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

The matter was allowed to rest until July 1897, when a revised proposal was received. It was agreed that Marianne would pay the majority of the costs to erect and furnish the museum and that Peter would fund the remaining building costs, undertake to pay the expenses for the first five years and provide an endowment.¹⁰⁸ The original plans were sent to an impartial advisor to make suitable improvements and both parties were satisfied with the outcome. A dedicated committee was formed, including Marianne and Francis Brocklehurst, and work commenced on the project. The classical design was based on the South Gallery of the Whitworth Gallery in Manchester and it was sited near the Cumberland Road entrance to West Park. It consisted of one large room, a vestibule and a curator's office.¹⁰⁹ The formal opening took place in October 1898 and the celebrations were declared an 'entire success', with the town taking on a 'very gay and festive appearance' for the occasion.¹¹⁰ Sadly, Marianne Brocklehurst never saw the finished museum, as she was unable to attend the opening ceremony and died shortly afterwards.

Figure 5.5. West Park Museum, designed by Mr Purdon Clarke from South Kensington Museum, carries the initials of the donors and a depiction of Queen Victoria above its entrance.



The main protagonists in the museum's foundation were all members of the Brocklehurst family. Marianne was responsible for the idea at the outset, was included on the original committee and donated the majority of the money. P. P. Brocklehurst served on the committee, paid for some of the initial costs, the first five years' upkeep and the enlargement of the curator's room in 1901.¹¹¹ F. D. Brocklehurst attended the opening

¹⁰⁸ C.R.O., LBM 2703/23, M.B.C., Museum Committee Minutes, 7 July 1897.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 4 October 1898.

¹¹⁰ *M.C.H.*, 8 October 1898, Supplement.

¹¹¹ C.R.O., LBM 2703/23, M.B.C., Museum Committee Minutes, 16 August 1901.

ceremony on behalf of his cousins, was committee chairman and donated many items. Of the three Brocklehursts who were involved in the project, none could strictly be described as a silk manufacturer. P. P. Brocklehurst was a solicitor, F. D. Brocklehurst was a banker and Marianne Brocklehurst had no official occupation. However, all three were direct descendants of the founding partners of J. & T. Brocklehurst and a large proportion of their money would have been inherited directly from that source, even if they did not retain links with the family business.

The dual reasons given by the benefactors were to found a museum 'with a view of affording educational advantages and giving inclusive recreation to the people of Macclesfield'.¹¹² This concurs with the nineteenth-century view of museums as a means of 'rational recreation' with a strong educational influence. One of the potential benefits of such an institution for the town was that it could act as a civilising influence and lead to a reduction in crime or public disorder. By giving inhabitants another facility to occupy their leisure time, they were less likely to turn to pursuits such as gambling or drinking and the educational angle might encourage people to become interested in further study. The institution could also have been perceived as neutral territory where people of all classes could mix, in contrast to the restricted access of many earlier museums and galleries.¹¹³

The museum was to be furnished with a collection of 'Works of Art, Geological specimens, Egyptian and other Oriental curios' with 'frequent changes in the Exhibits, both of pictures, Works of Art, and other things'.¹¹⁴ This was in line with the nineteenth-century beliefs that collections of historical objects, artistic works and items from the natural world would give people the chance to learn more about their own environment and the outside world.¹¹⁵ The committee set up an agreement with the South Kensington Museum to receive loan items to complement the items donated by local benefactors.¹¹⁶ The gifts included eight cases of silk moths from Sir Thomas Wardle of Leek, and a collection of Egyptian books given by Revd Joseph Freeston.¹¹⁷ Marianne's extensive Egyptian collection was later bequeathed to the museum by her niece and in the 1940s the institution was described as having 'a quantity of silk and textile exhibits...a good permanent collection of pictures...enriched from time to time by loans of porcelain, silver and pictures'.¹¹⁸ Samuel Moss, a former School of Art student, was the first curator and he

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 4 October 1898.

¹¹³ Hooper-Greenhill, *Museum and Gallery Education*, p. 13.

¹¹⁴ C.R.O., LBM 2703/23, M.B.C., Museum Committee Minutes, 4 October 1898.

¹¹⁵ Hooper-Greenhill, *Museum and Gallery Education*, p. 9.

¹¹⁶ *M.C.H.*, 8 October 1898, Supplement.

¹¹⁷ C.R.O., LBM 2703/23, M.B.C., Museum Committee Minutes, 20 November 1899; 15 May 1900.

¹¹⁸ F. M. Bonnaud, *Guide to the Brocklehurst Museum and Art Gallery* (Macclesfield, 1949), p. 3.

was responsible for giving explanations to ‘a few interested persons who might like to hear him’, rather than to large groups in a lecture room environment.¹¹⁹ This illustrates that the donors had intended that West Park Museum should be a small-scale institution with personal contact at its core.

The newspaper report of the opening ceremony stated that ‘The last few years have been times of rapid progress in Macclesfield with respect to the erection and establishment of educational institutions of various kinds and the inauguration of still another...a list of institutions of which any town of the size of Macclesfield might well feel proud.’¹²⁰ This emphasised Macclesfield’s reputation as a progressive town with a wealth of facilities for visitors and inhabitants. The mayor described Marianne Brocklehurst’s motive for providing the institution as being ‘desirous in every way of promoting the education, refinement and elevation of the town which all of them loved’.¹²¹ The museum also complemented the work of the School of Art by raising awareness of art and design in the town, with potential benefits for the silk industry. The gift raised the profile of the Brocklehurst family by providing another public amenity for the town and the opening ceremony speeches referred to their many gifts which ‘would redound to their honour and credit and which would benefit the town for all succeeding generations’.¹²²

The other main people involved with the museum were members of the Borough Council on the Parks and Museum Committees. They worked closely with the Brocklehursts to ensure that the museum was built and operated according to their wishes. There were silk manufacturers evident on both committees, such as J. O. Nicholson and Charles Crew, but there was a wide mixture of occupations present by the 1890s. There is little evidence to suggest that these representatives took any specific interest in this institution beyond their standard municipal duties.

The only major problem to face the museum at the early stage of its development was the dispute that led to the withdrawal of Marianne Brocklehurst’s offer in 1894. The severity of her reaction to the committee’s decisions suggests that the donor felt strongly that it was at fault. In view of her subsequent decline in health, there was only a small window of opportunity for the project to be realised and it was perhaps fortunate that she reconsidered her decision at that stage.

¹¹⁹ C.R.O., LBM 2703/23, M.B.C., Museum Committee Minutes, 21 March 1899; LBM 2703/26, M.B.C., P.C.M., 22 February 1894.

¹²⁰ *M.C.H.*, 8 October 1898, Supplement.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 10 July 1897, p. 3.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 8 October 1898, Supplement.

At the opening ceremony, it was hoped that the museum would be ‘prized both as a glory and a benefit to the town and people of Macclesfield’. The visitor numbers on the first day reached 15,000 people, which indicated the level of support for the new institution and appeared to justify the hopes of the benefactors.¹²³ The museum was seen as an added attraction for West Park and it was described as being ‘happily enhanced’ by the ‘valuable’ new institution.¹²⁴ There is evidence that schools in the town were able to utilise the museum’s facilities to supplement their teaching and the institution fostered links with particular schools, such as Lord Street School. Therefore, the museum appears to have filled a niche in Macclesfield as an amenity with both educational and recreational benefits for inhabitants.

There was little direct influence on the part of the silk manufacturers in the development of West Park Museum. However, the fact that the main donors were members of the Brocklehurst silk manufacturing dynasty means that much of the money which was used to fund the institution is likely to have been derived from the silk industry. Without their contributions and drive, the museum was unlikely to have become a reality in the nineteenth century and thus it owes its existence entirely to the philanthropy of the Brocklehurst family.

Discussion

The previous case studies show the commitment of the silk manufacturers to the various amenities, but were there any overall patterns evident in their support? As Victoria Park and the museum were both private donations, the opportunity for individuals to support multiple public amenities was very limited. The only four people to do so were John Brocklehurst and Thomas Allen (who both subscribed to West Park and the Volunteers), Thomas Unett Brocklehurst (who was heavily involved in the Volunteers and gave donations to West Park) and F. D. Brocklehurst (who donated Victoria Park and was museum chairman). From the sparse information available on West Park’s subscribers, it appears that four members of the Brocklehurst family contributed to this appeal and four also supported the Volunteers. However, the family’s largest contributions were Victoria Park and West Park Museum, which represented a significant private outlay for the donors.

¹²³ *Ibid.*

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 3 December 1904, p. 2.

Mrs W. C. Brocklehurst continued the tradition of large family donations for public amenities in the twentieth century. She gave £10,000 in 1908 for the building of the Liberal Club and Brocklehurst Memorial Hall in Queen Victoria Street, which increased the recreational facilities for local Liberals and other organisations.¹²⁵ A later development in Macclesfield's park provision was the donation of the 45-acre South Park by William Frost (the silk manufacturer) in 1922.¹²⁶ As a result, there was a strong precedent for outright gifts of public amenities from Macclesfield silk manufacturing families in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, contrasting with the town-wide involvement which characterised the earlier projects.

Having investigated the silk manufacturers' support, how important were people from other occupational groups in the history of these amenities? The 'working classes' were described as being the initiators of West Park and it was their upward pressure, together with John May's organisational capabilities, that stimulated support from wealthier inhabitants. Their sustained enthusiasm for the project, despite many economic difficulties, makes their contribution particularly valuable. They also made up a proportion of the participants in the Volunteer movement, but any contributions they made towards the organisation are not likely to have featured in the few available records. This strong working-class support for West Park contrasted with the other Macclesfield amenities that were led and financed primarily by the middle classes. This factor, and its subsequent heavy usage, suggest that West Park was an institution that was of real benefit to working people in contrast to some of the other middle-class initiatives that attracted little working-class participation.

John May, a solicitor, was the obvious leader in the campaign for West Park and this involvement tied in with his particular interest in sanitary improvements for the town. He was largely responsible for overseeing the park's four-year fundraising campaign and in gaining the government grant. He then successfully cleared the outstanding debt, in spite of his key involvement in the concurrent Baths project. His action repaid the faith of the committee who acknowledged that his role had required 'able direction, unwearied application and undeviating constancy'.¹²⁷

There is no indication as to whether any other professionals or businessmen were involved in the campaign for West Park, due to the anonymity of most of the contributors.

¹²⁵ *Kelly's Directory of Cheshire, 1923* (London, 1923), p. 455.

¹²⁶ Laurie, *East Cheshire Parks*, p. 145.

¹²⁷ *A Walk*, p. 117.

Nevertheless, there were a few visible Volunteer members from this group, such as the brewer William Stancliffe, which suggests that they did have some influence on this organisation. Of the Brocklehurst gifts, Francis (a banker) gave Victoria Park and the museum involved Marianne, Francis and Peter (a solicitor). However, as they were all members of the Brocklehurst silk manufacturing family, it is hard to discount their silk connections.

Members of the county families were prominent in the early history of West Park and the subscribers included the Wilbraham-Egertons, Mrs Davenport, the Marquis of Westminster and the Earl of Harrington. Similarly, some were also active members of the Volunteers, including Sir William Bromley Davenport and Thomas Antrobus. The only apparent involvement of the clergy in these amenities was a donation of £50 from Revd John Thornycroft and that Revd C. A. J. Smith presided at one public meeting for West Park in April 1851 and spoke at its opening (presumably as part of his interest in sanitary matters).¹²⁸

These examples illustrate that some people from other backgrounds were able to make a contribution to the amenities that were funded through public appeals. John May was the vital link in West Park's development and people outside silk manufacture supported both this cause and the Volunteers. However, the two later Brocklehurst gifts effectively excluded any further participation in this field by other occupational groups.

Having explored the identities of the people involved, what considerations outside the control of the silk manufacturers affected the progress of these institutions? Trade depression was a detrimental factor in both West Park and the museum's history. In West Park's case, it led to the prolonged fundraising campaign and its committee acknowledged that 'Our labours have been arduous, extending over a long period.'¹²⁹ The project was also launched in 1850, 'a year in which fever and famine were raging in the town', which added to their problems. However, this incidence of disease did reveal how much Macclesfield needed to improve its facilities and West Park became a fundamental part of the sanitary reform movement, to provide 'breathing space for the physical entertainment of the labouring population'.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ C.R.O., D 5299, Nicholson, 'Macclesfield Present and Future', p. 95.

¹²⁹ *A Walk*, p. 117.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

The museum was such a late foundation because the School of Art was reluctant to launch a large fundraising campaign against the backdrop of a continued decline in trade. Once Marianne had made her offer to fund such an institution, the Council's heavy-handedness in dealing with the planning stages resulted in the withdrawal of funding. It was unable to make amends for this mistake and it was only through Marianne's change of heart that Macclesfield's museum was opened by the end of the century.

The Volunteer movement was established largely a result of military pressure and thus French foreign policy was a crucial external factor in its development. The national difficulty in attracting recruits then led to a change in the organisation's policy, which gave a greater prominence to recreational activities in the second half of the nineteenth century. These illustrations show that there were a few external influences to affect the progress of these amenities during the nineteenth century.

Having seen how far the silk manufacturers were influential in this field, what obvious reasons lay behind their support? The motives for the silk manufacturers' patronage of the public amenities appear to be varied. Nationally, there was unease at the way in which leisure had become privatised and the unrest during the 1840s meant that the middle classes sought ways in which to regulate the free time of workers.¹³¹ Public amenities were seen as delivering suitable forms of leisure activity that would attract people away from traditional working-class pastimes and minimise unrest. These themes were common in Macclesfield, together with the recognition of the dearth of recreational facilities available in the town.

West Park's original committee revealed its primary aims by reassuring 'their fellow townsmen, in all sincerity, that they have no other motive in the objects which they seek to accomplish, than an earnest desire in dependence on the blessing of God, to elevate the social and moral condition of the town as at large, and provide such amusements for the working class as they may legitimately and profitably engage in, with their wives and children around them.'¹³² West Park was also an integral part of the sanitary movement in the town and the potential health benefits were often cited in the coverage of the campaign. As most Macclesfield people worked long hours in factories, the chance to exercise in fresh air was felt to be of the utmost importance in the battle to reduce illness and mortality rates.

¹³¹ Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, p. 106.

¹³² *M.M.*, June 1851, p. 156.

One of the primary benefits associated with such institutions was the perceived effect on law and order and this occurs frequently in the records. The fact that many of the manufacturers were councillors and magistrates meant that they would have had a particular interest in this aspect.¹³³ For example, Alderman Thorp stated in 1893 that in Hurdsfield ‘children swarm in the public streets because hitherto there has been no other place for them to play in, and we, as magistrates, have felt great difficulty in dealing with complaints as to their playing in the streets’.¹³⁴ Unrest and damage to property were prevalent in the 1840s and there may have been some self-interest involved in providing alternative places for people to congregate, which could lessen the possibility of unsociable behaviour. This could also have been viewed as imposing an element of social control, although this effect was limited within larger settlements, particularly when compared to the strong paternalist influence exerted on factory village communities.¹³⁵

The parks and museum were perceived to have educational benefits for their users and these opportunities for moral and intellectual improvement fitted particularly well with the middle-class promotion of ‘rational recreation’.¹³⁶ The parks were seen as a way of inspiring an appreciation of nature in its visitors and the increased interest in this subject was reflected by the growth of organisations, like the Macclesfield Scientific Society. The efforts made to provide aesthetically pleasing surroundings in the parks, coupled with the displays of art in the museum, were designed to encourage the artistic tendencies of the population and to reinforce the work of the School of Art. The provision of music in the parks was an added attraction for visitors and could have acted as a refining influence for listeners. The museum was designed to give its visitors an opportunity to learn more about the environment in which they lived, in addition to a wider appreciation of the world in general.¹³⁷ Consequently, Marianne Brocklehurst’s gift was seen as an educational boon for the town, which also improved its local standing.¹³⁸

The silk manufacturer, James Kershaw, provided a large water fountain on Park Green in 1890 and this provision, along with the fountains in the parks, was an attempt to encourage the consumption of water while providing attractive features.¹³⁹ This fitted in with the ideals of the temperance movement in the town and a number of silk manufacturers were heavily involved in this field, which could have stimulated their interest in the parks

¹³³ I. Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London, 1976), p. 110.

