



SALTAIRE'S ALLOTMENTS

A second draft of their history

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¹ In this paper, footnotes are numerical, and endnotes, alphabetical. The Club welcomes comments that query or correct any part of this paper – or adds to our understanding of the allotments' history. Email saltairehistorymail@gmail.com

² Aerial view of Saltaire dating from ~2005.

Introduction

The allotments in Saltaire are amongst the many public facilities that have elevated this small 'village' from a Victorian curiosity to a World Heritage Site. Yet - like the engineer who designed the mill, the horny-handed sons of toil who built it, and the women whose labours at home and at their machines were crucial to its success - the allotments rarely get a mention in histories.

How odd, because these "allotment gardens" are so conspicuous ³.

Today, a favourite spot for photographers is on Victoria Road from which the mill's magnificent frontage can be admired - as you look across the rhubarb, flowers, shrubs and greenhouses of allotments.



Moreover, it's odd that the allotments are neglected by historians since a principal reason for Saltaire's global status is that it is not only "an outstanding and well-preserved example of a mid-19th century industrial town" but that it "exert[ed] a major influence on the development of the "garden city" movement" ⁴.

³ Sometimes rendered as "garden allotments", this was a common term in Victorian times. See the wording on the early maps and plans in this paper.

⁴ From UNESCO's World Heritage inscription. For more on this movement, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Garden_city_movement. (As far as I can see, there's no evidence for UNESCO's claim!)

Allotments in industrial settings and model towns

In historical context, Saltaire's allotments are far from unique.

The village's sister World Heritage Site and mill village, New Lanark, also had them, 50 years before Saltaire. Its owner/manager, the famous Robert Owen,

*believed that health could generally be improved by a clean living environment and fresh air and provided residents with allotments to grow their own fruit and vegetables as well as planting woodlands and laying out paths on the hillside above the village, to be enjoyed by the villagers*⁵.

That could be the founder of Saltaire speaking. Yet the histories of Titus Salt

*provide no evidence to demonstrate that Salt ever visited New Lanark or supported Owen's vision of utopian socialist communities. It would, however, be very unlikely that Salt had no knowledge of Owen's work...*⁶.

Closer to home, in Leeds, during the depression of 1838-42, the sons of the pioneering millowner Benjamin Gott made "a benevolent gesture" by converting the tenter ground of their Bean Ing mill into allotments for their workers⁷.

Daniels notes that

*Allotments were intended to promote in leisure time the industrious habits that William Chambers admired when he saw the Bean Ing employees at work in 1841: 'Throughout the different large buildings containing the workmen you do not hear a word spoken. Every individual is busy as a bee at his own peculiar work; no such thing as straggling out is observable, and the whole system seems perfect in point of concentrated industry and organization'*⁸.

⁵ <https://www.newlanark.org/introducing-robert-owen>. Notwithstanding this assertion, I have asked our New Lanark counterparts for evidence and have not received a reply.

⁶ <https://www.saltairerecollection.org/saltaire-history/saltaire-foundation-and-legacy/>

⁷ 'Tenter ground' was an area used for drying newly manufactured cloth after fulling. Bean Ing was on the western edge of Leeds city centre.

⁸ Stephen John Daniels *Moral Order and the Industrial Environment in the Woollen Textile Districts of West Yorkshire, 1780-1880*

Daniels goes on to observe that allotments were a feature of two other West Yorkshire 'model villages', Copley and Akroydon ⁹. These post-date Saltaire.

The allotments in front of Salts Mill

As we shall see later, the allotments in front of the mill are not the only ones in the past and present village - but they are the earliest and, historically, the most interesting.

Their date is not known but they were certainly in place by the time Caroline Street's eastern extension was built, probably in late 1868 into 1869 ¹⁰, and all the indications suggest a much earlier date, maybe soon after the completion of the mill in 1853 ¹¹.

These allotments were deliberately designed both in location and form, and that they sit immediately in front of the mill is striking. Why would they be designed and why would this location be chosen? Salt's chosen location for his mill and small town was in the countryside, in the pristine Aire valley. The choice was deliberately rural:

one of the most beautiful and picturesque in the neighbourhood of Bradford... charmingly situated on the banks of the Aire... an extensive landscape of hill and dale ¹².



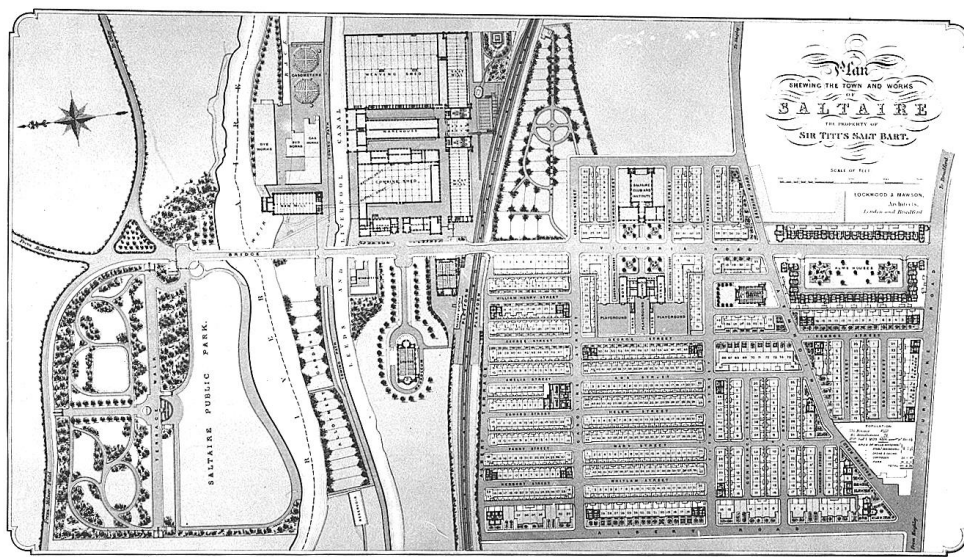
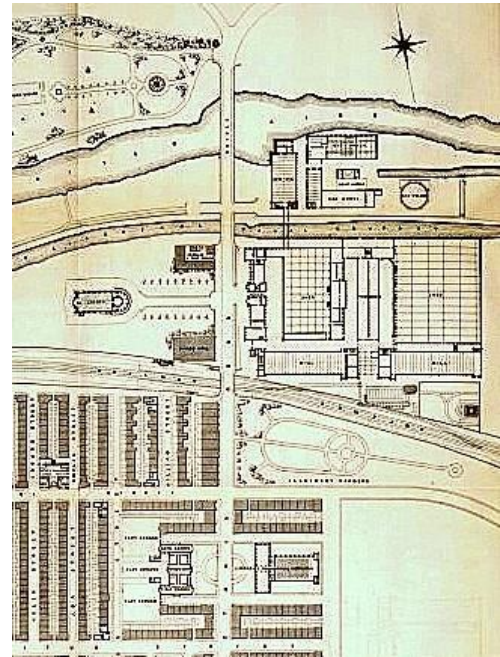
⁹ Ibid. The Copley allotments appear to be on Copley Lane Halifax HX3 0RD. The Akroydon allotments are next to York Terrace, Halifax HX3 6LZ. Both are small scale.

¹⁰ We shall see later that Lockwood Street and (part of) Caroline Street were constructed on part of the original allotment space. For evidence of the dates here, see Les Brook 16 BUILDING CONTRACTS critical appraisal v210622 (unpublished).

¹¹ These indications will be addressed later in this paper. They include various plans; the early foundation (1861) of the Floral and Horticultural Society; the evidence on later OS maps of a unique allotment layout which clearly preceded constructions with known dates, the dates of which are known; the date of the Garden Cottage; and the 1887 W and R Mawson plan. And why not early, since they required little effort or money to construct?

Creating a colossal factory in such a setting was an act of vandalism... or so it might seem. So would it not be appropriate to re-create 'rural' outdoor space within the village? And would it not also facilitate a splendid view of the mighty mill? ¹³

That the optics of this space were important and that the space was designed is evidenced by its layout. The two early plans here show the allotments organised around a symmetrical guitar pattern of pathways ¹⁴. And what is striking is that subsequent Ordnance Survey (OS) maps confirm that this elaborate arrangement was actually built.



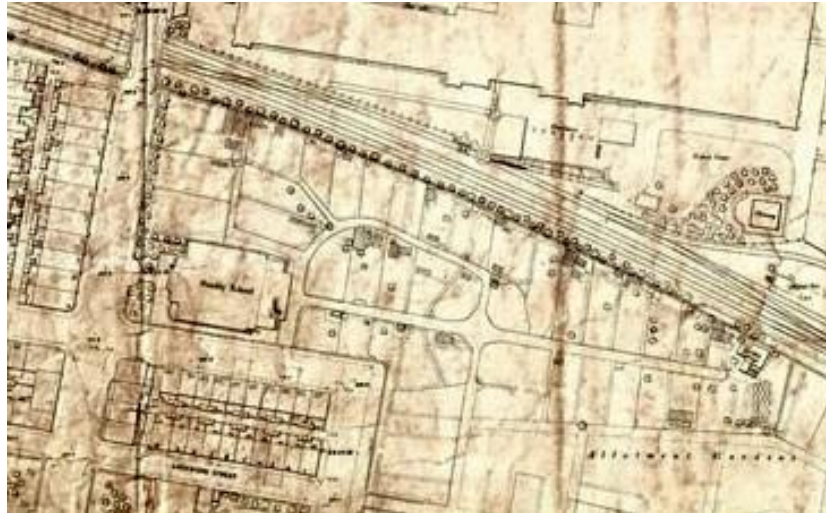
¹² Balgarnie's Salt with commentary and additions by Barlo and Shaw

¹³ A: This is not a silly question. Saltair village has many designed vistas. Try looking down George Street to the URC Church and beyond. Glorious!

