

**THE HISTORY OF TRAFFORD PARK
&
THE WESTINGHOUSE FACTORY**
(including the de Trafford family)

From Deer Park to Trafford Park in 100 years
(A history of Trafford Park and "The Big House")

Presented by Mr S Nelson on
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Trafford Park really was a park in the late 19th Century and this painting by Joshua Renshaw in 1895 shows it to be a very pleasant place. It also shows the end of an era before the Park became the first Industrial Estate in the World.

The de Trafford family owned this land for almost 900 years in spite of the usual traumas of allegiance to monarchs and religion. About 1020 King Cnut gave this piece of land to one of his Saxon warriors called Radulphus for defeating a Northern rebel leader called Wolvercote who had a fortified village on the banks of the River Irwell.

Cnut came north-west with an army. He camped and crossed the River Bollin, now called Knutsford, the River Mersey at the Street Ford and arrived at the Trayford over the Irwell near Manchester. The victorious warrior Radulphus now took this as his new surname - de Trafford.

The Trafford's obviously had many dwellings over the years and this was their last but one at Trafford Bar. Built in the 15th Century and demolished in 1939. One Humphrey died here in 1716 aged 85. Known as 'Owd Trafford', he probably gave his name to the area (O.T.).

Their last dwelling was formerly Wickleswick Hall on the site of Wolvercote's Saxon village. It was bought in 1635 by Sir Cecil de Trafford and was rebuilt in 1763 by the famous architect Inigo Jones. After the family left Trafford Park, this hall served as a golf club house. A military convalescent home in the 1914/18 war and a hotel for the first Trafford Park factory bosses, the Hall was destroyed by enemy bombing in 1941.

The Trafford family had been generous with their land. Horse sales were quite common at the back of the Hall; they had shooting parties for friends and locals and rallies and displays were encouraged - like these early cars, and the lake was a Mancunian amenity for boating, swimming and fishing, until 1914 and even the Scout movement was welcome - so why did the de Trafford's move?

The reason was caused 600 years previously with the granting of the 1301 Charter by Edward I, and Manchester became a medieval boom town. Sadly, its rivers proved inadequate for the increasing transport and roads were almost non-existent. The traveller Arthur Young had this to say of his journey from Manchester to Warrington and Wigan in July 1770. "It was however absolutely essential to deliver raw materials and manufactured goods, so.... great effort was made to improve the Irwell and Mersey rivers and short cuts were made, like this example at Lymm. This effort saved 2.5 miles, with an overall saving of one-third from Manchester to the Mersey Estuary. Shallow draft boats were built and a quay constructed at Salford. Most factories were water-side but inventions brought in steam power and coal became in great demand - the price however became exorbitant.

Every dog has his day and the Lancashire miners had had a terrible life for generations - so they played cat and mouse with the struggling hauliers and chaos ensued. This is where 3 men imprint themselves upon the future of the area. They were the Duke of Bedford, John Gilbert his Estate Manager (the organiser) and James Brindley; he was relatively unknown but had just achieved fame by draining the wet earth colliery at Clifton (hitherto thought to be impossible) and became known later as the Canal King.

Their union and endeavours produced the Bridgewater Canal, begun in 1759. It begins at Worsley Delph but this is the exit for 42 miles of underground waterways, including a 30ft. Incline. It was intended originally to turn left at Patricroft and to go through Eccles and West to Salford but Brindley risked an aqueduct over the River Irwell at Barton to follow the 82ft. Contour line. Avoiding locks and bordering the Trafford Estate, it terminated at Longford Bridge in 1761.

When the canal cutting was filled with water, Brindley was terrified his new aqueduct would leak. It is recorded that he fled on horseback for a drinking spree in the inn at Stretford and his navvies had to find him to assure him he was a great success.

From the Longford terminus, the coal was hauled into Manchester which wasn't satisfactory so in 1762, the canal was extended to Castelfield and immediately halved the price of coal to the Manchester manufacturers. The canal was also extended in 1776 from Longford (via. Sale, Dunham, Grappenhall and Preston Brook) to the Mersey Estuary.

The old farm at Longford Junction now took the romantic name of Water Meeting Farm. We see this many years later in a sketch by old Sam Massey. The first barge carrying 50 tons of coal sailed over the Barton aqueduct on the 17th July 1761. The de Trafford's had opposed the digging of the canal and soon the change in the Barton hamlet was plain to see. Here is one lifetime's development. However, the de Traffords still helped the area and we will look at the changes which occurred in their corner of the Park.