¹³⁴ C.R.O., D 5299, Commemorative Album, Newscutting, 18 February 1893.

¹³⁵ Storch, ‘The Problems of Working-class Leisure’, p. 148.

¹³⁶ Bailey, ‘A Mingled Mass of Perfectly Legitimate Pleasures’, p. 25.

¹³⁷ Hooper-Greenhill, *Museum and Gallery Education*, p. 109.

¹³⁸ *M.C.H.*, 10 July 1897, p. 3.

¹³⁹ Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, p. 103.

movement and other alternative recreational facilities. J. W. White was one such prominent temperance campaigner¹⁴⁰ and Charles Brocklehurst (chairman of the municipal Parks Committee) was also one of the promoters of the Coffee Tavern in the 1870s. This aimed to provide an alternative alcohol-free meeting place, but eventually closed due to poor usage.¹⁴¹

Within Macclesfield there were many factors related to the silk industry that would have been beneficial for silk manufacturers in their support of these institutions. The Volunteer Force was an organisation that promoted a sense of industry and discipline for its participants and its members were generally regarded as good workers. As a result, T. U. Brocklehurst's support for the movement had the added attraction of encouraging desirable behaviour in his employees, while the health benefits that would have arisen from the physical activities were valuable to him as an employer. F. D. Brocklehurst's gift of Victoria Park was a way of providing further facilities in the area in which the majority of the Brocklehurst workers lived and the goodwill engendered by the donations is likely to have had positive effects on industrial relations with their workers.¹⁴²

Involvement with the provision of public amenities enhanced the reputation of the people concerned and underlined their social standing.¹⁴³ This process was assisted by the generous coverage given to such acts in the local press and the public displays of gratitude.¹⁴⁴ The donation of specific facilities, such as Victoria Park and the museum, was also a way of leaving a permanent monument to an individual and ensuring that his or her memory lived on for future generations. For example, William Bromley Davenport stated at the opening of Victoria Park that 'I for my part, rejoice indeed to be able to join with all classes and with all parties in bearing my humble but cordial testimony to the great qualities of head, hand and heart which distinguishes the hero of today's most interesting ceremony and the respect and regard in which all members and all connections of the family whose name he bears and adorns are esteemed by all amongst whom he lives. Long may the name of Brocklehurst flourish in our midst and long may the hero of today's most memorable proceedings live to continue his good work for the benefit of his fellow men and to enjoy the heartfelt gratitude of his neighbours.'¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁰ C.R.O., D 5299, Newscuttings on the Public Life and Work of J. W. White, Vol. 3, unpaginated.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, LBM 2703/62/1, M.B.C., Newscuttings, 28 December 1878, p. 29.

¹⁴² K. Austin, *Troubled Times: Macclesfield, 1790-1870* (Leek, 2001), p. 129.

¹⁴³ F. K. Prochaska, 'Philanthropy' in F. M. L. Thompson (Ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950, Vol. 3, Social Agencies and Institutions* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 369.

¹⁴⁴ J. Garrard, *Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns, 1830-1880* (Manchester, 1983), p. 30.

¹⁴⁵ M.S.M., *Record on the Proceedings*, p. 40.

There were a few political considerations involved with the provision of certain public amenities. The building of the Liberal Club and Brocklehurst Memorial Hall was a way for the Brocklehursts to support Liberalism and to celebrate the periods of public service that family members had undertaken.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, James Kershaw's water fountain and George Godwin's building were a way of marking their mayoral years and their contribution to local politics. William Frost was heavily involved in Council matters and maintained an interest in health, education and housing in Macclesfield. However, he indicated that South Park was given primarily to prevent workers having to spend summer evenings sitting on their doorsteps and the low-key opening ceremony (held on a Wednesday evening) indicated that he did not seek great public acclaim or to make political gain from his action.¹⁴⁷ However, as his political career lasted into the late 1920s or early 1930s, it is possible that this gift did help at election times.

In contrast, Victoria Park and the museum were gifts from Brocklehurst family members who had no political connections and were not generally active in public life. A newscutting about Francis's gift of Victoria Park underlined this factor in 1894, stating that the 'spontaneous kindness of the thought which prompted the gift – its absolute disinterestedness, its liberality, and its practical utility to the present and succeeding generations...the ill-natured critic could not allege the slightest sight of a shadow of interested motive in the act...a kindly-disposed English gentleman, living an unobtrusive, honourable, and useful life in our midst, who has no honours to seek or hope for at the hands of our public.' This article went on to contrast his action with David Chadwick's gift of the Library, which was given by 'a politician whose disinterested motives were questioned, and with some show of reason at the time, by a large section of the community'.¹⁴⁸ This piece indicates that the editor assigned a broadly altruistic motive for Francis's large donation, which is borne out by the fact that he declined the offer of election as an alderman in 1894. Personal satisfaction in providing facilities for others was another element of these actions, as Francis hoped that the park would be 'an aid to the pleasure and improvement of the rising generation'.¹⁴⁹ Similarly, William Frost stated that 'Nothing gave me more pleasure in the whole of my public career than being able to secure this little bit of country for the benefit of the town.'¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁶ *Kelly's Directory of Cheshire, 1923*, p. 455.

¹⁴⁷ Little, *The Parks in Macclesfield*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁸ C.R.O., D 5299, Commemorative Album, Newscutting, May 1894.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, Letter, 1 January 1894; M.S.M., *Record on the Proceedings*, p. 48

¹⁵⁰ Little, *The Parks in Macclesfield*, p. 4.

There seems to be little obvious religious motivation behind these actions, other than the general evangelical encouragement of good works.¹⁵¹ The nonconformist ministers were fulsome in their praise of the opening of Victoria Park, but otherwise there are few overtly religious references in the available evidence and little participation by the clergy. Social respectability was contributory in the support of the Volunteers as it traditionally attracted a high level of participants in the officer class. The organisation also offered a chance for integration, especially through the various sporting teams. For example, the Macclesfield Football Club saw Sir William Bromley Davenport playing on a regular basis, alongside fellow team members from differing backgrounds.¹⁵² The campaign for West Park also saw the union of a diverse range of people towards a common aim, with many county families adding their contributions to those of Macclesfield inhabitants.

Civic pride was a strong factor in the provision of nineteenth-century public facilities. References were often made to other towns that had accumulated superior amenities, particularly in the early stages of fundraising for West Park when the promoters wished to attract subscriptions. This was common in other towns, such as Preston, where neighbouring cotton towns were used as examples of what could be achieved.¹⁵³ The effects of such campaigns served to promote the sense of identity within a community, which was often lacking in urban areas.¹⁵⁴ The lavish celebrations at the opening of facilities were also a chance for the whole town to unite in collective pride and to rejoice in the acquisition of new institutions.¹⁵⁵ Once Macclesfield had gained its museum and parks, they acted as a potential magnet for visitors and improved its general profile in the area. The donations of Victoria Park and West Park Museum were also prime examples of wealthy inhabitants taking personal responsibility for the provision of public facilities, which was a common feature of late nineteenth-century philanthropy.¹⁵⁶

Therefore, there were a number of motives that could have been instrumental in prompting people's support for public amenities in Macclesfield. How much were these institutions realistically able to achieve compared to their founders' original expectations? West Park did appear to attract a large number of users, with an average of 19,000 a week in the

¹⁵¹ B. Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1982), p. 226.

¹⁵² Ainscough, 'Macclesfield Élites', p. 319.

¹⁵³ M. Whittle, 'Philanthropy in Preston: The Changing Face of Charity in a Nineteenth-century Provincial Town', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Lancaster, 1990), p. 387.

¹⁵⁴ J. Walvin, *Victorian Values* (London, 1987), p. 110.

¹⁵⁵ A. King, 'Acts and Monuments: National Celebrations in Britain from the Napoleonic to the Great War', in A. O'Day (Ed.), *Government and Institutions in the Post-1932 United Kingdom* (Lewiston, N.Y., 1995), p. 238.

¹⁵⁶ H. E. Meller, *Leisure and the Changing City, 1870-1914* (London, 1976), p. 72.

1850s, but there is no subsequent indication of visitor numbers.¹⁵⁷ The fact that little damage was reported in the municipal records suggests that working people did respect their surroundings, perhaps as a result of their involvement in the original campaign. The reduction in crime reported in 1855 indicates that it also had a positive effect on law and order, which was a particular concern of the promoters (see page 216).¹⁵⁸ The range of activities that took place in West Park, and the number of organisations which made use of its facilities, suggests that it did match up to the hopes of its promoters and was a considerable boon to the town. For example, in 1904 John May's obituary stated that 'Everybody appreciates it', reinforcing the positive perception of the park's contribution to the town.¹⁵⁹

The fact that it took until the 1890s for the other public facilities to emerge meant that for much of the nineteenth century there was still minimal provision for people on the eastern or southern side of the town to gain access to nearby free recreational facilities. The Volunteers seem to have attracted sufficient members as a result of their additional recreational facilities, but this was a cause that had membership restrictions and so did not cater for the majority of Macclesfield's population.

The two institutions founded in the 1890s were both free amenities. Neither had any indication of visitor numbers after their respective opening ceremonies, but there were examples of gratitude from users of Victoria Park. A letter to the donor from Hurdsfield National School stated that 'Your noble gift, meeting as it does a longfelt want, is yet so far-reaching in its consequences to the population generally of this part of the town, that we cannot find words to adequately express the gratitude we feel.'¹⁶⁰ A newspaper report in 1900 described how 'Victoria Park is fast becoming, what I am sure no-one heartily desires it to be more than the donor himself, namely "a thing of beauty and a joy forever" and if he could have seen it, as I saw it last Sunday – its well-kept walks crowded with people, scarcely a seat unoccupied, and all thoroughly revelling in the picturesque scene...it would have gladdened his heart and convinced him – if indeed he has not been convinced before that in this splendid gift to his native town he has conferred one of the greatest blessings possible on the people.'¹⁶¹ The report of the museum's opening ceremony stated that it was 'one of the most interesting and instructive institutions' in the town, but there are no subsequent indications of its progress in the nineteenth century.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁷ M.S.M., PH 28, *Third Report of the Local Board of Health*, p. 11.

¹⁵⁸ C.R.O., D 5299, Nicholson, 'Macclesfield Present and Future', p. 96.

¹⁵⁹ *M.C.H.*, 3 December 1904, p. 2.

¹⁶⁰ C.R.O., D 5299, Commemorative Album, Letter from Hurdsfield National School, 1894.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Newscutting, 16 June 1900.

¹⁶² *M.C.H.*, 8 October 1898, Supplement.

The lack of evidence does limit the possibility of gaining a true assessment of the effect that these institutions had on Macclesfield, but surviving sources do emphasise their beneficial contribution. The parks provided attractive open areas for all inhabitants, which promoted healthy exercise and countered some of the negative effects of urbanisation. The other indoor facilities gave alternatives to public houses, while the museum also had a clear educational purpose. Together, the facilities do seem to have had the effect desired by their promoters, even if their original aims were tempered somewhat by the users.

Having seen the influence of the Macclesfield silk manufacturers on these amenities, were their actions consistent with those of industrialists in other urban areas? One of the earliest examples of industrialists providing public amenities was Joseph Strutt in Derby. He believed that the working classes would utilise and respect amenities that had educational and recreational value. As a result, his own private residence, St Peter's House, was opened on request to inhabitants who wished to see its extensive art collections. Strutt recognised that Derby had no open spaces for recreation and he gave the Arboretum to the town in 1840 at a cost of £10,000.¹⁶³ At the opening ceremony he alluded to the reasons behind this gift, stating that 'as the Sun has shone brightly on me through life, it would be ungrateful in me not to employ a portion of the fortune which I possess, in promoting the welfare of those amongst whom I live, and by whose industry I have been aided in its acquisition'.¹⁶⁴ These sentiments have a similarity to some of Francis Brocklehurst's professed motives for his park donation.

The 1850s saw the emergence of parks as a collective civic effort and Bradford's Peel Park was an example of this type of foundation. Workers were heavily involved in the fundraising efforts and saw assistance from wealthier citizens, a feature which was consistent with the early history of Macclesfield's West Park. Titus Salt was prominent in this campaign and gave a personal donation of £1,000.¹⁶⁵ This echoes the support shown for West Park by the Brocklehurst family, although on a much smaller scale. The Cotton Famine during the 1860s stimulated interest in providing municipal parks as a meaningful way of using relief funding for the permanent benefit of inhabitants and in keeping the pool of unemployed workers occupied. Alexandra Park in Oldham was one such example

¹⁶³ R. S. Fitton & A. P. Wadsworth, *The Strutts and the Arkwrights, 1758-1830: A Study of the Early Factory System* (Manchester, 1958), p. 187.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

¹⁶⁵ T. Koditschek, *Class Formation and Urban-industrial Society: Bradford, 1750-1850* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 578.

and opened in 1868.¹⁶⁶ This was consistent with both the Macclesfield parks, which also provided some alternative employment for workers during times of trade depression.

As the century progressed, the number of private park donations continued to rise. Some bore the names of their donors, such as the Seftons of Liverpool and the Norfolks of Sheffield. The donors were a mixture of landowners, businessmen and local leaders who wished to leave their mark on local society.¹⁶⁷ For instance, Sir Francis Crossley was an example of a manufacturer who donated the People's Park to Halifax in 1857.¹⁶⁸ Likewise, Titus Salt established his own park at Saltaire, which offered a range of activities, such as swimming, bowls, croquet and cricket, in addition to landscaped walks. Its opening ceremony was celebrated by the whole village and reflected the public festivities that accompanied the opening of Macclesfield's nineteenth-century parks.¹⁶⁹

In general, public parks did prove to be a popular innovation, which had real benefits for local communities. In Manchester and Salford (as in most other towns), parks were able to draw people together in pride at the acquisition of new facilities and provided a range of enjoyable leisure activities for urban populations.¹⁷⁰ In the Black Country, Richard Trainor identified parks as a mechanism for mediating between the idealised aims of the founders and the working class distrust of middle class initiatives that attempted to reform their way of life.¹⁷¹ In the end, both sides were able to take positive aspects from park provision without compromising their beliefs too greatly and thus parks retained their universal popularity throughout the nineteenth century.

An illustration of the Volunteer movement's attraction was that in 1860 a parade in front of the Queen was held in Holyrood Park, Edinburgh, involving around 22,000 members from Scotland and the north of England. In Scotland there was clear evidence of industrial patronage of the Volunteers, with employers encouraging participation and paying for uniforms and equipment for their workers.¹⁷² Similarly, in Blackburn, the Feilden and Hornby families dominated town life and they strongly supported the Volunteer Force, which may have encouraged their employees to join the cause.¹⁷³ In general, the Volunteer

¹⁶⁶ Conway, *Public Parks*, p. 23.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹⁶⁸ Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*, p. 151.

