

# **St Michael's Church, Great Lever**



## **Centenary and Rose Queen Festival Handbook 1851-1951**



**FOREWORD By the Rector.**

To you who may enjoy the perusal of this booklet, commemorative of the Centenary of the Parish Church of Great Lever, I greet you well.

The compilation and condensation of so complete a record of the story of St. Michael's Church and Parish speak volumes of the exhaustive research of its author, Mr. H. T. Tyldesley, who must be most well and worthily commended for his splendid achievement.

Our patron saint was one who fought for God, for truth and the right. May we, as we recall the zeal, the offerings, the labours of those who during the hundred years now passed have rendered yeoman service, be inspired to renew our energies in order that the real purpose of the building of our church be maintained in our day and generation.

Then it will be with Angels and Archangels and with St. Michael we shall join week by week to laud and magnify God's Holy Name and praise Him in His Holy temple.

W. WORTHINGTON - Rector.

**AUTHOR'S FOREWORD.**

The writing of this brief account of St. Michael's story has indeed been a labour of love. It would

not have been possible without the help of others and I wish to record my thanks particularly to the Rector, the Rev. W. Worthington; to Mr. Arthur Worthington, J.P.; to Mr. Brian Worthington, B.Sc.; to Mrs. L. Berry; to Counc. J. Booth; to Mr. James Higson; to Mrs. Ashton; to Mr. W. Glen; to Mr. P. B. Hallam, and to a number of other senior members of our congregation whose memories have assisted me. My greatest help has been derived from the diaries of the late Thomas Loxham and I wish he were here so that I could shake him warmly by the hand.

Above all, we owe the advertisers a real debt of gratitude, for without their financial assistance it would not have been possible to produce a booklet of these dimensions. Their best thanks and reward will be your patronage. Will you please give it wherever you can?

In presenting this booklet I do so with a consciousness of its limitations and faults. Kindly forgive these. That being done, I send it forth in the hope that it may encourage the faithful, recall the lapsed, and awaken the indifferent to take a fuller part in the life and worship of our beautiful church.

HARRY T. TYLDESLEY,  
Author and Editor.

### **GREAT LEVER OF BYGONE DAYS.**

Like most places in England, the name of this district is associated with an ancient family and a manorial building. Great Lever's story is largely centred round its old Hall.

Nothing is historically certain before 1466 when, after much litigation, the "manor was awarded to Sir Rauff Assheton of Middleton against the claim of Roger Lever, gentleman."

Quoting from a Chronological Historical Supplement to the Bolton Chronicle, published in December, 1898, we find that the award referred to above and given by the Court at Lancaster, "was resisted by Roger Lever, who in these lawless times took with him one John Lever, of Bolton, yeoman, 'with many and divers other evell disposed personnel to a gret nowmber,' many of whom had been outlawed, probably in the contests between the houses of York and Lancaster. These proceeded from Bolton to Lancaster where they broke into the Castle and carried off the record of the recovery. Of this outrage Sir Rauff Assheton complained to the King and to the two Houses of Parliament, but though a fresh record was ordained and execution awarded, Roger Lever with his abettors 'ryotously, with force of armes, defensably in the forme of warre arrayed, that is to sale with bowel, arrowes, swerdes and bylles, and other defensable wapenes, contynuelly during the space of five yere and more' occupied the manor and also 'daily and nyghtly robbed the seid Sir Rauff, his tenaunts, and many other the King's leiges, kynne and frendes to the said Sir Rauff, of their owne propre goods and chattelles and with forse entered in their lyvellot, and the same despoiled'."

Evidently the Asshetons were firmly fixed in their intentions to reside at Great Lever Hall: the Levers, a family apparently suffering a temporary decline at that time, were as much resolved that they should not. Finally, the verdict went in favour of the Asshetons who lived in continuous residence at Lever Hall from 1466 until the early part of the 17th century. The head of the Assheton family lived at Middleton Hall, another branch residing at Lever Hall.

