

**THE LAND DISPOSALS OF SIR JAMES ROBERTS
IN SALTAIRE AND MILNER FIELD 1918-1923**

THE EARLY RETIREMENT YEARS OF SIR JAMES ROBERTS

By Ian Watson-2023

Several years ago, I wrote a small booklet, and gave a talk on the subject of: 'The Land Acquisitions of Sir Titus Salt'. In which I looked at the Salt land purchases in Shipley and Baildon from 1850 through to 1874.

So, I suppose that this paper could be seen as a way of rounding off this subject. In that, I am going to show how Sir James Roberts, reluctantly, came into possession of and disposed of the surviving undeveloped land, from Sir Titus' original purchases.

Most of the information in this paper comes from a collection of letters, held by the Saltaire Collection, which is managed by the Saltaire World Heritage and Education Association (SWHEA), and held in 'Shipley College', Shipley.

The letters are part of the 'Roberts Family Collection', and form part of a significant loan to the Collection by the Roberts family of Strathallan Castle, Perthshire, Scotland.

The purpose of this loan was to enable the volunteers at the Collection to make fair copies of the documents and photographs. The object being to allow students of Saltaire history to gain additional insights into the various aspects of Sir James Roberts' life and his connections with Saltaire.

The particular letters that I have used for this talk were written between 1918 and 1922. The letters consist of communications between Sir James Roberts and his Saltaire representative, John Baker, who was clerk of works at the Saltaire Mills during Sir James' time there.

John Baker was born in Goatland, in the North Riding in c.1852. In 1911 he was living at 5 Albert Road, Saltaire, with his wife and two sons, and is shown in the census as 'Clerk of Works'. He retired to Morecambe in May 1919 and commuted to Saltaire on a weekly basis, in order to take care of Sir James' interests in Shipley, Baildon and Bingley. He died in February 1934. He is buried with his wife and a son in Nab Wood Cemetery, Shipley.

The other main source of information has come from the collection of land transfer records, held in the West Riding Registry of Deeds, now housed in the Yorkshire History Centre in Wakefield (WRRD).

In addition, various articles and letters published in the Shipley Times and Express have added to the information on this subject.

5 Albert Road Saltaire
March 29th 1918

Sir James Roberts Bart
Dear Sir ✓

I herewith enclose you the monthly statement of wages Rents, & Pensions &c and hope you will find the same correct and to your entire satisfaction I was thinking that perhaps it would save you worry if you were to send a Cheque on to Mr Coleman at Lloyds Bank for say one hundred pounds for me to draw on week by week

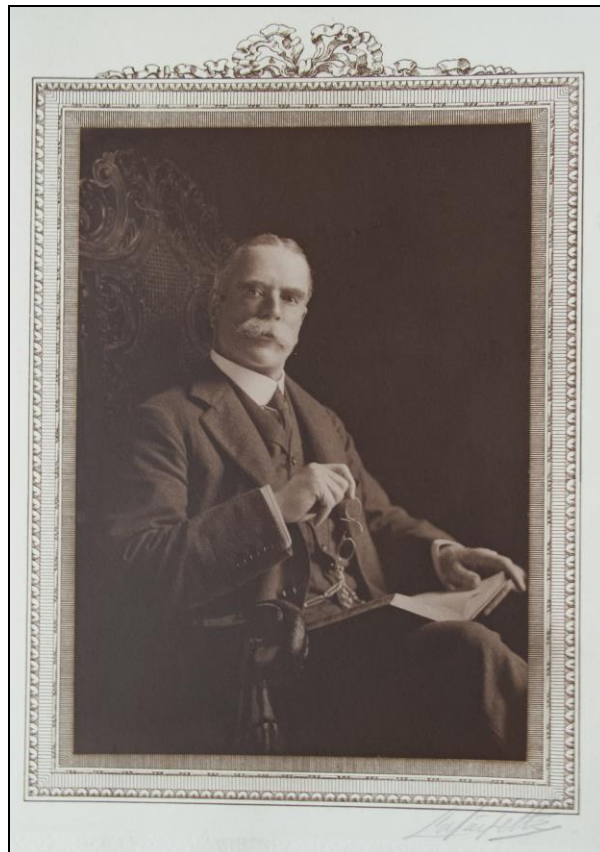
instead of me having to keep troubling you with this matter and send you a full statement each month same as the enclosed it is quite right to me whichever way you chose my only object is to save you as much worry as possible Mr Gates sent for me into the private office on Tuesday last to ask me if when you bought the Mill you bought the allotment gardens and the Boat house I said I thought these were a later purchase they do seem as if they would like to own the whole of the River Bridge but I hope they

Baker Letters - Roberts papers -Saltaire Collection

As the majority of these letters consist of those written by John Baker to Sir James, and only a few by Sir James in return, there are gaps in the story. Whilst one letter may refer to a particular issue, there is not, necessarily, enough information in the returning letters to obtain a full explanation of the topic in-hand. This means that there can be problems with trying to understand the full picture of some of the issues relating to this period.

