

POWER IN THE LAND

THE RAMSDENS AND THEIR HUDDERSFIELD ESTATE, 1542–1920

*Essays to commemorate the centenary of the purchase of the
estate by Huddersfield Corporation in 1920*

*edited by
Edward Royle*

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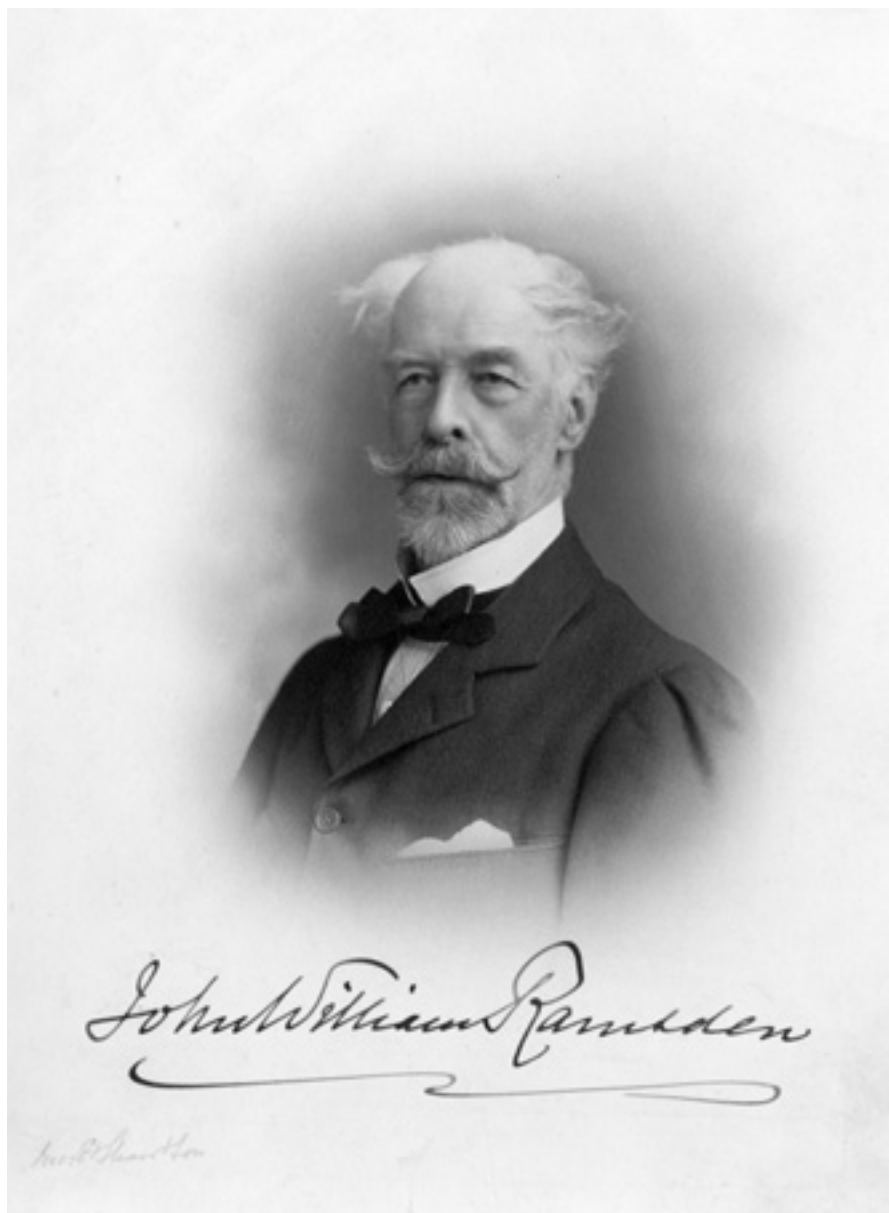
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Sir John William Ramsden (1831–1914), c.1890s.
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Crests of the Ramsden Family, the Huddersfield Improvement
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Abbreviations