It is undoubtedly due to the incursion of the Asshetons that Great Lever was in the parish of Middleton. Long after they had left the Hall evidences of their ancient connection remained. For instance, prior to 1850 the district of Great Lever was outside the boundaries of Bolton, being, known as the Parish of Middleton (detached). Similarly, the official Rate Book for the period 1825-1835 records that after two of H.M. Justices of the Peace had authorised the rate for each period, the Clerk "read up at divine service" the amount of the rate to be levied and its purposes. This was done at Middleton Parish Church. Incidentally, the product of the rate during this period never exceeded £150!

In those days the Great Lever Parish extended from Raikes Clough in the east, then roughly followed a line to Burnden, Lever Street, High Street, fringing Daubhill and Morris Green, and finally by a somewhat irregular line ran from west to east and included part of the Moses Gate district.

When St. Michael's Church was built in 1851, it served the whole of the area of this parish of Middleton (detached). From 1851 to the early part of the present century several major amputations were made and the new parishes of St. Mark's, St. Bartholomew's, St. Bede's, St. Philip's, All Saints' (Farnworth), and S.S. Simon and Jude's were carved out of the original St. Michael's boundaries.

To return, however, to our brief story of Great Lever, or perhaps more correctly, Middleton. Though the Asshetons occupied the original Great Lever Hall, the building remembered by most of us and which was demolished in the 1930's was not the Hall building as it appeared prior to 1629. About that time the Hall was purchased by Bishop Bridgeman (Chester) from Sir Ralph Assheton. This Bridgeman was the progenitor of the Earls of Bradford whose family almost completely re-built and enlarged the Hall.

During the Middle Ages Great Lever Hall was undoubtedly a dwelling of distinction and successively the Levers, the Asshetons and then the Bridgemans (afterwards the Earls of Bradford) entertained there many of the prominent county families.

The population of the district was small. We read, for instance, that, in 1623 the population of Great and Little Bolton combined was barely 3000 and in that year "the plague or sweating sickness destroyed one-third of the inhabitants. The number of burials this year in the Bolton Parish Church yard was nearly 500." In 1593 the number had only been 45! At this time the population of Great Lever was fewer than one hundred souls. These were largely yeoman farmers and servants and retainers on the Great Lever Hall estate.

Ample evidence remains hereabouts to support the contention that this district was beautiful, well-wooded countryside. It remained so until towards the end of the last century, the inroads of industrialisation largely taking place during the present century.

Yet in spite of this pastoral and picturesque landscape local history forcibly reminds us that life in those days was not so tranquil and undisturbed as one would expect. In Middleton Church, for example, a painted window is still preserved which depicts a local soldier, John Seddon, together with the Assheton of his day, in the battle dress of the period, both of them fighting at the battle of Flodden Field (1513).

It is also recorded that in 1588 preparations were made locally "against the threatened Spanish invasion, watch towers and fire signals on Rivington Pike and other hills kept in readiness for months." Sad to reflect that 350 years later we were doing much the same sort of thing locally against the threatened Teuton invasion!

Some inhabitants of Bolton, Middleton and Manchester, most probably some from our own district, earned the displeasure of the local magistrates, for it is recorded that they were "severally taxed for watching the beacon at Rivington" which had been erected for signalling purposes. One wonders whether those fined were suspected of Fifth column activities?

In 1591 an edict was sent out from London expressing the King's apprehension that an invasion was imminent and ordering the local gentry to muster under arms all their tenants and servants. A postscript to the letter mentions that "Mr. Assheton of Leaver, doe dwell nearest unto the beacon upon Rivington Hill."

Evidently the Privy Council of those days held Mr Assheton of Great Lever in great regard and trust. Possible because he was a Protestant.