Following the death of Sir Titus Salt in 1876, he left the undeveloped land in Shipley and Baildon, that he had purchased between 1850 and 1874, in the hands of his Trustees. His Trustees, most of whom were his sons, had the responsibility for paying out various annuities to Sir Titus' female relatives. These annuities were paid through loans, known as Debentures, which were secured by the income from the rents on the farm land and allotments and the assets of the mill company.

The failure of these heirs to maintain the mill company as a going concern led to the sale of the company to a group of Bradford business men.



Sir James Roberts – Roberts Papers-Saltaire Collection

When James Roberts and his fellow directors, Isaac Smith, John Rhodes and John Maddocks took over control of the mill in 1893, they also took on the 'Joint Beneficial Ownership' of these undeveloped lands along with the Salt family Trustees.

This meant that neither party could do anything with this land without the approval of the other interested parties.

Over the years, several of these plots of land were sold. These included the land on Baildon's Otley Road, between Baildon Bridge and Charlestown Cemetery. Also the land lying to the east of the Shipley College building, now occupied by Maddocks, Rhodes and Baker Streets.

In 1901, Mr Roberts, as he then was, became the sole owner of the mill and village, following the withdrawal of his earlier partners. As such, he also came into the joint ownership, with the Salts Trustees, of all the surviving undeveloped land.

From all the records available, it can be seen that Sir James had decided to retire from the Saltaire Mill business before the start of the First World War. As a consequence of this decision, and, following the award of a Baronetcy, he had bought Strathallan Castle in Perthshire in 1910.

In one of his letters Sir James shows that he had intended to pass on the responsibility of running the mill business to his only remaining son, Harry. But Harry's conscription into the army in 1916 prevented this. In the event, Harold was severely wounded and was unable to return to his management activities at Salts, leaving Sir James without a practical heir to take over the firm that he had been involved with since 1893.

As a result, Sir James did not officially retire from the Saltaire Mill company, that he had been in sole charge of since 1900, until 1918, at the age of 70. At which point, he sold the business and retired to Scotland. Though, as it turned out, he would remain involved in the affairs of Saltaire and Shipley until at least 1925.

Mr Roberts had bought the Milner Field estate, in Bingley, from Catherine Salt, the widow of Titus Salt jnr. in 1903. Though according to John Baker, Mr Roberts got the house at a discount. It seems that Baker had told Mrs Salt that Bertram Roberts, Sir James' eldest son, was going to build a large house in a field close to Trench farm.

This was possibly a negotiating sleight of hand by Mr Baker, or perhaps a member of the Roberts' family, but the idea seemed to horrify Mrs Salt, and, according to Mr Baker, she sold the house at a much lower price than she had wanted to [22nd March 1918].

Following his move to Scotland, Sir James' daughter, Lily-May and his son-in-law Frederick Aykroyd seem to have had the responsibility for looking after Milner Field, until 1919 when the house was included with the Coach Road lands in the arrangement with Messer's Gaunt and Foster.



Milner Field - Roberts papers - Saltaire Collection

In 1911, Sir James, as he then was, had bought Hirst Wood from the Lord of the Manor of Shipley, the Earl of Rosse. One of the later letters suggest that this purchase was in order to prevent any possible development of the wood, and to protect Sir James' view from Milner Field. Though, during the First World War, Sir James was approached by a chemical company who wanted to buy Upper Hirst Mill in Hirst Wood, in order to build a chemical plant. It is likely that one of the reason behind this was that prior to the First World War, Germany had a virtual monopoly on industrial chemicals in Europe. Following the outbreak of war, the government realised that we would have problems obtaining such chemicals for our own industries. So, they encouraged the development of a British chemical industry, in order to protect us against a future crisis. So, it is possible that this planned project would have been part of that scheme [29th September 1918]. Fortunately, the request to buy was rejected.

By the end of the First World War, the last of the Debentures were due to be repaid, and the Trustees, having fulfilled their responsibilities with regard to the annuities, offered the land to the new 'Part Beneficent Owners', the Salts Mill company, now led by: Arthur Hill, Ernest Gates, and Henry Whitehead, but they declined.