¹⁶⁹ J. Reynolds, *The Great Paternalist: Titus Salt and the Growth of Nineteenth-century Bradford* (Bradford, 1983), p. 280.

¹⁷⁰ Wyborn, 'Parks for the People', p. 12.

¹⁷¹ R. H. Trainor, *Black Country Elites: The Exercise of Authority in an Industrialized Area, 1830-1900* (Oxford, 1993), p. 345.

¹⁷² O. Checkland, *Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland: Social Welfare and the Voluntary Principle* (Edinburgh, 1980), p. 55.

¹⁷³ D. Beattie, *Blackburn: The Development of a Lancashire Cotton Town* (Halifax, 1992), p. 36.

movement appealed particularly to those with Tory and Anglican affiliations, which led to the participation of a large number of the landed gentry, followed by prominent professionals and businessmen. This was also the case in Macclesfield, but the membership of some nonconformist manufacturers, such as the Pearsons and Brocklehursts, indicated that it had more in common with the Bradford Volunteers than the considerable Anglican and Tory bias of employers in towns such as Bolton and Preston.¹⁷⁴ Workers may have been attracted to the organisation by the opportunities for physical exercise and sport (especially for those in sedentary occupations), a suitably patriotic cause and the chance to gain new skills.¹⁷⁵

Entrepreneurs were also important in the provision of art galleries and museums in the second half of the nineteenth century. These emerged largely due to private initiative, as they tended to be a less popular cause for municipal leaders than parks. As a result, it was generally the donations of buildings, pictures and exhibits that forced local councils into supporting such institutions, rather than any positive action on their part.¹⁷⁶ For example, Salford Art Gallery and Museum was founded by cotton manufacturers and supported by subscriptions and donations from the local community who were keen to introduce more culture into their midst.¹⁷⁷ T. C. Horsfall (the son of a card manufacturer) attributed his support of the Manchester Art Museum to the belief that the middle class had the duty of 'guiding and ennobling the life of the people'.¹⁷⁸ However, the subsequent funding difficulties indicated that his fellow Manchester inhabitants did not share his commitment, as there were only 90 subscribers remaining in 1895.¹⁷⁹ West Park Museum in Macclesfield bypassed these financial problems, because of the Brocklehurst family intervention, but there is no indication as to how far the hopes of its founders were realised in the institution's subsequent history.

Macclesfield's acquisition of public amenities followed a similar pattern to those in other towns, with a mixture of public appeals and private donations. Manufacturers were often the key people in initiating such facilities and in Macclesfield the silk manufacturers were strongly connected to most of the public amenities, an influence that continued into the twentieth century. The Brocklehurst family were especially prominent in this field, accounting for the outright donations of Victoria Park and West Park Museum, while supporting the Volunteers and West Park. The apparent motives for patronising such

¹⁷⁴ P. Joyce, *Work, Society and Politics* (London, 1980), pp. 35-36.

¹⁷⁵ Checkland, *Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland*, p. 54.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 46, 148.

¹⁷⁷ A. Howe, *The Cotton Masters, 1830-1860* (Oxford, 1984), p. 296.

¹⁷⁸ Harrison, 'Art and Philanthropy', p. 120.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

organisations tended towards the potential educational and civilising effects they would exert on the working classes. There were also other more self-interested reasons that could have come into play, such as heightened social respectability and leaving a permanent reminder of their contribution to a particular locality. The effect of these initiatives on urban areas was generally positive as they did address real deficiencies in recreational facilities. However, the working classes tended to make full use of the facilities on offer without necessarily assimilating all the moral overtones that accompanied such philanthropy. In Macclesfield, F. D. Brocklehurst's particular contribution to the town's public amenities (and other institutions) was emphasised at his memorial service in 1905: 'The gift of the Victoria Park to the poor of Macclesfield would alone make his fame imperishable. And so would his munificent gifts to the Parish Church in Macclesfield. Suffice it to say, from the wealthy classes down to the poorest lad in the Industrial School, we are all conscious that we have lost a personal friend.'¹⁸⁰

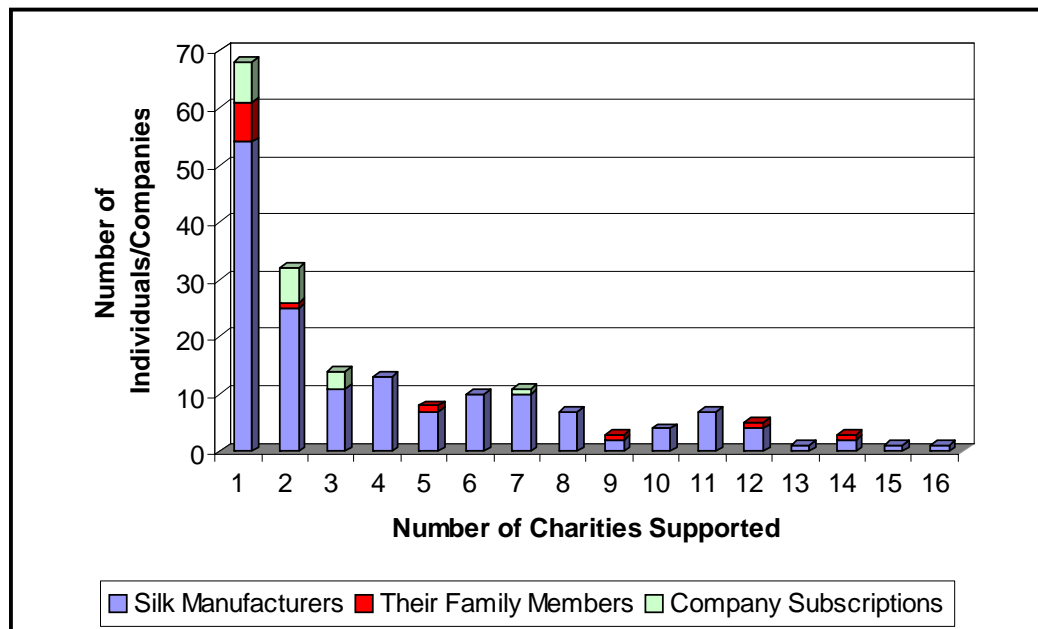
¹⁸⁰ Sudeley Castle Archives, F8, Newscuttings Book, Memorial Service for the late Mr F. D. Brocklehurst, 15 October 1905 (reprinted from *M.C.H.*, 21 October 1905), p. 10.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

The previous chapters have shown the level of assistance offered by the Macclesfield silk manufacturers to voluntary institutions within particular spheres of action. What does an overall view of the silk manufacturers' involvement add to this picture? Many silk manufacturers were prolific in the number of charities that they chose to assist and Figure 6.1 shows the number of this occupational group (including their family members and companies) who supported between one and 16 different organisations in the town.

Figure 6.1. The number of charitable causes supported by silk manufacturers, their families and companies.



This graph demonstrates that there was a core of people who aided many charitable institutions. A total of 21 silk manufacturers (or their family members) had links with ten or more charities and representatives of the Brocklehurst family accounted for six of these people. William Coare Brocklehurst was the only person to amass 16 causes, his father John supported 15, with William Barnett, Peter Pownall Brocklehurst and John Birchenough following with 14 charities. The extent to which they were spread across the spectrum depended on their beliefs and interests. For example, Thomas Unett Brocklehurst had links to three religious charities, five secular education organisations, three public services institutions and two public amenities. In contrast, David Holland supported 11 religious causes and only one public services institution.

The nature of the silk manufacturers' involvement ranged from occasional subscriptions to James Jackson's 54-year period of service as superintendent of the Lord Street Sunday School.¹ In certain institutions, such as the King Edward Street Chapel, these businessmen were able to assert complete authority over organisational and policy decisions, which meant that their development became inextricably bound with the lives of their patrons. In most other institutions, supporters from other backgrounds lessened this dominance, but the silk manufacturers were still clearly influential through their blend of managerial and financial support. The extent of this group's contribution to individual charities was dependent on the amount of time and money that they could expend on such institutions. As a result, the wealthier manufacturers could amass a long list of credentials through subscriptions, which did not necessarily involve any great effort on their part. At the other end of the scale, those who poured their energy into specific institutions over prolonged periods of time did not necessarily have the time or funds to support large numbers of other charitable organisations.

The existence of a core of individuals who supported numerous charities was a common phenomenon in other nineteenth-century towns. Revd A. Hume completed an analysis of subscribers to Liverpool charities in 1854 and found that there were 122 gentlemen who subscribed to most of the causes, while the remainder generally chose to support one or two such charities. In addition, a total of 1,500 people contributed over 75 per cent of the charitable contributions for the Liverpool charities (out of 10,000 individual annual subscriptions), which illustrates that the burden of support was disproportionately distributed.² A similar pattern emerged in Manchester where an 1884 study found that 20 individuals subscribed to nine charities out of the 40 surveyed, compared to 8,184 people who supported only one cause.³ Edward Akroyd appeared to be one of the most prolific textile magnates in this sense, through his membership of over 20 voluntary societies in Halifax and West Yorkshire during his lifetime.⁴

This study has concentrated on the main organisations serving the Borough of Macclesfield and so the total number of charities supported by individuals is likely to have been significantly higher, when national and other local appeals are taken into account. For example, F. D. Brocklehurst was the chairman for the restoration of Prestbury Church

¹ *M.C.H.*, 22 August 1874, p. 5

² Revd A. Hume, 'Analysis of the Subscribers to the Various Liverpool Charities', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 7, 1854-1855, p. 22.

³ *Transactions of the Manchester Statistical Society*, 1884, pp. 130-133, cited in P. Shapely, *Charity and Power in Victorian Manchester* (Manchester, 2000), p. 27.

⁴ T. Iwama, 'The Middle Class in Halifax, 1780-1850', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Leeds, 2003), p. 287.

in 1879, James Kershaw was chairman of the Macclesfield branch of the N.S.P.C.C. in 1899 and a number of silk manufacturers gave donations to the Macclesfield Cabmen's Shelter Fund in 1900.⁵ National appeals were also made within the *Courier*, such as the Indian Famine Fund in 1897, and it is likely that silk manufacturers would have subscribed to some of these causes.⁶

There were a number of individual acts of charity that took place outside an institutional setting and did not necessarily receive any coverage. Charles Brocklehurst paid for deaf and dumb boys in the town to be educated and William Coare Brocklehurst gave £25 for books to a Butley schoolboy who had just won a scholarship.⁷ W. C. Brocklehurst also paid for the Diamond Jubilee celebrations at Prestbury and Butley, giving half-crowns to each person over 60 years of age.⁸ In addition, some subscribers preferred their contributions to remain anonymous and there are missing or incomplete records for various institutions. In view of all these factors, the silk manufacturers are likely to have supported many more causes than have been covered in this study.

Several descriptions give an overall impression of how an individual's charitable involvement was perceived at the time, but the possibility of some exaggeration should be borne in mind. For example, James Kershaw's obituary stated that his 'philanthropy is too well-known to need emphasis. His pocket was never closed to the claims of either public or private charity, and many there are in Macclesfield today who have reason to feel grateful for his timely but ever unostentatious help...Other religious denominations have shared to no small degree in Mr Kershaw's munificence and his support of all manner of local charitable institutions was on an equally generous scale.'⁹ William Coare Brocklehurst's obituary indicated that 'his hand was always full for the helpless and distressed, his generosity as continuous as his purpose to do good was steadfast. Each and every year bounties came from him and none knew thereof.'¹⁰ References were also made to the contributions of the Brocklehurst family to the town and Robert Brown stated at an Infirmary meeting in 1900, that 'they all knew that their greatest benefactors had been the Brocklehurst family, not only to the Infirmary, but to every philanthropic institution in the town'.¹¹ Likewise, in 1869 Revd S. Field from Holy Trinity Church 'referred justly in

⁵ C.R.O., LBM 2703/62/1, Macclesfield Borough Council, Newscuttings, 1 March 1879, p. 65; *M.C.H.*, 4 May 1900, p. 3.

⁶ *M.C.H.*, 6 February 1897, p. 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 1 June 1901, p. 3; 9 June 1900, p. 7.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 9 June 1900, p. 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4 April 1908, p. 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9 June 1900, p. 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3 March 1900, p. 5.

eulogistic terms to the services rendered by the family of the Brocklehursts to the town and trade of Macclesfield. The family was at once the wealthiest in the town, and devoted their wealth in its welfare and support.¹² Despite their possible shortcomings, these descriptions do reinforce the impression of these individuals as some of the key supporters of Macclesfield's charities. In contrast, there was one isolated example of less flattering coverage of a Macclesfield silk manufacturer's contributions, as David Clarke's obituary stated that 'though it would be incorrect to say that he was a public benefactor, or used his great wealth as many philanthropists do – for the benefit of those around him – yet, it would be equally unkind to say that he was a narrow-minded or ungenerous man.'¹³

The only non-silk manufacturer to have links with ten or more charities was the solicitor John May. In addition to his primary role in the collective efforts to improve Macclesfield, he supported 12 causes. However, the level of commitment he displayed to institutions, such as West Park and the Baths, would have restricted the number of causes he was realistically able to assist. Other supporters of multiple institutions included William Bromley Davenport who aided eight charities, Revd Joseph Freeston who had five affiliations and David Chadwick who assisted five organisations and paid for the Public Library outright. John May also praised the Grosvenor family's contribution to the town in 1897, saying that 'For two generations within my knowledge, the Duke's father and the Duke himself have been founders of the best of our charities and other institutions.'¹⁴ These people were joined by representatives from a mixture of other backgrounds including innkeepers, grocers, physicians and managerial staff from the mills. Consequently, a diverse range of people played their part in the development of these organisations.

Nevertheless, even the influential John May had to enlist the help of the silk manufacturers in order to achieve his goals and the available evidence suggests that this group (and especially the Brocklehurst family) did appear to dominate the charitable field in Macclesfield as part of their integral role in the town's élite. The extent of their involvement varied considerably, with some institutions owing their existence entirely to this occupational group and others seeing little of their support. The numerical advantage of the silk manufacturers within the town was translated into support for most charitable organisations and their failure to contribute to all was perhaps a realistic response, given

¹² *Ibid.*, 6 March 1869, p. 4.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 18 August 1894, p. 5.

¹⁴ Macclesfield Silk Museum, PH 290, *Visit to Macclesfield of Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Teck* (Reprinted from *M.C.H.*, 20 April 1895), p. 7.

the multitude of causes clamouring for their money and time. Therefore, the surviving records confirm that these industrialists were prominent in financing and organising the responses to Macclesfield's problems throughout the period.

Having seen how the silk manufacturers were able to influence the development of Macclesfield's charitable institutions, what were the possible motives behind their actions? Many authors have alluded to the difficulty in discerning the reasons underlying charitable involvement, because of the limited evidence and the fact that most of the surviving sources were intended for public consumption.¹⁵ Macclesfield is no exception to this situation and thus it is impossible to gain a definitive idea of the silk manufacturers' motives. However, from the institutions covered in this study, it seems likely that there was a mixture of many influences that could have stimulated their interest.

