

SAMUEL OLDKNOW AND THE PEAK FOREST CANAL

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Samuel Oldknow has long been regarded as the chief promoter of the Peak Forest Canal¹ and recently he has been described as the driving influence in the canal company.² He was in fact influential in the building and running of the canal, but his connection with it was by no means straightforward. A complex relationship developed between him and the canal which this article is designed to explore.

Oldknow, born in 1756, set up as a cotton manufacturer at Anderton, between Bolton and Chorley in 1781, and soon concentrated on muslins for which there was a considerable demand.³ Muslins required fine spun cotton yarn, and although the first attempt to produce them in Lancashire is ascribed to Joseph Shaw of Anderton in 1764, he could not get suitable home-spun yarn cheap enough to compete with imported muslins from India. Oldknow was more successful and from 1783 achieved eminence in the trade, selling muslins primarily to the London market. Improvements in the quality of the yarn available following Samuel Crompton's invention of the spinning mule, first known as the muslin wheel, made this possible.⁴

Capital to enable Oldknow to expand his business was short, and unable, to raise sufficient from the London firms to which he sold his products, he turned to Richard Arkwright, the supplier of one of his chief materials and the recognised leader of the cotton industry. Arkwright lent him £3,000 at 5 per cent to enable him to start his manufacture on a larger scale at Stockport.⁵ He also received large advances in the form of yarn and drafts which by the beginning of 1788 amounted to over £10,000.⁶

Oldknow started as an employer of outworkers, but by 1790 he had already organised his operation to some extent on a factory basis. He had established works at Heaton Mersey, near Stockport, to carry out bleaching, printing and dyeing and so render himself less dependent on others.⁷ He built a factory for spinning by steam power in Stockport itself and laid the foundations for his larger mill at Mellor, near Marple Bridge,⁸ for which he had purchased land in the 1786-7 boom. The main motive seems to have been to guarantee his supply of yarn, a course recommended by Arkwright. The timing of the move seems to have been occasioned by the size of his profits. Robert Owen said that Oldknow had made £17,000 profit from muslin manufacture in each of two successive years, but he thought that the spinners were getting greater profits. Owen's view was that Oldknow was not, like others, content to do as well as he was doing but being ambitious, desired to become a great cotton spinner as well as the greatest muslin manufacturer.⁹ This comment may show prejudice on Owen's part, but his remark that when the trying time of 1792 arrived Oldknow was too wide in his plans to sustain his expenditure is apt.

The Stockport mill was in production by 1791, but the Mellor mill was not in operation until 1793. It was the latter development which was particularly costly, for at Mellor he had not been content to buy sufficient land on which to build his mill and provide it with water power. By exchange and extensive purchases he was becoming a considerable landowner in Mellor and Marple. This strained his finances. 'Do leave Mellor awhile and look after the manufacture' wrote one of his principal business contacts.¹⁰ Instead he sought business and matrimonial alliances. In 1792 he took into partnership Peter Ewart, an engineer, who had worked with Rennie, and with Boulton and Watt. He apparently came to the Manchester area to erect engines for the latter. The partnership was dissolved after a year, presumably as a result of the depression in trade in 1792-3 when Oldknow had some 500 hands laid off, many with arrears of wages. Subsequently

Oldknow's desire to achieve an alliance with one of the leading Manchester manufacturers, Peter Drinkwater, was disappointed. Oldknow would have achieved complete control over Drinkwater's spinning interests. His engagement to Drinkwater's daughter was however broken off, possibly because Drinkwater discovered that Oldknow's financial position was not what he had expected.¹¹ The debts Oldknow had incurred in the 1780s had not been discharged. By 1791 he had undertaken to mortgage to Richard Arkwright junior the estates he was engaged in purchasing at Mellor as security for a loan of £12,000. Nevertheless it was Mellor on which he staked his future.