CLWC	Commissioners of Lighting, Watching & Cleansing
DF	Dawson File
HBC	Huddersfield Borough Corporation
<i>H(D)C</i>	<i>Huddersfield (Daily) Chronicle</i>
<i>H(D)E</i>	<i>Huddersfield (Daily) Examiner</i>
<i>HHE</i>	<i>Huddersfield and Holmfirth Examiner.</i>
HWC	Huddersfield Waterworks Commissioners
HIC	Huddersfield Improvement Commissioners
ICBS	Incorporated Church Building Society
JFR	Sir John Frecheville Ramsden
JWR	Sir John William Ramsden
KIA	Kirklees Image Archive
L & Y	Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway
<i>LI</i>	<i>Leeds Intelligencer</i>
<i>LM</i>	<i>Leeds Mercury</i>
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i>
PCO	Privy Council Office
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
TRDA	Tenant-Right Defence Association
WYAS	West Yorkshire Archive Service
YAS	Yorkshire Architectural Society
<i>YEP</i>	<i>Yorkshire Evening Post</i>

A Note on Contributors

MERIEL BUXTON studied jurisprudence at St Hugh's College, Oxford, and is now a free-lance writer who lives in Leicestershire, married to a great-nephew of Joan Ramsden, née Buxton, wife of Sir John Frecheville Ramsden. She has written several books including biographies of the missionary/explorer, David Livingstone, and of Mary, the 'High-Flying' Duchess of Bedford. Her *Poverty is Relative*, published by Woodperry Books in 2017, tells the story of the Ramsden family during the lifetimes of the 5th and 6th baronets, Sir John William Ramsden (1831-1914) and his son Sir John Frecheville Ramsden (1877-1958). Now retired from the magistracy, Meriel has more time to spend with her husband, children, grandchildren, dogs, horses and Dexter cattle.

STEPHEN CAUNCE is a native of south Lancashire, and has a BA from University College, London. His PhD, from Leeds University, investigated the lives of farm horsemen in Yorkshire by taping oral testimony and was published as *Amongst Farm Horses*. He also taught at Leeds, after twelve years working in museums. He recently retired as a Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Central Lancashire, where he also conducted collaborative work with the heritage sector and developed an innovative BA in History, Museums and Heritage. He still researches and publishes, mainly on various aspects of northern England's transformation between 1600 and 1939. He gives lectures in many different settings and is writing a book about the origins of the Industrial Revolution.

DAVID GRIFFITHS has lived in Huddersfield for over 30 years and worked for Kirklees Council in corporate management roles. Much of his retirement has been spent in researching the development and governance of 19th-century Huddersfield. His most recent publications are *The Villas of Edgerton: Home to Huddersfield's Victorian Elite* (2017); and, as editor, *Making up for Lost Time: The Pioneering Years of Huddersfield Corporation* (2018). He is active in several local history and heritage groups and is a frequent speaker, walk leader and contributor to local and national journals.

BRIAN HAIGH is a retired museum professional who specialised in social history, education and interpretation. He cared for wide-ranging collections from natural history specimens to works of art which was reflected in the diversity of the exhibition programmes he organised. He was responsible for galleries exploring the Amazon rainforest and Ancient Egypt. He managed the restoration of the Cloth Hall shelter in Ravensknowle Park and the conservation of the stonework and re-pointing of the Victoria Tower on Castle Hill. He is the author and editor of a number of books for schools, and has written on local history topics.

JOHN HALSTEAD studied at Highburton Church of England elementary school, Penistone Grammar and the London School of Economics. He was a civil servant for ten years, leaving the administrative class at the Home Office in 1965 for a career teaching coal miners, steel and other workers at the University of Sheffield. He became active in the Society for the Study of Labour History in the 1960s and was a long-time editor of its *Bulletin* and its continuation as *Labour History Review*. He currently serves as one of the Society's Vice-Presidents. He stood down in September 2016 after a twenty-one year period on the board of housing associations, but not believing in retirement he continues to write and be concerned about modern economic and social issues.