There were other important halls in the district which were nearer Rivington than Great Lever Hall eg. Snydale Hall, Lostock Hall, Anderton Hall, but those who dealt in these at this period were evidently Roman Catholics, who at that time would naturally be friendly to the King of

Spain because the latter was the staunch champion of Catholicism.

It should be remembered that the days of which we write were bitter, controversial days.

People were intolerant and old faiths died hard. People fought for their faith; they died for it, too! So the injunction to Mr. Assheton was well warranted.

Bolton and district has often been in the centre of religious strife and conflict. As far back as 1555 George Marsh of Deane suffered martyrdom for resistance to the Popish faith. Nearly a hundred years later, in 1642, during which period Bolton was known as the "Geneva of Lancashire" and was considered the "very school and centre of Puritanism" Bolton people took up the cause of Parliament, that is the Protestant cause.

During the years 1642-1650 there was much fighting in and around Bolton, the town being several times besieged and stormed and the Parish Church being used as a storehouse for military supplies. In 1644, for example, Prince Rupert and the Earl of Derby assembled a large army on Deane Moor and made a disastrous attack on the town, defeating the Parliamentary forces. The Middleton clubmen (many of these no doubt from Great Lever) under Colonel Ashton (Assheton) fought against the Prince and the Earl on this occasion. There is a tradition that Prince Rupert lodged in the old Hall at Great Lever but in the writer's opinion this is very doubtful as the inhabitants of the Hall espoused the Parliamentary cause. He probably lodged at Prince Rupert Farm, demolished two years ago, in Lever Edge Lane.

Passions appear to have died down by 1651 in which year the 7th Earl of Derby, who had taken such a leading part in the bloody siege of Bolton in 1644, was beheaded at the Market Cross in Churchgate. Internecine war after that came to an end.

To continue our story of Lever Hall, we find that in 1629 Sir Ralphe Assheton sold it to Bishop Bridgeman. This John Bridgeman was a distinguished cleric who had made a brilliant career at Cambridge where he ultimately became Fellow and afterwards Master of Magdalen College. His sovereign, James I, thought so highly of him as to appoint him one of his domestic chaplains. In 1615 he gave him the substantial Rectory of Wigan. Soon he was made Prebendary of Lichfield and Peterborough and finally, in 1619, he was elevated to the bishopric of Chester, at that time a huge diocese.

In order to be in closer contact with the northern extremes of his vast diocese John Bridgeman purchased Great Lever Hall. In 1630 he commenced rebuilding it and the work was completed in 1631. The Bishop's initials are still to be seen carved in the stone arch over the old gateway, with the date 1631 underneath.

Thus we have seen that our knowledge of three of the Hall's principal owners, the Levers, Asshetons and Bridgemans, is reasonably detailed and accurate. The Hall's actual origin is buried in obscurity. From its position 'he writer believes there has been a dwelling place of some local importance there for perhaps well nigh a thousand years. It has certainly passed through several vicissitudes being first a manorial house, then the seat of noted Lancashire knights, finally becoming a bishop's palace.

It remained in the possession of the Bridgeman family until its demolition in the late thirties.

The last three centuries of its story are closely associated with the rise of the Bridgeman family.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Bridgemans were created earls of Bradford, taking the name of their title from their other seat at Bradford in Salop county. The family rose in influence and importance in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, several of its members occupying positions of rank and prestige in the State. Some of their names are preserved in local place names, e.g., Bridgeman Street, Bradford Road, Orlando Street, Henry Street, etc.

It is to be regretted that Great Lever Hall had to be pulled down. The building contained much that was of interest to the antiquary—the episcopal arms of Bishop John Bridgeman in plaster work on a ceiling in a room which was long remembered as "the Bishop's study," several oak panelled rooms; secret cupboards; ornamental work in wood and stone; heavy oak beams and

narrow, winding stairs and latticed windows. All these have gone though fortunately some of these treasures have been preserved by the Bradford family.