Altruism represents the most idealistic reason for supporting charitable action and is likely to have featured in the actions of most silk manufacturers to a varying degree. Few individuals could have remained unaware of the deteriorating conditions within industrialising Macclesfield and people genuinely believed that voluntary action could solve the problems faced by the poorer sections of society. As a result, subscribers saw the wealth of religious, educational, recreational and public service institutions as appropriate means through which they could improve life for the town's citizens. The promoters of these organisations usually expressed the hope that they would effect real change for people within the town and F. D. Brocklehurst's comments at the opening of Victoria Park were a prime example of this desire for improvement (pages 221-222). John May also cited the altruism of the Brocklehurst family in supporting their workers during trade depression. Having enquired about the possibility of work for starving unemployed men, May recalled that W. C. Brocklehurst said that he was unable to do anything as he was already 'giving so much...in order to keep employed all his weavers, or they would starve, "and that" he said "they shall not do"'.¹⁶ There could have been many other contributory reasons for the Brocklehursts' support (which will be discussed further), but May does imply that concern for his workers' welfare was William's prime consideration on this occasion.

¹⁵ B. Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom: Stability and Change in Modern Britain* (Oxford, 1982), p. 224; M. Gorsky, *Patterns of Philanthropy: Charity and Society in Nineteenth-century Bristol* (Woodbridge, 1999), p. 178.

¹⁶ *M.C.H.*, 16 June 1900, p. 3.

Religion was a key component in encouraging the wealthy to contribute towards charitable causes and its influence was clearly visible in Macclesfield's voluntary institutions. From the eighteenth century, religious leaders had emphasised the need for followers to make charitable donations during their lifetimes, instead of providing posthumous endowments. This allowed the donor to dictate where the money should be directed, meant that they could witness the benefits of such gifts at first hand and were able to participate in the institution's affairs if they so wished.¹⁷ The growth of evangelicalism, with its emphasis on good works and Christian duty, added considerable impetus to voluntary action and was instrumental in the burgeoning number of charities that were established in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Its influence was demonstrated by the fact that in 1850 it was estimated that around 75 per cent of English charitable organisations were evangelical in nature.¹⁸ Consequently, the prevailing ethos was that the poor could only be assisted through moral reform and self-help, rather than the traditional dispensation of alms.¹⁹ Thus, charities were seen as agencies through which the lower levels of society could be assisted, that aimed to reform beneficiaries and encouraged conversions to evangelicalism. In return, the wealthy could expect to attain salvation for their efforts.

Religious leaders were important in encouraging individuals to heed their social consciences and to assist the poor in any way they could. As a result, most annual reports contained biblical references and emphasised the Christian duty of citizens to support these organisations, whether they were religious or secular in nature. Macclesfield's silk manufacturers appeared to support charities that reached across the denominational divisions, and there were relatively few individuals who confined their contributions solely to their own religious group. This assistance for a broad range of charitable organisations, regardless of religious affiliation, was also the case with the Lancashire manufacturers and both groups appeared to be more concerned with the positive benefits of such institutions for their respective towns.²⁰

Religion's relationship with the charitable field was weakened from the 1880s as secularism became more prevalent and many family firms were taken over by larger conglomerates. This often removed the ties between employers and the religious institutions that they had traditionally attended and supported. In addition, the range of

¹⁷ D. T. Andrew, *Philanthropy and Police: London Charity in the Eighteenth Century* (Princeton, 1989), p. 42.

¹⁸ I. Bradley, *The Call to Seriousness: The Evangelical Impact on the Victorians* (London, 1976), p. 123.

¹⁹ D. Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State* (London, 1984), p. 128.

²⁰ A. Howe, *The Cotton Masters, 1830-1860* (Oxford, 1984), p. 305.

services operated by the religious institutions was being overtaken by state-driven initiatives and the secular expansion in leisure facilities.²¹ Nevertheless, philanthropic progress had been imbued with religious influence throughout this period and was therefore of considerable importance as a motivating factor for all involved in the charitable field.

Despite the evidence implying altruistic and religious motives, there were a number of more self-interested reasons that could have been of importance and the most obvious of these was the associated benefits for employers of labour. W. H. Lever, the soap manufacturer, emphasised the importance of this factor in 1900 when he stated that 'There is no room for sentiment in business'. He went on to say that 'The truest and highest form of enlightened self interest requires that we pay the fullest regard to the interest and welfare of those around us, whose well-being we must bind up with our own and with whom we must share our prosperity.'²² This illustrates that all Lever's efforts to improve the lives of his workers at Port Sunlight were based primarily on sound business sense and that other aims were of secondary importance.

The silk manufacturers saw their primary role as running successful businesses and their workers wanted stability of employment before any charitable gestures.²³ The crucial importance of this factor was illustrated by Samuel Greg's experiences at Bollington. His fixation on providing good facilities for his workers meant that the business was facing ruin in 1847 and the resulting strike showed that all his efforts to improve workers' lives were cancelled out by his failure to provide security of employment.²⁴ In the same way, the fickle nature of the silk industry and Macclesfield's reliance on this luxury fabric meant that continuous employment was rarely possible and long lay-offs resulted in extreme hardship for workers. In this context, manufacturers' efforts to provide various facilities, particularly those that were not well patronised and were believed to benefit employers, might have been construed as a poor substitute for a steady wage.

Many of the Macclesfield silk manufacturers attempted to exert a paternalistic influence on their workers in order to engender loyalty and respect. Celebrations of the employers'

²¹ H. McLeod, *Religion and the Working Class in Nineteenth-century Britain* (London, 1984), p. 64.

²² A. Macquoen, *The King of Sunlight: How William Lever Cleaned Up the World* (London, 2004), p. 69.

²³ H. I. Dutton & J. E. King, 'The Limits of Paternalism: The Cotton Tyrants of North Lancashire, 1836-1854', *Social History*, 7, 1982, p. 73.

²⁴ M. B. Rose, *The Gregs of Quarry Bank Mill: The Rise and Decline of a Family Firm, 1750-1914* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 65.

family events and annual treats became commonplace from the 1860s and aimed to maintain good relations with the workforce. For example, William Smale provided a dinner for his weavers in 1872 when he ‘congratulated his workpeople on such an occasion, and hoped that the good friendship, which had so long existed, might continue...between employer and employed’.²⁵ Robert Brodrick also received a testimonial from his managers, stewards and warehousemen on the occasion of his wedding ‘testifying to the uniform kindness and consideration that for so many years you have always manifested’.²⁶ In the same way, entrepreneurs who were seen to be supporting charitable causes of direct benefit to their employees, such as the Dispensary and West Park, may have gained some goodwill from their actions. However, this relationship was never easy and certain charitable acts could prove to be inflammatory to industrial relations, like the weavers’ reaction to T. U. Brocklehurst’s donation of overcoats for cabmen (page 199).

Educational institutions, such as the School of Art and the Sunday schools, provided employers with disciplined factory workers and this factor may have prompted some support from manufacturers (pages 66, 132). The U.K.S., the School of Art and the Technical School were viewed as agents for improved standards in the Macclesfield silk industry and it is no coincidence that their promoters came predominantly from this group of businessmen (pages 122, 132, 138). The Dispensary, Infirmary, Baths and public parks were all facilities that could improve the health of their workforces and prevent the spread of disease, while the medical institutions also provided a cost-effective method of dealing with factory accidents and negated the need for private medical cover for workers (pages 162, 172-173, 181-182). Support for the Relief Association provided sustenance for the unemployed during trade depression and may have prevented some mill hands from leaving the town in search of work (pages 170-171). Likewise, the Brocklehursts’ policy of keeping their factories open meant that they could retain their skilled workforce during times of poor trade (pages 199-200). Silk manufacturers also supported friendly societies as they encouraged workers to save during times of prosperity in order to ease the impact of unemployment or sickness; for instance, James Kershaw acted as a director for the Baptist Sick and Burial Society.²⁷ The flexible nature of the voluntary charities also suited employers who could tailor their contributions on an annual basis, according to their

²⁵ *M.C.H.*, 20 January 1872, p. 5.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 15 November 1879, p. 4.

²⁷ R. Brown, *James Kershaw* (Macclesfield, 1899), p. 74.

financial situation.²⁸ All these illustrations show that the charitable institutions offered many business benefits for the silk manufacturers.

These silk manufacturers, together with other middle-class professionals and tradesmen, took on the traditional mantle of the aristocracy and gentry in supporting charitable causes. However this appeared to be a gradual assimilation of responsibility, rather than the decisive break in patronage proposed by Harold Perkin.²⁹ For example, upper-class representatives (like the Davenports and Grosvenors) remained involved with many of Macclesfield's charitable institutions throughout the nineteenth century. Similarly some manufacturers, specifically the Brocklehursts, were landowners before their involvement in silk manufacture and were active in Macclesfield affairs during the eighteenth century. Therefore, Macclesfield's charities lend support to the idea of a more fluid transfer of power to the rising middle classes.³⁰

As many silk manufacturers acted as social leaders, participation in charitable causes was an integral part of their public persona. For those seeking to move up the social scale, charities offered the chance to mix with a variety of influential people and involvement with prestigious charities, like the Infirmary, could raise their profile and provide the opportunity to exert power in the community. However, this represented only part of a complicated equation and such involvement, in isolation, did not automatically guarantee success.³¹ Other factors, including wealth, existing reputation, personal ability and moral worth, were also important in the quest for the acquisition of sufficient cultural capital to become eligible for public office.³² Similarly, those with political aspirations could demonstrate their suitability for candidature through service on the committees of philanthropic organisations.³³ However, certain leading Macclesfield silk manufacturers, such as W. B. Brocklehurst, already had an impressive array of credentials before standing as a political candidate and had little need to boost their reputations through charitable involvement.

²⁸ R. J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: The Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds, 1820-1850* (Manchester, 1990), p. 21.

²⁹ H. Perkin, *The Origins of Modern Society, 1780-1880* (London, 1969), p. 182.

³⁰ S. Gunn, 'The Failure of the Victorian Middle Class: A Critique', in J. Wolff & J. Seed, *The Culture of Capital: Art, Power and the Nineteenth-century Middle Class* (Manchester, 1988), p. 28; S. Nenadic, 'Businessmen, the Urban Middle Classes and the 'Dominance' of Manufacturers in Nineteenth-century Britain', *The Economic History Review*, 44, 1991, p. 82.

³¹ Shapely, *Charity and Power in Victorian Manchester*, p. 19.

³² P. Shapely, 'Charity, Status and Leadership: Charitable Image and the Manchester Man', *Journal of Social History*, 32, 1998, p. 169.

³³ P. Shapely, 'Charity, Status and Parliamentary Candidates in Manchester: A Consideration of Electoral and Charity Fields and the Social Basis of Power, 1832-1910', *International Review of Social History*, 44, 1999, p. 2.

Charitable gifts also served to mark periods of public service and to reinforce the benevolent reputations of particular families. The most obvious Macclesfield examples were the Brocklehurst Memorial Hall and James Kershaw's Park Green fountain. In contrast, Victoria Park and West Park Museum were donations from Brocklehurst family members who were not generally active in public life and may have wanted to leave a permanent reminder of their family's contribution to Macclesfield, at a time when their collective influence was starting to wane.³⁴ The duty of the middle classes to participate in public affairs was another factor to affect involvement in the charitable field. Emma Dent commented on the Brocklehursts' penchant for public office by quoting Daniel Webster: 'A sense of duty pursues us ever. It is omnipresent like the Deity.'³⁵ This reinforced the impression that the family felt a strong obligation to serve the community and their string of affiliations to charitable organisations was additional evidence of such responsibility. Similarly, John Brocklehurst refused a baronetcy three times 'desiring no other satisfaction than to do his duty'.³⁶

Several manufacturers who had made their fortune in Macclesfield wanted to mark their business success and to give something back to the community; Charles Roe's building of Christ Church, Joseph Tunnicliffe's endowment for the Infirmary and James Kershaw's large donations to the St Michael's Church restoration all being clear examples. These large gifts also gave the donors considerable power in determining how the money should be spent and the institutions run. This was most evident with Christ Church, which was a deliberate statement by Charles Roe about his Anglican sympathies (despite his family's Methodist connections) and the respectability he had gained. His stipulation that the tower should be higher than St Michael's was an obvious challenge to its religious supremacy in Macclesfield and made Christ Church an eye-catching monument to Roe's business achievements.

Charitable institutions offered a number of advantages to civic leaders. They instilled a sense of pride within a fragmented community and united a wide array of people towards a common cause. The most obvious evidence of this was the lavish opening ceremonies and accompanying parades of members of various Macclesfield institutions, all of which

³⁴ S. Ainscough, 'Macclesfield Élites, 1832-1918', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Liverpool, 2003), p. 297.

³⁵ J. Bray, *The Lady of Sudeley* (Ebrington, 2000), p. 100.

³⁶ *How Loyal Macclesfield and the District Celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria* (Macclesfield, 1897), p. 10.

represented a suitably ordered response to the prevailing urban problems.³⁷ The various institutions were believed to exert a pacifying force on their members and were a weapon in the battle to prevent crime and disorder. The potential damage to personal property and the threat of rioting meant that any measures designed to lessen the likelihood of such behaviour were likely to be popular with the middle classes. The delivery of assistance to the poor was also believed to carry the implication that the recipients would adhere to a certain standard of behaviour through the gift relationship, which could be interpreted as a form of social control.³⁸ The fear of revolution was of particular concern in the 1840s and probably stimulated some charitable contributions at this time. However, the fact that the middle classes continued to support these organisations long after the threat had dissipated indicates that it was probably a contributory factor, rather than a primary concern.³⁹ The opportunity for social interaction through voluntary organisations was also believed to break down barriers and to facilitate a greater understanding of the difficulties facing different sectors of the community (page 214).⁴⁰

The acquisition of new facilities raised the town's status within the local area and underlined its reputation as a progressive industrial settlement. Likewise, the efforts of the local community to establish voluntary institutions were seen by most civic leaders as infinitely preferable to the imposition of state initiatives. They believed that local knowledge was essential to direct assistance where it was needed most and distrusted government legislation that forced action upon them. An important element of this fear was the fact that such legislation generally meant an increase in taxation. For example, both the Brocklehursts and the Fieldens of Todmorden were similarly suspicious of state intervention and felt that it could 'order us to set our pockets wide open'.⁴¹ The most obvious examples of this were the opposition of certain silk manufacturers to sanitary reform and their negative reaction to the proposal that the Infirmary should receive public funding (page 200). As the largest silk manufacturing concerns paid the highest amounts of tax in Macclesfield, such legislation had direct financial implications for their personal fortunes. Another factor that could affect the rate of taxation was the number of people receiving poor relief. Support for the Relief Association and the medical charities offered

³⁷ S. Gunn, *The Public Culture of the Victorian Middle Class: Ritual and Authority and the English Industrial City, 1840-1914* (Manchester, 2000), p. 175.

³⁸ P. Shapely, 'Urban Charity, Class Relations and Social Cohesion: Charitable Responses to the Cotton Famine', *Urban History*, 28, 2001, p. 49.

³⁹ E. C. P. Lascelles, 'Charity', in G. M. Young (Ed.), *Early Victorian England, Vol. 2* (London, 1951), p. 347.

⁴⁰ H. Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c. 1780-c. 1880* (London, 1980), p. 110.

⁴¹ B. R. Law, *Fieldens of Todmorden: A Nineteenth Century Business Dynasty* (Littleborough, 1995), p. 172.

ways in which manufacturers could reduce the numbers reliant on the Poor Law and thus minimise their tax liability.

