

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This is the story of a northern English family shaped by the Industrial Revolution. This revolution had a profound effect on the fortunes of one man, David Bellhouse (1764 – 1840). Over the course of his career, he put together a large business empire in Manchester that included a building and contracting business, a timber business and sawmill, an iron foundry, and a cotton mill. He started with next to nothing and at his death left a large fortune of £60,000, which amounts to between £1.5 million and £1.75 million at today's prices.¹ The value of the estate probably includes personal property only and excludes real property so that the total fortune may have been much higher. The businesses were passed on to succeeding generations; there were descendants working in some of the businesses into the 1950s and 60s. In addition, there is an evolutionary chain of careers outside these businesses over the course of several generations of descendants.

With roots in the seventeenth century, the story begins in the mid-eighteenth century in Yorkshire with two obscure people named John and Mary Bellhouse or Bellas. Born in 1697 at Wortley, now a suburb of Leeds, John was baptized into the Church of England; his wife Mary was born a year earlier in Beeston, also near Leeds.² Their importance to the story is their change in religious belief. In 1759, John and Mary were accepted into the fellowship of the Moravian community at Fulneck in Pudsey, currently another suburb of Leeds. Six years later, they were both admitted to the sacrament in the same community.³ In common with all the married couples of this religious community, they did not live at the Fulneck settlement,⁴ but rather continued living at Wortley.⁵ John died at Wortley in 1772 and Mary three years later.⁶ Both are buried at the Fulneck cemetery. Neither left a will, but their legacy was their religious nonconformity. For three or more generations, the Bellhouses generally were not adherents to the Church of England.

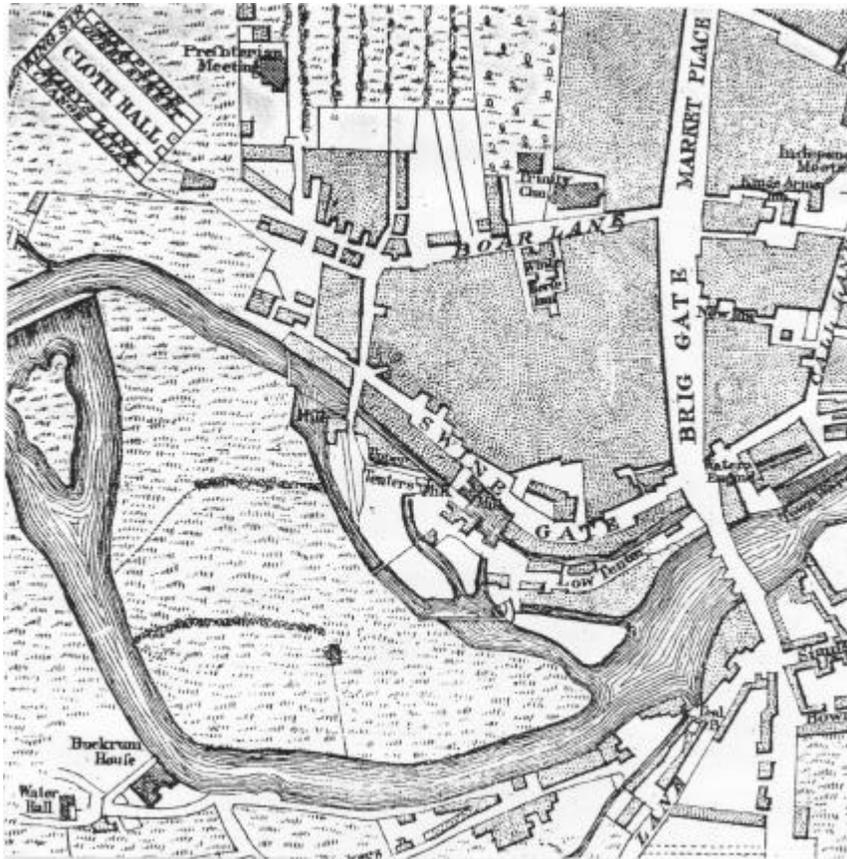
The Fulneck community was founded in 1746 on land given to the Moravians by Benjamin Ingham. Ingham, a Yorkshire evangelist, was one of the Oxford Methodists. He first came into contact with the Moravians in 1735 during a sea voyage to Georgia, at that time one of the

thirteen British colonies in North America. The voyage was the first stage in a missionary journey to America with John and Charles Wesley, and Charles Delamotte. Delamotte later became a Moravian. Upon returning to London from America, some strong ties were formed among the Wesleys, Ingham and the Moravians, part of which resulted in the establishment of Moravian missions and congregations in England. This lasted until 1739, when a falling out occurred between the Wesleys and the Moravians. At this point Ingham returned to Yorkshire to begin a religious revival there. He maintained strong connections with the Moravians by putting the religious societies he established in Yorkshire under Moravian control. In 1754 he separated from the Moravians. This led to the formation of several congregations of “Inghamites.”⁷ The theology of this Christian denomination was Calvinistic. The Wesleys were also very active in the Leeds area; John Wesley preached in Leeds at least every second year during the 1740s, 50s and 60s. They were also Ingham’s main competitors in Yorkshire.⁸

At least two of John and Mary Bellhouse’s children were part of this new movement, either through the Moravians or through Ingham. Their second son, David Bellhouse (b. 1734),⁹ probably had connections with the Moravians. His wife Sarah is buried at Fulneck.¹⁰ The eldest son, James Bellhouse (1726 – 1796),¹¹ and his second wife Ellen (née Pemberton) have been described as “pious Inghamites.”¹² Several Bellhouses of later generations were connected with Inghamite congregations at Leeds and Winewall in Lancashire.¹³ As we will see in Chapter 8, the Inghamite connection for the Bellhouses is central to establishing some genealogical connections in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

