

An Expanded View of our Walsh/Fish Heritage

We are all familiar with the story of William and Alice Walsh leaving England, enduring the trials of the North Atlantic, and crossing the plains in the Martin and Willie Handcart Companies to be with the Saints. We are also familiar with the story of Alice creating the first plaid cloth in Utah, many of us memorizing and reciting the story in school and church, proudly displaying a small piece of that cloth. Despite these wonderful stories of our heritage, how many of us are familiar of some of the other aspects of the Walsh and Fish lines?

I had the unique opportunity to live in the United Kingdom for a year to pursue my Master's degree in the city of Liverpool. Liverpool was the city from which William, Alice, and their children departed their homeland to join the Saints and strengthen their newly found faith in Utah. Liverpool was at that time the great port city of Britain and part of the county of Lancashire. Since Liverpool was close enough to our ancestors' hometowns, I took a daytrip to go and visit these towns to experience a part of our past. I conducted some research beforehand so that I could visit the sites that would have been frequented by our ancestral families. Here, I present my findings and photos of the day I ventured into Blackburn, Darwen, and Accrington. I hope that you will experience some of that newfound respect that I have felt as I discovered what made us Walshes and Fishes.

Darwen

In the days that the Fish family lived in this industrial town, it was known as Over-Darwen. This large town has its heart in a valley of the Pennine Mountains, with portions of it flowing up the side of the surrounding foothills. Darwen is just south of Blackburn and has a very visible industrial revolution past, with several old factories and mills imposing their silhouettes on the town skyline.

Darwen is the ancestral home of the Fishes. A visit to the town's old cemetery yielded many headstones with the Fish name on it. Alice was the daughter of Jane Fish, who was the daughter of Thomas Fish. No biological father is listed with her in any records, and it wasn't until her mother married Edmund Bury several years later that Alice had a father.

Two old churches associated with our line of the are now closed, with the buildings standing but in a derelict state. The Wesleyan Methodist Church is in the city center and was a grand building. A very small cemetery remains, and most headstones were in such a bad state that they were indecipherable. However, I found one upright headstone that mentioned the Fish line. Alice was christened here in 1829.

The other church, which was frequented by our direct line, was the Lower Independent Church in northeastern Darwen. This was a much smaller building, and quite a bit older, dating back to 1719. This church was near the edge of town and in Alice's time may have been more rural. The grounds here are very overgrown, and many of the headstones were so covered in brush that I could not determine the names. I definitely found links with the Fish line and with Edmund Bury's family line.

William moved to Darwen from Accrington where he met Alice, possibly at work or at a civil function such as a town social. Alice worked at a local textile mill, where apparently she was quite successful and moved up the ranks, which was a notable achievement for women in that period. William and Alice eventually joined the Mormon church, and the meeting house was located at the far south side

of town on the road to Bolton. Based on a photo taken by John Walsh in 1924, the meeting house was a residence. The actual building is not there, but a nice garden has replaced it. The old cemetery was just a short distance up the road from this area, and because this part of town is actually in the foothills, offered a great view of the town of Darwen.

I did try to find the home where William, Alice, and the children lived until they embarked on their international journey. Unfortunately, the road sign was indecipherable in the photo taken by John Walsh in 1924, and there were no other records of the street they lived on. I did take pictures of many of the lines of homes that would stand in as accurate representations of what the neighborhoods looked like when they lived there. Homes were small, usually full of extended family, and cramped among many others. Bathrooms would have been shared in a back alley by several different households.



The city center of Darwen. Outside of the photo is the traditional market and town square.



Darwen town hall.



The Penine Mountain Range surrounds the city center.



The local library in the city center. A beautiful Victorian-era building.



Some old buildings and shops on Darwen's High Street.



One of the old factories in Darwen, now an office complex.



A row of residences in Darwen. While this particular set of homes comes from later in the 19th century, it is representative of what William and Alice experienced in a neighborhood.



The first Wesleyan Methodist Church in Darwen. This building is derelict. Alice was christened here 25 May 1829. The church later split in two and a new building was erected.

The headstone for Betty and Ellen Fish who were buried in the Methodist cemetery.





The Lower Independent Church which was the main church for our direct Fish line for many years. The pictures below are set in the church façade and detail when the church was built and the year it was repaired after fire damaged it. Several headstones of the Fish family are found here.



Side by side photos of the LDS place of worship in 1848 on the road to Bolton in southern Darwen. The building is now gone and a small garden decorates the place. The photo on the left was taken by John Walsh on his mission in 1924, with the photos sent to his mother, Alice Fish.