B: Hopefully to be added to a future draft: material from Ruth Quinn's PhD thesis. See summary here: <https://heritageconsortium.ac.uk/current-students-2/2017-cohort/ruth-quinn/>

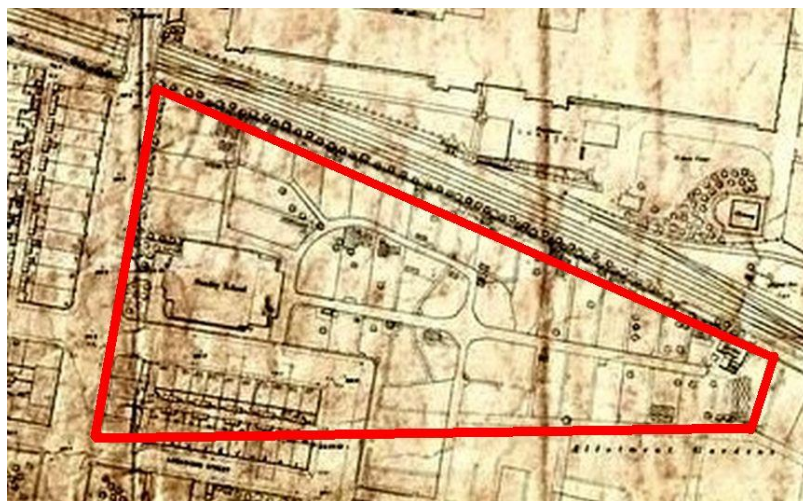
¹⁴ Unfortunately, these are plans and not maps. Maps are reliable sources of information, of what existed or exists. Plans may be just that: plans. For example, in the present cases: the top plan shows a layout for Saltair Park (now Roberts Park) that was not implemented, and neither plan depicts the Sunday School. Unlike maps, plans can be very difficult to date. However, the top one is from *Reports on the Paris Universal Exhibition, 1867*. Thanks to Jo Lintonbon for this info. The document can be read at https://www.google.co.uk/books/edition/_/UQgtf13kA20C?hl=en. The lower image is later than 30 October 1869. We know that because the second has Salt as a baronet, and he was ennobled on that date.

Here's the evidence – an extract from the 1891 OS map - that the guitar layout was adopted. By the time of this map, considerable construction had taken place on the allotments' southern edge but this cannot hide the remnants of the more extensive, guitar-emblazoned, set of plots.



Look back at the first, earlier plan. It shows the allotments to be enclosed within an area north of Caroline Street. But if we look at the later plan, and more importantly the later, authoritative OS maps like the one above, it is clear that initially these allotments occupied a greater area.

The red line is a rough estimate of the original (~1853 to ~1868) boundary of this larger area ¹⁵.

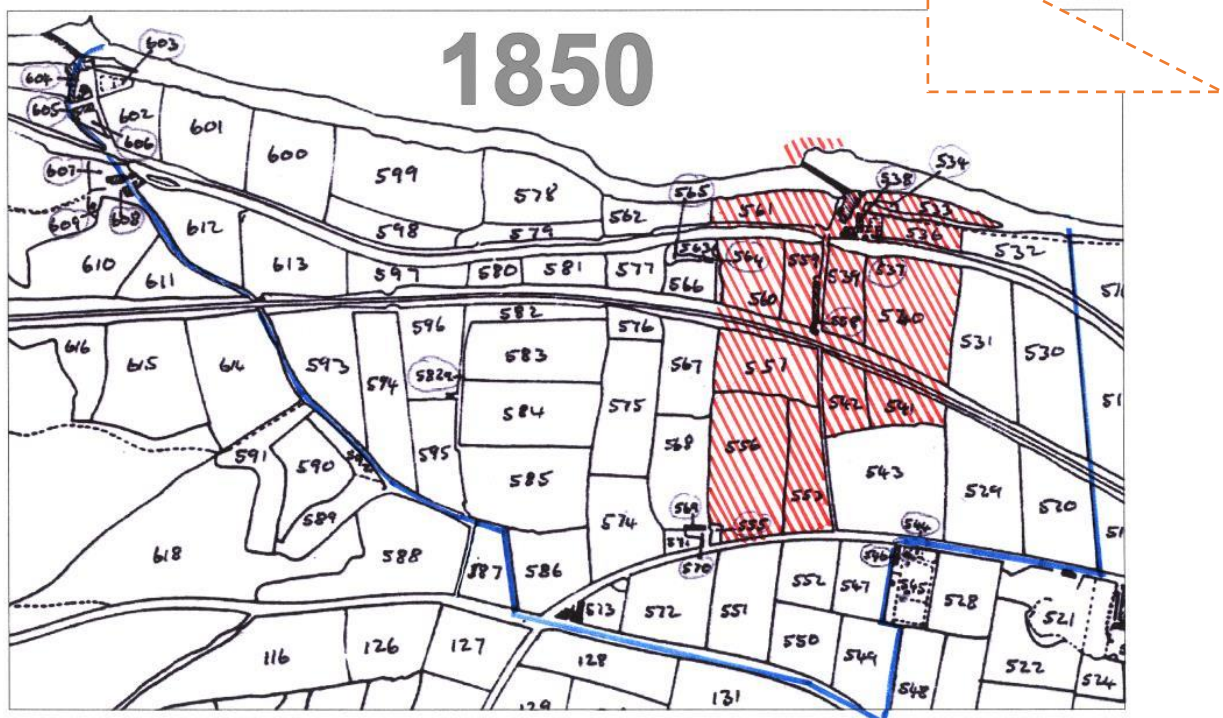


¹⁵ 1868 because, in October of that year, Lockwood and Mawson sought builders for the houses on each side of the Saltaire Institute (Victoria Hall), including the eastern end of Caroline Street. The latter group of houses feature at the bottom right of the area marked within red lines above. Bradford Observer..8 October 1868.

That the first area of allotments was more extensive is not entirely surprising if we look back at the plots of land which the village occupied to the east of Victoria Road. The analysis that follows makes considerable use of research by Ian Watson in The Land Acquisitions of Titus Salt ¹⁶.

Saltaire was built on many separate fields with multiple owners, and they were purchased by Salt over a lengthy period ¹⁷. Indeed, much of Saltaire was built well before significant areas were in Salt's hands. Immediately below is Ian's map showing the first purchase. It involved many fields, was made in 1850, and is hatched in red.

Fields 542 and 541 occupy the area immediately south of the railway line in front of the mill which were to host the allotments. Note the area's roughly triangular shape.

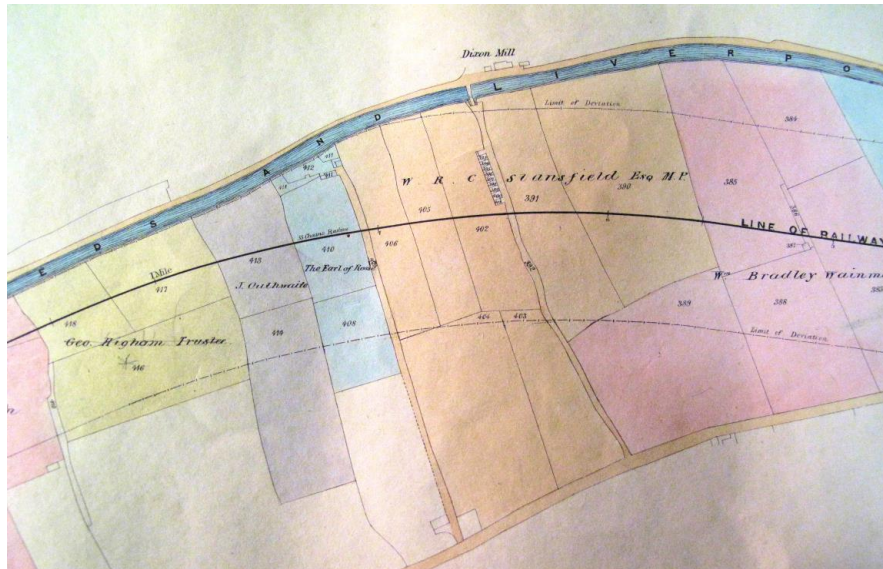


If fields 542 and 541 in front of the mill were all given over to allotments in the 10 or more years after the mill opened (1853) – and I believe they were – the area they covered would have been greater than their area in the first of the early plans above. In fact, it would have been roughly the same as the red-boundaried, rough-estimate area in the map above. Not a coincidence. There is no reason for not converting both of these fields into allotments. The implementation of the building plan (the earliest of the plans above) could not proceed until field 543 was purchased.

¹⁶ Ian's booklet is available at <https://www.saltairecollection.org/wp-content/uploads/THE-LAND-ACQUISITIONS-OF-TITUS-SALT-IW-2018.pdf>.

¹⁷ Ibid. Almost all the land consisted of conventional farmland at the time of the purchases, and contained a range of arable, pasture and grass-meadow.

Below are two more maps from the period before Salt had purchased any land in the area. The enclosure map is not dated but clearly pre-dates the OS map which was surveyed in 1848¹⁸. The roughly triangular shape is in evidence on both. The railway line is the upper boundary of these two fields and the western boundary is a track or road, Dixon Mill Lane.



¹⁸ It was published in 1852 and is usually referred to as the 1852 OS map.

Back to Salt's land acquisitions. Fields 542 and 541 did not share a common owner with the land to the south, and notably, field 543. Watson shows that it took until 1866 – 16 years after the purchase of 541 and 542! – for the deal to be clinched.

Over that pre-1866 period, Saltaire was being built according to the plan drawn up by Salt's architects, Lockwood and Mawson. However, after April 1860, there's reason to believe that they ran out of land: no invitations to tender for new housing were issued until March 1866 ¹⁹. The conversion of the whole of fields 542 and 541 into allotments was probably not meant to last for ~13 years but that is what happened, and now we know why.

