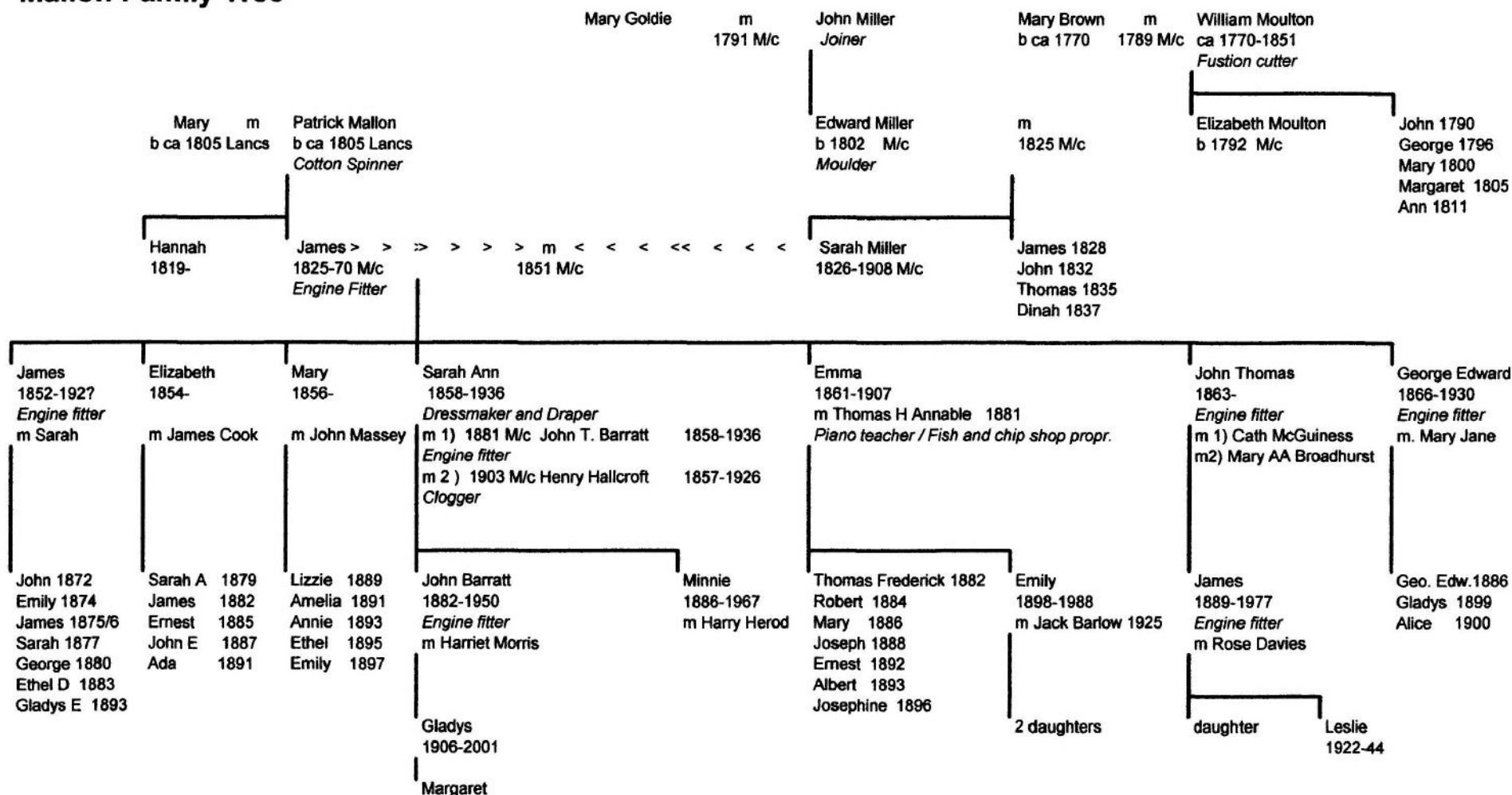


Manchester Mallons

by Margaret Wigglesworth Dec 2006

Mallon Family Tree



The Early Mallons

Although nothing definite is known about the Mallons before 1800, there are several family stories. They are said to have been Huguenots who fled to Ireland from France during the persecutions (the main exodus from France was in 1685) before eventually crossing to England. Mallon (or Malone or Mullin) is certainly an Irish name. Our first known ancestor is Patrick and in the early 1800s there were several Patrick Mallons in Liverpool. Seasonal migrants had been coming over from Ireland to Liverpool to help with the harvest since the 18th century and, with the start of the Industrial Revolution, the industrial towns of Lancashire attracted a greater number of settlers than any other county. A distribution map using data from the 1881 census showed the highest concentration of Mallons to be in Lancashire, together with parts of Cumbria immediately to the north.

