

David Bellhouse and Sons, Manchester

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To Louise,
who has often told me that
I am more interested in dead
Bellhouses than in live ones.

PREFACE

When I first started to research my family's history, I had very little information. My parents and grandparents possessed several watercolour paintings by my great-great-grandfather, Richard Taylor Bellhouse (1825 – 1906). There was also a miniature picture of him set in a silver locket surrounded by pearls, the whole thing sitting in a wooden frame. On the back of the frame were written the dates of his birth and death, 1825 and 1906, and his wife's name, Elizabeth Ida Wynyard. My grandfather, Edward Ainslie Bellhouse (1896 – 1965), loved to talk about family history, but he talked almost exclusively about two families that married Bellhouses, the Wynyards and the Stacpooles. Some time after his death in 1965, my grandmother found two old photographs in her closet. They were photographs of portrait paintings. On the back of one photograph, part of an obituary of David Bellhouse (1792 – 1866) had been written in longhand. I had no idea who he was and neither did my grandmother. There was no clue as to the identity of the gentleman in the second picture. This is what I started with. The rest of the book is what I found about the businesses started by the unidentified gentleman of the second picture and the impact that these businesses have had on succeeding generations of the Bellhouse family.

My grandfather did have one story about the Bellhouses that I remember. He said that the Bellhouse name was originally French, a corruption of a Huguenot name. I have since found that this was wishful thinking, probably on the part of my great-grandfather, David Wynyard Bellhouse (1861 – 1952), who once spelled his surname as “Bellehouse” on some homestead records in Manitoba, Canada. I have also discovered in the course of my research that some truth always seems to lie behind old family stories. My great-grandfather's uncle, Edward Taylor Bellhouse (1816 – 1881), married Sarah Jane Lafone, and that surname is of Huguenot origin. Once I started digging, I found an incredible wealth of information about the Bellhouses. Some of it came very easily, but other sources on which this book is based were much harder to find. Probably the hardest was spending several evenings reading the classified advertisements from microfilm copies of Manchester newspapers between 1800 and 1830. The microfilm came through Interlibrary Loan and the reader was an old one borrowed from a library. Besides the eyestrain at the end of the evening, there was always the possibility of giving myself a hernia lifting a very large old-fashioned steel-encased microfilm reader from the kitchen table to an out-of-the-way corner of the room. Recently, I read a newspaper report that someone is planning to put

many old newspapers into machine-readable form. In 10 years, when the project is complete, searching for Bellhouses in old newspapers will become an almost trivial matter and the efforts that I made will look like a waste of time.

Over the years that I have been researching the material that is in this book, several people have helped me along the way. To all of these people, I am very grateful for their help. The first people with whom I was in contact were Peter Clough of Sale and Marguerite Bellhouse of Chapel-en-le-Frith. Both were working on genealogical research that involved the Bellhouses of Manchester. Since then other genealogical research connections were made: Miss Evelyn Bellhouse of Alderley Edge, Cheshire, Mrs. Jessie Bellhouse formerly of Galiano Island in Canada, Mrs. Holly Fallows of Turrumurra, Australia, and Mrs. Elizabeth Champion of Altrincham. Through Mrs. Bellhouse of Chapel-en-le-Frith, I came into contact with distant cousins (third and fourth cousins) Richard Lafone Bellhouse and Roger Bellhouse and their families. Through them I met Brian Bellhouse of Oxford and several other distant relatives. I thank them all for their hospitality, as well as their help, on the trips that I have made to England. Through academic research channels, I have received help from Mr. Randy Rostecki of Winnipeg, Mrs. Joan Mottram of Manchester, Mr. Richard Byrom of Manchester, Mr. Geoffrey Tweedale of Manchester, Mr. Miles Lewis of Melbourne, Mr. Eduardo Lozano of Buenos Aires and Professor Edmund Cooney of York. I have also been given many helpful Internet leads through my former student Kathleen Lawry who has enthusiastically embraced family history. Finally, no research of this nature is complete without a lot of work in a library. The level of detail achieved in this work would have been gravely lacking without the help of the local history librarians at the Manchester Central Library, the librarians at the Portico and Chetham Libraries in Manchester, and the Interlibrary Loan office at the University of Western Ontario here in London.

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