

Sir William Henry Salt and St Paul's Church

Early Life

William Henry Salt was born in 1831 at North Parade, Bradford. He was educated at Huddersfield College and in 1847, at the age of 16, he was sent to Mill Hill School, London with his two younger brothers. A year later, William left Mill Hill and returned to Bradford, likely to work for the family business.

William's father, Titus Salt, was a famous textile manufacturer, who concentrated on material made from alpaca and mohair combined with cotton or silk. By 1850 Titus owned five separate mills and employed large numbers of workers. Around this time, Titus decided to build a new mill and create a village for the associated workforce – this was to become known as 'Saltaire'. Located 3 miles from Bradford on the bank of the River Aire, the mill was the largest of its kind in the world when it opened in 1853. The village was then built around the mill.



'William Henry Street', Saltaire

David James provides a brilliant description of the site:

*'By 1871 there were 4300 inhabitants living in 824 houses, all, directly or indirectly, reliant on Salt for their livelihoods. None of the houses were back-to-backs, they were generally slightly bigger than the norm, all were connected to mains drainage, and nearly all had their own lavatory. Each house had sun and light, and the streets were open-ended. Generous amenities were also provided. There was a school; an institute, which served as a mechanics institute and community centre; almshouses; a Congregational church and a Methodist chapel; baths and a wash-house; and a park. The Salt family also encouraged sporting and recreational activities in the village.'*¹

In 1854 William married Emma Dove Octaviana Harris, the only child of John Dove Harris of Ratcliffe Hall, Leicestershire. Emma was from an eminent family. Her grandfather, Richard Harris, born in 1777 in Leicester, made his wealth in the textile business. 'Messrs Harris and Sons' was largely responsible for the development of the fancy hosiery trade in Leicester. Her father, John Dove Harris served as MP for Leicester in 1857-9 and 1865-74, JP and Deputy Lieutenant for Leicestershire. William and Emma had a daughter, Constance, born in 1855 and a son, Shirley, born in 1857.

Also in 1854, William and his brother George were made junior partners in the family business and William helped to finance a new library for Saltaire.

Leicestershire, Maplewell and St Paul's

It is not clear when or why William decided to leave Saltaire and the family business but by the 1871 census, he and Emma had moved to Kirby Frith in Leicestershire, possibly to be closer to Emma's family. He appears on the census along with his wife, a cook, a lady's maid, a housemaid, a kitchen maid, and a butler. William Henry's occupation is given as 'Landowner and Magistrate'. By 1873 he had ceased all connections with the family business and his name no longer appeared on the 1873 Articles of Partnership.

In 1875, William purchased Maplewell Hall and the couple settled there for the rest of their married life. William continued to make architectural alterations to the property during his tenure and William and Emma were very involved in the local community, especially St Paul's Church. In 1880 William funded the building of the south transept at St Paul's and also donated the organ – his donation is commemorated by a plaque in the church. He also donated the lectern – the base bears an inscription with his name on.

¹ D. James, 'Salt, Sir Titus, first baronet (1803-1876)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* [23rd September 2004] [<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24565>] [Accessed 31st May 2018].



Organ at St Paul's



Brass plaque commemorating the building of the South Transept by William Henry Salt



Lectern at St Paul's

In 1876, William became Sir William, after he became a baronet upon the death of his father. The 1881 and 1891 census records show that William and Emma employed a number of servants at Maplewell, including maids, a cook, a footman, a lady's maid, housekeeper, butler, gardener and coachman! In 1881, William listed his occupation as 'Farming 400 acres, employing 10 men' but by 1891 simply 'Baronet'.

William fell ill in 1892 and died at Maplewell aged 60. The cause of death was listed as 'Intestinal Atrophy several months. Chronic diarrhoea. Exhaustion.', suggesting that he had suffered for many months. Emma left Maplewell after the death of her husband and the estate was sold in 1893, possibly to pay outstanding death duties. Emma moved to Heatherdone, Elstead, Surrey and died there in 1904, however, her body was returned to Leicestershire to be interred next to her husband.



Gravestones of William and Emma Salt (By Beth Walsh)

Sources:

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Information taken from:

Harris, D. *A History of Maplewell* (2009) [Taken from CD version of book].