Another family story has it that one of the family was honoured by Cromwell during the Civil War at the Battle of Gorton Brook but this would predate the Huguenots' departure from France. I have been unable to find any reference to a Battle of Gorton Brook but Manchester, with its strongly militant Puritanism, characterised by daily preaching and singing of psalms, was certainly on the side of the Parliamentarians during the Civil War. In the autumn of 1642 it came under a week's intensive attack from the Royalists, led by the Earl of Derby. This was followed by a siege that lasted ten weeks before the Cavaliers eventually withdrew.

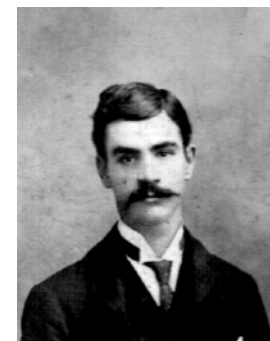
Patrick Mallon 1825-

So far all that is known about Patrick is that he was a cotton spinner, born somewhere in Lancashire about 1800, and that his wife was called Mary. Until the late 18th century spinning had been a relatively simple task performed mainly by women and children but in 1779 Samuel Crompton's spinning mule was introduced into steam-powered mills, transforming the industry. Spinning was now done by skilled men who earned high wages and by the 1840s, just the time when Patrick was working, spinners were the highest paid cotton operatives. The average wage in Manchester for male mule cotton spinners was 16–22 shillings [1s = 5 new pence], twice as much as for carders and other less skilled workers. Women were paid from 7s 6d -10s 6d. The average rent was 3s 7d a week. (*A. Bethune Reach – Manchester and the textile districts in 1849*) Real wages were higher than they had ever been, working hours were shorter as a result of the factory acts and workers had won the right to belong to trade unions. It had not been without a struggle, however, and the effects of one strike are vividly portrayed by Mrs Gaskell in her novel *North and South*. Patrick and his family, with only two children, could have been relatively well off among the working classes of Manchester.

According to another family legend, a Patrick Mallon is said to have founded the R.C. Church in Stockport, though it seems more likely, if there is any truth in the story, that the church in question was the Catholic Church of St Francis in Gorton.

James Mallon. 1825–70

James was, so far as I know, Patrick's only son and one of his surviving great-grand-daughters has a small oil painting of him. He is portrayed as a pleasant young man, dressed in black jacket and waistcoat, a frilled white shirt with a high collar, and a black cravat. He has pale, possibly blue eyes, and a quiet smile on his face. The most striking thing, however, is that his head is cocked slightly to the right, evidently characteristic of many of the Mallons, as can be seen in a number of family photographs.



James Mallon
Daughter Sarah A

Son John Thomas
3 x great-granddaughter, Ruth

James was christened at Manchester Cathedral on September 11th 1825 and he had an older sister, Hannah, christened in 1819. The 1841 census shows that at the age of fifteen he was already working as a mechanic, probably with the engineering firm, Beyer Peacock. James is variously described as a locomotive engine maker, a Mechanic 'Fitter' and plain Mechanic. In 1851 he married Sarah Miller and their first child, James, was born in Manchester but by 1854 when their daughter Lizzie was born they had moved out to Gorton, about four miles south-east of the city centre. This would tie in with Beyer Peacock's move to its new foundry at Gorton in 1854. In 1856 a fitter working at Beyer Peacock was earning from 26–34 shillings a week. [£1.30-1.70] He would be working a

57½ hour week, finishing at lunch-time on Saturday unless he worked overtime. In 1854 there were only five fitters but two years later this number had risen to forty-five. By the time James's sons were working there, the total number employed reached a maximum, in 1890, of 2,159. James died in Manchester Royal Infirmary on October 8th 1870 from a brain tumour which had caused paralysis. He left seven children, all under twenty.

Sarah Miller 1826-1908

James's wife was christened in Manchester Cathedral in May 1826. She was illiterate, 'signing' the marriage register with her mark. At the time of James's death their three eldest children were already working so Sarah would not have been entirely destitute. Of the four still at home, the oldest, Sarah Ann, was twelve and George, the youngest, was four. By 1881 Sarah had remarried although I have been unable to find the record. Her second husband, Joseph Cooper, was from Runcorn in Cheshire, and he too was an engine fitter, presumably at Beyers. They lived in Queen Street in West Gorton and although they seem to have moved several times, often it was only further down the street.