The home of William and Alice Walsh in the 1850s. The photo on the right is not their home, but was a good representative of what those homes look like now.

Accrington

A few miles east of Blackburn is the town of Accrington. This is where a great majority of our Walsh ancestors came from. William was born in this town and had many relatives here. Presumably some of our distant cousins still live here. The village of Church-Kirk where some of the Walshes settled was absorbed by Accrington and is now the northwestern corner of the town, bordering the countryside.

Noted in history books as far back as 1194, Accrington is thought to mean acorn farmstead in the early Anglo-Saxon language, since the area was surrounded by large areas of oak forest. Accrington was also associated with the cotton and textile industries, so this may help explain why William left his family to move to Over-Darwen. As many laborers were trained in just one line of work, those unable to get a job would move on to the next center of the industry. In 1826, riots broke out in the textile industry which spread throughout the entire county, possibly leading to the creation of networks between the towns.

Accrington has a very beautiful town center, full of late-Georgian and Victorian architectural masterpieces. The town hall was built in 1857 – which means William never saw it – after the neo-classical style. Next door is the Victorian Market which has an imposing stone exterior, while inside is an airy space with a glass roof and bright cast iron columns. Another architectural marvel of Accrington is the arched rail viaduct that spans the valley. Mostly covered now by tall trees, the exposed portions of the viaduct reveal the ingenuity and hardworking spirit of the Victorian period and of our family line.

Also in the center of town is a large green square with a small Georgian-era church named St. James. Some records place family events in the Walsh family such as christenings and marriages at this church. While the building stands empty, the property is kept very nice and one headstone mentioned the Walsh name.

I then walked about 2-3 miles to what had been the town of Church-Kirk. My research had pointed to another church named St. James that was important to our family line that came from this small village. It is a truly ancient building, with a church being on site since 642 AD dedicated to St. Oswald. The current structure has a tower dating from the late 15th century, while the nave dates from the turn of the 19th century (1804-1805). The property was quite large and has many headstones. Sadly, however, I

found one headstone with the name of Walsh on it. Either our extended family had been buried elsewhere in town, or had moved to another village. The one headstone that was there did have an interesting nugget of information though. It was that of James Walsh and the epitaph revealed that he was the grocer of Warren Lane in the neighboring village of Oswaldtwistle (also part of Accrington now). So part of the larger extended family did do something other than work in textile mills.



The town of Accrington as seen from the train station. Long streets of terrace housing dating back to the Victorian 1800s give way to the Pennine Mountains and the rare wooded areas which remain.



The city center of Accrington, revealing a town that had a lot of money during the height of the textile industry based on the outstanding architecture.



The town hall of Accrington, built in 1857 in the neo-classical style.



The town market in Accrington with exterior and interior views. The English love these indoor markets which allow them to buy goods from a variety of regions and countries. Plus, they stay dry in the wet environment of the British Isles.



Built in 1848, the Accrington railway viaduct is an impressive structure that spans the valley of the River Hyndburn. It is composed of 19 arches, each 40 feet wide and 60 feet tall.



St. James Church in the heart of Accrington. One of the churches associated with Walsh records.



An old mill located on the road out to Church-Kirk. It is likely that many of the mills our family worked in looked similar to this.



This is St. James Church in the old village of Church-Kirk in northwest Accrington. With the tower dating from the late medieval period and the nave dating to 1805, a church has stood on this site since 642 AD.



The medieval tower of St. James in Church-Kirk. Also a stained-glass window from the early-19th century nave.



A Victorian-era factory borders one side of St. James chapel while the Lancashire countryside opens up on another side.



The gravestone of James Walsh, the Grocer of Warren Lane in Oswaldtwistle, who died August 8th, 1855, aged 53 years. Also of Jane, his wife, who died March 18th, 1869, aged 65 years. Also of Harriet, the daughter of James & Jane Walsh, who died Oct. 11th, 1834, aged 1 year. Also of Sarah, their daughter who died – 15th, 1833 aged 6 years. Also of John, their son who died March 27th, 1835 aged 4 years. Also of Grimshaw their son who died June 8th, 1855, aged 11 months.

Blackburn

The last town that plays an important part in the Walsh-Fish legacy is that of Blackburn. It is a small city that proudly displays the red rose of Lancashire (The House of Lancaster chose the red rose as its symbol prior to the war of the roses that raged during the late Medieval period, culminating in the death of Richard III in 1485, who was of the House of York and the ascension of Henry VII, first Tudor monarch and proud member of the House of Lancaster.). It was in Blackburn that William and Alice wed on 15 July 1850.