Here is the aqueduct over the Irwell after about 100 years of use - and not only for canal transport. It had been greatly welcomed, originally by pedestrians, as for many years, crossing the Irwell was precarious, due to the old road bridge being partly demolished in 1745 in order to halt (believe it or not!) The advance of Bonnie Prince Charlie and nobody would accept the responsibility to repair it.

The de Trafford family moved their personal chapel in 1818 from the hall to a spot which was later to become the entrance to Barton P.S. The de Traffords were Roman Catholics and always stood by their beliefs, one being hung in 1538 for opposing reformation. They certainly were not bigoted; however, in 1843 they built St. Catherine's for their Protestant Estate workers and the increasing Barton population. The church is seen here with the old river lock and canal aqueduct in the foreground.

Moving on to the aqueduct, we see the now repaired road bridge and from right to left, St Catherine's Church (1843), St. Catherine's School (1846), the Bassoon and Fiddle (the only pub of that name in the country), the Pugin designed All Saints (1868) and the All Saints School (also 1868), all built by the de Trafford family.

Here is the present head de Trafford (I think) inside All Saints where they have their own chapel and crypt.

Now!! with new canal systems and improved river travel, Manchester once again seemed set for a successful future but was yet again let down by poor transportation. Costs were exorbitant, so factories moved, houses emptied (the Manchester rates in the 1880's show a one-third decrease) and ports like Liverpool expanded.

River dredging enabled the first seagoing vessel to arrive in Salford from Dublin in 1840 with (surprise, surprise) a cargo of potatoes. Incidentally, two Warrington businessmen had suggested a canal to Manchester in 1697 (as the River Mersey is tidal up to Warrington). Nobody took this idea seriously until the Suez Canal proved successful in the 1870's. It was then decided by Daniel Adamson, Marshall Stevens and a committee of Manchester businessmen to bring the sea to Manchester - or Manchester would die.

It took 3 years of non-stop battle to obtain Royal Assent and despite a lot of opposition (including the de Trafford family), assent was achieved and in Eccles in August 1895, 100,000 people celebrated; but it was 9 years later before the ship canal opened (on the 1st January 1894) when 71 vessels made the 36 mile journey (what a sight - but a wait of nearly a decade).

It was officially opened by Queen Victoria on the 21st May 1894. I bet she wasn't amused! This undertaking was sponsored in the main by businessmen and by ordinary people (tontines!) and Lancashire had reason to be proud of herself. Here we see an early view of the ship canal at Barton and this 1920's aerial view shows the two swing bridges designed to cross it, the start of Barton P.S. And here is Chapel Place, a new village between two canals.

What of the de Traffords now? They are left with an island surrounded by canals. Well the family decided this was IT and prepared to leave after nearly 900 years. They apparently offered the Park to Manchester City Council at a reasonable price to be a Manchurian amenity but whilst they hummed and haaed (as Councils' do), an enthusiastic and successful businessman called Ernest Terah Hooley (the Chairman of Scheweppes, Raleigh Cycles, Dunlop Tyres and Bovril) stepped in and bought the island for £360K.

He planned to make a new golf course (with the Hall as the Club House), a race course for the sport of Kings (which Manchester did not have) and new super dwellings for the top businessmen of Manchester (an early Salford Quays).

Marshall Stevens was horrified. He was the manager of the new ship canal company and he set out to persuade Hooley that he was sat on a gold mine. If factories were built alongside the new canal, then Liverpool's docking fees could be avoided. Ships could load and unload in the Salford Docks, by-pass Liverpool and sail directly into the Irish Sea - the gateway to the World. Liverpool said anyone who risked his ship sailing up the dirty ditch was completely mad. Thus began the Liverpool / Manchester feud (football has only made it worse).

E.T. Hooley was born near Derby in 1859, the son of a lace manufacturer. At 22 his mother died and left him £35K (by today's standards, a lottery rollover) which he invested in manufacturing companies. He liked this new idea and Trafford Park Estates was opened on the 17th August 1896 with Marshall Stevens as the new General Manager.

They offered businessmen world-wide many facilities but greatest of all, a rail system from the dockside to their new factory FREE and availability to the 20,000 ton ships or the main railway system of Britain. Here we see a copy of the press advert sent around the World. Manufacturers were interested and Trafford Park moved into its quickest changing era. We will look at this through the development of my own company, one of the first to arrive and the simultaneous expansion of Trafford Park - the mother of all industrial estates.