By 1891, Joseph, now aged sixty-six, had retired. In the same house, but recorded in the census as a separate household, was Sarah's widowed daughter, Sarah Ann Barratt, and her two children. Ten years later all five were still in Queen Street, at number one, together with Sarah's son John Thomas and his little boys. Head of the household was Sarah Ann.

Sarah, now a widow, died on January 2nd 1908 and was buried five days later in the Dissenters' section of the public cemetery in Gorton. Her burial in a 'Special Grave' cost eleven pounds, six shillings. Six months later a marble cross was erected at a cost of twenty pounds, including kerbing. Some time in the early 1990s it had to be restored and made safe, the cost now being fifty-two pounds. In July 1927, Sarah Ann paid seven pounds ten shillings for 'Planting the Grave in Perpetuity'. However, when I visited the grave in 1994, there was no sign of any planting. When Joseph died and where he is buried I don't know but the death of a Joseph Cooper, aged eighty-one, was registered in Runcorn in 1905 and this could be our Joseph.



Sarah's parents and grandparents

Sarah's father, **Edward Miller**, was an iron moulder, christened in Manchester Cathedral in 1802, and her mother was **Elizabeth Moulton**, who was christened at St Ann's, Manchester in 1792. They were married at St John's Church in 1825 and both made their mark. Sarah was born the following year and they had four more children. In 1841 they were living at Ancoats and daughter Sarah, now fifteen, was working in a cotton mill. One of Elizabeth and Edward's great-great-grand-daughters has in her possession a jug inscribed *James Miller 1836*. James was the eldest son, born in 1828. The local trade directories give an Edward Miller, variously described as Iron Moulder, Moulder and Iron Turner, up to 1855/6.

John Miller and Mary Goldie, Edward's parents, were married at Manchester Cathedral in 1791 when they both signed the register. Otherwise all that is known about them is that John was a joiner. The witnesses at their wedding, which was by Licence, were M. and J. Goldie, possibly Mary's parents. There are no Goldies to be found in the IGI for Lancashire or any of the neighbouring counties but Goldie is a Scottish name and large numbers emigrated from Scotland to Manchester at the time of the Industrial Revolution. Mary's parents may well have been among them.

William Moulton and Mary Brown, Elizabeth's parents, were also married at Manchester Cathedral, in 1789, both making their mark, but according to the 1841 census neither of them had been born in Lancashire. They had five children. In the 1760s Manchester had a population of only 17,000. However, since at least the mid-seventeenth century it had been the centre of the fustian industry. Fustian was a rather coarse mixture of cotton and linen yarns and could be treated to produce superior materials, including corduroy (a ribbed fustian), moleskin and velveteen. This latter was a cheaper fabric than true velvet which is woven from silk. In the late 1800s, fustian woven in Oldham was taken by rail to Millers Dale in Derbyshire and from there to a 'velvet' factory in Tideswell. When it reached the factory, the fustian was stiffened with lime and stretched taut on a frame ten yards long. Women walked from one end of the frame to the other, cutting through the loops row by row with a keen blade made from a watch spring. The pile was then fluffed up with a wire brush to produce velveteen. Finally it was returned to Oldham to be dyed ready for sale. (*Julie Bunting - Bygone Industries of the Peak*)

William was a fustian cutter. Velveteen had become an affordable fabric following the lifting of duty on fustian in 1785 just at the time when factories were springing up all over Manchester and seemingly at an opportune moment for William just four years before he married. In 1841 William and Mary, now in their seventies, were living in Deansgate in Manchester, William evidently still working.

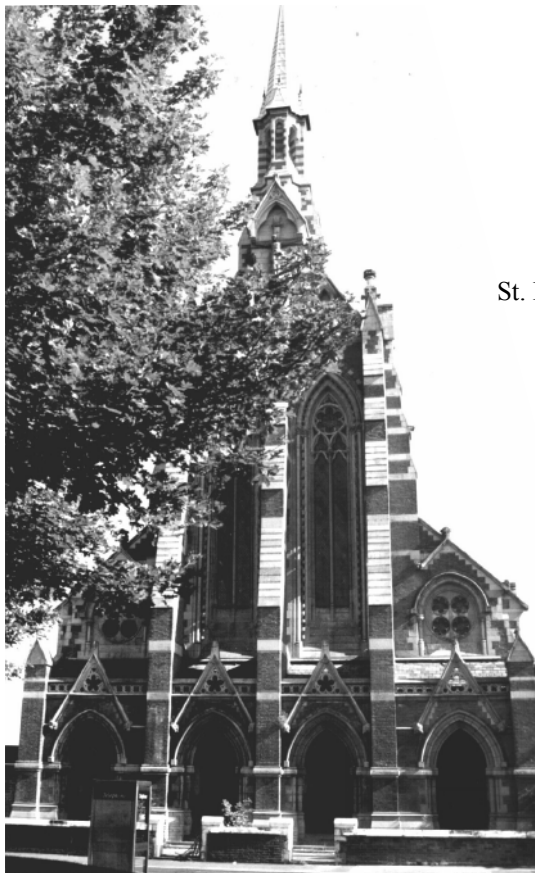
The children of James and Sarah Mallon

James 1852-192?