During the last century the Hall ceased to be used by the Earls of Bradford as one of their residences. It has been used since as the home of a member of the Smith family and by the Rector of Great Lever. Some years ago it was used for a time as the Headquarters of the Great Lever Conservative Association. For a time it remained derelict but the cellars were left intact and when strengthened at the outbreak of World War II., they made admirable air raid shelters for the Day School children and for the residents in Lever Hall Fold.

### **THE OLD CHAPEL.**

This was built by Bishop John Bridgeman in 1634 and it did not long survive the Hall. Efforts were made to preserve it and some scheme was initiated whereby it could be used for devotional purposes by the Day and Sunday School scholars. Scarcity of essential materials and lack of manpower were the immediate causes of the scheme failing to be put into effect.

The Chapel was dedicated to the Holy Trinity and consecrated in 1636 "for men that dwelt eight miles from their Parish Church at Middleton." It should be remembered that at that time the nearest places of worship were Bolton Parish Church or Deane Church with Eccles and Middleton Churches a little more distant. The Bishop, by the way, consecrated Ringley Chapel in 1634.

There is evidence that the Chapel was used for public services, quite apart from as a place for the devotional exercises of the Bishop. In the register of Middleton Parish Church (1541-1663) it is recorded that "Mr. William Assheton, Clerk, Rector of this Church, and Miss Eleanor Brookes of Sankey, were married in the Chapel at Great Lever within this Parish the 27th day of May, 1635."

Under the will of Miss Ellen Seddon in 1824, nine acres of land together with a pew in Lever Chapel were disposed of at an auction. How the right to dispose of a pew in this manner was acquired by Miss Seddon is a mystery. Yet it is a pointer to the fact that the Chapel was used as a public place of worship.

### **THE STORY OF ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH.**

The first Rector of Great Lever, the Rev. Thomas Loxham, was a most methodical man who meticulously kept diaries of all his parochial activities. Perhaps the best introduction to this part of our story would be to quote directly from his own account of his first ministrations at St. Michael's:

"1851. Sept. 29th—THE CONSECRATION OF ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH, GREAT LEVER . (Read the prayers and lessons). A baptism after service." "The Sermon was preached by the Revd. Richard. Durnford, M.A., Rector of Middleton, from Leviticus xix. 30 'Ye shall keep my Sabbaths and reverence my Sanctuary—I am the Lord.' "

"Oct. 5th, Sunday—The first Sunday at Great Lever Church----officiate at Communion and preach from 2 Timothy iv. 1, 2 'I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his Kingdom: preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine.'

"Administer the Holy Communion. 17 Communicants Churching in afternoon before service-2 Baptisms after Second Lesson Preach from, Psalm xxvi. 8 'Lord I have loved the habitation of thy house ,and the place where thine honour dwelleth.' "

" Revd. Richard Loxham read prayers morning and afternoon, and assisted at the Sacrament."

"Oct. 7, Tues. Licensed to the Perpetual Curacy of St. Michael's, Great Lever, at the Diocesan Registry, St. James' Square, Manchester, by Dr. James Prince Lee, Bishop of Manchester."

Thus we submit, faithfully registering every comma and stop in the original, the detailed account

as recorded by the principal actor himself, the Rev. Thomas Loxham, the happenings of the first nine days at St. Michael's!

The Church is dedicated to St. Michael. It was consecrated, as we have seen, on the 29th September, 1851 (the Feast of St. Michael and All Angels) by the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Manchester—Bishop James Prince Lee. The dedication of the name St. Michael is appropriate because many of our ancient churches in Lancashire are so dedicated.

Though the Church cannot boast great antiquity, it has, nevertheless, few rivals locally in the matter of design and correctness of proportions.

In style it is Early English, a graceful style, and those who designed it kept very faithfully to the prototype. Its pointed arches and high pitched roof are the main characteristics of the Early English period of architecture, a style of building which flourished in this country in the 13th century. Because of its elegance, its grace of form and harmonious blending, the writer often imagines that he is worshipping in a church which boasts six centuries of history rather than one!