Although it can be argued that this front-of-mill allotment space was a significant and deliberate part of Saltaire's design, it was far from invincible. Indeed, with the benefit of hindsight, the first of our plans can be seen to spell out the architects' intentions: the allotments were always destined to have Caroline Street as their southern boundary.

However, this destiny was breached in the final couple of years of Titus Salt's life when the Sunday School was erected on the allotments. The Bradford Observer reported that

The Sunday schools [sic] attached to [the Congregational, now URC, Church] have hitherto been held in the day school and institute, but, with that munificent elaboration which distinguishes [Titus Salt] the founder of this model town, a distinct building is to be reared, which will also contain distinctive features and appliances specially adapted for Sunday school teaching. The building is being erected on a portion of the allotment gardens in front of the factory... ²⁰.

It seems that planning for a Sunday School ²¹, and specifically planning for its location, was poor to non-existent – and the allotments suffered from that. Perhaps a Sunday School was an afterthought, and although that seems very unlikely in the model village of a very committed Christian, it may indeed be the case, as Jack Reynolds suggests:

¹⁹ Les Brook op cit. They had issued more than 10 in the years 1853 to 1860.

²⁰ Bradford Observer 27 May 1875. Balgarnie's Salt confirms this report: *The [Sunday] schools stand upon a portion of the allotment gardens...*

²¹ We're talking about a Sunday School *building* here. For many years before the construction of a dedicated building, the church ran Sunday School classes both under the church and in the Dining Hall.

The last building of all to be put up was the Congregational Sunday School, built at the corner of Caroline Street and Victoria Road in 1875. Originally, the space had been reserved for a hotel, but the idea had been abandoned and the space re-allocated for use as allotment gardens.

The Congregationalists decided that the basement of the church, which they had used as a Sunday school, was cramped and unsuitable and asked Salt for a site on which to place a new purpose-built structure. Salt agreed and gave in addition £7,000, provided they raised £500 towards the interior decorations. ²²

The trouble with Reynolds' statements is that they are largely misleading or inaccurate:

- This building was a very late addition to the village. "Contract 16" for "New SUNDAY SCHOOL and CLASS-ROOMS" was only published in the press on 18 February 1875 ²³ and the building opened on 29 April 1876, the last building for which Salt himself was responsible ²⁴.
- As we have shown, there is good reason to believe that the allotments in front of the mill were there right from the start – and there is no evidence of a hotel being planned, there or elsewhere.
- Whilst the Congregationalists used their basement for Sunday School classes, their principal location was the Dining Hall. This means that Reynolds' tale of pressure from the congregation may be correct, but not for the reasons suggested.

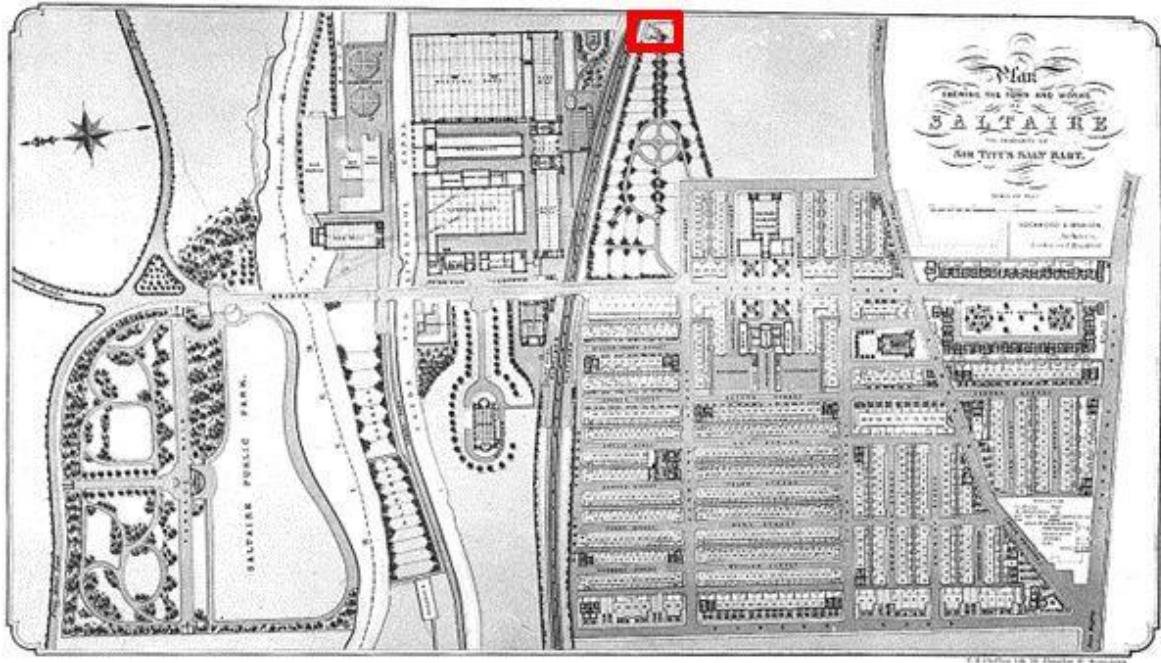
²² Reynolds Jack The Great Philanthropist

²³ Lockwood and Mawson were the architects of Saltaire. Their invitations to tender for Saltaire's buildings were usually called 'contracts'. See Les Brook op cit.

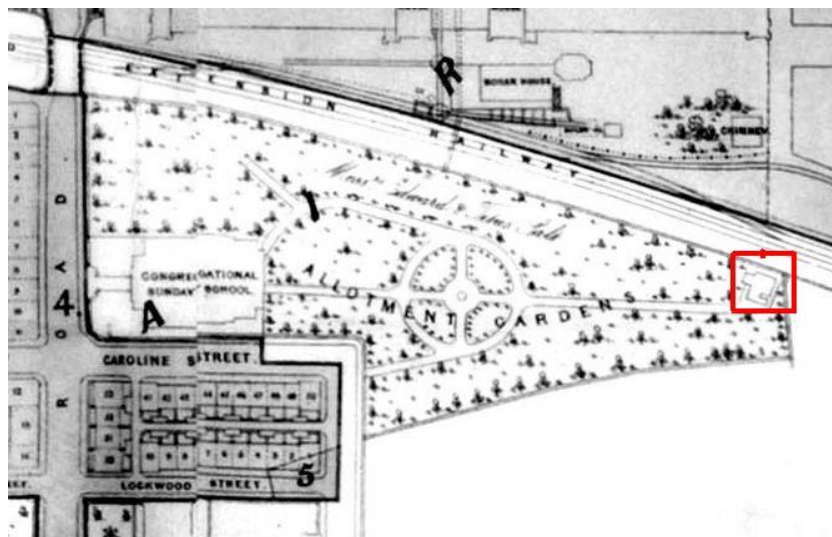
²⁴ In December of 1876, he died. The building was demolished in 1972.
https://salthairvillage.info/Saltaire_WHS_Demolished_buildings.html

The Garden Cottage in the allotments in front of Salts Mill

A rather odd and mysterious addition to the allotments in front of Salts Mill is the Garden Cottage. It was located in the far eastern corner and features on the second Lockwood and Mawson plan of Saltaire...

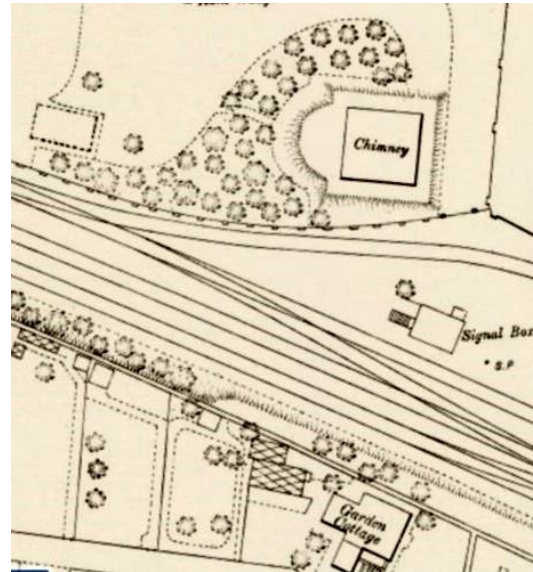


... and on the 1887 Mawson plan (of which more later) ²⁵.



²⁵ This is the most graphic image of construction over the allotments. Note the damage to the guitar pattern. Note also the curvature of the southern boundary of the allotments. This is entirely consistent with the southern boundary of fields 542 and 541, as is the cut-off eastern end of the triangle.

The cottage is much more prominent on the 1891 OS map, directly south of the mill chimney and across the railway line. And it is named.



Two further images *may* show this same building. The first is on a well-known drawing of Salts Mill in the Illustrated London News of 1 October 1853. This is the full 1853 drawing...



and this is a crop from it, showing the building, much-enlarged, to the right of the mill chimney.

We know that, at some point, a signal box was constructed close by, but this is not a Victorian signal box. They were typically 2 storey and did not have chimneys ²⁶. This building's footprint is also similar to that of the Garden Cottage on the 1891 map.

If this 1853 building is a house, it is the first, the oldest, house in Saltaire ²⁷.



²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Signal_boxes_that_are_listed_buildings_in_England

But leaving aside that intriguing possibility, census records from 1861 to 1901 confirm that Garden Cottage was a house, and had occupants. The first four of these censuses show Joseph and Maria Kitchen and as many as three daughters living there. Joseph was not employed in gardening ²⁸. He was a power loom overlooker who had retired by 1891. Newspaper records show that he was a keen flower grower who won a number of prizes ²⁹.

In the 1901 census, the cottage was occupied by Bramley Badland, a wool sorter, his wife Hannah and their two young children. In the 1911 census Garden Cottage is not listed. Indeed, it probably disappeared (was demolished?) by 1908 as it is not shown on the 1908 OS map ³⁰.