Like their father, James and his two brothers worked as engine fitters at Beyer Peacocks. James had also married a Sarah and they had seven children. The sixth child, Ethel, was, according to the 1901 census, born in India in 1883.

Overseas orders were vital to the success of Beyer Peacock's foundry (see Appendix on page 9). According to a great-niece, James was sent out to Argentina and apparently spent the rest of his life there, dying some time in the 1920s. This was not unusual and many of Beyer's fitters stayed overseas to run the locomotive sheds in well paid jobs. It looks as if earlier James had gone out to India, taking his wife with him.

A James Mallon, an engineer living in Manchester, appears in the 1911 Trade Directory but this may have been the eldest son of James and Sarah. One of their sons is said to have married a Spanish lady [In Spain? Argentina?] while their daughter Sarah married Charles Greave of the Wright Greaves music publishers in Manchester.



St. Francis Friary, Gorton

(Lizzie) 1854-

As a little girl Lizzie is said to have been taken up the spire of St. Francis' Friary in a bucket during building operations. The same story is told of her sister Sarah Ann so maybe they went up together. Known as The Monastery, it was designed by the younger Pugin and built between 1866 and 1872.

The church is not far from their home in Queen Street and only down the road from Beyer Peacocks where her father was working so the story could well be true. Lizzie married James Cook, remembered for his long white beard. He worked for Listers Textiles, described as a velvet worker in the 1901 census, and is said to have invented Indigo Dye. They had five children, Sarah, James, Ernest, John and Ada. Before her marriage Lizzie worked as a weaver, presumably in one of the many cotton mills but later she used to help her sister Sarah Ann with the domestic work and laundry. By then their niece Emily was living with Sarah Ann and it used to be her job to accompany Lizzie to catch the tram home. Lizzie was lame, probably having been born with a club foot, and needed a little three-legged stool in order to mount the trams. James would be waiting at the far end to see her home, often sheltering in a nearby shop doorway from the cold and rain. It seems the only thanks he got was to be told he was a silly old fool for waiting there in the cold.

Mary 1856

At the age of fifteen, Mary was working as a cotton polisher. She went on to marry John Massey, a Railway joint maker - did he too work at Beyer Peacocks? They had five daughters.

Sarah Ann 1858-1936

It seems fitting that Sarah Ann should have been the middle one of James and Sarah's seven children for she seems to have played very much a central role in the family. And yet we begin with a slight mystery. Where was she on the night of the 1871 census for she was not at home? Her father had died the year before and although the eldest brother, James, and her two older two sisters were all working and so contributing to the family income, the three youngest children were still under eleven. We know that Sarah Ann had little education so she would certainly have left school, if indeed she ever went. At thirteen she could well have been in service, leaving her mother with one less mouth to feed. Ten years later, she is back home. Not only had her mother remarried but the three eldest children had all married and left home and so the situation would have been very different. Both she and her sister Emma were described in the census as sewing machinists and the two youngest boys, John Thomas and George, were already engine fitters.

In June 1881 Sarah Ann married John Turnock Barratt, also a locomotive engineer at Beyers. In 1887/8 he went to Venezuela to help establish the railway there but within two years he had died of yellow fever, leaving Sarah Ann a widow with two small children, John and Minnie. In 1903 she married a widower, Henry Hallcroft, a clogger (who is believed to have had an apprentice with the delightful name of Hamlet). Henry's first wife, Elizabeth, was considerably older than him and so far as I know they had no children. According to her granddaughter, Sarah Ann refused to remarry before her children were grown up, perhaps as a result of her experience in losing her own father when she was twelve and her mother then remarrying. In fact, however, Minnie was still not fifteen and Henry's first wife only died in 1902.