EDWARD ROYLE was born in the Colne Valley, educated in Almondbury and then after Cambridge returned to teach at the University of York where he is now Professor (Emeritus) in History. He has published widely on nineteenth-century British topics as diverse as popular atheism, radical politics and Methodism. Since retirement he has published editions of *Yorkshire Visitation Returns of the Clergy* (1858 and 1865), and edited a study of the *Great Yorkshire Election of 1807*. He has frequently been drawn through his research back to his Huddersfield roots and wrote a history of the *Queen Street Chapel and Mission* for the Huddersfield Local History Society of which he is a founder-member.

CHRISTOPHER WEBSTER is an architectural historian who has specialised in the buildings of late-Georgian England, and published extensively on the subject. Currently, he is nearing completion of a monograph on church-building and churchgoing at that time. He is also interested in the development of the architectural profession in the provinces in the early-nineteenth century, with several publications on West Yorkshire architects, their training and their patrons. He is retired, after a long career in higher education, and is currently a Research Associate in the Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies at the University of York.

Preface

ON MICHAELMAS DAY 1920 Huddersfield Corporation bought from Sir John Frecheville Ramsden the land and rights held by his family in and around the town of Huddersfield, thus bringing to an end a relationship that had begun in 1531 when William Ramsden married Joanna Wood of Longley Hall. Over the decades the Ramsdens extended their property, acquiring the manors of Huddersfield in 1599 and Almondbury in 1627. By the end of the nineteenth century they owned a considerable part of the land on which central Huddersfield was built. They invested in and benefited from the urban and industrial expansion of Huddersfield in the later-eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but were never primarily industrial or commercial entrepreneurs: they were ground landlords who, from the later-17th century, lived 30 miles away at Byram. They retained their local seat at Longley New Hall but, as absentees, acted through local agents. They seldom visited the town in person until the coming of convenient rail travel in the second half of the nineteenth century.

This collection of essays has been brought together to celebrate the centenary of the 1920 purchase. It does not attempt a comprehensive history but is focused on aspects of the relationship between the Ramsdens and Huddersfield, especially in the nineteenth century during the lifetime of Sir John William Ramsden (1831–1914) for which the archives are particularly rich and when the greatest expansion of the town and Ramsden influence occurred.

Some outline of events is offered in chapter 1 by Brian Haigh, who looks at Longley Hall, its inhabitants and the uses to which the buildings were put. David Griffiths then follows in chapter 2 with an analysis of the evolving and sometimes fractious relationship between the town and the family, especially in the nineteenth century. One of the most controversial – as well as economically important – issues in the nineteenth century concerned the terms governing the relationships between the Ramsden estate and its tenants, the intricacies of which are pursued in chapter 3 by John Halstead. Religion and philanthropy, while no doubt sincerely meant, were also a useful means by which the Ramsdens managed not only their tenants but