The financial crisis of 1792-3 meant that Oldknow had to abandon most of his other activities, including the Stockport manufacturing and spinning. He let his Stockport premises for £600 a year, sold the Heaton Mersey works, and gave up the manufacture of muslins, but this did not stop him from expanding his investments at Mellor. Further, throughout this period he was in substantial debt to Arkwright, the mortgage on the Mellor properties amounting to £32,000 in 1796, and Arkwright's hope, expressed the previous year, that he would convert some of his assets into money was not achieved.¹³

Oldknow was not the only cotton manufacturer to whom the Arkwrights lent money. James Longsdon of Great Longstone, Ward of Belper and Twigg of Ashover received loans at various times.¹⁴ Oldknow's position does not seem to have been affected by the death of Sir Richard Arkwright in 1792 as for the previous five years or so most of his arrangements had been with Richard Arkwright junior. In any case Arkwright senior left a fortune estimated at little short of half a million pounds. The family was apparently generous to creditors: for instance, the £5,000, which Arkwright senior had lent to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, in 1786, to meet gambling debts incurred without her husband's knowledge, was carried forward.¹⁵

Oldknow's interest in the Peak Forest Canal arose primarily on account of the Mellor properties, and especially from his interests in the lime trade. His first estate at Mellor, Bottoms Hall, seems to have been purchased mainly with the need for a suitable site for the mill, including water power, in mind. To provide the latter he diverted the Goyt and constructed dams and reservoirs. It was on the Bottoms Hall estate that he built his principal farm, which he also used as an apprentice house. A complex series of land purchases and exchanges gave him the opportunity to pursue a wide range of interests based on the ownership of a substantial, but compact, area of land in the Marple district. To the Bottoms Hall estate he added by piecemeal purchase the Chapel Houses estate on the opposite (i.e. west) bank of the Goyt where he built his lime kilns and sank his coal shafts. It was through this estate that the Peak Forest Canal was to run. He also bought the estate known as Goyt's Cliff Torr to the south of the Chapel Houses estate and exchanged lands at Stockport for land to the south of the Bottoms Hall estate which extended his holding along the east bank of the Goyt as far as Strines Hall. He had acquired all this by 1791 and his financial difficulties do not seem to have prevented the acquisition of further portions of land which filled out his Marple and Mellor estate. Moreover, it appears from the records of the Peak Forest Canal that he also acquired land to the north of Marple Bridge on the east bank of the Goyt—the Brabins estate between Marple Bridge and the junction of the Goyt and the Etherow, and the Hyde Bank estate opposite Marple Dale.¹⁶

The population of Marple and Mellor grew rapidly. The mill employed mainly women and juveniles. To some extent Oldknow's other enterprises provided jobs for the males. He was an active and progressive farmer: his lime kilns on the banks of the canal involved a capital outlay of £4,500: his coal mines provided employment too. The preparations for the erection of the mill led immediately to the building of a new bridge over the Goyt and to extensive improvements in local roads. Although by upbringing a dissenter, he contributed to the rebuilding of the Anglican church at Marple. In this period therefore Oldknow and Marple were virtually synonymous. Marple was also the hub of the Peak Forest Canal, because until the long flight of locks

was opened in 1804 all goods from the southern or summit section, which ran from Buxworth and Whaley Bridge to Marple, had to be conveyed down a specially laid tramway at Marple to resume their journey along the northern section of the canal to Dukinfield where a junction with the Ashton Canal gave access to Manchester, south Lancashire and more distant parts. It is against this background that an account of Oldknow's relations with the Peak Forest Canal must be set.

The original inspiration for the canal does not seem to have come from Oldknow as it was first mooted as a branch of the Ashton Canal. Indeed in May 1793 the Ashton shareholders agreed to introduce a bill for this purpose. In July a subscribers' meeting was called and the Peak Forest Canal went ahead as a separate venture,¹⁷ although about a third of the Ashton shareholders also subscribed to it. Oldknow was not a subscriber to the Ashton Canal, but he seems to have been involved in the Peak Forest from an early stage. He was probably present at a meeting at the Ram's Head Hotel, Disley on 5th December 1793 to meet the agent of the Duke of Devonshire.¹⁸