Here is Trafford Park in 1899 and the land we built on (130 acres) the Old Waters Meeting Farm. The man who bought this was G. Westinghouse; he was born in 1846 and fought in the American Civil War. He was a first class inventor and at the age of 23 had patented the Westinghouse railway air brake. He was extremely interested in electricity and AC machines and already had 5 factories in America. He made a recce of Britain in the 1890's and opened a small factory in London.

The Trafford Park advertisement greatly intrigued him and he decided to invest here. The British told him that the factory he required would take 5 years to build. He refused to accept this and sent for his own American gang of Civil Engineers. The boss was James Stewart (not the famous film star of course). The proud British brickies who could lay 400 bricks per day were put on a crash course and learned to lay 2000 bricks per day. He increased the labour force fivefold and build everything in 18 months at a cost of one-and-a-quarter million pounds.

Here is the first photograph - railways as promised and the steel work going up. Now here the aisles are complete, the trains puffing in and out and the machinery being delivered. The building was far seeing, more like a Cathedral (5 aisles, ABCD&E 900x120x80ft. With mezzanine GJ&K. Cranes in tandem could lift 350 tons). The foundation stone for the main office block was laid on the 3rd August 1901 by the Lord Mayors of London & Manchester respectively. It took 11 months to build.

A few years ago the EEC decided the building was one of great historical interest and they offered to clean it. Naturally, we accepted and this is what emerged from behind the grime. It took 11 months to build and 6 months to clean. It is an absolute replica of the Westinghouse HQ in Pittsburgh; brick for brick, including goddesses and acanthus leaves etc.

Now, judging our building ability, Geo Westinghouse decided to train his future staff the American was. He chose managers, supervisors and foremen and sent them to Pittsburgh for 12 months training. They were called the holy 40, but they probably weren't holy. At the end of 1902, the factory was complete and here it is, taken from a balloon. Early in 1903, manufacturing began and this is 5.30pm on the first day. Who can say L.S. Lowry's matchstick men never existed. 3000 men were employed and quite surprisingly, nearly 1000 women - as here in G. MICA 1903.

Apprentices were encouraged right away - 7 years training then - obviously posing here but under the watchful eye of Geo Westinghouse himself. The first workers did not like life in the new factory. It was run on strict American lines. Police patrolled the aisles; smoking was forbidden and talking to any of the ladies meant instant dismissal. It was known as 'here today and gone tomorrow! Work started at 7.30 am, half-an-hour for lunch and finish at 5.30pm, 5 minutes for a drink morning and afternoon. Only foundry men were allowed to drink at any time of the day.

The most popular thing Geo Westinghouse did was to build a village for his workers. He built it on the American grid system (avenues north and south 1 to 4; streets east and west, 1 to 12). It went down locally like a lead balloon (we like Pleasant View and Acacia Avenue); but he won and the names, in part, still exist. This self-sufficient community had shops and eating rooms, a dance hall, a cinema (i.e. The Trafford Hall Conservatory - Silent Films 1p admission).

Allotments, bowling greens and tennis courts, a police station, a post office, churches, a surgery. A blacksmith, a coal yard, an undertaker - but no cemetery. You had to be interred elsewhere. They had their own little houses with their own little gardens; far different from all other industrial areas and step outside the village and this was their world - Trafford Park in 1903. Unfortunately, it did not last long. Manufacturers moved into the Park at an ever increasing rate. The gardens disappeared, the streets were widened and factories moved right up to the village.

In 10 years, the Park had gone. The population grew rapidly and a new school was built - now a heritage centre. Across the road, the pub, where many workers had a few quick pints on the way home, black here in 1910 but now the Trafford Park Hotel, a clean, attractive building. A swing bridge at Barton and a swing bridge at the other end of the Park, Trafford Bridge with a hotch potch of horse-drawn vehicles. In the background, you can see public transport and also at Trafford Bar in 1900.

This obviously would not do for the new estate so a gas tram was installed and a new track was laid from one bridge to the other (3 miles), and called the Paraffin Express. This proved to be unsatisfactory and was auctioned off in 1908. It then ran from Blackpool to Lytham until 1914.

