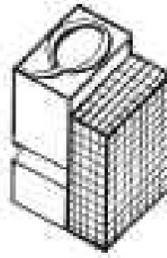


Quadrat



*A periodical bulletin of research in progress
on the history of the British book trade*

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The British Book Trade Index on the Web

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CLAIMS FOR BOOKS LOST IN THE 1864 SHEFFIELD FLOOD

Tanya Schmoller

AT MIDNIGHT on 11th March 1864 a dam on the outskirts of Sheffield gave way, causing a flood along the rivers Loxley and Don which claimed about 240 human lives and destroyed everything in its path: houses, mills, bridges and manufacturing establishments. It resulted in over 6,500 claims for losses, from loss of life to loss of a pet canary, rhubarb plants, a valuable yard dog, an Indian Mutiny medal, or a 'Powter Pigeon'. Everyone seems to have lost a pancheon (a large cask for holding liquids) or a maiden pot (used for laundry); mahogany card tables and cases of stuffed birds were popular; on the other hand few people had guns. Many claims were disallowed or settled for far less than the estimated amount. [The value of the £ in 1864 should be multiplied by about 50 to approximate today's value.]

I thought it might be interesting to see if any light is shed on the reading habits of the time – did people only read the Bible and religious tracts; what sort of people owned books? Such an exercise is fraught with difficulties as a 'book' may be a blank notebook or a day book recording debts – as one man puts it 'Books and papers washed away which will prevent claimant from suing his customers' – and books could be included in 'sundry articles'. There are also nuances discernible from whether books are listed at the beginning or the end of a claim: a cheese dealer starts off by listing Beeton's *Dictionary*, Family Bible, Clayton's *Farrier*, *Temperance Conversion*, Dr Carpenter's lectures and sundry small books (£2. 10s. 0d). I have tried to record only what appear to be printed books, most of which are not categorized by title, and some may have been owned for sale rather than for pleasure or enlightenment. Newsagent's stock and other such detectable holdings, for example, are not listed. Music books have been included: in one case this is all that is claimed.



In order to replace lost Bibles – which I list separately – the British & Foreign Bible Society donated copies of their 1864 edition with a suitable inscription, but unfortunately it has not been possible to find any reference to this decision in their Head Office minutes, or in those of the Sheffield Auxiliary Bible Society. It is interesting to note that very many claimants did not own a Bible. To widen access to this snapshot of a major industrial city in the mid-Victorian period, rich in the minutiae of everyday life, mainly of the poorer classes, in both domestic and business environments, a project led by Dr Steven Earnshaw of Sheffield Hallam University has recently been awarded £50,000 by the Heritage Lottery Fund to produce a website which will make searching easier, but it is not yet available. Thus it is not possible without a great deal of labour to work out how many of the claims out of the total are for household possessions, so that one could estimate what percentage of the total owned books.

My favourite claim (No 4061) is that of Richard Nesbit Ryan, late Theatrical Manager and Comedian, now Author, Poet and Publisher, of 21 Wicker Lane. He claims for Poems, Odes, Songs and Sonnets ready for publication, also printed copies &c. MS of Poem: *Life and Adventures of R N Ryan*, the Showman, Actor,

Theatrical Manager, Innkeeper, Poet and Publisher, written by himself from his own Diary carefully compiled for thirty years – also the loss of Diary – £200. *Life of Lord Hatherton* £10. Ode on John Brown's great Armour Plate £5. Ode on Messrs Stanley's Monster Anvil Block £5 (these are both Sheffield manufacturers). 300 printed copies on Monopoly £1. 5s. 0d., 76 printed copies of a Descriptive Poem on the Sheffield General Infirmary £3. 16s. 0d. 74 poems on Places and Persons including Sheffield, Buxton, Bakewell, Rotherham. Our library only owns a copy of the 40-page poem on the Sheffield General Infirmary, and also an 8-page poem on the Great Flood, an 1838 illustrated newspaper announcement for a performance at the Royal Amphitheatre, a poster advertising a benefit performance after an accident in 1855, and an unsigned ballad on the Armour Plates: we must regret this literary loss!