UNESCO failed to recognise this corner of Saltaire when it delineated the boundaries of the historic village. That was a significant omission. The evidence shows that the cottage and the nearby allotments were part and parcel of the original village. There is a strong case for this cottage having been built as early as 1853, but even if it wasn't, the census returns show that it was in place before a very significant fraction of the houses in the village ³¹.

²⁷ There's no record of Garden Cottage amongst the Lockwood and Mawson 'contracts', most probably because contracts were for large groups of houses or single large buildings such as the Congregational Church. See Les Brook op cit.

²⁸ Which scotches the idea that this cottage was built to accommodate an allotments' supervisor.

²⁹ Joseph Kitchen won "the best cultivated Cottage Garden" at the 1856 Airedale show, described below. This surely indicates that Garden Cottage was built by 1856 and adds value to the argument that the allotments were up and running by that date.

³⁰ Thanks to Jack Hargreaves for this observation.

³¹ Les Brook op cit.

The allotment holders and others combine: the Horticultural, Pig, Dog, Poultry and Pigeon Society

Within 7 years or so of the construction of the first streets in Saltaire, a Floral and Horticultural Society had been formed. Its changes of name reflect the range of uses of gardens and allotments that we have uncovered above ³². Founded in 1861 as the Floral and Horticultural Society ³³, it was renamed as the Horticultural, Pig and Dog Society in 1873, and in 1876 became the Horticultural, Pig, Dog, Poultry and Pigeon Society.

It had about 100 members, most prominent among them being long serving and skilled mill employees such as Eli Lambert, Isaac Constantine, John Hanson, James Ellis, Sam Baldwin and James Rushton. Men with local status were most likely to be allocated and to keep the allotments which the firm provided, though they could not establish a total monopoly since there were 100 allotments and 38 piggeries along the canal side ³⁴. It had an annual show and exhibition which was a highlight of the village social life for many years.

Notwithstanding the importance to Saltaire of this local organisation and its show, it was not unique and it didn't appear from nowhere.

In 1856, the Bradford Observer ran an article on the second annual exhibition ³⁵ of the Airedale Floral and Horticultural Society in "Mr Darlington's park, Shipley" ³⁶ A. At >3,000 words long, this news article is encyclopaedic and indicates that gardening and related activities were of substantial local importance well before the existence of Saltaire.

³² This short summary about the Society is based on text in Saltaire Overlookers 1830 to 1914 by Roger Clark in collaboration with Colin Coates. Roger acknowledges that much of the information is from Reynolds op cit pp303/4

³³ Bradford Observer Thursday 23 June 1870. Announcement of the ninth annual show of the Saltaire Floral and Horticultural Society.

³⁴ Bradford Observer of 27 August 1863 according to Reynolds op cit

³⁵ Though the event was described as an "exhibition", at its heart was a comprehensive competition.

³⁶ Bradford Observer 21 August 1856. Mr Darlington was almost certainly John Darlington, the resident of Shipley Hall which was in the middle of Shipley, more or less where Wetherspoon's is today. See map in endnote. The "park" is almost certainly the grounds of Shipley Hall. These can be seen on the map.

The author tells us that a “large and commodious marquee” was erected and it held examples of the following produce:

| | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| Acacia | Cauliflowers | Kidney Beans | Peas | Stocks |
| Achimenes | Cherries | Kidney Potatoes | Petunias | Stove Plants |
| African Marigolds | Cineraria | Lettuce | Picotees | Strawberries |
| Antirrhinums | Coxcombs | Lilium | Plums | Verbenas |
| Apples | Cucumbers | Melon | Potatoes | White Turnips |
| Asters | Dahlias | Mosses | Raspberries | White, Red, Yellow and Green Gooseberries |
| Autumn-Sown Onions | Eschalots | Nectarines | Red And White Grapes | |
| Beans | Ferns | Onions | Redcurrants | Yellow Turnips |
| Blackcurrants | French Marigolds | Orchid | Rhubarb | |
| Cabbage | Frontignac | Pansies | Roses | |
| Campanula | Fuchsias | Parsley | Round Potatoes | |
| Carnations | Garlic | Parsnips | Spring Onions | |
| Carrots | Gloxinia | Peaches | | |

And in addition to all these vegetables and flowers, there was poultry:

| | | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Bantams | Fowls of the Sultan | Silver Pencilled or Chittapratt |
| Cochin China or Brama Pootro | Golden Spangled Hamburg | Silver Spangled Hamburg |
| Dorking | Polands | Spanish fowls |
| Ducks | | |

and pigeons:

| | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Common | Tumblers | Antwerps | Jacobins |
| Carriers | Fantails | Turbites | |

and game too! ³⁷

³⁷ Doyle, Martin The Illustrated Book of Domestic Poultry George Routledge & Company, 1854 is a splendid reference book on Brahma Pootros and Chittapratts! Download it free from https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=dgBLAQAAMAAJ&source=gbs_slider_cls_metadata_7_mylibrary

This remarkable range of fruit, veg, flowers and domesticated animals does not tell us what would have been cultivated and kept in Saltaire's allotments – but it is surely indicative. It may also provide evidence of the gender balance in gardening in mid-C19 West Yorkshire. Amongst the very long list of successful competitors, only one (Mrs Sharp, a poultry keeper) appears to be female.

The attendance at the 1856 event also tells a story. It drew people from across the largest county in England. Folk came from Bingley, Bradford, Leeds, Skipton, Holmfirth, York, Wakefield, and Otley.

And Titus Salt was amongst the distinguished guests. An indication of what we suspect from our study of Saltaire's founder's allotment plans – that he was firmly committed to allotment gardening being a feature of his model village. Though we have little direct evidence that Titus was also enamoured of allotmenting itself, one snippet does suggest he was supportive, and it is dated May 1848, pre-dating Saltaire:

BRADFORD PIG AND POULTRY SHOW.—We stated several weeks ago that preliminary steps had been taken to get up a show of pigs and poultry in this town. It will be seen by reference to another column that that is now a settled matter, and that the first show of “the Bradford Association for the improvement of the breed of pigs and poultry” will be held on the 28th of July next. The prizes offered are on a most liberal scale; more so, we believe, than those of any of the neighbouring associations. The association starts under the patronage of the Mayor, and the presidency of Titus Salt, Esq. ³⁸

The allotments at the Exhibition grounds

By the late 1880s, the allotment gardens in front of the mill occupied a much larger area than that long thin triangle shown on the earliest plans.

Here's a drawing which dates from the late 1880s/mid-1890s. The large building bottom right is Exhibition Building ³⁹, constructed for the 1887 Royal Yorkshire Jubilee Exhibition. Below the drawing is an extract from the 1889 OS map. Both evidence a greatly increased area of allotments.

³⁸ Bradford Observer 24 May 1848

³⁹ This is its modern name.



It appears that the closure of the 1887 Exhibition prompted a discussion on the use of its extensive grounds which, on the map above, are to the east of the 'Technical Schools' (now called Exhibition Building).

On 13 April 1889, the Shipley Times reported:

We understand that the trustees of the late Sir Titus Salt are prepared to lay out the ground on which the greater part of the [The Royal Yorkshire Jubilee Exhibition] stood in 1887 for garden allotments. It is hoped that this will meet an admitted want amongst the population of Shipley and part of Saltaire.

There are several acres of ground, and, if the desire for allotments equals the quantity of land, the trustees will proceed to enclose the land suitably

and substantially. Practically, it is proposed to build a stone wall from the corner of the Technical School to the boundary wall of the Board Schools [now Wycliffe CE Primary School].

The intervening space between this wall and the railway will be staked out for allotment pieces, and if required, the ground alongside the railway up to the Primitive Methodist Chapel [today, the site of a Tesco Local] will also be taken in. The ground is certainly well adapted for garden plots, and the soil is abundant and suitable for the raising of garden produce, as well as for fancy gardening.

In these days of demand for allotments throughout the country, it is satisfactory to know that the growing population of this district have an opportunity keeping pace with their fellows in more distinctly rural districts.

Of course we are not in a position to state the terms on which the trustees will be willing to let the allotments, but we are assured that, in keeping with the desire to meet a felt want, there is no intention of fixing terms such as would preclude cottagers taking advantage of the offer.

At present the trustees leave the matter in the hands of Mr Samuel Barber, than whom no one is better qualified to know the needs of the district. Seeing that gardening operations are in their inception for the produce of the present year, Mr Barber is anxious to know as early as possible what demand there be may for the allotments in order to enable the trustees to make final arrangements. In other words, those who wish to have allotments should see Mr Barber [⁴⁰] and state their wishes to him.

Within two months, the Shipley Times indicated that most of the plots were taken:

We are informed that there are still a few garden plots for disposal in the Exhibition Grounds, which Sir Titus Salt Bart., & Co., have laid out for allotment gardens. Mr. S. Barber has the matter in hand and is prepared to receive applications. ⁴¹

So where are these allotments now?

In the decade that followed this major increase in plot numbers, Salts Mill and Saltaire changed hands. In 1892 the Salt family left the scene and a consortium took over. The four principals were Isaac Smith, John

⁴⁰ From c1866 to his retirement in 1888, Samuel Barber was clerk of works at Saltaire Mills. He lived at 50 Victoria Road. He was a member of the Shipley Local Board (the local council) from 1874 to 1890.

⁴¹ Shipley Times 22 June 1889

Maddocks, James Roberts and John Rhodes ⁴². Roberts would go on to become the sole owner and, by the 1901 census ⁴³, three streets had been built on the former Exhibition grounds – and thus on a swathe of the 1889 garden allotments.

It is worth noting that, in 1889, the decision to create these allotments would have been made by the son of Titus Salt. The new proprietors appear not to have shared the same commitment to allotment gardens as the Salt family and, unsurprisingly, two of the streets were named after Maddocks and Rhodes.