He was certainly the largest shareholder, being down for more shares than any other single person included in the subscribers list.¹⁹ He was allocated 65 shares of £100 each; James Harrison of Cheadle Hall²⁰ and John Arden of Harden Hall, Dukinfield with respectively 34 and 31 shares had the next largest individual holdings, although Samuel and Peter Marsland, the Stockport spinners, had 50 shares jointly. It is possible that Oldknow only took up 52 shares at that time, but, as Hadfield points out, it is surprising that he could have afforded to invest so heavily,²¹ and, as will be seen, he had difficulty in meeting the calls. He must have purchased more shares later and is reported to have held 261 at one time.²² He certainly bought 30 shares in December 1800 from Ottiwell Wood.²³ He also purchased shares from Miss Shaw, a neighbour and friend, and Thomas Winterbotham, a member of the canal committee, neither of whose names appear on the original list.²⁴

Oldknow was not elected to the Peak Forest Canal committee at the first general meeting, which was held on 5th June 1794, but at a subsequent one held on 7th August.²⁵ The first of many transactions between the new committee member and the canal company is recorded in the minutes of the committee meeting held the same day, when the committee agreed to pay Oldknow £158.5s. for ash timber. He was a member of the sub-committee appointed to meet the landowners on the line of the canal and to fix the places where bridges were necessary, and he took the chair at the meeting of the committee in October.²⁶ Although John Bower Jodrell²⁷ generally took the chair at the early meetings of the canal committee, Oldknow frequently did so from mid-1796 onwards and was one of those who drew up the report for the general meeting that year.²⁸ Even before then he took an active part: he was one of the members appointed to report on progress in February 1795, and one of a group asked to correct and alter the rules and regulations produced by Thomas Brown, the resident engineer, for establishing a fund for the purpose of relieving the necessities of the families of workmen prevented from working by reason of sickness or by any accident happening to them in the execution of the canal. The company was to contribute 20s per fortnight to the fund.²⁹

Oldknow clearly saw the canal as a means of furthering his own interests and sometimes the committee had to ensure that these did not cut across those of the company. In October 1795 Benjamin Outram, the engineer, was asked by the committee to stake out the top level to the first lock at Marple as soon as possible, but Oldknow was requested to make certain preparations to bring his coals upon the canal as soon as it became navigable.³⁰ In July 1796 Outram was asked to ascertain whether the company ought to bear the expense of making the upper level of the canal from the place marked out for the first lock to the situation in Marple proposed by Oldknow for his limekilns.³¹

He was obviously in a special position. When cash was short and the company had to sell its boats, which were then still being built, he was given the opportunity to purchase,

at Outram's valuation, the first boat finished. It was later agreed that he should have two. He bought two more boats in 1799 for use on the upper level of the canal and two for the lower.³² In 1797 he was allowed to take water from the canal at Marple for the purpose of raising coal from his mines there on condition that he returned an equal quantity to the summit level. The following year his terms were accepted for accommodating the company and others in his dry dock at Marple. Five shillings was to be charged for each boat on entry and 1s. a day for each working day spent there. One guinea per boat, with an additional 1s per day, was the rental charged when boats were built there. Access was available to the store, timber yard, stocks and chains.

Oldknow was also a supplier to the company. He made bricks by the Peak Forest Canal, and they were made available to others for building lime-kilns and other works near the canal at 16s per 1,000, but the purchaser had to pay him an additional 1s per 1,000 for the clay from which the bricks were made.³³ He rented land to the canal company, being paid 10 guineas per acre per annum for land for the canal's timber yard at Marple. He even seems to have run a passenger service on the canal, as in July 1797 he was permitted until the next annual assembly 'to navigate one or more Passage Boats on the top level of the Canal on condition that he do pay to the Company one half of the Money which may be collected from the Passengers without any deductions for the Boats, Horses, or Men, and on his not navigating more than three miles an hour'.³⁴

By this time both Oldknow and the canal were in financial difficulties. Their relationship became rather curious. Oldknow took the chair at the committee each month from August 1796. In March 1797 the committee urged that the £10 call on the shares, which had been due the previous month, should be paid immediately to prevent a stop being put to the building of the canal and they threatened action against defaulters. Oldknow was one of a group deputed to see the canal's treasurers to explain that, except on the top level and the Marple aqueduct, work would stop until improvements in the funds of the company allowed it to restart. In April the committee agreed to commence actions against defaulters. On 31st May a special committee seems to have been called with Thomas Phillips³⁵ in the chair, a day before the regular committee meeting was held under Oldknow's chairmanship. The special meeting instructed the clerks to write forthwith to inform several shareholders, including Oldknow 'that, as the money due on their shares can no longer be suffered to remain unpaid' action for recovery would begin unless they paid within a fortnight.³⁶