Pressure was put on Sir James to take on the properties, and, despite some reluctance, he took over control of this land, even though by this time he was living in Perthshire.

As I mentioned earlier, there are gaps in our knowledge with regards to Sir James and his business activities in Saltaire. And this situation is one of those conundrums. Given that Sir James had retired from the mill business, and left the area, why did he take on the purchase and ownership of this land?

It is possible that he saw the potential benefit of amalgamating his Milner Field property with the Coach Road properties; and the profit that would be generated from the future sale of this enlarged estate. But that is speculation, as, of the present time, there is no evidence for his decision to purchase the Trustees' land.

According to the deeds in the West Riding Registry of Deeds in Wakefield, Sir James took personal possession of these lands in Baildon and Shipley in 1919 (WRRD 1919 92 897 320) for the sum of £23,233 15s 3d.

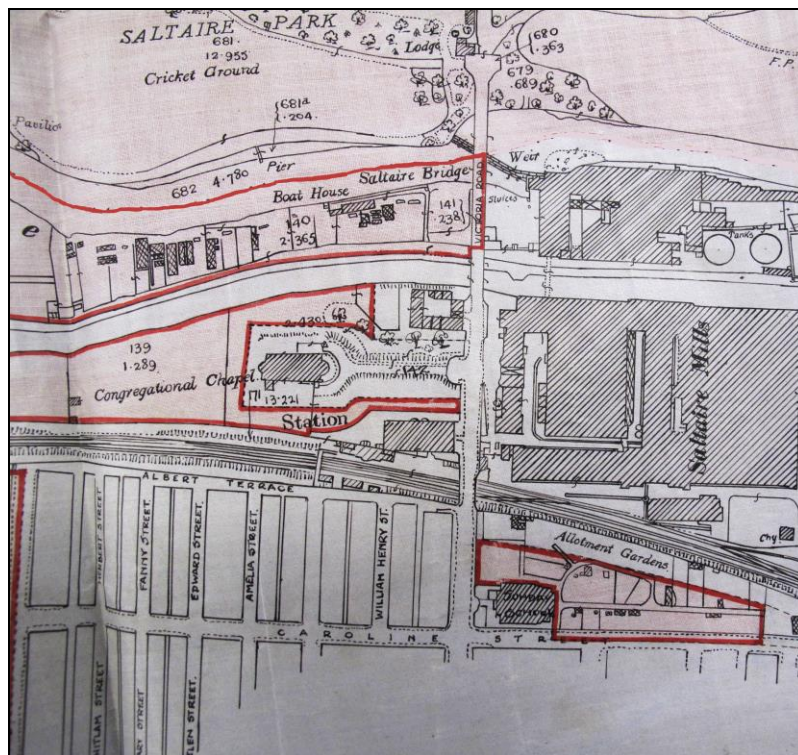
This purchase consisted of the land on the Baildon Coach Road between Green Lane and the Baildon/Bingley boundary at Loadpit Beck. It included: Midgley Farm, the two Trench farms, Midgley Wood, Trench Wood, Walker Wood and Saltaire Park.

The lands on the Shipley side consisted of the area to the west of Victoria Road, between the River Aire on the north and the railway line on the south, excluding the Congregational Church grounds. It also included the allotments between the river and the canal, and the land behind the Congregational church. It also included all the undeveloped land between Albert Road and Hirst Lane, at the junction of which were a set of allotments, now covered by the playground and buildings of the Clarence Road Nursery School. The transfer also included the allotments on Caroline Street opposite the mill.

The division of the old Salt's estate between the Mill company and Sir James following the withdrawal of the Trustees, led to some confusion. The reason behind this is that it would seem that there was no definitive plan of the whole estate. Indeed, the evidence suggests that there were several different plans, produced at different times, in the possession of the various parties. As a result, no one seemed certain who owned what, with regard to the land between the canal and the river at the bottom of Victoria Road.

The problem over the precise details of the boundaries even led someone in the mill company to question whether or not they actually owned the Royal Café! (previously, the Dining Room) [Letter: 22nd April 1918]. Even though the evidence of the map accompanying the deed of 1919, shows that this building was part of the mill assets and not included in this sale.

The plan accompanying the deed of 1919 shows that the bridge north of the canal, the land under the bridge and the land to the west of the bridge formed a part of the assets transferred to Sir James; i.e. the area coloured pink. Although it is not obvious from this plan, there was a small area just to the west of the bridge and a section under it, which remained the property of the mill company. This allowed them access to the New Mill.