In addition to the Bishop and the Rev. Thomas Loxham, the following clergy assisted at its dedication and consecration: the Venerable Archdeacon Rushton, Rector of Prestwich; The Rev. Canon Slade, Vicar of Bolton; the Rev. Richard Durnford, Rector of Middleton, who preached the sermon.

The Church itself is built from stone which was quarried in the neighbourhood, the windows, mouldings and dressings being supplied from the delph at Horrocks Fold. Because of the presence of gravel in large quantities round about the site of the old Hall, the district was popularly known and called the Gravel Hole.

Messrs. Dixon and Breakspeare of Manchester were the architects. They designed the church with great skill in blending perfectly with the local landscape. We are indebted to these accomplished architects and the builders for leaving to posterity our picturesque and unpretending church. It is indeed a City of God set on a hill—a city which cannot be hid!

We, the inheritors of this pretty Church, are particularly indebted, too, to the Earl of Bradford (of whose family we have treated elsewhere in this booklet) of his day for largely making St. Michael's possible. The earl gave an acre of ground and a donation of £1,000 towards the cost of the fabric and endowment. Since then successive Earls of Bradford have on several occasions given more land so that to-day "God's Acre" has increased to almost 4 acres.

Other principal contributors were the Earl of Ellesmere, T. G. Horridge, George Piggot and T. Hayes. In addition there were a number of lesser benefactors. The original cost was £2116.

The main structure is much the same to-day as when it was first built except that the interior has been materially improved and altered. Gifts of exquisite stained glass windows; Communion Table; Reredos; Altar Cross; Vases; Plate and Vessels; Credence Table; Lectern; Font; Prayer Desk; portion of the Organ and numerous other useful articles of furnishing have been donated by a number of friends in memory of loved ones. There is room for still more and nothing is a more fitting and perpetual reminder of loved one than some useful item of Church furniture.

## **THE RECTORS OF GREAT LEVER.**



Rev. THOMAS LOXHAM, M.A.  
(1851—1899)

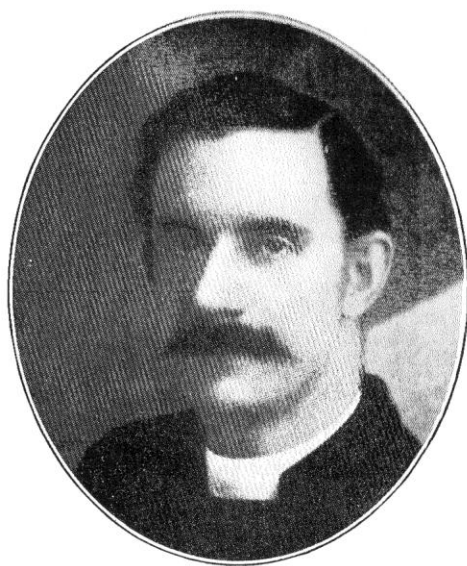
### **The Rev. Thomas Loxham, M.A.** (1851-1899)

Mr. Loxham was the first Rector of Great Lever, coming from Bolton Parish Church where he had been a Curate under Canon Slade from August, 1845, until July, 1851. When he became incumbent of Great Lever the population was 800, when he died nearly 50 years later it was 8,000.

Several of Mr. Loxham's ancestors on both sides had been clergymen. His elder brother, Richard, was a clergyman, too, and often assisted at the services at Great Lever. Both brothers were well and worthily esteemed and respected in the whole town and district. They both inherited considerable property and this they devoted to deserving causes and gave extensively to the building of S.S. Simon and Jude's Church, Schools and Vicarage. Thomas Loxham contributed the sum of £12,000 towards the latter project. He and his brother were munificent benefactors to St. Bartholomew's.