A different slant on middle-class patronage was given by Engels when he stated that ‘The English bourgeoisie is charitable out of self-interest; it gives nothing outright, but regards its gifts as a business matter, makes a bargain with the poor, saying: “If I spend this much upon benevolent institutions, I thereby purchase the right not to be troubled any further, and you are bound thereby to stay in your dusky holes and not to irritate my tender nerves by exposing your misery. You shall despair as before, but you shall despair unseen, this I require, this I purchase with my subscription of twenty pounds for the infirmary!”’⁴² The concept of subscriptions acting as an appeasement to the consciences of the wealthy and keeping the problems of the poor hidden from public view may have been an exaggeration, but still contained elements of truth for Macclesfield charities. The donation of money did not generally involve much effort on the part of wealthy businessmen and they gained much in return, while the beneficial effects of such a gift were often restricted to a small number of the poor. However, it is likely that some entrepreneurs were more selfless in their support of local charities. For example, Joseph Tunncliffe’s endowment for the Infirmary (which was the largest single recorded donation to any Macclesfield charitable institution) was primarily intended to meet the needs of the ‘deserving sick and infirm poor’ in the town.⁴³

While many of the motives prompting silk manufacturers’ charitable activity are likely to have been consistent throughout this period, there were times when particular considerations would have gained greater immediacy. As a result, the extant sources of all the Macclesfield institutions (and particularly the Macclesfield Sunday School which has annual reports over the greatest timespan) were compared to see whether such time-critical themes were evident between 1750 and 1900.

The late eighteenth-century reports of the Macclesfield Sunday School show a strong emphasis on moral improvement, the need to educate and discipline factory workers, the importance of the diffusion of religious knowledge and Sabbatarianism. For example, the 1798 report stated that ‘Large numbers there still are who remain totally destitute of instruction, and in a deplorable condition in every moral and religious point of view.’⁴⁴

⁴² F. Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (London, 1987, originally published in 1844), pp. 277-228.

⁴³ C.R.O., LBM 2703/45/2, M.B.C., General Purpose Committee Minutes (within Water Committee Minute Book), 12 May 1859.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, SP 2/29, Macclesfield Sunday School, Annual Report, 1798 p. 6.

This reflected the preoccupation with providing education for the working classes with a religious bias at this stage.

The late eighteenth century also saw the emergence of Methodism as a distinct sect and the religious fervour that accompanied this movement must have had an influence on the support shown by its followers. For example, John Ryle's repeated gifts to Sunderland Street Chapel appeared to arise primarily from his religious beliefs and the desire to see a permanent and safe place of worship for the congregation. In addition, his whole family urged him to take the large donation of £1,000 for the 1799 version of the chapel out of their inheritances, showing their strength of feeling for the cause.⁴⁵ Similarly, the Independents and the other subsequent Methodist sects attracted support from followers precisely because they were swept up in the momentum that accompanied the new religious movements.

In the early nineteenth century, the establishment of rival Sunday schools meant that the Macclesfield Sunday School committee had to constantly stress the institution's particular worth, the dedication of the teachers and the recognition that subscribers would gain from their actions. The religious dispute that affected the Sunday school around 1814 led to a decided focus on the benefits of nondenominational schools over the education given by particular sects and this was indicative of the religious rivalry that was at its height during this time. In general, this period of intense denominationalism stirred up strong feelings amongst followers and must have stimulated support for their own particular institutions throughout this phase of religious expansion.

The only time that law and order was specifically mentioned in the Macclesfield Sunday School reports was in 1841 when Chartism was at its height. This report stated that 'It is with most serious alarm that your Committee learn that multiplied accommodations are provided in various taverns and public-houses for the encouragement of evening revelry, and that to these nurseries of vice many of the sons and daughters of the poor habitually resort. This, in connexion with the numbers of disorderly youths seen daily lounging about our streets, furnishes the worst feature of the times, and is so far from supplying an omen of returning prosperity, that, indicating as it does, increasing immorality, it must, if persisted in, issue in severer distress.'⁴⁶ This excerpt shows the middle-class concern about public order issues within the town at this time.

⁴⁵ B. Smith, *Methodism in Macclesfield* (Macclesfield, 1875), p. 231.

⁴⁶ C.R.O., SP 2/31/14, Macclesfield Sunday School, Annual Report, 1840-1841, p. 1.

In 1842 Macclesfield avoided the worst of the public disorder associated with the Plug Plot riots, but a large contingent of strikers from Lancashire and Cheshire visited the town and forced the factories to stop work. When Macclesfield workers had joined the demonstration it was estimated that there were between 12,000 and 14,000 strikers present and industrial action on this scale must have encouraged employers to seek ways in which they could placate their workers and prevent the situation from recurring.⁴⁷ The threat of possible unrest and revolution at this time was also clearly evident in the petition to the Church Commissioners for St Paul's Church in 1843, which was established in an area known for Chartist sympathisers. This stated that 'It is a sound and constitutional observation that the key-stone of the arch of England's stability is in her Established Church – in the progress of years, Englishmen have seemed to overlook or forget this great political axiom and hence have sprung up the masses of the population of the Country which have wholly overgrown the reach of the Christian instrumentality provided.'⁴⁸ Therefore, the proliferation of voluntary institutions founded in the 1840s is clear evidence of the danger felt by Macclesfield inhabitants at this time and their need to counter any threatening behaviour.

Other times when public order was a particular concern was during periods of unemployment and the reports of the Relief Association emphasised how the donation of money to the cause was a way of ensuring stability in the town. Periods of trade depression also promoted activity in founding institutions that had a potential impact on the silk trade. For example, the Technical School was established directly as a result of the slump in trade in the 1870s and the School of Art was founded in 1850 to enable Macclesfield to compete with the superior quality of foreign silk goods.

The reports of all the educational institutions continually emphasised the way in which education could reform the character of their members and to produce useful members of society. The silk manufacturers' support of these institutions is likely to have emanated from their roles as public leader, employer and magistrate where they could see the correlation between the lack of educational opportunity and the incidence of crime and disorder. For example, Thomas Unett Brocklehurst stated at the laying of the foundation stone of St Peter's Working Men's Institute in 1878 that 'His experience on the Bench as a magistrate gave him an idea of what was required for the elevation of some sections of the

⁴⁷ K. Austin, *Troubled Times: Macclesfield, 1790-1870* (Leek, 2001), pp. 107-108.

⁴⁸ C.R.O., P 225/3499/1-26, St Paul's Church, Macclesfield, Proposed New Church on Macclesfield Common, Petition to Church Commissioners from Minister, Churchwardens and Other Inhabitants, 1843.

working class; many cases came before them, in which of course they were bound to administer the law, but which it was evident had arisen from simple ignorance and want of cultivation, and therefore he looked on such institutions as the great boon of the future.⁴⁹ Again, this was a period of great distress in Macclesfield and shows how such institutions were believed to offer a solution to the most pressing problems of the time.

All these examples illustrate the fact that certain factors would have attained a greater urgency in the public consciousness at particular periods in Macclesfield's history. As a result, the silk manufacturers' motivation in supporting charitable institutions is likely to have been affected considerably by contemporary local and national circumstances. Consequently, there was a myriad of different influences that could have prompted individual silk manufacturers' involvement in charitable institutions. Their public assertions showed the general desire to improve Macclesfield and the welfare of its inhabitants, but there was a wealth of other factors that could also have been contributory.

This multiplicity of reasons is broadly consistent with other general studies that consider charitable motivation during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, David Owen's conclusion that religion, medical factors, civic pride, humanitarianism and personal satisfaction reasons were all contributory resonates with many of the Macclesfield examples.⁵⁰ Brian Harrison and Frank Prochaska's primary focus on altruism, with a strong religious influence, is more difficult to quantify, but there is no doubt that most of the Macclesfield silk manufacturers at least professed altruistic and religious ideals, even if the actual extent is likely to have varied from person to person.⁵¹ Edward Lascelles acknowledged the part that fear played in prompting charitable activity during the turbulent late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. However, he used the fact that they continued to support charitable institutions after the threats had receded to imply that the main motivations of charitable participants were genuine philanthropy and a sense of duty.⁵² Certainly, the Macclesfield participants continued their support for the institutions well into the late nineteenth century and many of the major individual donations happened at this time. Similarly, public duty was a factor that was cited in many of the Macclesfield

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, P 187/8/4, St Peter's Working Men's Institute, Reprint from *M.C.H.* on laying of foundation stone, 1878, unpaginated.

⁵⁰ D. Owen, *English Philanthropy, 1660-1960* (Cambridge, MA, 1964), pp. 94-95, 104, 108, 121-124.

⁵¹ Harrison, *Peaceable Kingdom*, pp. 224-227; F. K. Prochaska, *The Voluntary Impulse: Philanthropy in Modern Britain* (London, 1988), p. 47; F. K. Prochaska, 'Philanthropy' in F. M. L. Thompson (Ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain, 1750-1950, Vol. 3, Social Agencies and Institutions* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 378.

⁵² Lascelles, 'Charity', p. 347.

records. Richard Trainor contrasted the religious benevolence, social improvement and civic pride motivations of the Victorian élites against more self-interested reasons including social stability, keeping rate rises at moderate levels and self-promotion.⁵³ Again, there is evidence in the Macclesfield examples that social stability and rate rises were of importance to the silk manufacturers, along with differing levels of religious influence, a desire for social improvement and civic pride.

Alan Kidd identified a range of emotions that were involved in prompting charitable activity during this period including sympathy, religious piety, a sense of guilt, fear of public disorder, social responsibility, personal satisfaction and the improvement of one's personal profile.⁵⁴ The records of the Macclesfield institutions show that elements of these emotions would have figured in the Macclesfield silk manufacturers' decisions to undertake charitable work to varying degrees. Kathleen Woodroffe proposed that the political conservatism of the time meant that local philanthropic initiatives would always be more popular than state-driven social change and this was certainly the case in Macclesfield where many silk manufacturers were vociferous in their opposition to improvements forced upon them by the government.⁵⁵ Pat Thane suggested that in addition to the fear of revolution, humanitarian concern, the desire to effect moral improvement on recipients and religious considerations, charitable activity gave the opportunity for individuals to emphasise their superiority over working class recipients.⁵⁶ This latter consideration was reflected in the system of recommendations for medical treatment, which provided an ideal opportunity for Macclesfield subscribers to have face-to-face contact with the poor and to gain some gratitude for their actions. As a result, most of the motivations given in the general studies do seem to be applicable to the charitable activities of the Macclesfield silk manufacturers.

Research on charitable motivation in specific British cities and towns does reflect these general themes, but also reveals some different emphases according to local circumstances. Olive Checkland concluded that Scottish Victorian philanthropy was driven primarily by religious piety and that its catalyst was the growth of the evangelical movement.⁵⁷ Allison Jordan's study of Belfast outlined the deep sectarian divisions in the city which resulted in

⁵³ R. H. Trainor, 'Urban Elites in Victorian Britain', *Urban History Yearbook*, 12, 1985, p. 3.

⁵⁴ A. J. Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth-century England* (Basingstoke, 1999), p. 69.

⁵⁵ K. Woodroffe, *From Charity to Social Work in England and the United States* (London, 1962), p. 21.

⁵⁶ P. Thane, *Foundations of the Welfare State* (Harlow, 1996), p. 26.

⁵⁷ O. Checkland, *Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland: Social Welfare and the Voluntary Principle* (Edinburgh, 1980), p. 30.

Protestant and Catholic support for charities that catered for their own followers and this meant that two parallel sets of institutions emerged with no cooperation between them.⁵⁸ Although religion was clearly a strong motivation for some Macclesfield silk manufacturers, the fact that many supported a wide range of charities outside their own denomination suggests that it was not as crucial an element as in some other urban areas. This is similar to many other northern textile towns where cotton manufacturers exhibited a broad approach to their choice of charities.⁵⁹

Meg Whittle's research in Preston outlined the way in which charity was used by the middle class as a channel for social control through the gift relationship. This meant that the town's leaders aimed to modify the behaviour of the working classes and thus to ensure stability.⁶⁰ However, Jordan's conclusions in Belfast imply that this process was more akin to enlightened self-interest on the part of leaders, rather than a calculated imposition of authority.⁶¹ There is no doubt that any measures to improve class relations were likely to be popular and charities offered a wide range of benefits in this respect. In Macclesfield the frequency with which the moral improvement of participants appears as a positive factor in the annual reports shows the preoccupation with this issue. However, this was one of many considerations and it is difficult to isolate this factor as the primary motivation of leaders in Macclesfield.

Peter Shapely's study of voluntary charities in Manchester demonstrated the way in which participation could enhance a person's status and offer evidence of suitability for public office. This was especially important for middle-class figures who wished to climb the social ladder and become a public leader. As a result, local council and parliamentary candidates were expected to have involvement with a portfolio of local causes to support their political aspirations.⁶² These additional benefits were undoubtedly welcome to those Macclesfield silk manufacturers in this situation. However, there were some people who already possessed a high profile through family connections and had little need to bolster their reputations in this way. Similarly, in Belfast many people were invited onto the committees of charities because they were high status figures, rather than the other way

⁵⁸ A. Jordan, 'Voluntary Societies in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Queen's University of Belfast, 1989), p. 589.

⁵⁹ Howe, *The Cotton Masters*, p. 305.

⁶⁰ M. Whittle, 'Philanthropy in Preston: The Changing Face of Charity in a Nineteenth-century Provincial Town', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Lancaster, 1990), p. 14.

⁶¹ Jordan, 'Voluntary Societies in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast', p. 676.

⁶² P. Shapely, 'Voluntary Charities in Nineteenth Century Manchester: Organisational Structure, Social Status and Leadership', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Manchester Metropolitan University, 1994), p. 328.

round. For example, Sir William Ewart M.P. (the linen manufacturer) had no need to be a committee member of the Workshops for the Blind, but still gave his time to the cause.⁶³

Anthony Howe described the way that the civic ambitions of the cotton lords were reflected in much of their charitable activity and this was also a key consideration in Preston, where civic leaders sought to outdo rival cotton towns in the acquisition of an array of institutions for the town.⁶⁴ The Macclesfield evidence also points towards civic pride as a major reason for the silk manufacturers' support and the frequent references to neighbouring towns, such as Stockport, in the opening speeches of institutions corroborates the importance of this factor for competitive industrial towns.

All these examples illustrate that the motivations apparent in the Macclesfield records do seem to concur with most of the studies covering philanthropy at this time. However, this area is notoriously difficult to evaluate and Martin Gorsky illustrates this point by citing the fact that the surviving evidence leads scholars to impose social meaning on people's actions rather than allowing for spontaneous decisions arising from benevolence, which could have been closer to the mark.⁶⁵ Similarly, the relationship between altruism and egoism is impossible to distinguish and all these factors mean that it is extremely hard to make any decisive judgements on the issue of motivation in this field.

How much were these institutions able to accomplish in Macclesfield, given the many problems that confronted them? The silk manufacturer, J. W. White, gave his view of the scope and efficacy of Macclesfield charities in 1867 when he said 'Allow me to call your attention to our local charities, and to our religious and philanthropic institutions, for which in numbers and usefulness we stand second to no town in the kingdom, and although these have been continually on the increase, yet, during a panic unprecedented in its duration and intensity, not one of them has suffered in its funds; our poor have been fed, our distressed and unfortunate have practical charity and benevolence has been fully sustained; and that too, not in passing through a season of temporary privation merely, but even after our distress has become chronic, all that has been done, and we have never craved the nation's charity.'⁶⁶ His optimism in the effectiveness of the organisations founded in Macclesfield

⁶³ Jordan, 'Voluntary Societies in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast', p. 689.

⁶⁴ A. Howe, *The Cotton Masters*, p. 291; M. Whittle, 'Philanthropy in Preston', p. 387.