A further set of allotments, between canal and river

On 18 October 1870, the Leeds Mercury reported that

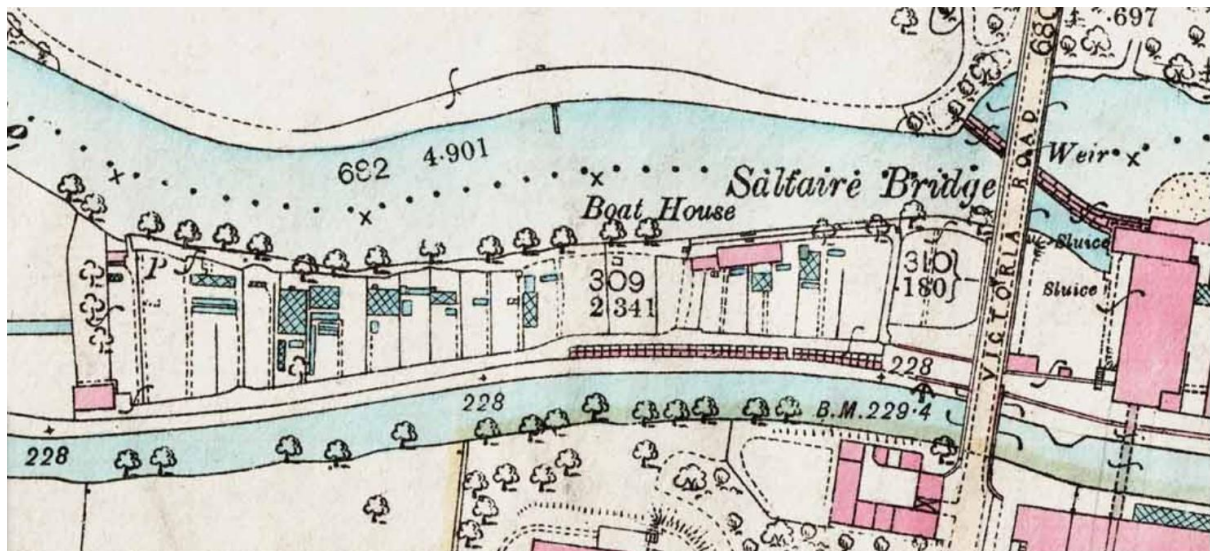
Saltaire is noted for pig keeping, and between the river and the canal a long range of neat pig-styes have been erected, close to the allotment gardens, for the use of the residents who have a taste for home fed ham and bacon.

The most plausible location for these “styes”, “between the river and the canal”, is the area behind and to the west of what is now the Boathouse

⁴² Maggie Smith and Colin Coates Salts Mill: The Owners and Managers 1853 to 1986

⁴³ Based on Colin Coates’ research to be found at <https://saltairevillage.info/>

pub and restaurant. This extract from the OS map, surveyed in 1889 and published in 1893, appears to confirm this as the location of Saltaire's piggeries. There is what may be "a long range of neat pig-styes" directly south of the Boat House and immediately alongside the canal.



In the Merthyr Telegraph of 8 December 1871, these allotments get a very honourable mention by a Saltaire visitor-cum-correspondent:

Returning to the working man's paradise on the south bank of the river Aire, we observe that even the pigs are well cared for. They occupy what may be called a little street, if not a colony, of their own. Sty is too bad a name to apply to the clean little dwellings which the Saltaire gruntes inhabit. They are so substantially and tastefully built, and withal so scrupulously clean.

The Saltaire piggery is a collection of stying styes, soaring far above the filthy holes in which animals of the hog kind are usually brought up. Every sty has its own number, so that one passing along the row is almost tempted to imagine himself in a street of Lilliputians, only that an occasional grunt from some inhabitant, who probably mistakes him for a relative, wakes him from his reverie.

Two years later, on 29 May 1873, the Bradford Observer described Saltaire's allotments in some detail:

Turning my eyes from the factory, I notice a square tract of allotment gardens, let out to such Saltairites as are desirous of growing their own vegetables. The gardens are fresh and bright; flowers blending sweetly with the more useful plants and roots which form so necessary a part of the British workman's dinner.

There is a profusion of peas, cabbages, rhubarb, gooseberries, and other vegetables and fruits familiar in the mouth of the perambulating greengrocer, and the walks and beds are kept with scrupulous care and neatness.

These allotments appear to be those in front of Salts Mill, but our journalist walks on:

Pushing forward still further down this main street (Victoria Road) I come upon the canal where the great iron bridge begins. Here I have a view, to the right, of the north end of the factory buildings, and to the left of another series of allotment gardens.

These allotments appear to be the piggeries.

That Saltaire was “noted for pig keeping” suggests these allotments had been there for some time before the earliest newspaper reference in 1870. This implies that they were a relatively early feature of the village – and maybe they were because Titus himself approved of pig (and poultry) husbandry. The newspaper snippet cited above supports this view: in 1848, he was already President of the Bradford Pig and Poultry Society.

There is further reason to believe that pig-keeping in Saltaire started early. Local historian Ian Watson has demonstrated that Salt did not buy the land for Saltaire in one fell swoop. Quite the opposite, explains Ian in his excellent [The Land Acquisitions of Titus Salt](#), and he dates to 1851/1852 the purchase of the fields⁴⁴ that made up the bulk of this “between the river and the canal” allotment land which housed a concentration of piggeries⁴⁵. This is very early amongst Salt’s acquisitions, coinciding with the construction of the mill itself.

Though we can’t claim to know the exact date when these allotments were established, we do have some clues as to when the piggeries expired.

⁴⁴ Numbered 561 and 562

⁴⁵ Ian’s booklet is available at [https://www.saltairecollection.org/wp-](https://www.saltairecollection.org/wp-content/uploads/THE-LAND-ACQUISITIONS-OF-TITUS-SALT-IW-2018.pdf)

[content/uploads/THE-LAND-ACQUISITIONS-OF-TITUS-SALT-IW-2018.pdf](https://www.saltairecollection.org/wp-content/uploads/THE-LAND-ACQUISITIONS-OF-TITUS-SALT-IW-2018.pdf).

Ian tells me that plot 561 was owned by W R Crompton Stansfield of Esholt Hall and was part of Salt’s first purchase in late 1850. The sale was finalised in 1851. Plot 562 was a small field owned by Dr John Outhwaite of Bradford. It was sold to Salt in 1852. The neighbouring plots (to the west) are 578/9. These were owned by William Wright, a manufacturer of paper at Hirst Mill. They were purchased by Salt in 1854.

They were reported as “rapidly disappearing” in 1901. The same newspaper making that claim also spoke of “their removal” ⁴⁶. Was this a decision of the mill which owned the land or the local authority or a court?
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Whatever, the closure was highlighted because of the alleged stealing of a pig trough in which the protagonists were all from Saltaire or thereabouts. The Shipley Times ran the story on 13 July 1901. The victim of the crime was Whitaker Clough of Caroline Street, Saltaire, who “had rented pig-cotes, which were being pulled down”. A witness, Benjamin Read, who lived at Constance Street, Saltaire, said he was “employed in pulling down the pig cotes on 19 & 20 June”. Alfred E. Jackson, a second witness, also said that he was “employed in pulling down the piggeries”.

But were the allotments closed? Or was it just the piggeries?

In January 1922 ⁴⁸, the Shipley Times reported the purchase by “Sir Titus Salt, Bart., Sons and Co., Ltd., Saltaire Mills” ⁴⁹ from Shipley Council of a substantial area of land including that behind the Congregational church. We shall look at this acquisition in more detail later, but for the moment we’re focusing on the “between the river and the canal” area and the report includes this:

the allotments lying near the boathouse opposite Saltaire Park [ie “between canal and river”] are to be done away with ⁵⁰, and the Caroline Street Allotments will probably share a similar fate...

A most comprehensive scheme for the laying-out of the land between the canal and the river Aire has been drawn up. The allotments situate near the boathouse are removed because of their unsightly appearance...

Well, we know that the Caroline Street allotments (ie those in front of the mill) survived – but the first part of this quotation makes clear that the “between canal and river” allotments were still in existence in January 1922. They had survived the 1901 dissolution of the piggeries and may well have been closed completely in the early 1920s “because of their

⁴⁶ Shipley Times 13 July 1901

⁴⁷ Note the involvement of the police, the courts and the Salts Mill company in the stories that follow.

⁴⁸ Exact date not known.

⁴⁹ At this time, the Salt name was still in use, even though it was 30 years since the family lost ownership.

⁵⁰ This is confirmed as the intention by the 1923 Estate Office plan (which can be seen at Endnote C). The land between canal and river is shown as landscaped.

unsightly appearance". And as we shall see below, a significant number of new allotments, behind the church, would more than compensate for their demise.

Clearly there was a plan in the early 20s to close these "between canal and river" allotments. But was it implemented? At this point we do not know - but fast forward to 1937. Close inspection of this aerial photo shows no allotments "between canal and river" by then.



Before becoming "unsightly", the piggeries (if not the allotments) had an unsavoury history.

On 27 April 1881, the Yorkshire Post reported that

An alarming outbreak of swine fever has just been discovered in the Saltaire piggeries on the canal bank at Saltaire, near the mills of Sir Titus Salt, Sons. & Co... it is feared that the disease may spread amongst the large number of pigs stored in the piggeries, which number altogether nearly 100.

Further cases were reported by the Post on 2 May and, less than 2 weeks later, the Shipley Times, said that

*During the past week, the police authorities have deemed it necessary to slaughter three pigs believed to be suffering from swine fever*⁵¹.

The involvement of the police is notable, as is that of "the firm of Sir Titus Salt, Sons, & Co." who

⁵¹ 14 May 1881

have issued the following notice regarding their piggeries [my emphasis]: Pigs are not to be brought direct from any public market, but only from places ascertained to be free from disease, and where the pigs have been for at least fourteen days immediately preceding.