John Turnock and Sarah Ann Barratt with their children
John and Minnie, 1887

We have already seen that Sarah Ann's parents were living in Gorton by 1854 and the trade directory for the following year shows them living at 17 Queen Street. In 1871 the family was living at nearby Belle Vue Street but ten years later they were back in Queen Street. Various sources show them living at six different house numbers in Queen Street but whether they kept moving up and down the street or the numbers themselves were changed, I don't know. It was not uncommon in the 19th century, as the population rapidly expanded, for house numbers to be changed to take account of new buildings being fitted into any available spaces. It was also common, at a time when virtually all houses were rented, for families to make frequent moves, even if only across the road, if the accommodation was thought to be superior. I don't know where John and Sarah Ann lived during their brief marriage, though I am sure it would not have been far away, but by 1891 Sarah Ann and her children were living at number 35 Queen Street. She had now established herself as a dressmaker with a draper's shop. Her granddaughter Gladys tells us that she was one of the first people in the district to possess a gas iron, a noisy and dangerous-sounding appliance. Sarah Ann's daughter, Minnie, used to help in the shop before her marriage to Harold Herod.

We get a glimpse of that shop from Gladys who, in later life, described how *"it was always a treat to be allowed to walk to Grandma's on a Saturday morning. There I would enjoy myself tidying the drawers of cotton reels, buttons, tape and such things in her shop. She had a draper's shop which also had blouses, shirts, dress materials, stockings and coloured ribbons. My favourite job was to tidy out the glass case where the ribbons were stored. And sometimes I was allowed to sell some small item."*

Despite her own hardships Sarah Ann had a reputation for taking in any lame ducks. When her sister-in-law, Catherine, died in 1899 leaving two little boys, George Harold, (who later became a jockey, riding for Indian Nabobs during the First World War) and James, (another loco. engineer at Beyers) she looked after them both until their father, John Thomas, remarried. They and their father were still living with her in 1901, as were her mother and step-father. With eight people in the household and the shop on the premises one wonders where they all slept. They were now at 1 Queen Street, on the corner with Sussex Street, and paid a weekly rent of 12 shillings. This was almost twice that for most of the houses in Queen Street and could be because it included a shop but it also suggests that it was more spacious. Other members of the family were also taken in at various times, including her niece Emily Annable. Close to Queen Street was a row of terraced houses, known locally as the garden houses because of their longish front gardens. Either Sarah Ann or Henry would act as rent collectors and typically, Emily would often be sent round with a potato pie or some other nourishing dish for old people.

A further example of Sarah Ann's generosity and compassion, as well as one of the less attractive sides of working class life in the early 1900s, again comes from her granddaughter Gladys: *At the opposite corner to my grandma's draper's shop was a public house and at the weekends I would see drunken men coming out of there, shouting, brawling, fighting. My grandma was much involved with the wives of these men because they came into her shop to buy things, paying for them on a weekly basis and more often than not having to ask for credit because the husbands had spent all their wages on drink and they had to endure many other hardships.*



Sarah Ann and her second husband,
Henry Hallcroft

Sarah Ann's second husband died in 1926 at which time they were still living in Queen Street. A report in the local paper included this tribute: *A man of charm of manner Mr Hallcroft had given valuable service to the Birch-street Baptist Church and Sunday School for over forty years, in which period he had been treasurer, Sunday School teacher, and deacon of the church. The interment at Gorton cemetery was marked by a touching demonstration of sympathy. A service was attended by large numbers of the congregation, and there was also a procession of members to the graveside. Alderman Robert Turner performed the last rites at the graveside, where many beautiful wreaths were laid by different organisations connected with Birch-street, the local tradesmen and neighbours.*

When her granddaughter was born it was Sarah Ann who looked after her for the first three months of her life as her mother was too ill to do so. Later Gladys said that in many ways she always felt closer to her grandmother than to her mother. Another of her memories was of *"Sunday evenings at Grandma's house in Queen Street after chapel - there was good nonconformist singing there - but I am thinking of the family get-together. There seemed always to be a houseful of people, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins plus friends of theirs. Uncle Jim Mallon had a fine voice ... He sang duets with Auntie Rose; she also sang with Auntie Minnie. Father played the piano but I eventually took over."*

A letter written to Gladys when Margaret was born shows Sarah Ann to have been deeply religious (barely literate, she was apparently largely self-taught).

June 13 1932

My dear glades,

I am so thankful to know you are doing so well. and the dear little darling. I am longing to see it. I know it is lovely. bless it I am sorry you have been so bad but you will soon be well if you take care.

I know mother will take care of you if you will let hir, & she will be so glad it is over and all is well. I could not get you out of my head last Thursday I was praying for you all the day. that the lord would help you and spair you. and bless you. and he has done so we must thank him with all our hearts. kiss the little darling for me.