WRRD plan 1919-92-897-320 (Part of)

It is also interesting to note that there is a strip of land on the north edge of the allotment garden paralleling the railway line not included in this transfer. This strip of land was bought by the railway company several years earlier in preparation for the widening of the railway cutting. A project that never took place. At the moment, I am not sure if the railway authorities still own this land or not.

Almost immediately after taking full possession of this old Salt land, Sir James decided to sell it, along with the Milner Field estate; and he seems to have given Mr Baker a free hand to find a buyer.

During the early discussions regarding the future sale, Sir James, talking about potential buyers, suggested to Mr Baker that:

'..... you might point out that all the land, but particularly the 14 acres comprised in the Park, is excellent building land' [30th June 1919].

Such a comment implies that, at this time, there was nothing 'off the cards', as far as the future development of this area was concerned.

It can also be assumed that at this time, Sir James was considering selling off individual plots of land by auction. And apparently, an auction catalogue was in the process of being produced. This, though, was a different catalogue to the one published in 1922 for Gaunt and Foster.

In July 1919, Mr Baker informed Sir James' that he was negotiating with a Bradford man, a Mr Robinson, regarding the sale of the Coach Road lands and the Milner Field Estate [4th July 1919]. Initially, it was uncertain who Mr Robinson represented. Though it soon became clear that he was negotiating on behalf of a Bradford Solicitor, Norman Foster.

At this point Sir James got personally involved, and the sale was finally agreed after a face-to-face meeting between Sir James and Mr Foster in July 1919, with the price set at £72,500 [17th July 1919]. The news of this 'sale' was announced in the Shipley Times & Express on the 25th July. This agreement included all the land on the north side of the River Aire between Primrose Lane in Bingley and Green Lane in Baildon, that had not already been disposed of.

Later deeds, relating to this transfer, show that there were two partners in the purchase: Maurice Gaunt and Norman Alexander Foster, who were in practice together as solicitors at No. 1, Cheapside, Bradford.

A few weeks after the purchases, Gaunt and Foster received an offer from a 'Bradford Gentleman' who wanted to buy Saltaire Park, in order to save it from possible development. Though after this initial newspaper report of 22nd August 1919, there seems to be no more information regarding this offer.

The Milner Field estate and house were also included in the sale, along with those house contents not wanted by Sir James for Strathallan Castle, nor for his London home at Hyde Park Gardens. Though we have no information on exactly what Sir James removed from the house.

Immediately after the sale, though, Sir James had second thoughts. He asked John Baker to have the flagpole at the house taken down and shipped to Scotland, along with a rowing boat on the lake outside the house. Mr Foster objected, saying that these two items were included as part of the original purchase. It then became necessary for Mr Baker to explain to Sir James that the flagpole was too large to transport economically and the boat was rather old. [23rd July 1919] So that plan seems to have been dropped.

Although his letter of the 17th of July, and the later newspaper reports in the following month, implies that Sir James had sold this land outright to Gaunt and Foster, later evidence contradicts this.

In a letter of November 1920, for example, Mr Baker refers to Mr Foster '*talking as if they did not already own Milner Field.*'

Also, there seems to be no record of a 1919 freehold sale by Sir James to Gaunt and Foster in the West Riding Registry of Deeds in Wakefield, where records of such sales are recorded.

It can also be seen that in subsequent sales of the Milner Field estate and the Coach Road lands over the next few years, Sir James was still identified as the 'vendor' i.e., the actual seller. While Gaunt and Foster are shown as the 'sub-vendors', i.e., people who had some contractual interest in the properties (WRRD 1921-1923).

It would seem more than likely, therefore, that this 'purchase' by Gaunt & Foster was simply an 'option to buy'. If this was the case, then, presumably, the arrangement would have been secured by a large down payment. Though the lack of sight of the relevant document means that the evidence for this probability is not yet available.

In retrospect, it can be speculated that this 'option to buy' was probably on condition that the two solicitors would be able to obtain planning permission to develop the whole of the Coach Road and the Milner Field Estate for housing and new roads.

But prior to the large project that seems to have been planned for the land, the pair seem to have been quite prepared to sell off individual sections. For example, in November 1920, Sir James was informed by Mr Baker that Gaunt and Foster were, apparently, talking to a motion

picture company, who were considering the idea of turning Milner Field into a film studio [10th November 1920]. Sir James didn't like this idea at all. As he wrote to Mr Baker, '*-- an institution in such surroundings is bound to have a serious effect upon the morals of the neighbourhood*'.