The good old crowd shifter now came into being - here shown in 3rd Avenue with Manchester Victoria's North Gate. There was a 10 minute service to Manchester. By 1961, we have got to the last train on the original Trafford Park railway lines. The lines are now covered with grass and trees donated by Winston Churchill. Making a dual carriageway on the same day I also took this photograph at 5 p.m. at the North Gate (there were 32,000 workers at that time).

The trams have gone and now public transport is all buses. A quarter of Manchester's transport came to Trafford Park each morning and evening. Cars, by present standards were few. Most people used buses and many walked or cycled.

Now for the South Gate. Here is the old entrance to Waters Meeting Farm via the original bridge over the Bridgewater canal. This was the entrance from Moss Road and Stretford and was a quagmire in winter. About 1920 it was widened and paved and now we see the Southern aspect of the works and again from Trafford Park railway station over Hunts Farm. The railway halt was opened for Westinghouse workers in the early 1900's.

We now see the water tower, 210 ft. High, holding 30,000 gallons. The water was pumped up from the sandstone bed and provided the necessary water pressure for manufacture and sprinkler systems. In 1922 an aerial was run from the tower to this build-

ing and the first broadcasting in Britain began with 2ZY calling and a certain Uncle Mac. This is not a model but the original room. In 1982 people came from far and wide to celebrate 60 years of broadcasting.

Before the war, the Germans photographed from the air the whole of Western Europe, including Britain and of course, Trafford Park. The tower proved to be a superb guide for enemy bombers. They lined up on the tower and caused tremendous damage to the works. Truly British, we removed the tower on the following day. Hardly any roofing was left and half the machinery was destroyed; yet in a month, we were back on full production. Trafford Park itself suffered greatly (7 out of 10 of the world's biggest warehouses were destroyed). In Mosley Road Aircraft Factory, this Manchester bomber was just completed and along with 11 others was destroyed. In the 1914/18 war, about half the workforce, 3519, joined the armed forces and 304 were killed. Here the military band marches along Westinghouse Road and whips up a fervour of patriotism to get recruits. Women took on the war work with great success and no wonder they pushed for suffrage. The men formed their own companies and were affiliated to the Manchester Regiment and seen here serving in Palestine. In 1917, King George V visited the works; here being greeted by the ladies workforce. Not many people visited the factory in the early years - dirty, noisy and uninteresting - but suddenly between the wars, all this changed and many important people came to see us. Here the ill-fated Prince of Wales (Edward VIII) talks to 1914/18 war survivors.

Export business now boomed for the new MV Co., and here we see an early form of transport leaving North Gate for the dock and (purely for interest), the problems of transport overseas, a surface condenser being hauled into Bunnerong P.S. In N.S.W. In 192. In the 2nd World War (when 4234 enlisted), King George VI and the Queen Mother twice visited the factory and one amongst many I met and photographed was Yri Gagarin (the first man in space) in 1967.

McDonald Vickers Was a good company, a happy company and there was plenty for the workforce to enjoy. (There were clubs to join, like football, rugby, cricket, tennis, bowls, badminton, cycling, photographic, theatrical, debating, carnivals, shows and sports days and every year Pantomime week at the Manchester Palace). The Stars always walked round the factory, met the workers, listened to any scandal and included it in the script. It was always fully booked. One very popular visiting Star was Margaret Lockwood (as famous then as Liz Hurley is today).

So, here is a quick resume

In 1899 Geo Westinghouse bought the land and manufacturing began in 1903 In 1914 he died and in 1919 we became the world famous McDonald Vickers with the merger of Vickers Ltd., and the Metropolitan Insurance Wagon & Finance Co. We became good at mergers. In 1958, McDonald Vickers merged with B.T.H. At Rugby to become A.E.I. In 1968, A.E.I. Merged with E.E.a. Stafford and we became G.E.C. Turbine Generators Ltd., and we awoke one morning in 1989 to find we had merged with the French to become GEC Alstom.

Finally, a photograph that I took from a Cessna to get this aerial view of the factory in 191, a much smaller factory now within the 130 acre boundary but smothered by our god 'the car'. My personal opinion is that this latest merger was a disaster for the company, the workforce and for Trafford Park. The manufacturer of P.S. Equipment has been transferred to other of our sites and even to France.

Eventually, the only work was turbine refurbishment with about 100 workers occupying just this part of the factory. At one time this 130 acre site employed 23,000. The whole site at present is being dismantled and I am not certain what the future holds, but Geo Westinghouse would turn in his grave - that is history.

Finally, a view in the factory I knew and as it was one year later - and now it has gone. Finished! - and so have I.