Without possessing any showy gifts but rather by patient and a diligent continuance in well-doing, and by that mysterious power of having a good influence on those around him, Thomas Loxham was much loved. He was a reverent priest, an effective preacher, a delightful companion—one deeply versed in antiquarian study, art and literature. Moreover, he was an indefatigable worker. He died on the 20th April, 1899, in the 81st year of his age.

He ought to be had in everlasting remembrance."



Rev. T. WALLACE CASSTLES, M.A.  
(1899—1910)

### **The Rev. T. Wallace Casstles, M.A.** (1899-1910).

The Rev. T. W. Casstles was a native of Bolton being the eldest son of Joseph Casstles, one of the founders of St. Paul's Church, Deansgate, Bolton. After receiving his early education in the town and gaining a Theological Exhibition, Mr. Casstles proceeded to Queen's College, Cambridge, and took his B.A. degree, in 1889, and M.A. in 1895. Prior to his appointment as Rector of Great Lever he held appointments at Blackpool Parish Church, Holy Trinity, Torquay, St. Luke's, Bold Street, Liverpool, and Hoxton Parish Church, London. The most notable event during his ministry here was the erection of the new school which was opened debt free in 1904.

Mr. Casstles, like his predecessor, was a Rector beloved and honoured by his people. His death took place on the 8th January, 1910, at the age of 46 years.





REV. MATHEW PATTERSON, M.A.  
(1910—1928)

### **The Rev. Mathew Patterson, M.A.**

(1910 —1928)

Mr. Patterson was inducted to the living of Great Lever on the 14th May, 1910. A graduate of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, he held appointments at St. James's Church, Darlington; St. Clement's Church, Salford; Bolton Parish Church and Prestolee, from which parish he came to Great Lever.

Mr. Patterson displayed remarkable enthusiasm in the cause of both Day and Sunday Schools and he was well loved and affectionately remembered by the teachers and scholars of both. During his ministry here Parochial Church Councils were set up and he developed a full sense of the responsibilities which had been laid on the laymen of the Church.

It was a matter of regret to his people when, in 1928, he accepted the living of Christ Church-with-St. Mary's and St. Aidan's, Todmorden. He was inducted at Todmorden on the 12th June, 1928. He died late in 1939.



REV. FREDERICK PROCTOR  
(1928 —1942)

### **The Rev. Frederick Proctor.**

(1928-1942)

Mr. Proctor was inducted on St. Matthew's Day, 21st September, 1928. A native of Manchester, he received a business training in that city before answering the call to Holy Orders in 1905. After six years at Kelham Theological College he was ordained in Wakefield Diocese in 1911.

Mr. Proctor was imbued with the missionary spirit and his enthusiasm in this respect led him to spend the early years of his ministry abroad. He worked for six years in the North Queensland Bush Brotherhood among our own people settled in the sheep, mining and cattle towns. For a shorter period he went to the unhealthy Gold Coast of West Africa and worked there among the native races.

Compelled by sickness which he contracted there to give up the work, he returned to spend three years on the organising staff of the S.P.G. lecturing on his experiences and trying to arouse support for the work.

Mr. Proctor returned to his native Lancashire in March, 1928, to work as assistant curate at Little Lever. Later on that year he was inducted to the living at St. Michael's, remaining here until 29th October, 1942, when he left to take up the living at Westbury-on-Severn in Gloucestershire. It was in September, 1933, during Mr. Proctor's incumbency, and very largely due to his prompting and initiative that the St. Michael's Rose Queen Festival was inaugurated. Apart from a break of three years during World War II., the Festival has become a permanent feature of our parochial life. Mr. Proctor still flourishes and maintains contact with St. Michael's through occasional correspondence with the compiler of this Handbook and through a regular reading of our Parish Magazine.



## **The Rev, William Worthington, B.A. (1943—**

Our present Rector who was inducted on Saturday, 27th February, 1943, by the Venerable Archdeacon of Rochdale, (the late Canon A. F. Gaskell, M.A.) graduated at Hatfield Hall, Durham, in 1915. From there he went to St. Aldan's College, Birkenhead. A deacon in 1915, he was made a priest in 1916.