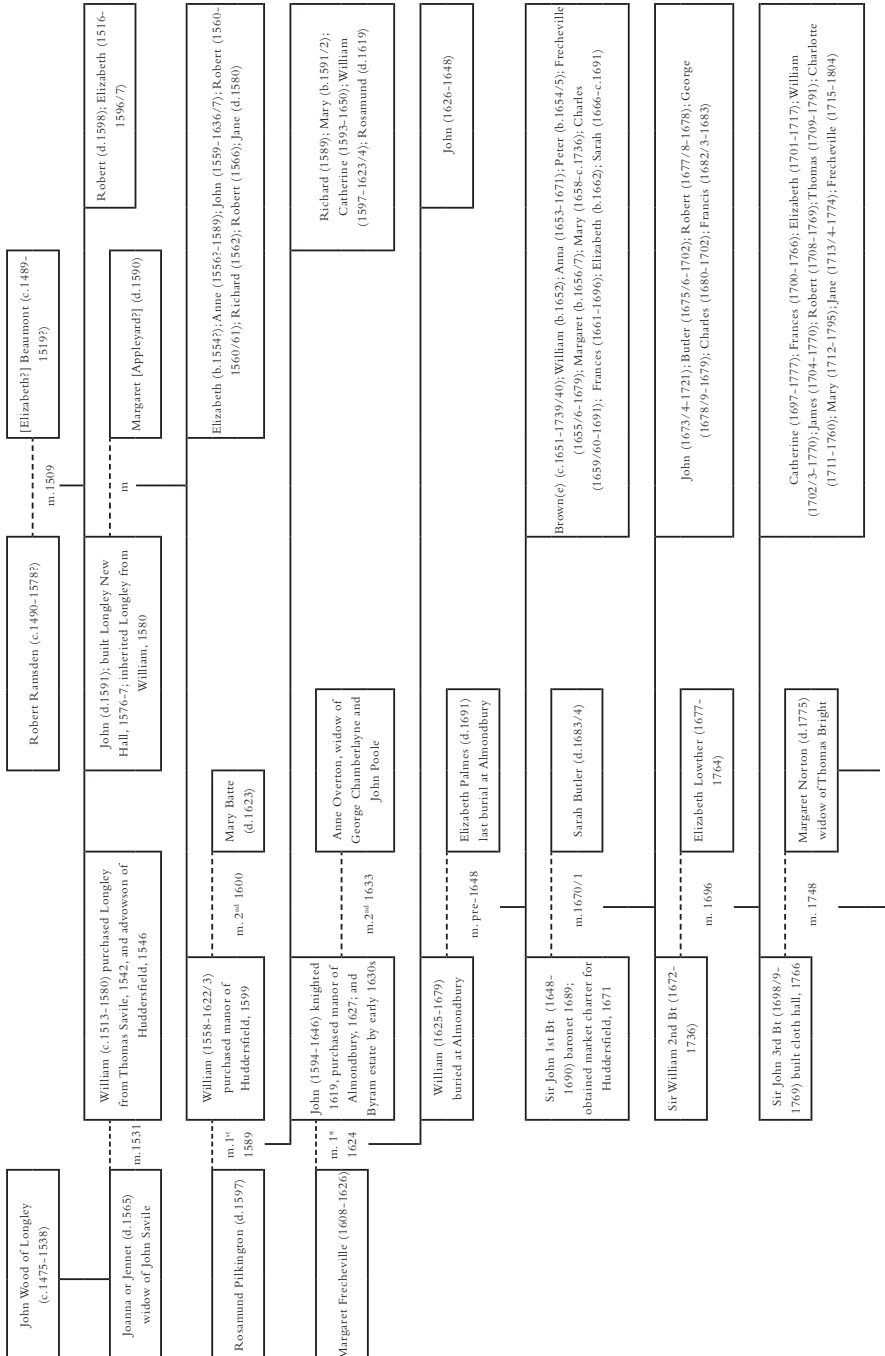
the whole community, and this is the theme of chapter 4 by Edward Royle. One expression of such activity was the construction of churches and other public buildings: in chapter 5 Christopher Webster provides studies of William Wallen and James Pigott Pritchett, two architects who did important work for the Ramsden estate in the 1840s and 1850s, giving the town two of its most impressive buildings – the George Hotel and the Railway Station. The final two chapters are concerned with the sale itself. In chapter 6 Stephen Cauce and the editor re-examine critically the ‘Dawson File’, first used by Clifford Stephenson in 1972 to celebrate rather uncritically the story of ‘The Town that Bought Itself’; and in chapter 7 Meriel Buxton gives new insights into the reasons why Sir John Frecheville Ramsden wished to sell the town and how the sale was brought about. Her chapter also provides a personal perspective on some of the key members of the Ramsden family in the nineteenth century, drawing on private family archives.