Oldknow, however, continued to be in arrears, and on 11th November the clerks were instructed to write to him that 'as this Committee have no other present Resource whence to procure Money to discharge the Demands of the Workmen employed on the . . . Canal than the arrears now due, they must request that Mr. Oldknow will immediately pay into the hands of the Treasurers the sum of £520³⁷ which agreeable to his promise on 14th June last ought to have been paid on 14th October last and that Mr. Oldknow will also in pursuance of that same promise immediately pay the Call which became due on his shares on 15th August last'.³⁸

The call due in August was for a further £5 a share, so making his total debt £780. At this time James Harrison or Thomas Phillips tended to take the chair even when Oldknow was present at the committee. He took the chair again in February 1798, presumably having paid off his arrears, and by September he was being authorised, together with James Mallalieu, another Stockport cotton spinner on the committee, to see Thomas Smith of Rochdale who owed £1,500 on his shares. But this did not signify any real improvement in Oldknow's finances.³⁹ By December 1798 he had fallen two years in arrears with his account with Boulton and Watt; the debt was not paid until September 1799.⁴⁰ In 1798 the Stockport premises with the Boulton and Watt engine were offered for sale, and the Mellor spinning business was in a very unsatisfactory state. By 1800 matters were so bad that Oldknow had to be saved from an open declaration of bankruptcy by the intervention of Arkwright who lent a further £42,000.

Oldknow was to pay 5 per cent on this sum, and on the £30,000 debt outstanding and half any profits. Arkwright had the right to intervene in the business if he desired without taking any active part in the management. For his part Oldknow was to live rent free at Mellor and give his whole time to the management. He seems to have been giving much more time to the improvement of the Mellor estate than to his spinning business, and this probably continued as the partnership with Arkwright was dissolved on 1st January 1805. By that time the value of the estate had risen from £83,794 in 1800 to £160,584, but the debts had also risen steeply from £97,400 to £156,333 of which £143,000 was owing to Arkwright.⁴¹

It was doubtless the state of Oldknow's finances which accounted for the fact that he eventually dropped out of a scheme to assist the canal financially to enable the Marple locks to be completed. From late 1802 onwards a number of arrangements were considered by the canal committee to raise funds for this purpose. They looked into the possibility of granting Oldknow and Arkwright the tonnage dues in return for a loan, or paying them in instalments for building the locks. In the end statutory authority seems to have been necessary before the tolls could be let, and the 1805 Act⁴² contained powers for this purpose. Up to this point the canal records generally mention Oldknow's name with Arkwright's, as if they were both on the same financial footing. In October 1805 however they reconcile the posture with the reality by stating that Oldknow declined, for reasons which appear very satisfactory to the committee and honourable to himself, further negotiations about the contract which was proposed to have been entered into between himself and the company for leasing to him the rates arising from the canal and the lands and buildings. The committee went ahead with Arkwright alone although the precise terms of the arrangement are not known.⁴³

Oldknow's own interests and ambitions were often inextricably mixed with the affairs of the canal. Tradition has it that he regaled the navvies with posset ale for breakfast to ensure that his boat, carrying lime from his own kilns, went down the new locks first.⁴⁴ His investment in the lime-burning business was considerable. The original cost of his kilns at Marple, which went into production in 1797, was £1,527, but he later spent a further £3,000 on more kilns and associated works around the canal. From 1799 onwards the canal company tried to encourage trade by offering premiums for lime-kilns built on the canal by way of reduced tonnage payments. In September 1801 it was agreed that Oldknow should be paid for six kilns, if they were built by 1st November and in full working order by then, at the rate previously agreed for completion by 24th June. The erection of these kilns gave a boost to production. In 1799 52,000 loads (about 4,700 tons) of lime were produced; in 1800 74,000 loads (about 6,700 tons). In 1802 13,000 loads (about 1,200 tons) were produced in a single month.⁴⁶

John Farey visited Marple at some date between September 1807 and December 1809 when collecting material for his survey of Derbyshire. He wrote that the structure and arrangement of the lime-kilns were the most complete that he had seen. There was a canal basin where the stone and coal was unloaded level with the top of the kilns. From the bottoms of the kilns railways were laid which led into a boat-house where two boats could be loaded with lime under cover by tipping from the 'trams on the railways'. Another railway line led to a lime house where four or five waggons or carts could stand at one time. The 12 kilns could burn 2,500 bushels of lime daily (about 50 tons). Between the bottoms of the kilns roomy arched stables were constructed, in some of which the farmers fed and rested their horses, while their carts and waggons were loading, and others were let to the boatmen for their towing horses.