⁶⁵ M. Gorsky, 'Charity, Mutuality and Philanthropy: Voluntary Provision in Bristol, 1800-1870', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of Bristol, 1995), p. 297.

⁶⁶ C.R.O., D 5299, Newscuttings Regarding the Public Life and Work of J. W. White, Vol. 1, Letter from J. W. White, 19 September 1867.

was perhaps misplaced, but it does illustrate that contributors to charitable organisations did believe that their actions represented the best solution to the town's problems.

In contrast, philanthropy has attracted much general criticism for its methods and the benefits it provided for donors rather than recipients, as shown by the quotation from Engels. The attempts to inculcate moral reform were often seen as futile and the whole sector imbued with hypocrisy.⁶⁷ In addition, the proliferation of charities with overlapping functions meant some wastage of precious resources, while handouts often encouraged people to become dependent, rather than seeking ways in which they could raise themselves out of poverty.⁶⁸ The development of charities in Macclesfield did exhibit some of these negative aspects and these factors affected their ability to deliver assistance to the needy. The lack of central coordination led to a patchwork of voluntary provision that saw some areas well supplied and others lacking any initiatives. For example, the religious divisions meant that churches and chapels grew up in close proximity to one another and each developed its own range of services for the community. The most obvious instance of this duplication of effort was in northern Sutton, where St George's Church, Brunswick Wesleyan Chapel and George Street Baptist Chapel were established in adjoining streets, with Park Street Methodist New Connexion Chapel nearby.

The way in which social leaders reacted to the problems of mass unemployment illustrated the limitations of voluntary action and the lack of any new approaches until the end of the nineteenth century. Families were already starving by the time the relief funds were initiated and the organisation continually struggled to cope with the volume of people needing assistance. J. W. White's assertion that such efforts were funded solely through local contributions was also erroneous, as Macclesfield was the recipient of many donations from individuals and institutions throughout Britain who were keen to assist the town's population at times of difficulty. The system of home visiting used as the basis for distributing aid to deserving causes was regarded by many working class people as invasive, demeaning and an assault on their independence (pages 201-202). There were also cases where people had become reliant on begging and this negative factor was recognised by the permanent version of the Relief Association in the 1890s (page 169). The evidence of dependence on charitable funds is consistent with Stedman Jones's

⁶⁷ R. H. Bremner, *Giving: Charity and Philanthropy in History* (New Brunswick, 1994), p. 7.

⁶⁸ Fraser, *The Evolution of the British Welfare State*, p. 129.

description of the 'demoralisation' of the poor, although the scale of the problem in Macclesfield was not obvious.⁶⁹

The efforts to provide suitable rational recreation for the working classes were often met with little enthusiasm and traditional working-class haunts, such as the public houses, retained their popularity despite the onslaught of middle-class initiatives. Most working people made full use of the institutions that were of value to themselves or their families (such as Sunday schools) without accepting the religious or moral connotations that accompanied such organisations. Financial considerations were also important in explaining the poor uptake for certain institutions. For example, many day schools suffered from low attendance because of the need for children to earn a living and the additional barrier of school fees. As a result, the standard of education was generally low and, even after the enforcement of the 1870 Act, the large number of children working on a half-time basis added to the problems. Similarly, the efforts to encourage working people to attend religious worship resulted in a poor response and most remained immune to the influence of church or chapel. The persistence of working-class traditions, together with the mixed response to middle-class initiatives and the diverse range of institutions, lend credence to the idea of an incomplete hegemony in Macclesfield.⁷⁰

The hopes that the U.K.S., School of Art and the Technical School would provide a skilled workforce to maintain Macclesfield's reputation as a leading silk town proved to be misplaced. Problems with attendance, financial difficulties and the imposition of a standard curriculum all acted against the chance of success. As a result, the gradual improvements in design and technical education were little compensation for the protective measures that favoured foreign firms after the Cobden Treaty, and a sustained revival in the British silk industry never materialised.

Despite the problems associated with charitable effort in Macclesfield, there were examples of significant achievements. In the absence of any governmental action to improve urban areas, the voluntary initiatives offered new facilities for the inhabitants. This network of provision was the foundation from which the modern system has developed and the fact that many of these organisations still exist today indicates that they did fulfil a real need. Some institutions, such as the Christ Church Schools and the Ragged

⁶⁹ G. Stedman Jones, *Outcast London: A Study in the Relationship Between Classes in Victorian Society* (Oxford, 1971), p. 251.

⁷⁰ J. Smith, 'Urban Elites, c. 1830-1930 and Urban History', *Urban History*, 27, 2000, p. 268; Morris, *Class, Sect and Party*, p. 321.

and Industrial School, gained a reputation for excellence in their field, while the medical charities were able to improve the population's health (page 97). Some facilities, such as the Baths, were so well used by working people that overcrowding was common and some Sunday schools had to turn children away because of the high demand for basic education (pages 163, 86).

The establishment of churches, chapels and schools in areas renowned for public disturbance, like the Common, was seen to have a positive effect on law and order (pages 95-96). Similarly, the Ragged and Industrial School frequently referred to the number of people who had been saved from a life of crime through their education (page 96). There were also examples of gratitude from former pupils of other Macclesfield educational institutions, indicating that their education had stood them in good stead for an industrious life (page 68). The people who were able to progress from a humble background to become businessmen, such as the silk weaver William Pownall, also illustrated that certain individuals were able to capitalise on opportunities to improve their prospects. As a result, some workers in Macclesfield did absorb or share the necessary values to enable them to progress to a higher status. This indicates that the concept of a common set of principles reaching across the social spectrum had some relevance in Macclesfield, as any rigid imposition of middle-class ideals was likely to be met with a similar response to their efforts to persuade working people to attend religious institutions.⁷¹ There was also evidence of some gratitude for charitable acts, such as the letters to F. D. Brocklehurst at the opening of Victoria Park and the public celebrations at the opening of new facilities (pages 220, 238, 210-211). Certain institutions, like the Volunteers and the Volunteer Fire Brigade, also encouraged social interaction between members from differing backgrounds and this inclusivity did act as an attempt to bridge the social divide that preoccupied Victorian society (pages 218, 237).

Considering the enormous difficulties that faced the charities in Macclesfield, a pattern of provision did develop to cater for the needs of townspeople prior to the implementation of centrally driven improvements. These pioneering organisations encompassed a wide range of action and drew people together, regardless of class, political persuasion or religious affiliation, to work towards a common goal. Noticeable improvements in health and education throughout the nineteenth century point towards the positive effects of such early voluntary action in Macclesfield, coupled with later state initiatives. Similarly, the acquisition of a range of facilities served to raise the town's profile in the local area and

⁷¹ F. M. L. Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', *The Economic History Review*, 34, 1981, pp. 196-197; Prochaska, 'Philanthropy', pp. 366-370.

contributed towards its reputation as the national centre of the silk industry. As a result, although J. W. White's comments gave an idealised view of the achievements of charitable initiatives in Macclesfield, there is no doubt that they did make a real difference to the lives of most inhabitants throughout this period.

The final question is whether the charitable work of the Macclesfield silk manufacturers was similar to the efforts of other contemporary businessmen. The previous chapters have indicated that Macclesfield's manufacturers did display some typical approaches to the establishment of a voluntary network of institutions during this period. However, the industrial structure of different urban settlements significantly affected the way in which philanthropic organisations developed. In some towns such as Bilston, in the Black Country, there were comparatively few wealthy entrepreneurs to support charities and this retarded progress in the acquisition of facilities.⁷² Edinburgh was predominantly led by a group of professionals and its charities often suffered from lack of support, while 'generous Glasgow' saw a greater level of involvement from its merchants.⁷³ Cardiff's shipowners and coal shippers, who represented the leading mercantile interests in the town, did not become social leaders and left the management of the town, and its charitable institutions, to the commercial sector.⁷⁴ In Leeds, the élite group consisted primarily of financiers, bankers, solicitors and merchants, although a few very wealthy manufacturers also made significant contributions to the development of the town.⁷⁵ These examples illustrate that there was regional variation in the responses of different occupational groups to charitable effort.

Macclesfield was typical of a small to medium sized industrial town where there was scope for leading manufacturers to become heavily involved in its development. Other northern towns where there was an overlap of economic, social and leadership roles were Accrington, Ashton, Burnley and Warrington, where a relatively small group of people exercised a disproportionate influence over many areas of town life.⁷⁶ Certain early textile magnates chose to invest their money in model villages to provide better facilities for their workers, often in isolated areas. As a result, business dynasties such as the Brooks family of Meltham Mills, near Huddersfield, built complete settlements that offered housing and

⁷² R. H. Trainor, *Black Country Élites: The Exercise of Authority in an Industrialized Area, 1830-1900* (Oxford, 1993), p. 373.

⁷³ Checkland, *Philanthropy in Victorian Scotland*, p. 312.

⁷⁴ M. J. Daunton, *Coal Metropolis: Cardiff, 1870-1914* (Leicester, 1977), p. 155.

⁷⁵ Morris, *Class, Sect and Party*, p. 222.

⁷⁶ A. Russell, 'Local Elites and the Working-class Response in the North-West, 1870-1895: Paternalism and Deference Reconsidered', *Northern History*, 33, 1987, p. 156.

facilities superior to those found in urban areas.⁷⁷ In contrast, few Macclesfield manufacturers provided any housing, preferring to leave workers to find their own accommodation. Instead, they chose to offer financial and managerial help to Macclesfield's voluntary organisations, which offered a range of associated benefits in return.

The closest comparison to Macclesfield is probably Todmorden, where the Fielden family dominated the town in the same way as the Brocklehursts. The families were united through two marriages, their Unitarian background was very similar and John Brocklehurst was portrayed as 'a man of the simplest and most unostentatious habits, always inculcating self discipline and the avoidance of "creeping luxuries"', a description that could have applied equally to John Fielden.⁷⁸ Both Johns became Members of Parliament and Fielden was responsible for championing the Ten Hours Bill in 1847. Their firms gained reputations as good employers and the Fieldens provided free medical care, paid injured workers a reduced salary and tried to keep their factories open during times of trade depression.⁷⁹

In terms of charitable involvement, both individuals were concerned that education should be universal and John Fielden assisted with the foundation of the nondenominational Sunday school in 1816. He went on to pay for a nondenominational day school and opened his own factory school in 1827.⁸⁰ In contrast, the Brocklehursts chose to subscribe to a range of Sunday and day schools (especially if their workers were likely to benefit), but did not establish any factory schools. The Brocklehursts' support of the King Edward Street Chapel was mirrored in the Fieldens' control of the Todmorden Unitarian congregation, formed in 1824. The family owned the chapel, John became superintendent of the Sunday school and he also established the Todmorden Friendly Society.⁸¹ John Brocklehurst did not take an active part in Sunday school life himself, leaving these duties to the female members of his family, such as his daughter Emma.

The Fieldens did not take any other significant part in Todmorden affairs until the second half of the nineteenth century. However, the backward state of the town and the absence

⁷⁷ C. Giles & I. H. Goodall, *Yorkshire Textile Mills: The Buildings of the Yorkshire Textile Industry, 1770-1930* (London, 1992), p. 177.

⁷⁸ Sudeley Castle Archives, F20, E. Dent, *In Memory of John Brocklehurst MP* (n.p., 1897), p. 5; Law, *Fieldens of Todmorden*, p. 96.

⁷⁹ J. A. Hargreaves, 'Religion and Society in the Parish of Halifax, c. 1740-1914', unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Huddersfield Polytechnic, 1991), p. 171.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

of any strong local leadership meant that John's sons eventually took up the challenge to improve matters. Consequently, John (II) and Joshua were heavily involved in the Todmorden Local Board from 1861 and became magistrates in 1865. This late participation contrasts with the Brocklehursts' public service throughout the nineteenth century. The Fieldens also took responsibility for the Relief Committee in November 1861 and re-established the Mechanics' Institute in 1859, both causes that were patronised by the Brocklehursts in Macclesfield.

The Fielden family's most striking additions to Todmorden were the Unitarian Church and the Town Hall. The former was built in memory of John (I) for £35,835 and opened in 1869, while the Town Hall followed in 1875, costing £54,000. Both buildings were intended to commemorate the business success of the family and showed how certain industrialists chose to express their identity through the building of grand civic structures. Todmorden also gained the Fielden Public Hall and Library, the Fielden Isolation Hospital and another day school from various members of the family. The brothers and their descendants also contributed towards a wide variety of causes outside the town (on a much larger scale than the Brocklehursts), including Owen's College in Manchester and the Royal Albert Asylum in Lancaster. Family members differed considerably in the amount that they contributed towards charities, with Joshua giving very little and Samuel donating around £90,000 during his lifetime.⁸² Samuel's interest in philanthropic ventures was possibly stimulated by his wife's sense of duty, as she was a member of the School Board for 12 years and continued to support a number of causes in Todmorden after his death.⁸³

These illustrations show that there were parallels between the charitable work of the Fieldens and Brocklehursts in their respective towns, but also some differences. Both left permanent reminders of their wealth and influence within their local communities and most of the significant donations happened in the second half of the nineteenth century. Due to the larger number of Brocklehurst family members, and the fact that they became wealthy at an earlier stage, their charitable involvement is clearly evident from the late eighteenth century and most family members supported a range of institutions. In Macclesfield, there were also many other wealthy silk manufacturers, such as Charles Roe, the Ryles and the Frosts, who played an important part in the town's acquisition of

⁸² Law, *Fieldens of Todmorden*, p. 197.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 234.

voluntary institutions, whereas other Todmorden industrialists tended to leave responsibility to the Fielden family.⁸⁴

It is difficult to measure the extent of the Macclesfield silk manufacturers' charitable contributions in relation to their respective fortunes. One indication from the Brocklehurst family was Peter Pownall's obituary which stated that 'His generosity, in recent years especially, was unbounded; indeed it is asserted that during the last five years he gave away certainly ten times as much as he spent on personal purposes.'⁸⁵ He also left a further £13,500 to Macclesfield institutions in his will, but his total contributions were probably much less than Samuel Fielden's estimated total of £90,000.⁸⁶

This thesis has demonstrated that the Macclesfield silk manufacturers did play an important part in the development of voluntary charities as part of their public role. Their numerical dominance was reflected in support for most of these institutions and thus the silk manufacturers were able to affect the way in which voluntary provision evolved in Macclesfield. The most generous members of this occupational body did donate large sums and gained a reputation for benevolence in the locality. For example, W. C. Brocklehurst was portrayed as 'a philanthropist of the best and truest kind such as any town might be proud and happy to possess'.⁸⁷ However, in comparison to the leading philanthropists of the day, such as the Crossleys and Samuel Morley, their contributions are likely to have been on a smaller scale. The Quaker George Cadbury is possibly the epitome of the philanthropic figure, as he gave away most of his earnings. He believed that it was immoral to harbour wealth and that he benefited from these acts because he was absolved from the responsibilities that accompanied such a fortune.⁸⁸ The Macclesfield silk manufacturers certainly did not go to these lengths, but their contributions were broadly similar to industrialists in other small to medium sized industrial towns that were dominated by the textile industry. In these settlements, manufacturers took on a range of public roles and formed a major part of the local élite, exerting a strong influence on the way in which urban settlements expanded. Support of charitable institutions was an important facet of this public service and the range of voluntary organisations established to counter the worst of Macclesfield's problems bear testament to the contributions of these silk manufacturers. However, this supremacy was less evident in larger urban

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ S.C.A., F8, Newscuttings Book compiled by T. U. Brocklehurst, 6 June 1903.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 12 September 1903.