The connection to the David Bellhouse (1764 – 1840) of Manchester is through James. An entry in the Leeds parish register for 1750 refers to James Bellhouse of Wortley as a clothier.¹⁴ Whether or not this is a correct reference, subsequently James was a joiner by trade and a moderately prosperous one. The inscription on a family tombstone in St. Peter’s churchyard in Leeds refers to James as a “builder.”¹⁵ The inventory of his goods and chattels at the time of his death includes a sawpit, a bellows and anvil, two carts, four cows and a horse, as well as some quantity of wood. The whole was valued at £193.¹⁶ By the mid-1760s he and his family, including some grandchildren, lived and worked at Water Hall in the southwestern part of Leeds.¹⁷ The building is clearly visible on the bottom left corner of the 1770 map of Leeds. Wortley lies to the southwest of Leeds. Water Hall may have housed more than one family or business. Space in Water Hall with stables, all suitable for a public house, was advertised for rent in a September

1776 issue of the *Leeds Intelligencer*.¹⁸ Relatives or descendants of James Bellhouse continued to live or work at Water Hall into the early nineteenth century.



Part of a 1770 Plan of Leeds by Robert Sayer and John Bennett¹⁹

James Bellhouse had four children by his first marriage to Jennet Lambert (1728 – 1760): Hannah (b. 1750), John (b. 1753), and James (b. 1755), and probably another, Joseph (b. 1753?). The first three children listed were all baptized in the Church of England.²⁰ James Bellhouse remarried in 1763, three years after the death of his first wife. David (1764 – 1840), the subject of Chapter 2 and the thread that weaves the rest of the book together, was the eldest son from the second marriage. There were four other children of this marriage: Sarah (b. ca 1767), George (b. ca 1769), Mary (b. ca 1772) and Ann. None of the baptismal records of any of these children of the second marriage, as well as Joseph from the first marriage, survives in the parish registers of Leeds and surrounding districts. Presumably at least the children of the second marriage were all baptized at the Inghamite Chapel in Leeds.

Many of the descendants of John Bellhouse (1697 – 1772) were assembled in a pedigree drawn up by Harry Speight over the years 1899 – 1901.²¹ The Bellhouses whose lives are followed in the next few chapters all appear in the pedigree, provided, of course, that they were alive before 1900. Many more who appear in the pedigree will not be followed here in detail in order to maintain the general theme of the significant impact that David Bellhouse (1764 – 1840) had on the lives of his descendants for several generations. The pedigree itself comes under scrutiny in the final chapter and some of the lives of David Bellhouse's siblings and their descendants will be briefly explored as well as other issues related to the pedigree.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- ¹ This calculation is based on the Sauerbeck-*Statist* Price Index from 1846 to 1966 in B.R. Mitchell, *British Historical Statistics*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 725 – 727, and on the consumer price indices from 1966 to 1986 as reported in *Annual Abstract of Statistics* published by the British Central Statistical Office.
- ² Fulneck Archives, *Church Book of the United Brethren in Yorkshire containing record of reception of adults with date and place of birth*, pp. 96 and 145.
- ³ *ibid.* Admission to the fellowship was akin to baptism and admission to the sacrament was like first communion.
- ⁴ "A City set on a hill," a publication of the Moravian Museum Fulneck, Pudsey, p. 4.
- ⁵ Public Record Office RG 4/3343 Burial at Fulneck, pp. 52 and 57.
- ⁶ The death and burial of John Bellhouse or Bellas is given in a pedigree of the Bellhouse family drawn up by Harry Speight. See Harry Speight, *Pedigree of Bellhouse, of Leeds, Manchester, &c.*, 1901. A copy of this pedigree is in West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford, Deed Box 17 Case 28 No. 1. This pedigree is the subject of Chapter 8.
- ⁷ R.W. Thompson, *Benjamin Ingham (The Yorkshire Evangelist) and the Inghamites*, Kendal, R.W. Thompson and Co., 1958.
- ⁸ John Wesley, *The Journal of John Wesley, A.M.*, N. Curnock (ed.), London, Charles H. Kelly, 1909.
- ⁹ *Thoresby Society, Vol. 23.*
- ¹⁰ Public Record Office RG 4/3062 Burials at Fulneck, p. 393.
- ¹¹ *Thoresby Society, Vols. 23, 26.*
- ¹² October 17, 1840 entry in John Robertson's notebook. The original is in the possession of Mrs. Anne Carver; a microfiche copy, made by Mrs. Joan Mottram, is in University of Manchester Library.
- ¹³ Public Record Office RG 4/2382 – Register of the Inghamite Chapel at Leeds; Public Record Office RG 4/1034 – Register of the Inghamite Chapel at Winewall.
- ¹⁴ *Thoresby Society, Volume 23.*
- ¹⁵ *Thoresby Society, Volume 26.*
- ¹⁶ Letters of Administration for James Bellhouse, 1796, Borthwick Institute of Historical Research.
- ¹⁷ *Thoresby Society, Vols. 25, 27.*
- ¹⁸ *Thoresby Society, Vol. 38*, p. 169.
- ¹⁹ J. Dodgson, *Historical and Descriptive Guide to Leeds*, Leeds, Dodgson, 1879.
- ²⁰ *Thoresby Society, Vol. 23.*
- ²¹ Speight, *op.cit.*