About half the lime was dispatched by cart and waggon, three-quarters of this for agricultural purposes, and the rest for cement except for what the bleaching houses and the calico printers took. The other half went by boat as far as Bolton, Bury, Saddleworth, and would go to Huddersfield and further when the Standedge tunnel was completed.

To charge the kilns the stone was broken into lumps weighing from half to six pounds

each. Three tons of stone were mixed with one ton of coal, producing on average 15 loads of lime. Each load consisted of 10 pecks, each weighing 200 lbs. Farey observed the piling up of stone and layers of coal slack before the men left work at night. Oldknow told him that the lime thus produced was found much the whitest. Farey commented that he could not but consider it as a great waste of fuel.

Oldknow was then buying limestone from the canal company at Buxworth at 2s 1d per ton. Coal, 'of an indifferent quality called slack', as Farey put it, was delivered to the kilns at 5s to 6s 8d per ton. The burnt lime was sold at 14d per load.⁴⁶ The kilns provided Oldknow with an operating profit in the first few years of their existence, but in the longer term they operated at a loss. From about 1803 the price of limestone at Buxworth seems to have been about a third higher than when the quarries first began to supply the canal and kilns. Probably the governing factor in the rise in the cost of getting the stone and in burning lime was the increase in wages. By 1811 Oldknow had leased his lime burning business to the firm of Wright and Brown of Disley who already had kilns on the canal at Buxworth and Hyde Lane.⁴⁷

Oldknow also took an interest on behalf of the canal in the getting of the limestone in the quarries near Dove Holes from where it was taken by the Peak Forest tramway to Buxworth for transit by canal. In July 1797 he was one of four appointed by the committee to view the limestone rocks and to consider the disputes with the getters. In 1798 he was asked to see Richard Kirke, who owned the Hallsteads estate at Dove Holes,⁴⁸ with whom the company was then negotiating for a lease of land in which to quarry limestone. In the following year he was particularly concerned with the letting of contracts for the ganging of the limestone from the limestone rocks to Buxworth, and with negotiating with another landowner in the Dove Holes area—the Duke of Devonshire—for getting stone and extending the Peak Forest Tramway.⁴⁹

His financial relationship with the canal was often complex. In May 1800 it was agreed that he should be repaid £250 which he had advanced to the company to help pay the expenses of the Parliamentary Bill of that year, but this was only a book-keeping transaction as the sum was to come out of money owed to the canal for tonnage dues.⁵⁰ Later that year the committee agreed to buy for the use of the canal company 46 yards of canal made by Oldknow at a price of £59, subject to Outram's valuation. He also played an active part in a variety of negotiations with the Ashton and Huddersfield Canal Companies and many private individuals.⁵¹ He discussed with Dove Holes landowners, Kirke and Gisborne, the excessive breaking up of their land to get limestone. In 1802 he was one of a group who oversaw the purchase by the Peak Forest Canal of Kirke's estate, and of another which looked into the best use of the collieries near the canal.⁵²

His interest in the building of the Marple locks was not restricted to the financial arrangements, referred to above, from which he eventually dropped out. He was asked to direct Thomas Brown to pay the workmen up to £10 and to direct such further encouragement, by liquor or otherwise, as he (Oldknow) should think in the interest of the company to allow. When the locks were finished the committee decided that the lock-keepers should be furnished with an upper waistcoat and badge to distinguish them from other persons and Oldknow was asked to provide them in such manner as he felt proper.⁵³

Even if the financing of the locks was beyond him he helped in lesser ways. In 1803 the committee decided to buy an estate at Chapel-en-le-Frith as a site for a reservoir (Combs Reservoir), but had insufficient funds, so Oldknow was asked to purchase on their behalf. The committee undertook to repay Oldknow over four years. He was to be considered the owner of the fish and fowl and shooting rights. In 1803 he was asked to advance £308 to the pay clerk, the sum to be allowed from his tonnage dues.⁵