⁸⁷ *M.C.H.*, 9 June 1900, p. 6.

⁸⁸ B. Nightingale, *Charities* (London, 1973), p. 131.

settlements where a wider range of people from different occupational backgrounds lessened the influence and power of the textile manufacturers.

This thesis has given a detailed view of the charitable involvement of the Macclesfield silk manufacturers between 1750 and 1900, the period in which both the town's silk industry and its charitable institutions experienced their most significant phases. The comparatively small size of Macclesfield has allowed a greater depth of coverage than would be possible in large cities and the isolation of one particular occupational group gives an idea of the significance that it attached to voluntary charity at this time. There is considerable scope for further research to be carried out on philanthropic activity within a range of other towns and cities, in order to supplement existing scholarly material on the subject. Such studies could explore the part that other occupational and social groups played in this field, the range of solutions used to counter urban problems, important influences affecting philanthropic endeavour, personal motives for involvement and the achievements of such charitable work. This approach overlaps a number of associated areas and informs topics such as the acquisition of power, the role of urban élites, the importance of political, religious, educational and social influences in urban areas, the relationship between charity and the Poor Law (particularly in the development of the welfare state) and the effect of differing business structures on urban development.

To conclude, the following extract gives an insight into how the philanthropic endeavour of one particular Macclesfield silk manufacturer, Thomas Crew, was viewed in the early twentieth century: 'taking a retrospect of his kindly deeds spread over a long and consistent life, it can be said very truthfully of him that he has faithfully fulfilled Henry Martyn's famous dictum concerning the objects of true Christian charity, viz: "Let your charity begin at home, but do not let it stop there. Do good to your family and connections, and, if you please, to your party; but after this look abroad. Look at the universal Church, and forgetting its divisions, be a Catholic Christian." This he has been, and continues to be, and must (he cannot help it) continue to the end. Heaven help Macclesfield to a multiplication of similar sons.'⁸⁹

⁸⁹ *Pen Pictures of Macclesfield's Public Men of Today* (Macclesfield, 1907), p. 25.

Appendix One

Map showing the location of the town's main institutions.
(Cheshire Record Office, PM 17/1, Claye, Plan of the Town of Macclesfield, c. 1890.)

Appendix Two

Biographical Details of the Macclesfield Silk Manufacturers and their Family Members (who were involved with three or more charitable institutions)

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
Thomas Allen 1770-1852	Wesleyan Methodist	Conservative	Alderman; Capital Burgess; Corporation Treas.; Mayor (1798, 1823)	C.M. – Macclesfield Sunday School C.M./S.S.T. – Mill Street Sunday School C.M./Treas. – Relief Association C.S./Don./Sub./Treas. – Brunswick Chapel (£1,000) Don./Treas./Tru. – Sunderland Street Chapel (£1,050 and Allen House) Sub. – St Michael’s Church; Volunteer Force; West Park Supp. – Wesleyan Centenary School Tru. – St George’s Schools V.P. – Dispensary
Joseph Arnold 1833-1884	Anglican	Conservative	J.P.; Poor Law Guardian; Savings Bank Dir.; School Board M.	C.M. – G.H.S.; U.K.S. C.M./Sub./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School Gov. – Grammar School; Infirmary Sub./Tru. – St George’s Church
Joseph Barker				C.M. – Baths & Washhouses; Dispensary; U.K.S.
William Barker				C.M. – Baths & Washhouses; Dispensary; U.K.S. C.M./Gov. – Infirmary Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School
William Barnett 1804-1873	Anglican	Conservative	Active in Macclesfield Equitable & Provident Society; Mayor (1843); Poor Law Guardian Ch.; J.P.; Savings Bank Tru.; Water C.M.	C.M. – Baths & Washhouses; Relief Association; School of Art; U.K.S. C.M./Don./Gov. – Infirmary (£3,000) C.M./Sub. – Dispensary; School of Art; St Michael’s Church C.M./Treas. – Ragged & Industrial School; Macclesfield Sunday School Gov. – Grammar School Sub. – Brunswick Chapel; Christ Church Schools; St John’s Church

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
Henry Birchenough b. 1856			J.P.	C.M. – U.K.S. C.M./Sub. – Technical School C.M./Sub./Treas. – School of Art Sub. – Hurdsfield Schools; St Michael’s Church
John Birchenough 1826-1895	Wesleyan Methodist	Liberal	Alderman; J.P.; Mayor (1876)	C.M. – Brunswick Chapel C.M./Pres./Sub./Tru. – School of Art C.M./Sub./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School (over 30 years) C.M./Treas. – Mill Street Wesleyan Schools Gov. – Girls’ High School; Infirmary Pres. – Technical School Sub. – Baptist Sunday School; St Alban’s Church; Trinity Chapel; U.K.S.; West Park S.S.T. – Fence Sunday School Tru./Sub. – Sunderland Street Chapel
John Bradbury				C.M. – Townley Street Chapel; Townley Street Sunday School Tru. – Sunderland Street Chapel
Charles Brocklehurst 1827-1884	Unitarian	Liberal	Councillor; Mayor (1878); Park Committee Ch.; Poor Law Guardian	C.C./Don. Volunteer Fire Brigade Ch./Sub. – Ragged & Industrial School C.M./Gov. – U.K.S. Don. – G.H.S.; St Michael’s Church (£1,100) Don./Gov. – Infirmary (£750) Don./Sub. – West Park Gov. – Grammar School Gov./Sub. – Hurdsfield Schools Pres./Tru. – School of Art Supp. – King Edward Street Chapel Treas. – Higher Hurdsfield Sunday School

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
Francis Dicken Brocklehurst 1837-1905	Anglican			C.M. – West Park Museum C.M./Don. – St Michael’s Church (£1,000 and east window) C.M./Sub./Tru. – Ragged & Industrial School Don. – Fence Almshouses (all costs); Grammar School (£1,000); Infirmary (£1,000); Relief Association (£500); Technical School (£100); Victoria Park (all costs) Sub. – Duke Street Schools; Hurdsfield Ebenezer Chapel; St John’s Church
Henry Brocklehurst 1819-1870		Liberal	Alderman; J.P., Mayor (1861-1862); Silk Weavers’ Emigration Society Treasurer	C.C. – Volunteer Fire Brigade C.M. – Technical School C.M./Lec. – U.K.S. Don. – Relief Association (£100) Proposed – Public Library Sub. – Baptist Sunday School; Hurdsfield Schools; Macclesfield Sunday School
John Brocklehurst (III) 1788-1870	Unitarian	Liberal	Alderman; M.P. (1832-1868)	C.M./Sub. – Relief Association Don. – Baths & Washhouses (£150) Founder/Pres. – U.K.S. Sub. – Baptist Sunday School; Beech Lane Chapel; Christ Church Schools; Dispensary; Higher Hurdsfield Sunday School; Macclesfield Sunday School; Ragged & Industrial School; Volunteers; Wesleyan Centenary School; West Park Supp. – King Edward Street Chapel Supp./Sub. – School of Art

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
Peter Pownall Brocklehurst 1821-1903				C.M./Don. – St Michael’s Church (£500) C.M./Tru. – U.K.S. Don. – Fence Sunday School (£500); Hurdsfield Schools (£500); Higher Hurdsfield Sunday School (£500); Infirmary (£5,000); West Park Museum (endowment) Don./Tru. – King Edward Street Chapel (£5,000); Macclesfield Sunday School (£500) Sub. – Dispensary; Holy Trinity Church; Ragged & Industrial School; School of Art; St John’s Church
Thomas Brocklehurst 1791-1870	Unitarian	Liberal	Alderman	C.M. – U.K.S. Sub. – Higher Hurdsfield Sunday School; Macclesfield Sunday School; Ragged & Industrial School; St Michael’s Church; Volunteers; Wesleyan Centenary School Sub./Treas. – Dispensary
Thomas Unett Brocklehurst 1824-1886		Liberal	Chamber of Commerce Member; Councillor; High Sheriff of Cheshire; J.P.; Mayor (1874-1875)	C.M./Don. – Public Library books C.M./Lec. – U.K.S. C.M./Sub. – Technical School C.M./Tru./C.M. – Higher Hurdsfield Sunday School Don. – Fence Hospital (all costs); Relief Association (£100) Gov./Don. – Grammar School (£1,000); Infirmary (£1,250) M./Sub. – Volunteers Sub. – Ragged & Industrial School; St John’s Church; West Park Tru. – School of Art
William Brocklehurst 1784-1859	Unitarian	Liberal	Alderman; J.P.; Mayor (1836); Police Commission Clerk	C.M. – Relief Association; U.K.S. C.M./Vis. – Macclesfield Sunday School Sub. – Dispensary; Duke Street Schools; Holy Trinity Church; Ragged & Industrial School; Volunteer Force Tru. – School of Art

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
William Brocklehurst Brocklehurst 1851-1929	Unitarian	Liberal	Alderman; Borough and Higher Education Committee Ch.; Deputy Lieutenant; J.P.; Macclesfield Silk Manufacturers' Association Pres.; Mayor (1883-1884); M.P. (1906-1918); Parkside Asylum Committee Ch.	Ch. – Technical School Ch/Don. – Grammar School (£1,000) Ch./Don./Sub. – G.H.S. (£1,000) C.M./Sub. – School of Art C.M./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School Don. – Six Cumberland Street Almshouses (all costs); West Park Museum (pictures and artistic objects) Don./Gov./Treas. – Infirmary (£1,000) Sub. – St Michael's Church Tru. – Cumberland Street Almshouses; Fence Almshouses
William Coare Brocklehurst 1818-1900	Unitarian	Liberal	Alderman; Chamber of Commerce President; Councillor; L. & N.W. Railway Dir.; Mayor (1855); M.P. (1868-1880)	Ch./Don./Pres./Sub. – G.H.S. (£500) C.M./Don./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School (£200) C.M./Pres./Sub. – U.K.S. C.M./Sub. – Ragged & Industrial School Don. – King Edward Street Chapel (£500); Public Library (books); Technical School (£500) Don./Gov./Treas. – Infirmary (£1,000) Gov./Ch./Tru. – Grammar School Sub. – Baptist Sunday School; City Mission; Higher Hurdsfield Sunday School; Hurdsfield Schools; Relief Association; St John's Church; Trinity Chapel
William Walter Brocklehurst 1829-1918				Don. – St Michael's Church (£200) Sub. – Holy Trinity Church; Ragged & Industrial School Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School
Robert Brodrick				C.M. – Baths & Washhouses Gov. – Grammar School Pres. – Y.M.C.A. Tru. – School of Art

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
Thomas Brodrick 1793-1865	Anglican	Conservative	Alderman; Capital Burgess; North Staffs Railway Ch./Dir.; Mayor (1825); Water Committee M.	C.M. – Baths & Washhouses C.M./Sub. – Christ Church Schools Gov. – Grammar School Pres. – Y.M.C.A. Sub. – St Peter’s Church Supp. – Christ Church; Dispensary; Infirmary; Relief Association V.P./C.M. – U.K.S.
John Brunt				C.M. – G.H.S.; Infirmary; Public Library C.M./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School
Joseph Brunt				C.M. – Park Green Congregational Church C.M./Deacon – Townley Street Chapel C.M./S.S.T./Tru./Vis. – Macclesfield Sunday School C.M./Supt – Townley Street Schools Sec./Tru. – Park Street Chapel Sub. – Baptist Sunday School; St Alban’s Church; Sunderland Street Chapel; Wesleyan Centenary School
Thomas Bullock				C.M./Don./Share. – St George’s Church (£100 and £200 for poor) C.M./Sub. – Dispensary C.M./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School (involved for over 70 years); St George’s Schools C.M./Vis. – Relief Association Gov. – Infirmary Tru. – Lord Street Schools
William Bullock		Liberal	Alderman; Mayor (1856, 1869)	C.M. – Baths & Washhouses; Infirmary; Public Library; U.K.S. Gov. – G.H.S.; Grammar School Sub. – St Paul’s Church Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School; School of Art

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
David Clarke 1820-1894	Anglican	Liberal	Alderman; Chamber of Commerce Founder Member; J.P.; Mayor (1867-1868)	C.M. – Dispensary; Public Library; School of Art C.M./Sub./Tru. – Holy Trinity Church Don. – St John’s Church (£200) Gov. – Grammar School Gov./Sub. – Infirmary Sub. – Hurdsfield Schools; Technical School; Trinity Chapel S.S.T. – Fence Sunday School Sub./Tru. – School of Art
Edward Clarke 1830-1893	Anglican	Liberal	Alderman; Chamber of Commerce Pres.; Mayor (1872)	C.M. – Public Library C.M./Pres./Sub. – Technical School Gov./Sub. – Infirmary Sub. – Christ Church Schools; Higher Hurdsfield Sunday School; Hurdsfield Schools; School of Art; St Andrew’s Church S.S.T. – Fence Sunday School Supp. – St Andrew’s Schools
Jeremiah Clarke	Anglican	Liberal	Alderman; Mayor (1859-1860)	Don. – Infirmary (£700) Sub. – Christ Church Schools; Higher Hurdsfield Sunday School; St Michael’s Church; St Paul’s Church Sub./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School Tru. – Hurdsfield Schools
G. H. Corbishley				C.M. – G.H.S.; Park Green Congregational Church; Roe Street Chapel; School of Art
William Cornes				C.M. – Public Library; St George’s Schools; Technical School; U.K.S. Sub. – St George’s Church
George Cox	Wesleyan Methodist			C.M. – Mill Street Schools Don. - Trinity Chapel (£150) Sec./Supt/Tru. – Wesleyan Centenary Schools Sub. – Baptist Sunday School; Higher Hurdsfield Sunday School; Sunderland Street Chapel Treas./Tru. – Fountain Street Mission Hall Tru. – Brunswick Chapel

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
Edwin Crew	Anglican	Conservative	Chamber of Commerce Pres.; Conservative Association Ch.; Highway Committee Ch.; J.P.; Mayor (1915-1916)	C.M. – Public Library C.M./Sub. – Technical School Don. – St Michael’s Church (£100) Sub./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School Sub. – St George’s Church Tru. – St George’s Schools
Thomas Crew 1836-1916	Anglican	Conservative	Alderman; Borough Auditor; Chamber of Commerce V.P.; County Councillor; General Burial Society Tru.; J.P.; Mayor (1887, 1909); Poor Law Guardian; Savings Bank Tru.; School Board M.	C.M./Sub. – St Michael’s Church Gov./Sub. – Infirmary Gov./Tru. – Ragged & Industrial School Sec./Sub./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School Sub. – Duke Street Schools; St Peter’s Church; West Park Sub./Tru. – St George’s Schools Tru./Ward. – St George’s Church
Thomas Critchley			Mayor (1792)	C.M. – Macclesfield Sunday School C.M./Sub. – Relief Association M./Sub. – Volunteer Force
Thomas Ryle Daintry				C.M. – U.K.S. Fund. – Dispensary Sub. – West Park; St Peter’s Church; St Thomas’s Church Tru. – Infirmary
Emma Dent (<i>née</i> Brocklehurst) 1823-1900				Don. – Holy Trinity Church (two stained glass windows); Hurdsfield Schools (£700); Infirmary (£250); St Michael’s Church (£100) Sub. – West Park
William Frost (I) 1828-1900	Methodist Free	Liberal	Burial Society Founder/Tru.; Councillor; Cheshire Permanent Building Society Founding Dir.	Ch./C.M. – Baths & Washhouses C.M. – Church Street West Chapel Sec./Supt – Park Green Methodist Free Church Sunday School (Supt for 40 years) Supp. – G.H.S.; Grammar School; School of Art Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School Tru./Treas. – Park Green Methodist Free Church (Treas. for 42 years)

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
William Frost (II)	Methodist Free	Liberal	Alderman; Chamber of Commerce M.; Cheshire Permanent Building Society Dir.; Founder M. of Macclesfield Free Church Council; J.P.; Mayor (1910) Temperance Supporter	Don. – South Park Gov. – Grammar School; Infirmary Sec. – Relief Association Sec./Treas. – Park Green Methodist Free Church Supp. – G.H.S.
George Godwin				C.M. – Dispensary Don. – Godwin House (West Park Bowling Club) Gov. – Infirmary
Rowland Gould d. 1847	Anglican	Conservative	Board of Guardians Ch.; Capital Burgess; J.P.; Mayor (1817)	Ch./C.M. – Dispensary C.M. – Relief Association Sub. – St George's Church
J. T. Hammond				C.M. – Public Library; Technical School C.M./Sub. – School of Art Supp. – Infirmary; Ragged & Industrial School
George Heath	Anglican	Liberal	Chamber of Commerce M.; Councillor (1899-1912); Town Development Committee Ch.	C.M./Don. – St Michael's Church (£100) C.M./Sub. – School of Art; Technical School Sub. – Duke Street Schools; St George's Church Supp. – Infirmary; Ragged & Industrial School
David Holland	Wesleyan Methodist			Ch./C.M./Sub./Tru. – Wesleyan Centenary Schools C.M./Don./Sub./Tru. – Mill Street Schools (organ) C.M./Treas. – Townley Street Schools C.M./Tru. – Brunswick Chapel Don./Tru. – Trinity Chapel (£1,150) Sub. – Baptist Sunday School; Christ Church Schools; Infirmary; St Paul's Schools Sub./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School Tru. – Broken Cross Chapel Treas. – Y.M.C.A.