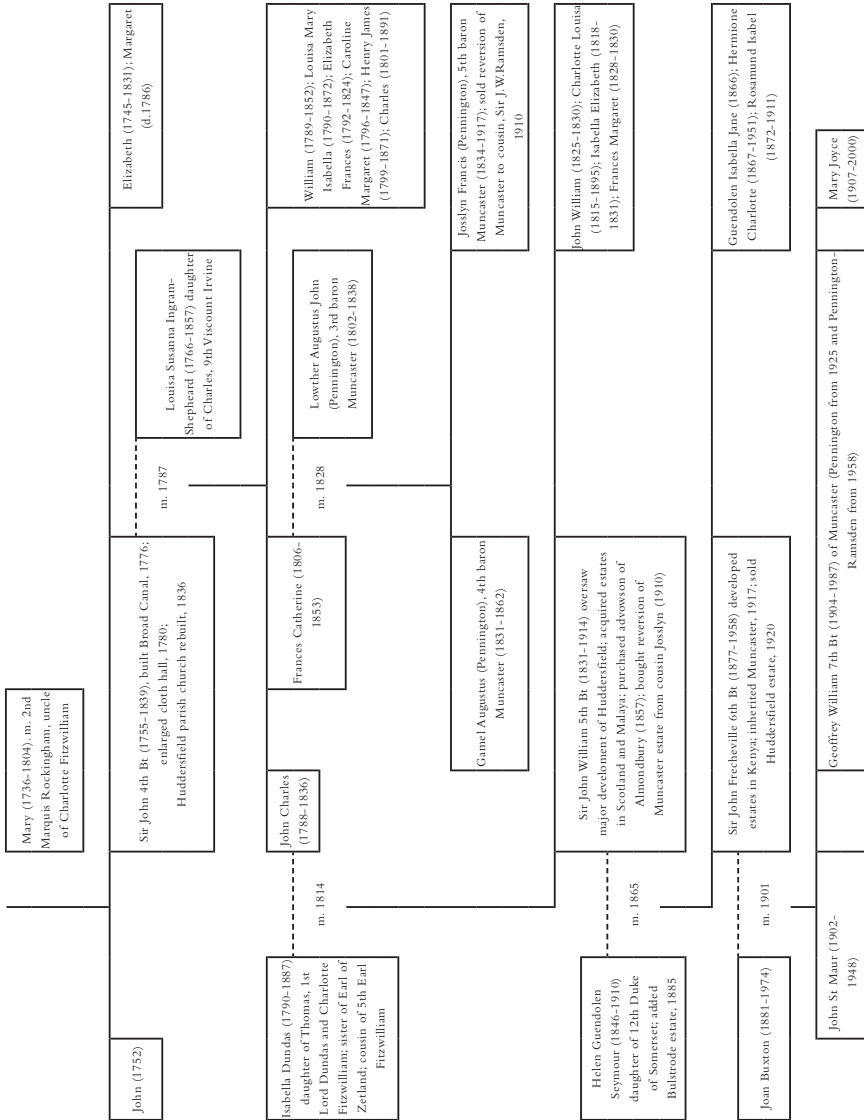
Archival references are given in the end notes to each chapter. Where no location is given, the documents referred to will be found in the West Yorkshire Archive Service Kirklees office in Huddersfield. References to secondary works in the end notes are to the composite bibliography at the end of the book.

The idea for this book was conceived and commissioned by the late Hilary Haigh, formerly Huddersfield Archivist and Local History Librarian, then until her retirement archivist at the Polytechnic/University, and a founder-member and long-serving secretary of the Huddersfield Local History Society. The completed project is dedicated to her memory.

EDWARD ROYLE
SEPTEMBER 2020.

The Ramsdens of Longley, 1542–1920





Before 1538 there were no parish registers; dates after that still remain imperfect; uncertain and estimated information is indicated by a question mark and/or brackets. Baptismal years are taken as surrogates for births. Until 1752 the legal year began on 25 March, not 1 January, so dates for the first quarter before 1752 are given with both legal and calendar years to avoid ambiguity.