I had a nice time wile I was away. I am sure denis is very proud he is a father for I am proud to be great gramar I had congratulations all day at chapel. for I told mr turner and he told them all and all that know you send there love and best wishes to you.

well dear I think this is enught for the present.

so with best love for the present I will close from your loving granmar.

so good night and god bless you xxxxxxx

for baby xxxxxxx

dear glade this is from antie as well as me x

Her evident concern is a reminder of how dangerous childbirth had been when she was a young woman and that even in 1932 the mortality rate for both mothers and babies was still high.

Sarah Ann and her second husband were both important figures at the Birch Street Baptist Chapel and Sunday School in Gorton, being closely associated with its foundation in 1878. Henry served as a Deacon there though it was his "tickly moustache" for which he was remembered by both Gladys and his great-niece Kathleen!

The Birch Street Chapel celebrated its Diamond Jubilee in May 1938 and a commemorative booklet was published to mark the occasion. Among its tributes to the many leaders was one to Harry Hallcroft "a valued servant whose work as a Deacon and teacher will be long remembered".

The tributes continue, "And what of the women, the wives of these men, who by their loving sacrifice and interest and encouragement, had made it possible for their menfolk to give us of their best. When the trophies come to be awarded they will rank with their loved ones in our Heavenly Father's 'Well Done'. Mrs Hallcroft, who [has] answered the higher call, we lovingly remember, especially at this time".



West Gorton Baptist Chapel & Sunday School
Birch Street, Manchester

Known as Sr'Ann, everyone spoke of her with great affection as a lovely lady and one who "kept a lovely table". Among family mementoes are a pair of salt cellars and a little glass 'coffee can',



*Presented to
Sarah Ann Mallon
On her 21st Birthday
July 18th 1879*

Following in the family footsteps, son John was also an engine fitter and started work at Beyer Peacocks. During the First World War he moved to Leeds where he worked for the Hunslet Engine Company up to the time of his death in 1950. Like his father and uncle, he went abroad to help with the establishment of new railways, most notably to China in 1933, but also to Egypt and Palestine.

Unfortunately Minnie, Sarah Ann's daughter, is remembered by her nieces with little affection and as someone who demanded a lot of attention. Could it be that as a little girl she had been jealous of the various cousins taken in by her mother or was she perhaps soured by having no children of her own? She was once involved in an accident when she was hit by a cricket ball which resulted in an ulcerated leg and ever after apparently regarded herself as an invalid requiring constant attention from her husband Harry. More positively, she was a skilled embroiderer and also did fine crochet work, knitting and tatting.

Sarah Ann used to go to Horsforth, near Leeds, to stay with her son John and daughter-in-law Harriet, and she lived long enough to see her two great-grand-daughters, Margaret and Norma. Margaret has vague memories of being taken by her to see the aeroplanes at Yeadon Airport. Gladys had many happy memories of holidays at Blackpool with her parents and grandparents, giving us another glimpse of Sarah Ann when we feel that after the hardships she must have endured as a young woman she found deserved happiness in later life.



Sarah Ann and her great-granddaughters Margaret and Norma

Sarah Ann spent the last few years of her life living in Westbourne Range, Gorton, in the same terrace as her niece Emily and her husband Jack Barlow. She died in 1936 at the age of seventy-eight and is buried at Gorton Cemetery in the same grave as her mother and her second husband. The bill for her burial expenses (which amounted to £4 4s 9d) includes £1 14s 6d for reopening the grave and 5s 3d for removing and fixing Memorials. The grave was reopened in 1953 for Harold Herod and again fourteen years later for his widow, Minnie. Also buried at the Gorton cemetery is Sarah Ann's brother John Thomas.

Emma 1861-1907

Emma was the youngest of James and Sarah's daughters and like her sister Sarah Ann she worked as a sewing machinist up to the time of her marriage to Thomas Henry Annable in 1881 when she was just twenty and he, it appears from the census of that year, was working as a plumber. They had at least ten children, including twins who are thought to have died at birth. Thomas's granddaughter Jennifer describes him as a dapper dresser, with spats and flashing diamond rings, and with 'massive delusions of grandeur'. He is reputed to have had a weakness for the 'gee-gees'. How long Thomas worked as a plumber we don't know but by 1891 he was describing himself as a Professor of Music! However, at least by 1901 his main income seems to have been from running a fish and chip shop although the brunt of the work was borne by his family. While the sons rose early to get the fish from Manchester market, at home his mother eyed the potatoes and daughters Josie and Emily cleaned the cutlery and tin plates. Meanwhile he would have swaggered off to give piano lessons. On his return home after an 'arduous' day's work he expected to be waited on hand and foot. Literally so as he sat for his wife to remove his boots and bring his house shoes. When new ranges were fitted in the shop a lot of dust was created and this settled on Emma's chest, resulting in her early death. Emily, the youngest of the children, was still only eight and consequently she was passed around to be looked after by various members of the family.