In November that year £125 was paid to Oldknow for making a road and bridge across the canal at Markcomb quarry on his Hyde Bank estate. In July 1806 he was allowed to erect a tollgate on the aqueduct at Marple and to levy tolls on both horse and

foot passengers going over the aqueduct, paying the company £10 per annum for this right. He had previously built a house and office at Marple for the canal's principal agent and rented it to the company for £10 a year.⁵⁴ He accompanied Brown to settle alterations in the land for the wharf at Whaley Bridge with Jodrell's agent, and to stake out the diversion of a turnpike road. He exchanged land with John Arden to avoid building another canal bridge. He also exchanged the land on which the canal company had built the temporary railway at Marple for other land which was taken from his Brabins estate.⁵⁶

These complex dealings between Oldknow and the canal company often gave rise to disputes. In November 1807 the clerks were authorised by the canal committee to take legal steps against him for the recovery of money owing to the company for limestone as soon as the canal agent, Meadows, requested. The chairman was asked to write to him to say that his claims in respect of the loss of water in Combs Brook, and of the coal under the canal which could not be mined, were unreasonable. The company was willing to pay for all the land it had purchased according to agreed valuations, but they wished him to understand that they were fully determined to have the account settled without longer delay and that unless he gave an answer satisfactory to Meadows, the clerks were directed to take legal steps. The dispute dragged on. In November 1808 Oldknow's claim for £88 for minor works on the Brabins estate was turned down and only £18 allowed. It was early in 1809 before an agreement was drawn up under which Oldknow was indemnified against any liability to compensate the canal for damages which might result from working his mines near the canal at Marple. He agreed to pay the company £2,200 in instalments to discharge his debts. He had however been lent without charge iron rails and blocks, presumably from the disused Marple railway, to lay a railway in the Hyde Bank estate for carrying sand and gravel to the canal. In 1811 the committee agreed to supply him with iron rails and the old blocks for 300 yards of railway for the same purpose. The materials were then lying near the aqueduct at Marple. The arrangement was that Oldknow was to return the rails when requested to do so, or to buy them. In any case the canal company was to have gravel at 3d a ton inclusive of the cost of using Oldknow's wagons and implements.⁵⁷

The canal company's account with Oldknow was settled in March 1813 except for five items. These included £31 owing for rent for the year ending 12th May 1806. The company was credited with this debt and with £200 interest on money Oldknow owed. He was however owed in turn £55 drawback on tonnage dues on limestone used for roads (for which the charge was lower than for stone for burning) and £100 for a road, well and drainage in the Brabins estate. Subsequently he was paid £40 for making a tunnel under the turnpike road at Marple to the towing path. He was also paid £511 for land taken for the canal from the Goytscliff and Chapel Houses estates. This was subject to a yearly rent of £20.11s.6d. with a further £5 for the warehouse erected on the Chapel Houses estate.⁵⁸

In 1813 the canal company offered to buy from him the lime-kilns, cottages and works at Marple lying between the Crick Bridge next to the top lock and the stone bridge next to the fourth lock at a perpetual rent of £500 per annum. Oldknow did not accept this offer. He proposed to lease the major part to Messrs. Gregory and Bullients for £600 a year to Christmas 1815, with subsidiary leases to George Newman, William Fletcher and the canal company, amounting to £145 altogether. But he did make an alternative offer of £1,200 a year from 1816 which was to include additionally the dry dock, boatyard, four boats and more land. The company refused this.⁵⁹

As late as 1816 and 1819 Oldknow was a member of groups appointed to discuss with the agent of the Duke of Devonshire the terms on which limestone could be got, and to report on the possibility of quarrying gritstone. In October 1817 he inspected the whole line of the canal. In the 1820s, however, he was less active in the company's affairs. In 1823 he offered his warehouse and two adjoining wharves at a perpetual rent of £140 and the new tollhouse and weighing machine for £125. He would keep the road under

repair and not charge any toll at his gate on carts going to the canal. The committee thought the rent much too high. A deputation was appointed to treat with him. If they could not get a satisfactory agreement Meadows was asked to obtain land in Marple for a canal warehouse for which they already had statutory authority. Agreement was not possible.⁶⁰