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
Ferdinando Jackson (I) 1805-1889	Methodist New Connexion	Liberal	Alderman; Watch, Tolls & Shambles C.M., Water C.M.; Local Board of Health M.; J.P.; Mayor (1857)	C.M./Sub. – Macclesfield Sunday School Gov./C.M. – Infirmary Loan./Treas./Tru. – Park Street Chapel (for over 50 years) Sub. – Christ Church Schools; Trinity Chapel Supt/Treas./Tru. – Lord Street Schools Tru. – Hurdsfield Ebenezer Chapel
Ferdinando Jackson Jnr	Methodist New Connexion	Liberal	Alderman (1877-1883)	Gov./C.M. – Infirmary Sec./Tru./Ward. – Park Street Chapel Sub. – Christ Church Schools Tru. – School of Art
James Jackson 1795-1874	Methodist New Connexion	Liberal	Alderman; J.P.; Mayor (1863-1864); Police Commissioner; Tolls & Shambles C.M.	C.M. – Technical School Don. – Infirmary (£200) Supt/Tru. – Lord Street Sunday School (Supt for 54 years) Tru. – Park Street Chapel
Thomas Johnson				C.M. – Relief Association C.M./Sub. – Mill Street Schools Don. – Public Library (books) Sub. – Trinity Chapel; Wesleyan Centenary Schools Sub./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School Supp. – Technical School
James Kershaw 1838-1908	Anglican	Conservative	Alderman; Chamber of Commerce M.; Cheshire Permanent Benefit Building Society Pres.; J.P.; Mayor (1889)	C.M. – Technical School C.M./Man./S.S.T. – St George's Schools Don. – Drinking Fountain (Park Green); St Michael's Church (£2,500 and cost of tower, c. £3,000); Infirmary (£500) Gov. – Grammar School Man. – Ragged & Industrial School Sub. – Duke Street Schools; Macclesfield Sunday School Sub./Treas. – St George's Church
J. B. Lees	Wesleyan Methodist			C.M./Sub./Treas. – Sunderland Street Chapel Gov. – Infirmary Tru. – Mill Street Schools

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
Charles Mellor				C.M./Tru. – St George’s Schools Sec./Sub./Tru./Vis. – Macclesfield Sunday School Sub. – St George’s Church
John Mellor				C.M./Sub. – Church Street West Chapel Don. – Public Library (books) Sub. – Sunderland Street Chapel; Trinity Chapel
Robert Mellor	Anglican	Conservative	Alderman (from 1902); Conservative Association Treas.; Finance C.M.; Sec. to Two Building Societies	C.M. – Technical School Man. – St George’s Schools Sec./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School Sub. – Duke Street Schools
John Newton				C.M. – St Michael’s Church C.M./Sub. – Macclesfield Sunday School; Technical School Gov. – G.H.S. Sub. – Higher Hurdsfield Sunday School; Sunderland Street Chapel Tru./Sub. – School of Art
Joshua Oldfield Nicholson b. 1839		Liberal	Chamber of Commerce Pres.; J.P.; School Board M.; Temperance Supp.	Ch./Sub. – Technical School C.M. – Townley Street Chapel; U.K.S. C.M./Deacon – Park Green Congregational Church C.M./Supt – Townley Street Schools Gov. – G.H.S. Gov./Don. - Grammar School (prize fund) Pres./C.M./Sec./Sub./Tru. – School of Art
David Oldham 1788-1876	Methodist New Connexion	Liberal	Alderman; Police Commissioner; Temperance Supp.; Water C.M.	Active – Fence Sunday School C.M. – Dispensary C.M./Don./Sub./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School (£100) C.M./Tru. – Park Street Chapel Founder/Tru. – Lord Street Sunday School Sub. – Christ Church Schools

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G. R. Oldham				C.M. – Baths & Washhouses; Infirmary; St George’s Schools C.M./Sub. – Dispensary C.M./Sub./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School Sub. – Baptist Sunday School; St Michael’s Church Sub./Tru. – St George’s Church
George Pearson (II)	Wesleyan Methodist		Mayor (1813)	C.M./Sub./Treas. – Macclesfield Sunday School M./Sub. – Volunteer Force Pres. – Dispensary Sub. – St Michael’s Church Tru. – Sunderland Street Chapel
Samuel Pearson 1785-1871	Wesleyan Methodist	Conservative	Mayor (1819, 1827)	C.M./Sub. – Macclesfield Sunday School; Relief Association Don./Share. – St George’s Church (£200) Sub. – St George’s Schools; St Michael’s Church; St Paul’s Schools; U.K.S.; Volunteer Force; Wesleyan Centenary Schools
John Potts				C.M./Sub. – U.K.S. Don. – Public Library (books) Sub. – Technical School; Duke Street Schools; Sunderland Street Chapel; Trinity Chapel
William Potts 1795-1865		Liberal	Alderman; Mayor (1838); Land & Buildings C.M.; Police Commissioner; Water C.M.; Watch C.M.	C.M. – Technical School; U.K.S. Don. – Baths & Washhouses (£100) Sub. – West Park Sub./Treas. – Macclesfield Sunday School V.P. – School of Art
Israel Rowson	Wesleyan Methodist			C.M. – Mill Street Schools C.M./Sub./Tru. – Wesleyan Centenary Schools Sub. – Church Street West Chapel; Duke Street Schools; Infirmary; Trinity Chapel Sub./Tru. – Sunderland Street Chapel
John Ryle (I) d. 1808	Wesleyan Methodist	Conservative	Alderman; Mayor (1773)	C.M./Sub./Treas. – Macclesfield Sunday School Don./Sub./Tru. – Sunderland Street Chapel (over £1,000 and land) Sub. – St Michael’s Church

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
John Ryle (II)		Conservative	Capital Burgess; High Sheriff of Cheshire; Macclesfield Cricket Club Founder; Mayor (1809); M.P. (1832-1837)	C.M./Sub. – Relief Association Don. – Infirmary (£500); St George’s Chapel (land valued at £600 and £100) Founder M./V.P. – Dispensary Gov. – Grammar School Sub. – Christ Church Schools; Volunteers Sub./Tru. – Sunderland Street Chapel
John Smale d. 1910		Liberal	Alderman; Church of England Friendly Society Tru.; School Board M.;	Ch. – Ragged & Industrial School C.M. – Townley Street Schools C.M./Don. – St Michael’s Church (£250) C.M./Gov./Tru. – Infirmary Sub. – Christ Church Schools; St John’s Church Tru./Ward. – Christ Church
Jonathan Smale			Councillor (in 1880s)	C.M./Supt – Townley Street Schools Sub. – Christ Church Schools Sub./Tru. – Trinity Chapel
Josiah Smale (I)				C.M. – G.H.S.; Townley Street Chapel; U.K.S. C.M./Deacon – Park Street Chapel C.M./Don. – Public Library (books) C.M./Sec./Supt – Townley Street Schools C.M./Tru. – Ragged & Industrial School; School of Art Loan./Pres./Treas. – George Street Chapel Sub. – Christ Church Schools; Church Street West Chapel Supp. – Bethel Baptist Chapel
Josiah Smale jnr		Liberal	Councillor (1881-1887)	C.M. – School of Art; Technical School C.M./Treas. – Townley Street Schools Ward. – Christ Church
William Smale		Liberal	Alderman (1880-1886); County Councillor; J.P.; School Board M.	C.M. – Park Green Congregational Church; Public Library; Townley Street Schools; U.K.S. Sub. – Church Street West Chapel; St George’s Church Tru./Sub. – School of Art

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
Thomas Smallwood	Wesleyan Methodist			C.M. – Mill Street Wesleyan Schools Tru. – Broken Cross Chapel; Sunderland Street Chapel; Trinity Chapel
John Smith (Langley) c. 1870			Alderman; Freemason; Mayor (1853)	C.M. – Infirmary; St George's Church; U.K.S.
John Staniforth d. 1905		Liberal	Alderman; Mayor (1890); Sanitary Committee Ch.	C.M. – School of Art C.M./Sub. – Technical School Gov. – G.H.S.; Grammar School
George Swindells 1820-1893	Anglican	Conservative	Alderman; Freemason; Mayor (1888)	C.M. – Baths & Washhouses C.M./Don./S.S.T./Tru./Vis. – Macclesfield Sunday School (£100) Gov. – Grammar School; Infirmary Sub. – Baptist Sunday School; Church Street West Chapel; St John's Church; St Michael's Church Sub./Tru. – St George's Church Treas./Tru. – St George's Schools Vis. – Relief Association
John Walter Hook Thorp	Anglican	Conservative	Alderman; Beaconsfield Club Pres.; Macclesfield Football Club Founder; Mayor (1897)	C.M. – School of Art; Technical School C.M./Don. – Public Library (books) C.M./Don./Sub. – St Michael's Church (one stained glass window) C.M./Gov. – Infirmary Gov. – Grammar School M. – Volunteer Force Sec. – Church of England Temperance Society Sub. – Duke Street Schools; Fence Sunday School; Hurdsfield Schools
Robert Thorp 1791-1860				C.M. – Infirmary; Public Library C.M./Sub. – Christ Church Schools Gov. – Grammar School Sub. – St John's Church; School of Art Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
Joseph Tunnicliffe 1776-1859			Mayor (1818)	Don. – Infirmary (£30,000) Sub. – Brunswick Chapel; Christ Church Schools; Relief Association; St George’s Church; St Thomas’s Church
John Barnett Wadsworth 1828-1892	Wesleyan Methodist	Liberal	Alderman; Mayor (1871, 1881-1882)	C.M. – Public Library; Trinity Chapel; Wesleyan Centenary Schools C.M./Gov./Sub. – Infirmary C.M./Tru. – Brunswick Chapel Gov. – G.H.S.; Grammar School Sec. – Wesleyan Foreign Missionary Society Sub. – Park Street Chapel; Ragged & Industrial School Sub./Tru. – School of Art Tru. – Broken Cross Chapel
Henry Wardle	Anglican	Conservative	Capital Burgess; Mayor (1828, 1849)	Ch. – Church Pastoral Aid Society; Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts C.M. – Macclesfield Sunday School Gov. – Grammar School Sub. – Duke Street Schools; St George’s Church
Thomas Wardle	Anglican	Conservative	Alderman; Finance C.M.; General Purposes C.M.; J.P.; Mayor (1839); Police Commissioner; Water Committee Ch.	C.M. – Dispensary; St George’s Schools; Wesleyan Centenary Schools Gov. – Grammar School Sec. – National Society for the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church Sub. – Christ Church Schools; St Thomas’s Church; U.K.S.; Volunteers V.P. – Y.M.C.A. V.P./C.M./Don. – Infirmary (£100)
Thomas Itchenor Watts	Anglican	Conservative	Board of Guardians Ch.; Capital Burgess; Corporation Treas.; Gas Committee Dir.; Local Board of Health M.; Mayor (1832); Police Commissioner; Water Committee M.	C.M. – Dispensary; Relief Association C.M./Sub. – Infirmary

Name	Religious Affiliation	Political Affiliation	Public Office/Other Affiliations	Charitable Involvement
William Whiston		Liberal	Alderman; Board of Guardians M.; County Councillor; Freemason; J.P.; Rural District Council M.	Ch./C.M./Gov./Sub. – Infirmary Don. – Macclesfield Sunday School (£100); St Michael’s Church (£500) Sub. – G.H.S.; Sunderland Street Chapel
John Willott White	Congregational/Methodist New Connexion	Liberal	Alderman; J.P.; Liberal Association Ch.; Local Board of Health Ch.; Mayor (1877, 1885-1886)	C.M. – Public Library; Technical School C.M./Tru. – School of Art Gov. – Grammar School Pres. – Gospel Temperance Union/Y.M.C.A. Pres./Gov. – Infirmary
John Woodward		Liberal	Alderman; Mayor (1854)	C.M. – Baths & Washhouses Sub. – West Park Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School
John Wright 1795-1856	Congregational	Liberal	Board of Guardians M.; Councillor (from 1835); Finance Committee Ch.; Police Commissioner	Ch. – Baths & Washhouses C.M./Lec. – U.K.S. C.M./Loan./Sub. – School of Art Gov. – G.H.S. Sub. – St George’s Church
Joseph Wright 1830-1892	Congregational	Liberal	Alderman; Chamber of Commerce Pres.; Mayor (1866)	C.M./Don. – Public Library (books) C.M./Gov. – Infirmary C.M./Sub./S.S.T./Treas. – Townley Street Schools C.M./Treas./Tru. – School of Art Deacon/Sec./Treas. – Park Green Congregational Church Gov. – Grammar School M. – Volunteers Sub. – Baptist Sunday School Treas. – Townley Street Chapel Treas./Tru. – Macclesfield Sunday School Tru. – Roe Street Chapel C.M./V.P./Lec. – U.K.S.

Abbreviations

C.C. – Captain-Commandant; Ch. – Chairman; C.S. – Chapel Steward; C.M. – Committee Member; Dir. – Director; Don. – Donor (money/gifts given during donor’s lifetime, or as a legacy); Gov. – Governor; J.P. – Justice of the Peace; Lec. – Lecturer; Loan. – Loaned money; Man. – Manager; M. – Member; M.P. – Member of Parliament; Pres. – President; Sec. – Secretary; Share. – Shareholder; Sub. - Subscriber; S.S.T. – Sunday School Teacher; Supt – Superintendent; Supp. – Supporter; Tru. – Trustee; Treas. – Treasurer; V.P. – Vice-president; Vis. – Visitor; Ward. - Churchwarden

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