In the event, the whole scheme seems to have fallen through. The company needed a large dam and a generating plant to produce the electricity require for making their silent movies. Initially, they looked at the reservoirs on the Glen to supply the water. There was also talk of the film company buying Upper Hirst Mill in order to use the existing dam on the river, but, obviously, nothing came of the scheme.

In September 1922 Gaunt and Foster tried to sell off the whole of the Milner Field estate and all the Coach Road lands. And a newspaper report of 5th September talks about plans to turn Milner Field into a 'Garden Suburb'.


A sales catalogue was produced highlighting all the different plots of land in the sale, along with an interim layout of the new roads and house plots that were to be available for sale. (A copy of this catalogue is in the Collection Room at Shipley College.) (Saltaire Collection - A2-008)

MILNER FIELD ESTATE
SALTAIRE, YORKSHIRE

Plans, Particulars & Conditions of Sale
of the above Estate comprising

**FREEHOLD RESIDENTIAL
MANSION AND GROUNDS**

FARMS, WOODLANDS,
BUILDING SITES, &c.
CONTAINING APPROXIMATELY
THREE HUNDRED ACRES



WILL BE OFFERED FOR SALE BY PUBLIC AUCTION
AT THE GREAT NORTHERN VICTORIA HOTEL
BRIDGE STREET, BRADFORD

On Thursday, 12th October, 1922, at 3-30 p.m.

BY
A. GADIE & SON
Auctioneers and Valuers
6 & 7 Thorpe Chambers, Bradford

::

SURVEYOR : Wm. ILLINGWORTH 11 Sunbridge Road, Bradford	SOLICITORS : GAUNT, FOSTER & CO. 1 Cheapside, Bradford
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Salles catalogue of Milner Field : Saltaire Collection: A2-008

For whatever reason, this proposed auction never took place. It is more than likely that Bingley UDC and Baildon UDC refused planning permission for the proposed development on the Milner Field Estate and the Coach Road. Though the evidence to confirm this theory has not yet been identified.

But it can be assumed that, as a result of this, probable, failure to obtain planning permission, the proposed plan for an auction of the estate, and the Coach Road lands, which according to the press was due to be held at the Victoria Hotel, Bradford, on 12th October 1922 fell through. From this time on, the two solicitors co-operated with Sir James in selling off individual plots of land on the Coach Road.



A section of the plan from the 1922 sales catalogue of the Milner Field Estate
Saltaire Collection: A2-009

In late 1922 Sir James transferred some the unsold land, valued at £3,000, as Freehold to Gaunt and Foster (WRRD 1922 91 1298 472) The value of this transfer was possibly based on the original holding deposit that Gaunt and Foster had used to secure the option to buy.

This transfer consisted of several plots of land:

A small piece of land just to the south of Trench Farm of 6,043 sq. yds.; a plot of 3,790 sq. yds. opposite the Primrose Lane entrance to Milner Field; another small piece of land to the north of Roberts Park of 6,283 sq. yds; a small plot of 1,000 sq. yds. at the top of the Glen Tramway; a plot of land of 2,247 sq. yds. to the north of the River Aire at Baildon Bridge; and a larger piece of land stretching between the Coach Road and the top of Midgley Wood of 21 acres. From this time on, these two solicitors were selling off these pieces of land in their own names. In 1923 the couple sold the land in Primrose Lane and two plot of land in Baildon to the Salts Mill company.

And it's from the record of this transfer of property that we get the evidence showing that Gaunt and Foster did not actually buy the Milner Field and Coach Road estates in 1919.

To quote from part of the deed of transfer, “ *Whereas the vendor being seised (sic) of the hereditaments hereinafter described and intended to be hereby conveyed in fee simple in possession free from incumbrances sometime since agreed with the purchasers for the sale thereof to them (amongst other hereditaments) for a like estate at the price of sixty-two thousand five hundred pounds but no conveyance of the hereditaments hereinafter described has yet been executed.*”

Though it should be noticed there is a £10,000 difference between this quoted figure and the price mentioned in the letter of 1919.

Later evidence also shows that even after this period, there were a few sales in which Sir James and Gaunt and Foster were joint sellers. This included the sale of various sections of land on the Coach Road, and the sale of the Milner Field estate to the Salts Mill company in January 1923.