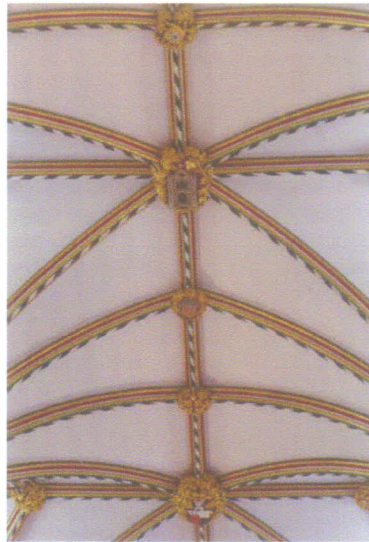
My research indicated that William and Alice were married at the central church of Blackburn, known as St. Mary's. Today, the Church is a small cathedral; however, in William and Alice's day, it was a small parish church. A church has been on site for 1,000 years, while the building that William and Alice were married in was built in 1826. It is this building that remains the central nave of the current cathedral. The nave has been refurbished to a high standard. The bosses on the ceiling depict coats of arms of the area and figures important to the building of that church.



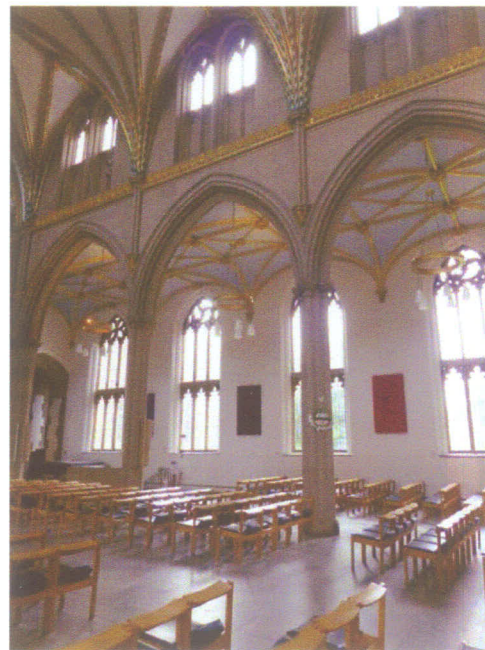
The portion of Blackburn Cathedral that existed when William and Alice were married here in 1850. This portion was built in 1826 and now forms the central nave of the expanded cathedral.



The entrance vestibule at the base of the tower of St. Mary's church (Blackburn Cathedral). The lion and unicorn flank the coat of arms of the royal house of Great Britain.



The nave of Blackburn Cathedral and detail of the ceiling bosses which provide excellent decoration.



The pulpit from which sermons are delivered and a side view of the arches and long windows of this 1826 church.

This experience was something that really changed my perspective on who we are and what it means to have the blood line of Walshes and Fishes in my DNA. We come from a long heritage of hardworking people who suffered through many, many things. We are part of a land that changed the face of the world forever with their innovations and extremely hard work ethic. I hope that you will realize that this is line is just a drop in the bucket of our heritage, but that it accurately reflects who we are and where we come from. It is my hope that you will enjoy this and keep it for future generations so they will know who they are as well.

William Walsh

♂ 1825 - 1856

William Walsh
B: 10 Oct 1825
Accrington, Lancashire, England,
United Kingdom
D: Abt Nov 1856
Near Devil's
Gate, Sweetwater, Wyoming, United
States

Robert Walsh ♂
B: Abt 1795
M: 27 Nov 1820
St. James Church, Accrington,
Lancashire, England, United
Kingdom
D: 11 May 1868

Ann Whitaker ♂
B: 16 Mar 1795
Huncoat, Lancashire, England,
United Kingdom
M: 27 Nov 1820
St. James Church, Accrington,
Lancashire, England, United
Kingdom

Lawrence Walsh ♂
A: 20 Jul 1766
Church-Kirk, Lancashire, England,
United Kingdom
M: Bef 1793
England, United Kingdom
D: 29 Jan 1827

Alice
B: Abt 1764
Church, Lancashire, England,
United Kingdom
M: Bef 1793
England, United Kingdom

Henry Whittaker

Ellen
B: Abt 1767
D: 1 Sep 1838
Over Darwen, Lancashire,
England, United Kingdom

Luke Walsh
B: Abt 1740
Of Church-Kirk, Lancashire,
England, United Kingdom

Unknown

Unknown

Unknown

Unknown

Unknown

Unknown

Unknown



Alice Fish

1829 - 1924