From 1915-1919, Mr. Worthington held the curacy at St. Luke's Miles Platting. The year 1919 saw him hold a similar position at Thornton-le-Fylde, where he remained until 1920. In that year he was made curate of Bamber Bridge (in charge of Lostock Hall) and he remained there for six years. From there, in 1926, he was appointed to the Rectorship of Holy Trinity, Failsworth, which living he held until 1943, when he came to St. Michael's, Great Lever.

If I am reticent about his ministry here it is because it is embarrassing both to the Rector and to the present

writer. When the time comes there will be many who will arise to extol him and his family, not least among them your scribe. Suffice it to say he is appreciated for what he is and for what he has done for the parish. His family, too, for the loyal and ungrudging support they give to him by their constant attendance at Church and by their support on other parochial occasions.

## **SOME INTERESTING "FIRSTS."**

Whoever was first to do this or that is always a matter of historical interest and so for posterity I give you the following "firsts" which I have taken directly from Mr. Loxham's diaries. Perhaps, these will save or settle a lot of arguments:

On Wednesday, 22nd October, 1851, the first marriage was solemnized in Great Lever Church between Alphonso Rowland Varley, and Hannah Jackson, granddaughter of Mr. Smith of Lever Hall - the latter family owned the local chemical works.

For the next few weeks Mr. Loxham prepared several candidates for confirmation. They met in the Vestry at 6-30 on at least one evening each week.

On Saturday, 8th November, eight candidates were presented at the Bolton Parish Church ---the first confirmees from this Parish Church. Bishop Prince Lee was the officiating Bishop.

On Tuesday, the 9th November, Mr. Loxham records, "the first funeral at Great Lever Church. Hannah Wood, a little child aged 9 months," was interred. This is also noted on the grave stone in the churchyard.

The first Sunday School to be held was on Sunday, the 4th April, 1852 - 88 scholars being present.

Here is an odd kind of "first" record described in Mr. Loxham's own words in 1852. "April 7th. Attend at Church, no service for want of a congregation!"

The first Vestry Meeting was held on the 12th April of the same year and the first Church Wardens to be appointed were Mr. Horridge and Mr. Piggot

The Day School was begun on the 26th April, 1852, and it began its life in the old chapel.

Priscilla Monks was the teacher and "there were about 50 scholars." Mr. Loxham did a good amount of teaching.

Friday, 4th June, 1852, saw the first Sunday School Treat at Great Lever. They "assembled in the school at 1 p.m. walked to Lever Cottage, and from thence into a field near Peter Selfe's,

returned to Lever Cottage. Tea in a Barn at 4 p.m. Return to school and separate at ½ 8 p.m." The first School's Sermons are recorded thus "31st October, 1852 Sunday. The Charity Sermon for the Schools. The Reverend T. Berry preached from Matt. xviii. 10. A crowded Church. Collection £41 7s. 8½ d" Bearing in mind the great deterioration in the value of money since those days, that first Sermons' Collection can indeed be regarded an excellent one. Mr. Loxham apparently lived outside the Parish until 1853 for an entry in one of his diaries for 5th April of that year reads "many journies during this week preparatory to our removing to Great Lever." Before coming to reside in the district he lived in what is now the St. George's Road district.

For the first few years the services were held morning and afternoon. This was common practice in those days. But, of course, there was neither gas nor electricity in Great Lever then. Mr. Loxham attended a meeting in the school (i.e. the old Chapel) on the 20th January, 1859, "when it was determined to light the township of Great Lever with gas, along the high road from Burnden to Moses Gate." It was not until Ascension 1861, however, that the first Evening Service was held in St. Michael's Church.

A few other items which I submit briefly are:—

The first morning funeral at St. Michael's occurred on the 24th May, 1853.