The Coach Road sales included: The two Trench Farms; a plot at the southern end of the Glen Tramway' where the large shed is; a plot at the junction of Thompson Lane and the Coach Road; a plot of land to the north of Saltaire Park; and the land, at that time occupied by the Saltaire Tennis Club, on the north side of the river

This plan, from that sale, (see below) shows those areas excluded from the sale marked around in red



WRRD plan 1923/17/778/16 (part of)

The original 'sale' to Gaunt and Foster had included Roberts Saltaire Park. Sir James had tried to offer the park to Shipley Council in February 1919. But, according to later newspaper accounts, two sub-committees of the Shipley Council who had considered the offer turned it down, without it going to the full Council meeting, and the public did not find out about this offer until later in the year.

However, it turned out that the park had been offered to Shipley on certain conditions. These being that Sir James would remain as the owner, but that Shipley UDC would be responsible for its upkeep. He also offered to let Shipley have the boathouse on the river, and the allotments on

Caroline Street and in Albert Road, though he wanted to keep the rents from these. He also wanted the council to guarantee that the public would have the right to free access to the park at all times.

Anyway, it would seem that Shipley UDC took so long to decide on the offer, that when Sir James 'sold' Milner Field and the Coach Road lands to Gaunt and Foster he included the park in the sale.

Back in August 1919, Gaunt and Foster had been in negotiations with the Salts Mill company with regard to their purchase of Saltaire Park, but the pair were asking for £12,500 which was rejected, so the park was left in their hands.

In an interview for the Shipley Times & Express of the 12th of September 1919, Gaunt and Foster are reported to have said, "*We feel that the estate, according to the way it is handled, might be very easily made or marred.*

It has been bought at a market price and upon a commercial basis, which implies we shall not be at liberty to make a present of the park to any local authority".

One of the more unusual events regarding this period was that the Shipley Times & Express reported that the park had been closed to the public on Sunday 14th September 1919, and the gates were locked. They were not re-opened until the following Wednesday. It is possible that the closure was because having 'bought' the park, Gaunt and Foster wanted to show that the park was now private property. Although the park had, legally, always been private property; initially, belong to the mill company and then to Sir James, the closure was, presumably to emphasis that the park was now separated from the mill company.

It was probably during this period that Sir James realised that Gaunt and Foster's plan for the development of the Coach Road might endanger the park and that there was a risk of it being destroyed and used for housing. Also, Sir James was taking a lot of 'flack' from the people of Shipley and Saltaire over his handling of the situation and putting the park in danger. He had obviously had a change of heart since the time when he had considered selling the park for development.

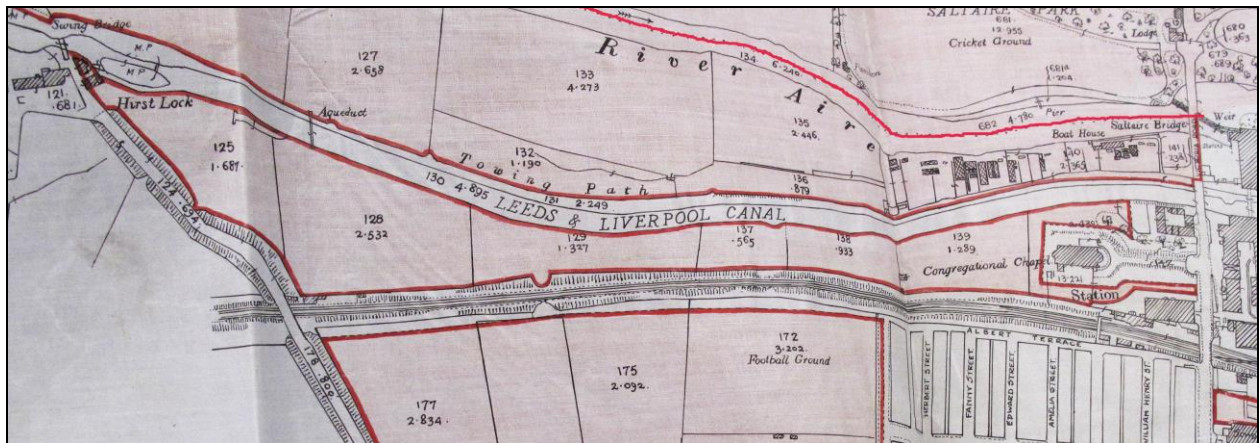
Towards the end of 1919, Mr Baker reported that the park was deteriorating, as the gardeners had been dismissed and no one was taking responsibility for it [22nd November 1919]. So, In late November Sir James took the park back from Gaunt and Foster.

The following year, Sir James decided to gift Saltaire Park to Bradford Corporation. The public were made aware of this move in the Shipley Times and Express edition of 5th November 1920.