Emma and Thomas Henry Annable

Eventually, as we have seen, she went to live with Sr'Ann where she stayed very happily until her marriage to Jack Barlow in 1925. They had two daughters and it is 'Jen' that I must thank for much of this account. Thomas subsequently remarried, his new bride being Mary Taverner, his daughter Mary's sister-in-law. Mary herself, or Polly as she was known, who had lost her right arm in an accident at work when she was only fourteen, was evidently a rather formidable lady. Of the other children, one of the sons, Robert, was drowned at sea off the coast of Colombo while Fred had the reputation of being a bit of a fly by night.



Jack and Emily Barlow, 1925
Bridesmaids Margaret Barlow (left) and Gladys Barratt (right)

John Thomas 1863-

As a little boy of three, John Thomas was badly burnt saving the life of his baby brother, George Edward. He grew up to become yet another engine fitter working at Beyer Peacock. He married twice, first to Catherine McGuiness (known to her nephews and nieces [in private?] as Aunt Chippie because she had a wooden leg) and they had two sons, James (Jim) and George. When Catherine died in 1899 at the age of thirty-four John Thomas and his two little boys went to live with Sr'Ann as we have seen, until he married again. His second wife was a widow, Mary Ann Broadhurst, with three daughters. The elder of the two sons, Jim, followed in the family footsteps and became an engine fitter. During the First World War he joined the Royal Flying Corps where his job was to repair planes that had crashed or been damaged in any way. Understandably, the pilots of these flimsy craft were especially nervous of flying machines that had been repaired. The best guarantee that they had been repaired safely was to require the engineer to go up with them! This must just have been a test flight as the only time that Jim went abroad was when he flew to France to effect some temporary repairs to a plane before flying home. After the war, when there was much unemployment, Jim eventually got a job with Moultons, another big engineering firm in Manchester. I know nothing about Moultons but it is an interesting thought that one of the earliest known of our ancestors, Jim's great-great-grandfather, was William Moulton, the humble fustian cutter.

Jim married Rose Hannah Davies (for reasons unknown, she was also married from Sr'Ann's at 1 Queen Street). They were staunch members of the Birch Street Baptists and took a full part in its activities, including going on the Whitsuntide marches, led by The Boys Brigade Band whose leader Jim was. The Birch Street Commemorative booklet ends with *Many thoughts from Many People* and includes this verse from Mr and Mrs J Mallon:

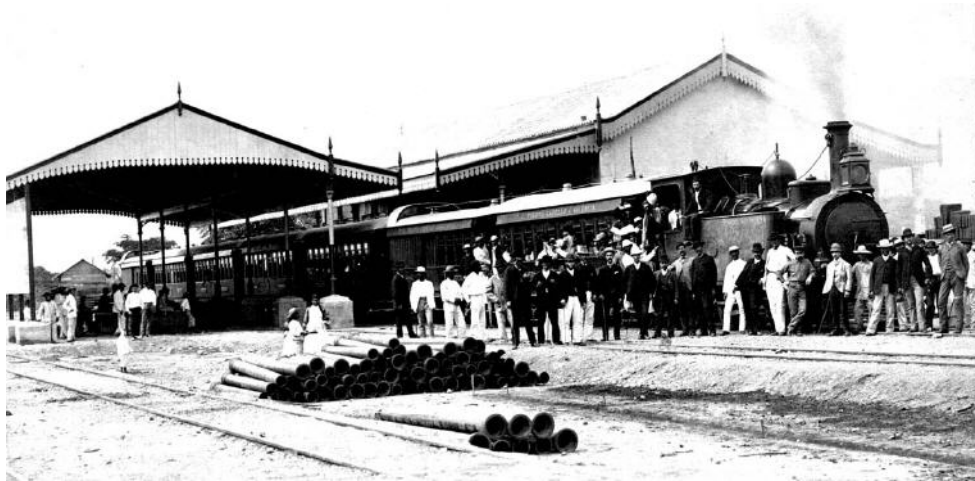
*Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone:
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own.*

Their cousins Mr and Mrs J. Barlow (Jack and Emily) contributed this thought:
Happiness can be increased by giving part of it away.

Jim and Rose enjoyed playing tennis and, we are told, were beautiful ball room dancers. As a young man, Jim had also enjoyed playing in the local football team. He and Rose had two children, Leslie and Kathleen. Leslie was less fortunate than his father had been in the first world war. He joined the air force in World War Two and was killed in 1944.