Further outbreaks of swine fever were reported by the Shipley Times on 13 August and 3 September 1881 and "the district has been declared an infected area".

This most destructive disease still continues its direful work at the Saltaire Piggeries

was the Times judgement on 1 October, and

... at present there are one-third of the thirty seven styes empty.

It was no better 5 weeks later:

Swine Fever has once more broken out at Saltaire piggeries. This time a young pig belonging to Jabez Giles has been slaughtered, and the place has been declared an infected locality ⁵².

This whole episode was repeated in 1885:

Information was given to Sergeant Bradbury on Tuesday (30 June), by William Walker of the dining rooms, Saltaire, that he had a pig suffering from swine fever. The animal was visited and subsequently slaughtered ⁵³...

Constable Russell has reported receiving information about five o'clock p.m. on 11 July, from William Buck, of 32 Ada Street, Saltaire, that he had a pig on his premises at the piggeries, Saltaire, which he supposed to be suffering from swine fever. The animal has since been destroyed ⁵⁴.

Further outbreaks occurred in 1887 and then in 1890.

In 1887:

The premises of the following persons in the Saltaire Piggeries have been declared, by a sub-committee for the East Morley Petty Sessional Division, under the above Act to be infected with swine fever - William Camm,

⁵² Shipley Times 5 November 1881

⁵³ Shipley Times and Express 4 July 1885

⁵⁴ Shipley Times and Express 18 July 1885

Martin Furnish, Samuel Hall, Holland Crabtree, Wm. Buck, Richard Newsome, John Milton, Samuel Beanland, and Albert Hargreaves ⁵⁵.

In 1890:

On Saturday 25 January, Mr Jonathan Foster, of Constance Street, Saltaire, night watchman at Saltaire Mills, reported to the police that one of his pigs in the piggeries at Saltaire was ill. Inspector Bielby visited the place and found three pigs in the cote, one apparently suffering from fever. The matter was reported to Supt. Symonds, and his direction Mr Collins, veterinary surgeon, of Bradford, visited the place on Sunday morning, and declared two pigs to be suffering from swine fever. On the following day both pigs were destroyed, and the sty was declared to be an infected area under the Contagious Diseases (Animals) Act.

On Thursday the magistrates further declared the whole of the piggeries at Saltaire to be an infected area, and the owners would not be permitted to remove any of the animals without a licence ⁵⁶.

By February 1890:

In reference to the outbreak of swine fever at the Saltaire piggeries, reported a week ago, several more pigs have succumbed this week, and under order of the police have been buried. The piggeries within the infected area are in the occupation of the following persons: Jonathan Foster, Luke Pedley, John Milton, James Jackson, William Buck, Thomas Mawson, Joseph Pitts, William Camm, Richard Newsome, Samuel Beanland, Albert Milton, George Shuttleworth, Jonas Bower, James Brook, Thomas Clarke, Jabez Giles, and Michael O'Donnell ⁵⁷.

But by April 1890, Jonathan Foster's piggery was free from infectious disease ⁵⁸ so we might assume that all was well.

Unfortunately, 1892 saw disaster strike again. The Nelson Chronicle ran a piece:

an extensive outbreak of swine fever has occurred at the piggeries near the allotment gardens, Saltaire. The whole of the piggeries have been declared within an infected area, and many of the animals have had to be slaughtered. The consequent loss to pigkeepers is somewhat serious. ⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Shipley Times and Express 27 August 1887

⁵⁶ Shipley Times and Express 1 February 1890

⁵⁷ Shipley Times 8 February 1890

⁵⁸ Leeds Times 12 April 1890

⁵⁹ 17 June 1892

Less than three weeks later the Yorkshire Evening Post announced that “the number of cases of swine fever at Saltaire was decreasing”.⁶⁰

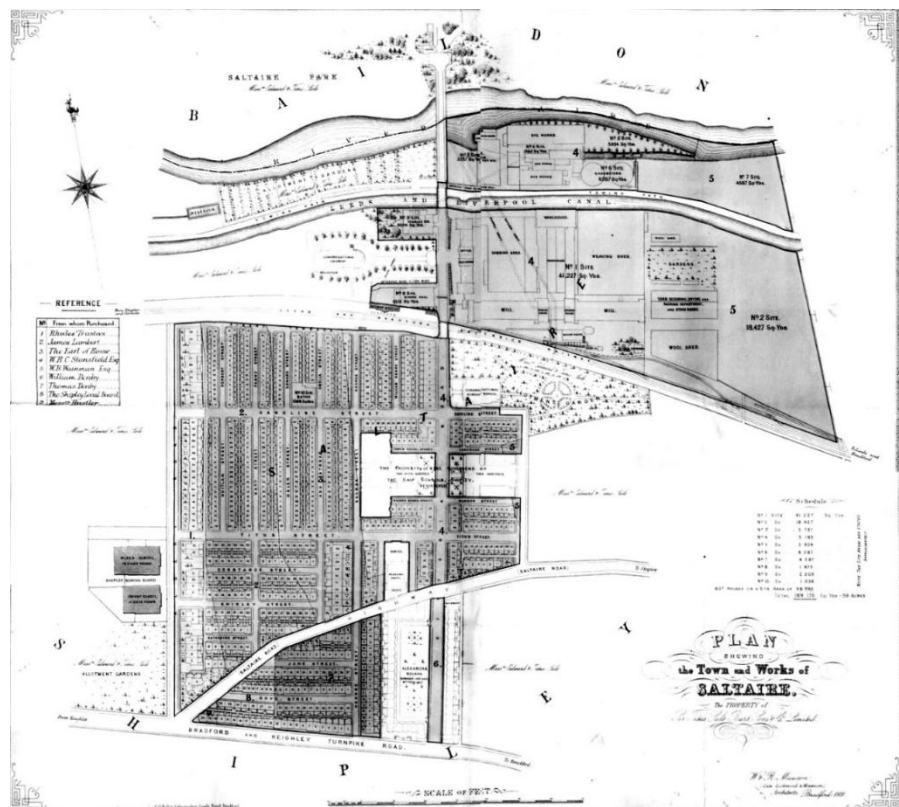
Did these regular outbreaks of swine fever lead to the demise of the piggeries? It seems possible but not probable. The closure (in the early 20s?) seems to have happened some years after the last reported outbreak.

[Porcine postscript...](#) This section of our exploration of Saltaire’s piggeries would not be complete without a twist in the curly tail. And here it is. An allotment holder from the front-of-mill allotments has just told us (June 2022) that his plot frequently yields pig bones.

The allotment gardens in Albert Road, Saltaire

In 1887, W and R Mawson⁶¹ published a plan showing “The Town and Works of Saltaire”.

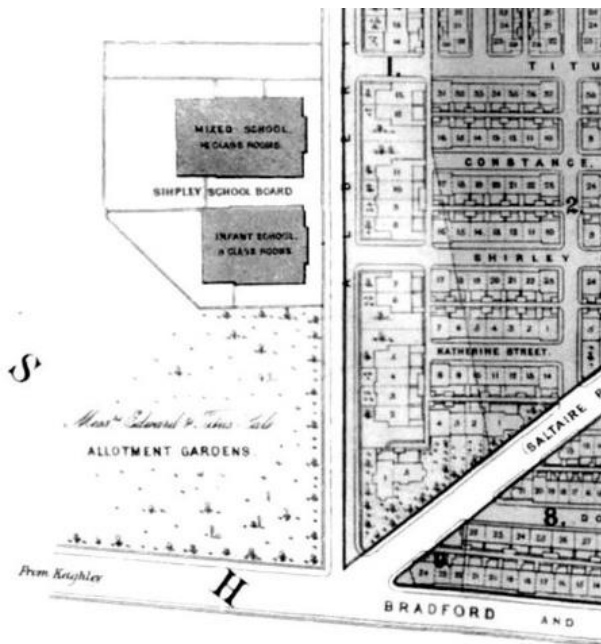
1887 was over 10 years after the end of the construction of the original village so we can take it that it is more of a map than a plan.



⁶⁰ 4 July 1892

⁶¹ The successor architects to Lockwood and Mawson.

In the bottom left corner was the top (southern) end of Albert Road and to its left were the Shipley School Boards Mixed and Infant schools. To their south were "Messrs Edward & Titus Salt Allotment Gardens".



This - on a plan drafted by the successor to the architects of Salts Mill, on land owned by Salts Mill ⁶² - surely means that the Albert Road allotments were 100% part of Saltaire. Regrettably, the 1891 OS map covering this area and which was surveyed in 1889 to 1891 fails to identify a group of allotments as such.

The first intimation we have of these allotments ⁶³ is to be found in a Shipley Times article dated 1 July 1893.

A few days before 1 July, at the Bradford County Police Court,

Thomas Laycock, labourer, of Saltaire, was brought up on suspicion of being concerned in the theft of pigeons from the allotment gardens in Albert Road...Constable Fuller saw the prisoner near to the Rosse Hotel [64], at 6.30 on Sunday morning. There were blood stains and other marks on the prisoner's clothing and hat, and also marks of tar. The officer could not find the pigeons, but the prisoner's boots corresponded exactly with the footprints in the gardens, and there was tar on the railings there.

When apprehended, the prisoner said, "I know nothing of the b_____ pigeons", The prisoner denied the allegation...

⁶² See the later information about the successors to the Salts trying to sell this land.

⁶³ ... and of any of Saltaire's allotments being used for the keeping of pigeons!

⁶⁴ Just across the main road from the Albert Street allotments... suspicious!

The prisoner's mother was called, and she declared that her son on Saturday night went to bed at 11.30, and she was quite sure he was not up on Sunday morning before 9 or 10 a.m.... The police were always on to him because he took a drop of beer.