The park was given to Bradford Council on condition that it was renamed 'Roberts Park' in memory of Sir James' eldest son, Bertram Foster Roberts who had died in 1912. Though Mr Baker complained about the placing of the memorial plaque to Bertram outside the park entrance, just by the side of the park lodge. He suggested that the plaque should have been placed inside the park by the main notice board [8th October 1920].

The Baker letters prove that in the early 1920s, there was a great deal of interest from local farmers regarding the land behind the Saltaire Congregational Church. And several people were interested in buying this ground. At that time this land consisted entirely of grass-land and cattle were kept in the fields [4th October 1920].

This information produces an interesting image of the sight of cattle moving up and down Victoria Road back in those days.



WRRD plan 1919-92-897-320 (Part of)

There are also numerous references in the letters of this period relating to the precise boundary between the church and the surrounding Roberts' land. So, it would appear that there was still no definitive map of the area showing the legal boundary between the two properties.

One of the main social elements to come out of the letters of 1921 was the serious economic crisis affecting both businesses and individuals. This was the time of the National Coal strike and many businesses had to shut down or go onto part-time working as they could not get coal for their mill engines.

The result was a great deal of poverty in the area, and Mr Baker found it increasingly difficult collecting rents from people who were unemployed [31st May 1921].

The rents that Mr Baker collected seem to be for the cottages at Higher Hirst Mill and Hirst Wood Crescent

Rents from Hirst Locks and Higher Hirst cottages			
	£	s	d
Feb 25 th	2	15	0
Mar 4	1	1	0
" 11		17	0
" 18		18	0
" 25		18	0
April 1 st		18	0
" 8		17	0
" 15		16	0
" 22		16	0
" 29		11	0
May 6	1	1	0
" 13		11	0
" 20	1	1	0
" 27		10	0
	<u>13</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>0</u>
Mar 1 st Cheque	25	0	0
" 18 th	50	0	0
April 10 th	100	0	0
x " Rent	1	12	6
" "	1	10	0
	<u>191</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>6</u>
Total received	191	12	6
" paid out	151	17	2
	<u>39</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>4</u>
			In Bank June 1 st

Baker Letters - Roberts Papers - Saltaire Collection

Mr Baker pointed out to Sir James that Shipley Council were planning to increase the rents of all the properties that they owned. So, he wrote to Sir James suggesting that by freezing his rents, it would make him look good and would be a way of getting his own back on Shipley Council, who had snubbed him during the last war over his son Harold's conscription. Sir James agreed with Mr Baker and did not increase the rents at that time.

There was also talk around this time of selling parts of Hirst Wood for a housing development, but there are no details of the specific locations in the relevant letter [30th July 1920]. It does suggest, though, that at that time nothing was 'out of bounds' with regards to the future development of the wood.

Even though they had fallen out earlier; during the course of 1921 Sir James had been negotiating with Shipley UDC with regard to them buying all the undeveloped Salt land on the Shipley side of the river. By November the Council had received the approval of the Ministry of Health to borrow enough money for the purchase [9th November 1921].

This transfer to Shipley included the land between the river and the canal, that later became the Saltaire Playing Fields and Tennis Courts; the land between Albert Road and Hirst Lane; the land between the canal and the railway line stretching out behind the Saltaire Congregational Church and the land between the railway and Caroline Street (WRRD1921-95-1228-492).



WRRD plan 1919-92-897-320 (Part of)

One of the main reasons for Shipley UDC deciding to buy all this land, was to allow them to build council houses, in preparation for a major slum clearance programme planned for the town. Once the Council had decided on how much land they needed, which was the land to the west of Albert Road, the Council sold all the surplus land to the Salts Mill company for £6,500. [WRRD 1922 54 1124 414]

It was also around this same period, that Sir James gave the Hirst Wood to Shipley Council as an outright gift (WRRD 1922 8 26 10). It is possible that this move was to ease relations between Sir James and the Council that had been under some strain for some years.

In January 1921, the mill company decided to convert the land between the river and canal into a park and playing fields and gave the allotment holders there notice to quit. As compensation, the Salts Mill company gave the land behind the Congregational Church to the allotment holders.