2. Mr. Loxham took evening schools for boys and girls (on separate nights) —two and three evenings each week. He taught English, Arithmetic and Handwriting at these classes for many years.

3. Towards the end of 1853 Mr. Loxham was very active collecting from his parishioners for a Lending Library which he started early in 1854. This most versatile of clergymen also took a party of boys "to P. Johnson's on Monday, 19th December, 1853, for 'foot-ball' a substitution for a break-up on Friday last."

4. The first Harvest Festival was held on the 1st October, 1854.

5. A sermon was preached on Good Friday for the first time on the 10th April, 1857.

6. From 1857 until 1862 Mr. Loxham was very active raising money, holding meetings and making plans for the proposed new (now called the Old School) which were eventually opened in 1862

### **THE STONEMASON'S YARD IN ST. MICHAEL'S STORY.**

One of the most ancient crafts in the world, that of mason and sculptor, has been carried on in and around St. Michael's Churchyard ever since the Church was built. Moreover, the spring of water in the yard of Ar. Brammall and Sons Ltd., was once the source and supply of all drinking water in the district. The proprietors of this firm have maintained a continuous and unbroken connection with the Church ever since it was built. In days gone by the Clerk and Sexton of the Church was often a stonemason. So it was at Great Lever for many years.

Originally, the firm went by the name of Entwistle and Hollows. This John E. Entwistle was Sexton and Clerk from 1851 until his death in 1888. His son, John Walker Entwistle inherited the business and bought out Mr. Hollows. Some time during 1888 he was appointed Clerk and Sexton in succession to his father. His wife was organist of the Church from 1875-1905.

Mr. Arthur Brammall, after serving his apprenticeship under Mr. J. W. Entwistle, purchased the business in 1921. Twenty years later, in 1941, Mr. James Booth (now one of the town councillors for Great Lever Ward) acquired the business. Both Mr. Brammall and Counc. Booth, though not becoming Sextons, have been loyally connected with the Church all their lives, thus maintaining the unbroken connection of their firm with the Church.

Here is a complete list of Parish Clerks and Sextons:

John Entwistle, 1851-1888.

John W. Entwistle, 1888-1919.

Francis Thompson, 1919-1922.  
William Danson, 1923-1944,  
William Glen, 1944-1949,  
William Neary, 1950-1951.  
Harold Holt, 1951

### **THE SCHOOLS.**

When the Church was built in 1851 the nearest schools in existence were those at Holy Trinity, Bolton, and St. John's, Farnworth. Almost immediately something was done to rectify this and consequently the Old Chapel attached to Lever Hall (Bishop Bridgeman's Chapel) was opened as a Sunday School on the 4th April (Palm Sunday) 1852 and on the 26th of the same month as a Day School. The latter commenced with Miss Priscilla Monks as Headmistress and with about 50 scholars.

As the population was growing fairly rapidly the Old Chapel building became inadequate for the purpose and consequently a new building was erected (now called the Old School). It was completed in 1862 and on Whit Sunday of that year the Sunday School was first opened in the new building. The Day School moved into their new premises on the 7th July, 1862. Numbers still continued to grow and in 1904 what is now called the New School building was opened. Consequent upon the raising of the school leaving age, effective from April, 1947, two extra class room spaces were erected in the form of a pre-fabricated building and these were first put into use on the 8th September, 1947.

Miss Monks, the first mistress of Great Lever School, was succeeded by four other head mistresses, but in 1871 a Mr. Taylor was appointed as the first Headmaster. Succeeding Headmasters, together with their length of service appear hereunder. Mr. Taylor did not remain one year.

Mr. J. Welch, 1871-1913,  
Mr. T. Smith, 1913-1920.  
Mr. R. O. Lawson, 1920-1927.  
Mr. F. W. Bowen, 1927-1933.  
Mr. H. T. Tyldesley, 1933 - present Headmaster.