They were to follow the example of Sr'Ann in looking after those in need. Despite an earlier rift, it was Jim and Rose who cared for Minnie Herod, Sr'Ann's daughter, when she was widowed in 1953. At some time before his death, her husband Harry had asked Jim to look after Minnie should the need arise. Eventually it was their turn to be cared for and they spent the last years of their lives living with their daughter Kathleen and her husband Trevor.

Today, Sr'Ann is still remembered by her great-niece Kathleen, born a Mallon, and, through their parents, by two more great-nieces, Rosemary and Jennifer, and also her great-granddaughters Margaret and Norma but whether the name Mallon still lives on in the family is unknown.



John T Barratt in Venezuela, 1887/8

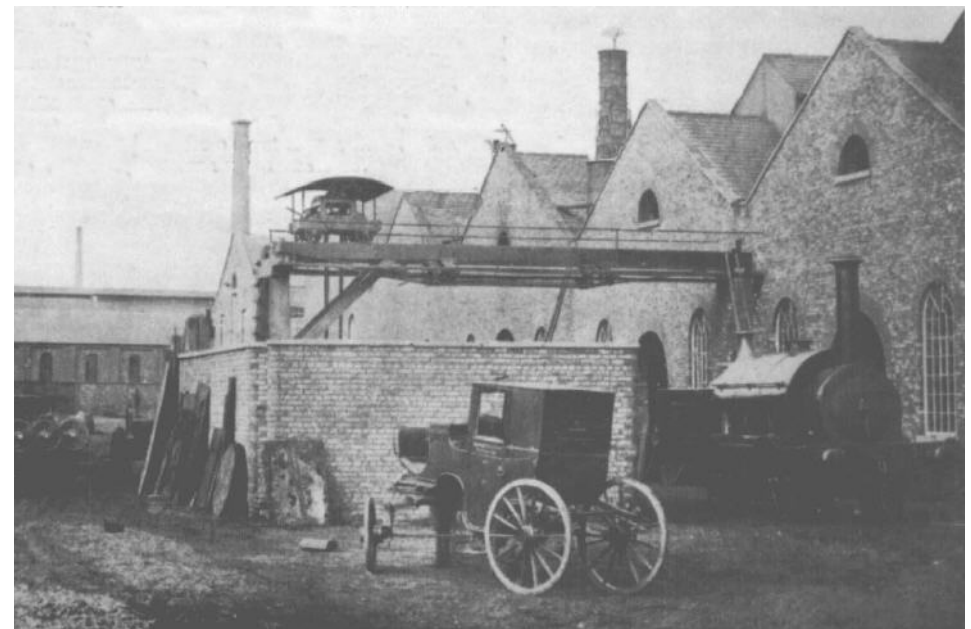
Appendix

Gorton Foundry 1854-1966

1856 The Engineer - From a correspondent: "I have lately had the opportunity of visiting an establishment which exhibits perhaps the best considered arrangements I have yet met with, for commencing the building of an engineer's workshop on a small, yet perfectly symmetrical plan. The buildings, being all of one storey, allow of their being lighted from the roof, and the effect is very cheerful and pleasant, while the additional advantage is gained of being able to cover the whole area of the workshop with tools, in place of confining them to the vicinity of the windows and side walls as is usually the case where workshops are placed one over another and carried to any great height."

This layout, with the glazed roofs, gave Gorton Foundry very good working conditions, and avoided carrying parts of locomotives from one floor to another, as was necessary in the multi-storeyed buildings of some earlier manufacturers. The foundry must have been the most up-to-date locomotive works then in existence, and the greater part remained in use until the last steam engines were finished in 1958.

The success of Gorton Foundry depended upon securing sufficient orders to keep the production steady and overseas orders were vital to ensure that capacity was filled. Roughly 56% were exported. Engines had to be taken to pieces and crated at Gorton. When the engines reached their destination, they had to be assembled and set to work. If the railway had no experienced fitters, this would be undertaken by a man from Beyer Peacock and this cost would usually be included in the original tender. Some railways were primitive in the extreme. In the early days, the local inhabitants might never have seen such a marvel of advanced technology as a steam locomotive. After the engines had been assembled quite a few of the Beyer Peacock engine erectors stayed with their charges, in lucrative posts, to run the locomotive sheds. The men chosen to erect these engines carried a great deal of responsibility, for on them, and on the quality of their work, depended the good name of Beyer Peacock. They had to sort out the snags in new designs, often without much help from home because letters took so long. They also had to report on the performance of the engines so that later designs could be improved.



Gorton Foundry, 1856