This period coincided with the formation of the 'Saltaire Mills Horticultural Society', led by one of Saltaire's main rose growers, Charles Houlden (ST&E August 24th 1923)

By 1922, around 100 allotments had been created. It is worth a quote from the relevant text on the Saltaire village web site. This was recorded as: *'Each allotment will have a cold frame, and every third allotment will have a greenhouse. The whole will symmetrically be laid out by the firm, who very likely will purchase the frames and greenhouses and sell them to the tenants of the allotments at a low figure. About nine greenhouses will be 9ft. by 15ft. and the remainder 6ft. by 12ft.'* [ref. saltairevillage.info/Saltaire_diary.html]

See also *Les Brook's paper on the history of the Saltaire Allotments:*

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/y967hdf15jjhebg/SALTAIRES%20ALLOTMENTS%20A%20Second%20Draft%20of%20their%20History%20version%202.pdf?dl=0>

Even after he had sold the mill and village to the new Saltaire Mill directors: Arthur Hill, Henry Whitehead & Ernest Gates in 1918, Sir James seems to have had the responsibility for paying the pensions of certain retired and disabled people. The origins of these pensions seem to date from 1909, following the presentation of a casket to commemorate Sir James' Baronetcy. This was the same year that the government introduced a state pension for 70-year-olds. At that meeting of the mill employees, Sir James announced that he would be paying a pension to all the Salts mill workers once they had reached their 65th year. [ST&E Dec. 3rd, 1909]

Paid to pensioners from February 15th to May 31st 1918

	Feb		March				April				May								
	15	22	1	8	15	22	29	5	12	19	26	3	10	17	24	31			
<i>Salome Pickard</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Edmund Rhodes</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Hannah Nowell</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Elizabeth A Gregson</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Clara Heyroyd</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Martha Dabryley</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Amelia Barker</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>John L Hadlum</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Susannah Gouett</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Eliza Gault</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	<i>Government</i>								1	15	0	
<i>Jane H Preston</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Susannah Ellingworth</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Susan Poole</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Sarah H Motealfe</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Fred Hartley</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>James Ruddock</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Eliza Walker</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>Ellen Sutcliffe</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
<i>John Latham</i>	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	5/-	4	0	0
	95/-	95/-	95/-	95/-	95/-	95/-	95/-	90/-	90/-	90/-	90/-	90/-	90/-	90/-	90/-	90/-	73	15	0

Though it can be seen from the information in the letters that at least some of the recipients were younger but disabled. In one letter of February 25th, 1919, for example, there is a reference to a lady of only 37, who was placed on the pensioner's list as she was crippled with chronic rheumatism.

It seems that Mr Baker was given the responsibility for paying out the pensions. However, the decision on who was to receive the payments seems to have been in the hands of a committee, chaired by Mr George Morrell. He was the Superintendent of the Saltaire Congregational Sunday School and had been the first headmaster of the Salt Factory Schools.

In 1918 the pension list consisted of 19 pensioners, who received 5 shillings per week. The payments to the individuals stopped when they reached the age of 70, as they then received the state pension. (Roberts Papers: 31st May 1918)

Due to lack of other evidence, it is not easy to understand this pensioner's list. Even in 1918, the list seems quite small, given the large number of employees of the mill at this time.

Also, given that the list diminished over time, with only the occasional addition, it can only be speculated that Sir James' obligations only related to people who had retired during Sir James' time at the mill.

By 1922 this list had been reduced to 7 pensioners. And it would seem that Sir James had decided that this was the right time to terminate all his obligations in Saltaire. So, the existing pensioners were paid a lump sum of £65, equivalent to 5 years' worth of pension. This, then, seems to have finalised Sir James' commitment with regards to paying such pensions. [11th October 1922]

So, that is the limit of my research on this subject, so far.

The letters loaned to the Saltaire Collection only go as far as the end of 1922.

As of this moment, we have no further documentary information from the Roberts' family regarding Sir James' involvement with Saltaire.

But I would like to finish with a small 'postscript' to round off this paper.

Postscript

In November 1925, the Saltaire Rose Society invited Sir James to accept the presidency of the society for the following year. Unfortunately, the 1926 show, which was normally held in Roberts Park, had to be cancelled owing to the General Strike. Sir James had donated £100 to the Society but declined to retain the presidency for the following year. (ST&E 12th December 1926.)

As of the present time, I have not been able to identify any later contact with the village.

Though Sir James obviously remained interested in local affairs. This can be seen from a letter he wrote to the Shipley Liberal Association at the time of a major meeting in 1927, in which he talked about the profitability of the Salt's Mill Company in the first two decades of the 20th century.

He was also known to have remained a keen supporter of the Shipley Veterans Association.

Sir James Roberts had given Strathallan to his grandson, James Denby Roberts. He died at his home 'Fairlight' near Hastings on 31st December 1935.

IAN WATSON - 2023

By Ian Watson-2023

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