The final reference to Samuel Oldknow in the minutes of the Peak Forest Canal committee was on 9th April 1829, six months after his death on 18th September 1828, aged 72. Richard Arkwright, it is recorded, had paid £1,396.18s.8d. to the company 'the amount of debt owing to them by the late Mr. Oldknow'. The Arkwrights had enabled him to survive as a public figure, despite his financial weaknesses, perhaps best epitomised by the fact that when he undertook the rebuilding of Marple church after it had been blown down in 1804, 'his liberal mind so enlarged upon the scale laid down that he spent £3,000 above the sum subscribed'—a mere £1,200.⁶¹ But the façade was preserved so that the former muslin manufacturer was High Sheriff of Derbyshire in 1824, and took the chair at the first meeting of another transport enterprise which was to turn out to be less profitable and hungrier for capital than the Peak Forest Canal—the Cromford and High Peak Railway.⁶²

REFERENCES

- ¹The phrase is A. Hulme's in G. Unwin, *Samuel Oldknow and the Arkwrights*, (Unwin) (1924), 223.
²A. J. Pierce, 'Samuel Oldknow and the Building of the Peak Forest Canal', (*Pierce*) *Journal of the Railway and Canal Historical Society*, XVIII (1972), 30.
³Unwin, 2.
⁴G. W. Daniels, *Early English Cotton Industry*, (1920), 114, 129 and 168-9.
⁵Unwin, 17.
⁶Unwin, 85.
⁷Unwin, 106-7.
⁸Unwin, 123.
⁹Unwin, 153-5; *The Life of Robert Owen written by Himself*, (Owen) (1857), 1, 40. Owen lost his opportunity of a partnership with Peter Drinkwater because of Oldknow's proposed marriage to Drinkwater's daughter.
¹⁰S. and W. Salte, Oldknow's principal London warehouseman, 5th January 1791, see Unwin, 148.
¹¹W. C. Henry, 'Biographical note of the late Peter Ewart, Esq.', *Memoirs of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society*, 2nd series, VII (1846), 120-5.
¹²Owen, 40-1 and 59; W. H. Chaloner argue that this must have been in 1794, not 1792 as Unwin assumed, see Chaloner, 'Robert Owen, Peter Drinkwater and the Early Factory System in Manchester', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 37 (1954-5), 97.
¹³Unwin, 194.
¹⁴S. D. Chapman, 'The Cressbrook and Litton Mills', *Derbyshire Archaeological Journal*, LXXXIX (1969), 89.
¹⁵R. S. Fitton and A. P. Wadsworth, *The Strutts and the Arkwrights 1758-1830*, (1958), 95-7.
¹⁶Unwin, 135-42.
¹⁷8th May 1793, see C. Hadfield and G. Biddle, *Canals of North West England*, (Hadfield and Biddle) (1970), 2, 306.
¹⁸Despite the reference to this meeting in Pierce, 29 and note 1, the only evidence in the Oldknow papers in the John Rylands Library seems to be a notice of this meeting, not a record of it, (John Rylands Library, English Mss 751).
¹⁹Figures from the list in the House of Lords Record Office.
²⁰Harrison was a cotton merchant who had recently bought Cheadle Hall (J. P. Earwaker, *East Cheshire Past and Present*, (1880), I, 184), who had also moved into cotton manufacturing and rented mills and workshops in Stockport to local men (S. D. Chapman, 'Fixed Capital Formation in the British Cotton Industry, 1770-1815', *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, XXIII (1970), 246).
²¹Hadfield and Biddle, 306.
²²Unwin, 227.
²³The reference to the purchase from Wood is in the Peak Forest Canal Minute Book (PFC), 26th December 1800. The minute books are in the Public Record Office, British Transport Historical Records. The first three in the PFC series (now indexed Rail 856, 1, 2 and 3) cover the period of Oldknow's association with the canal. They run respectively from 5th June 1794 to 26th September 1800, 6th October 1800 to 7th September 1807, and from 28th September 1807 to 20th May 1829.
²⁴Unwin, 227, and for Oldknow's attachment to Miss Shaw, 239.
²⁵PFC, 6th June and 7th August 1794.
²⁶PFC, 8th September and 10th October 1794.