The Bench concluded that there was insufficient evidence to convict and the prisoner was discharged.

Two years later, the consortium which had bought Saltaire in 1892 were off-loading land in this same part of the village.

...Wooller Jennings, auctioneer, of Bradford, offered for sale by auction, at the Sun Hotel, about fifty acres of land, which formed part of the Saltaire Estate, and was submitted by order of the Saltaire Syndicate.

Lots 49,50, and 51... contained 6100 square yards extending from the top of Albert Road to Hirst Lane, and now occupied as allotment gardens. ⁶⁵

Since no offers were made, we may assume that the allotments were spared... but not for long.

In 1902, a tramshed was built towards the top of Albert Road, and some allotments were lost. The tramshed still exists, as a brewery and restaurant called Salt Bar and Kitchen.

The Shipley Times' editor was sympathetic to the allotment holders for their loss:

One result of the erection of the intended tramway-car shed at Saltaire will be the displacement of some of the tenants of the gardens at the top of Albert Road, which will be a pity, as I know that these garden plots have been greatly valued, as well as been a great convenience to those residing near, who could get a fresh salad or a few tomatoes and other things in season.

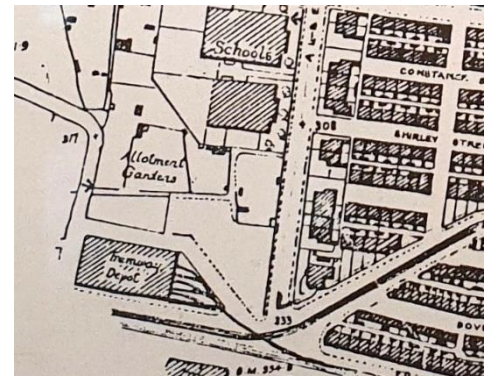
I believe steps will be taken to bring before the District Council the question of the provision of gardens under the Allotments Act. Several years ago, a committee of the Council was formed to deal with the matter, but nothing was done, I think, beyond making a few inquiries to suitable land for the purpose.

The destruction of some of the gardens at Saltaire, however, seems likely to bring the subject once more to the front, and if a sufficient number of applicants come forward, there ought not to be much difficulty in

⁶⁵ Shipley Times 29 June 1895. "There is no set standard size but the most common plot is 10 rods, an ancient measurement equivalent to 302 square yards or 253 square metres" says <https://www.allotment-garden.org/allotment-information/allotment-history/>. This means that the Albert Road allotments consisted of ~20 plots.

providing ground for the encouragement of such a healthy and desirable recreation.⁶⁶

It transpired that many allotments were lost. But not all, as we can see from this extract from an October 1923 Saltaire estate office plan.^{67 68} Much later however, a housing estate was built on the area formerly occupied by allotments – and on land to the west and north.



Nonetheless, two very small allotment gardens remain in the area today - at the southern ('top') end of Hirst Lane (**H**) and the western end of Carlton Avenue (**C**)⁶⁹. However, only **H** is in the original location, ie on land labelled "Allotment Gardens" on the 1890 OS map.



⁶⁶ Shipley Times 5 September 1902

⁶⁷ A copy of the full plan can be found at endnote C.

⁶⁸ The closeness to the school of this residual and small piece of allotment land prompts an interesting question. Had it become a school garden? After all, by 1918, 51 Bradford schools were growing potatoes, cabbages, cauliflowers, beans and peas. See Telegraph and Argus 25 July 2020

⁶⁹ Personal observations by James Roberts and Les Brook. James thinks they may have survived because of their location, over a water main.

Solving the food problem in the First World War - by creating allotment gardens

The 1914/18 world war demanded an increase in domestic food production and on 7 January 1916, the Shipley Times reported that

The Shipley District Council have decided to put into cultivation the vacant land in the area suitable for growing potatoes and other vegetables...

The Shipley Council is probably the first authority in the Riding to undertake what will doubtless be called a municipal potato supply. The experiment will be watched with a good deal of interest not only at Shipley, but in other parts of the Riding. The responsible committee, of which Coun. H. Hirst is chairman, and the officials of the Council will, we are convinced, put forth every effort to make the scheme a success.

By 1917, there is evidence that Shipley District Council had a Food Production Committee. An indication that food production was becoming a pressing issue?

The Clerk reported that, under the Lands Cultivation Order, the committee had taken control of 15 acres 2 roods 35 perches. Of these, 9 acres 2 roods 24 perches had been let off in allotments, leaving 6 acres 11 perches for cultivation by the Council's men under Mr. Newby.

The allotments were divided as follows: Redburn Estate 78, Hirst Wood 67, Moorhead 42, Dockfield 22, making a total of 209 allotments, which are held by 160 persons. Applications for additional allotments at Hirst Wood by present allotment holders were considered, but it was decided that the land now being cultivated by the Council should be kept by the Council for another year.⁷⁰

For whatever reason, the allotments in Saltaire were not included in this inventory, perhaps because they were already established, but Saltaire was the subject of Council action by January 1918.

Notice SHIPLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL ALLOTMENTS

The Council having acquired Land in Albert Road ⁷¹, Saltaire Road, and Manor Lane for Allotment purposes, The Food Production Committee are

⁷⁰ 2 November 1917

⁷¹ As noted elsewhere, the Council did not own the Albert Road land until 1921 – so I assume that in 1918 this ‘acquisition’ meant it was temporarily commandeered to assist the war effort.

Open to Receive Applications from Ratepayers for Plots for the Cultivation of Vegetables, &c.

The area of each Allotment would be approximately 200 square yards, and Applications should be forwarded to the Undersigned not later than 31 January. ISAAC LINDOW, Clerk of the Council... ⁷²

The Council's attention to increased food production – and thus more allotment land – continued:

It was reported that at meeting of the Food Production Committee 19 February the committee had before them a petition from residents at Crag End asking for allotments to be provided in that part of the district...

A report was made that new areas of land had been taken over by the committee and the following allotments provided: Manor Lane, 16; Saltaire Road, 28; Albert Road, 70.

There were also 45 additional plots available on the Redburn Estate. The committee agreed to place a plot of 100 square yards in Saltaire Road at the disposal of the Education Committee for a class of mentally defective children... ⁷³

At a meeting of the Shipley Urban Council on Tuesday (26 March), the Clerk reported that there had been several meetings of the Food Production Committee, and that efforts had been made to get additional allotments in all parts of the town. The following new allotment areas had been obtained: Fernhill, 25 plots; Albert Road, 70; Kitson St., 21; Manor Lane, 16; Saltaire Road, 28; Wrose Brow Road, 2.

Altogether about 9 acres had been added for allotment purposes, and about seven eight additional acres had been ploughed for corn growing.

Coun. Shakespeare said that 75 allotment holders would take up land on Fernhill Road and Coun. Rhodes said there was Kendall's field.

The Clerk said he had written to Mr. Kendall that day. ⁷⁴

⁷² Shipley Times 25 January 1918

⁷³ Shipley Times 1 March 1918

⁷⁴ Shipley Times 29 March 1918. The number of Albert Road allotments does not seem to square with the relatively small area that was left as allotments following the building of the tramshed so it seems likely that other land close by was being utilised. Long-time resident of Saltaire Anthony Briggs says that the Saltaire Road allotments were between the road and railway, east of what is now the Tesco convenience store.

A group of new allotments, behind the Congregational Church

1918 saw Sir James Roberts sell Salts Mill to a syndicate of local businessmen ⁷⁵. But when he walked away from the mill and the village, in his pocket was a significant acreage of local land. It included the Milner Field estate, Saltaire Park and a swathe of land from the Congregational Church to Hirst Wood, bordering the canal.

Over the following years, Roberts disposed of it. Saltaire Park was given to the people of Bradford and became Roberts Park, in memory of Sir James and Lady Roberts' son Bertram, and, in early 1921, Shipley Council bought the 'Church to Hirst Wood' swathe of land.

For some weeks past the Shipley Urban District Council has been in correspondence with Sir James Bart., of Strathallan Castle (formerly of Milner Field), with regard to the purchase of certain land at Saltaire which the Council considers very suitable for public schemes, the provision of allotment gardens, sites for houses, and playing fields.

The result of this correspondence was disclosed when, at a special meeting of the District Council Wednesday (12 January) evening last week, a resolution was unanimously adopted accepting an offer from Sir James Roberts under which the Council become the owners of the whole of the remaining portion of Sir James's estate, south of the River Aire, and extending from Saltaire Mills to the boundary of the district at Hirst Wood, an area comprising approximately 95 acres...

While [the purchase of the land by the Council] was receiving consideration a further letter was received from Sir James, who was anxious that the question should be settled, stating that, should the Council decide to purchase what is known as the Saltaire estate at a price which he named, he would make the Council a free gift of the estates which he purchased in 1911 at the sale of the Rosse properties.

The Council... has unanimously decided to accept this offer of Sir James, and an intimation to that effect has been conveyed to him.

The purchase price for what is described as the Saltaire estate is £13,000. This estate consists of certain allotment plots in front of the Saltaire Mills, in Caroline Street, Saltaire, the Albert Road allotments, the land extending from Albert Road to Hirst Lane, the land lying between the railway and the canal west of the Saltaire Congregational Church, the land lying between the canal and the river extending from Victoria Road to

⁷⁵ Smith and Coates op cit

Hirst Mill, and the boathouse situate on the opposite bank of the river to Roberts Park. The total area of this estate is 52 or 53 acres.

The portion of the Rosse estate which the Council receives from Sir James as a free gift has an area of just over 43 acres and extends from Hirst Lane to the river boundary at Seven Arches. It comprises the whole of the area between the Midland Railway and the river west of Hirst Mill...

No scheme in regard to the lay-out of the estate has yet been finally prepared by the Council, and when the plans are completed the schemes will have to be submitted to the Ministry of Health, which will be asked to grant the necessary borrowing powers. The general public of Shipley, will, in the meantime, however, be gratified to know that they have secured the control of a valuable estate, a considerable portion of which will be available for all time for public recreative purposes. ⁷⁶

But it was not long before the Council sold "a considerable portion" of this land to Salts Mill, who planned to use it for allotments and sports facilities. Note that the local council already thought the land "very suitable for... the provision of allotment gardens". Which is rather fortunate since the *Saltaire Times* report reveals that the front-of-mill allotments were part of the Roberts' package and that they were in the lot purchased by Salts Mill:

It is announced that the directors of Sir Titus Salt. Bart., Sons and Co., Ltd., Saltaire Mills, have acquired from the Shipley District Council a considerable portion of the Saltaire Estate recently purchased by the Council from Sir James Roberts, Bart., the former owner of Saltaire Mills.

The directors intend to use the land for the provision of allotments and recreation fields for their employees.

The Saltaire Estate bought by the District Council from Sir James Roberts comprised:

The land between the river Aire and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal from Victoria Road, to Hirst Mill, an area over 21 acres.

The land between the canal and the Midland Railway (9 acres).

⁷⁶ *Shipley Times* ? Jan 1921. The article goes on to make a comment which, 100 years later, reflects a continuing debate: *When Shipley possesses such lands of public usefulness [as] this estate, and the portion of the Rosse estate recently given to the town by Mr. H. Norman Rae (M.P. for the Shipley Division), it is no wonder that Bradford looks with envious eyes upon Shipley, and Sir James' generosity should add stimulus to Shipley people to try at all costs to maintain the independence of the town, and to resist the annexation proposals of the city of Bradford.*

The allotments facing Victoria Road and Caroline Street.

The land between Albert Road and Hirst Lane (18 acres), a total of 49 acres.

In addition, Sir James presented to the Council as a free gift the lands extending from Hirst Lane to the boundary at Seven Arches, comprising the whole of the area between the Midland Railway and the river west of Hirst Mill. The total area of the estate was about 83 acres.

The land which the directors of Saltaire Mills have now acquired includes the land lying between the river Aire and the canal from Victoria Road bridge and Hirst Mill (17½ acres, excluding the river), and that between the Leeds and Liverpool Canal and the Midland Railway line from the Congregational Church to Hirst Lane (8½ acres) and the Caroline Street Allotments (1¾ acres).

The purchase price, it is understood, is about £6,500. The whole of the land purchased lies on the south side of the river Aire and, in addition to the boathouse the opposite side of the river from the Saltaire Park, it includes several old buildings. Of its original 83-acre estate the Council will retain about 62 acres.

The idea of the directors, in addition to the providing of recreative facilities for their employees, is to beautify the immediate surroundings of the mills. Several old buildings situated on the land acquired will probably be removed, the allotments lying near the boathouse opposite Saltaire Park are to be done away with, and the Caroline Street Allotments will probably share a similar fate.

The land lying behind the Congregational Church and Hirst Lane is to be laid out as allotments. About 100 allotments, from 260 to 400 superficial yards in area, have already been mapped out, and some of these will probably be ready for occupation early in February.

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.

Certain lands, probably about two-thirds of an acre in extent, lying between the canal and the Congregational Church on the east of the church, and on the north side of the church, are to be given to the trustees of the church, and will undoubtedly prove useful for open-air functions, such as picnics.

A most comprehensive scheme for the laying-out the land between the canal and the river Aire has been drawn up. The allotments situate near the boathouse are removed because of their unsightly appearance, and most of this site will be laid out as a sort of pleasure garden or little park. Following this, tennis courts will be constructed, while the central portion of the land will be laid out as a cricket field, which will be larger in area than that of the Saltaire Club. In addition, hockey fields, etc., will be provided.

The District Council is laying a footpath from Victoria Road near Saltaire Bridge to Hirst Mill on the south side of the river Aire and intend fencing off a strip of land 15ft. wide for this purpose, the length of the river to that point, at the centre of this 15ft. strip they intend laying a footpath 4ft. wide.

The scheme is being drawn up and supervised Mr. William Rhodes Minn, M.S.A., architect and clerk of works Saltaire Mills, and will be proceeded with as soon as the land can be secured from the existing tenants. When completed, through the generosity the Saltaire firm, the playing fields and allotments will doubtless enhance the spirit of goodwill which already exists between the employers and workpeople of Saltaire Mills. ⁷⁷

The fact that the present-day allotments behind the Congregational Church were brought into existence suggests that Minn's plan was implemented. An aerial photograph from 1937 shows both the allotments by the church and the original front-of-mill group ⁷⁸.

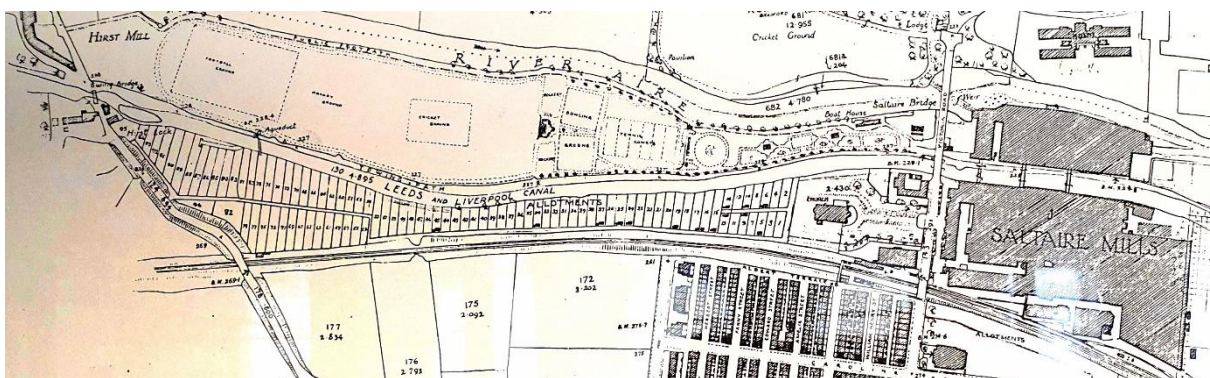


⁷⁷ Shipley Times ?January 1921

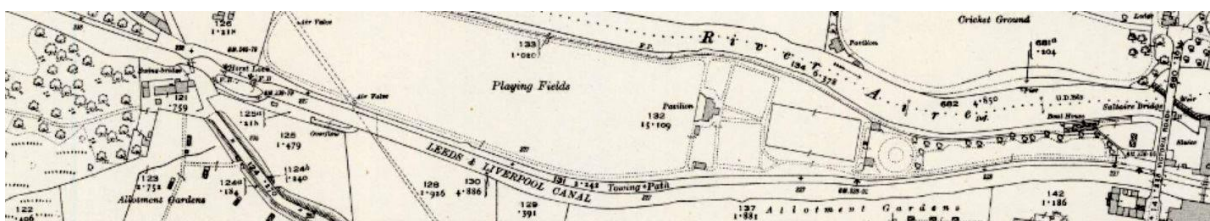
⁷⁸ From <https://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/en/image/EPW054197>

However, this does not tell the whole story. Remember that the Shipley Times reported that “About 100 allotments, from 260 to 400 superficial yards in area, have already been mapped out” and that “the remaining portion of Sir James’s estate, south of the River Aire [extended] from Saltaire Mills to the boundary of the district at Hirst Wood, an area comprising approximately 95 acres...”.

It transpires that what was proposed was far, far bigger than the ~28 allotments which now exist behind the church. The Salts Estate map dated October 1923 reveals all. The proposal was for no fewer than 95 allotments stretching from the church to Hirst Lock!



At the time of writing, we have no evidence that this very ambitious plan was implemented but text and other features on the 1935 OS map suggest that it was not, and that all that was created in ~1923 was what we see today.



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⁷⁹ 1934 revised 1935 published. Unfortunately this area is split across two OS maps which does not help the researcher.

The history of Saltaire's allotments continues to evolve

History never ends, and in recent years there have been developments in communal gardening that deserve a mention here.

Concerned that the land on Caroline Street, formerly occupied by the village wash house, was neglected, the Saltaire Village Society used the 2008 Saltaire Festival to ask people what they thought should be done with it. The idea of a Wash House Garden emerged from this and around 2011, funds were made available from a pot of money managed by ward councillors – and the result was, and is, this delight.



Three raised beds in the garden are now maintained by Veg on the Edge, a new mode of communal gardening which made its Saltaire entrance in 2012 ⁸⁰. Local volunteers work together to create opportunities for community food growing. A key objective is to reclaim areas of underused land. Today the group also look after the Sunday School Garden in Caroline Street car park, raised beds at the junction of Caroline Street and Baker Street a plot at the railway station, and the Japanese Edible Garden on Exhibition Road, supported by Shipley College ⁸¹.

⁸⁰ <https://vegontheedge.org/>

⁸¹ Thanks to Caroline Perry, Molly Kenyon and Rob Martin for much of the information in this section of the paper. A deadline for publication prevents the author from including information in this draft about the important role of the College in horticulture education and in a significant part of the front-of-the-mill allotments.

Saltaire continues to have a significant number of traditional allotments - in front of the mill and to the rear of the United Reform Church. As a result of the creation of a Shipley Town Council, governance of the former has recently transferred from Bradford District to Shipley. The 'behind the church' land is owned by Hartley Properties, the property vehicle of Alan Lewis, formerly chair and chief executive of Illingworth Morris who owned and then closed Salt Mill in 1985 ⁸².

Lewis's ownership of the land echoes Roberts' in the period after 1918. As we said above, "when he [Roberts] walked away from the mill and the village, in his pocket was a significant acreage of local land".

⁸² Maggie Smith and Colin Coates op cit

ENDNOTES

^A 1852 OS map of the old halls of Shipley



^C October 1923 Saltaire estate office plan