- ²⁷Born John Bower, he took the name of Jodrell after marrying Frances Jodrell in 1775. She had succeeded to the Jodrell estate at Taxal and Yeadsley, near Whaley Bridge. In 1795 he inherited the manor of Taxal and Shallcross Hall from his brother, Foster Bower. He died the following year. *Earwaker*, II, 532 and 536.
- ²⁸PFC, 4th May 1796.
- ²⁹PFC, 4th March 1795.
- ³⁰PFC, 9th October 1795.
- ³¹PFC, 8th July 1796.
- ³²PFC, 16th February 1709 and 19th December 1799.
- ³³PFC, 14th June 1797; 2nd May 1798; 16th February 1797.
- ³⁴PFC, 17th October 1796; 19th July 1797.
- ³⁵Thomas Phillips had started as a linen draper in Manchester and became a major cotton spinner in Ashton-under-Lyne. A member of the Manchester Literary and Philosophical Society like Drinkwater and Owen, and also Marsland, (but not Oldknow). (W. H. Thomson, *History of Manchester to 1852*, (1967), 246-7).
- ³⁶PFC, 24th March; 13th April; 31st May 1797.
- ³⁷This suggests that Oldknow originally only took up 52 shares.
- ³⁸PFC, 11th November 1797—Harrison was in the chair.
- ³⁹PFC, 6th September 1798.
- ⁴⁰Chaloner, 'The Cheshire Activities of Matthew Boulton and James Watt, 1776-1817', *Transactions of the Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society*, LXI (1949), 127.
- ⁴¹'Arkwright . . . entered into partnership with him on terms which, whilst leaving ostensible possession and actual management to Oldknow, transferred the essentials of ownership to the other partner, who had in fact advanced most of the capital'. *Unwin*, 199-201.
- ⁴²45 Geo III c 12.
- ⁴³PFC, 7th October 1805. The agreement referred to by *Hadfield and Biddle* (311-2) as final in 1803 was with Arkwright alone although the negotiations leading up to it involved Oldknow as well. This agreement seems not to have been implemented as discussions were still going on with Oldknow in 1804 when it was decided to apply for a Bill—PFC, 13th June and 13th September 1804.
- ⁴⁴J. Wainwright, *Memories of Old Marple*, (*Wainwright*), (1899), 10.
- ⁴⁵*Unwin* 215-8, PFC, 2nd September 1801.
- ⁴⁶John Farey, *General View of the Agriculture of Derbyshire*, (1815), II, 426-8.
- ⁴⁷*Unwin* 221.
- ⁴⁸Richard Kirke, who succeeded his uncle Henry Kirke of Martinside, lived in Denbighshire. In 1742 part of the Kirke estate had descended to the Gisbornes. W. B. Bunting, *Chapel-en-le-Frith*, (1940), 149 and 155.
- ⁴⁹PFC, 19th July 1797; 6th September 1798; 22nd August 1799.
- ⁵⁰PFC, 2nd May; 1st August; 7th October, and 17th November 1801.
- ⁵¹PFC, 1st August 1800 and 12th July 1801; 7th October 1800; 17th November 1800.
- ⁵²PFC, 20th March; 17th April and 12th January 1801; 11th May and 19th July 1802.
- ⁵³PFC, 13th August 1804; 16th May 1806.
- ⁵⁴PFC, 4th April 1803; 21st March 1803.
- ⁵⁵PFC, 16th November 1803; 28th July 1806; 1st February 1803.
- ⁵⁶PFC, 7th January 1805; 27th March 1805; 9th February 1807.
- ⁵⁷PFC, 9th November 1807; 14th November 1808; 13th February 1809; 8th November 1811.
- ⁵⁸PFC, 3rd March 1813.
- ⁵⁹PFC, 12th April and 26th May 1813.
- ⁶⁰PFC, 27th November 1816; 17th March 1819; 29th October 1817; 26th March and 14th August 1823.
- ⁶¹*Wainwright*, 18.
- ⁶²D. J. Hodgkins, 'The Origins and Independent Years of the Cromford and High Peak Railway', *Journal of Transport History*, VI, (1963), 41.