Many claims are for music. For instance a fork maker lists: the following oratorios of Handel and Haydn: *Te Deum*, *Messiah*, *Judas Maccabeus*, 2 of *Sampson*, 1 of *Joshua* and *The Creation* (13s. 6d.); Instrumental parts to the *Te Deum* (15s.), 8 selected songs and choruses (10s.); 8 select vocal songs from the oratorios of *Elijah* and *Joshua* (6s.); 20 select glees and trios (5s.); 200 hymns, anthems and chants – private copyright (£3. 13s.) and 2 volumes of Cassell's Bible (15s.). A widow's loss was leather bound. A timekeeper is very specific: Czerny's *Instruction Book and Exercises* (5s.); Farmer's and Hamilton's *Instruction Book* (8s.); sheet music; 2 years' of *Leisure Hours* and *Sunday at Home* (£1), and Musprat's *Chemistry*. A table blade striker lists a music library valued at £4. 5s. 6d., consisting of the music of Handel, Haydn, Fawcett, Newton, together with Collyer's stave books and selections of sacred music, glees and songs. A file grinder, among other music books, lists 'The Old 100th Psalm set to music in black silk needlework'; a forgerman 24 volumes of *Boosey's Journal*. Some of the music is for harp or concertina. A cabinet case maker claims for music and music books, and also pieces of marble and flock paper, perhaps used for lining cabinets.



An engine tender 25 to 30 numbers of *The Illustrated London News* (12s.); 6 monthly parts of *The Leisure Hour* (2s. 6d.); 1 vol. Blackie & Son's *Encyclopaedia* (10s.); 1 sketch book (3s.); 14 numbers of Cassell's *Natural History* (7s.); 1 Abbott's *Life of Julius Caesar* (2s.). An upholsterer claims £1. 15s. 0d. for loss of 11 funeral cards, 6 pictures and 4 likenesses (a fine distinction); both a file striker and a 'local dealer and tripe merchant' claim for engravings. A crinoline manufacturer and coverer, with an address in Walton Street, London, claims £40 for two pictures, one said to be by Sir Peter Lilley [sic]. Harriet Biggin, shopkeeper, lists Colenso's and Chambers' *Arithmetic*; Bird's *Dictionary*, Tait's *Algebra*; Chambers' *Bookkeeping*, Shakespeare's *Poems* and other books (£1. 19s. 0d.); soon followed by a postman who has lost Johnson's *Atlas* (12s.); Colenso's *Arithmetic* (4s. 6d.); Bromley's *Grammar and Analysis* (3s. 6d.) and Pan's *English History* (7s.). Bishop Colenso had caused a furore when he pointed out that arithmetical calculation showed that large portions of the Mosaic narrative were unhistorical.

A file and steel manufacturer claims for a small library of books consisting of a History of England, Life of Wellington, War with Russia, Galleries of Munich, large Family Bible and fifty books of various kinds; followed by a widow who has lost her Family Bible, Life of Christ, 1 volume each Household Words, Sunday at Home, and a bound Illustrated News (£3. 15s. 0d.); another widow had 5 volumes of an Encyclopaedia, a large Dictionary, Family Bible and

50 further volumes (£3. 10s. 0d.); and a joiner's tool maker who owned 13 numbers of Cassell's *Illustrated England* (16s. 3d.); an Atlas, Geography, Bible and Dictionary (7s. 6d.). A stone waller owned Cassell's *Lessons in French*, 2 volumes of French grammar and exercises, several religious books, Caesar's *Gallic War*, Virgil, Sallust, Horace, a Greek grammar, Latin/English and English/Latin Dictionary, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, and volumes on Elocution, Logarithms and Logic; a filesmith lists some individual titles, and 400 others, among many such examples. Cookery books were not as popular as they are today, when jumble sales are swamped by them. A filesmith claims 1s. 3d. for *Modern Cooking*; a wire drawer a copy of *Presetical (?Practical) & Expository Cookery*; and there is a further claim from an engine fitter. One claim is from the trustees of the Stanley Street Sunday School in the Wicker: 200 Bibles and Testaments, other school books, and 240 volumes in their circulating library (18 guineas), pointing to a Sunday School where not only the Bible was read.

The trustees of the Wesleyan Reform Chapel list 2 dozen Bibles, 4 dozen Testaments, Hymn Book and others. The treasurer of Low Bradfield Sunday Schools claims for 3½ doz. Bibles, 2½ doz. Testaments, 2½ doz. Hymn Books, 1 volume *Sunday at Home*, *Family Treasury*, *Methodist Magazine*, *Early Days*. The trustees (a shopkeeper and a filesmith) of the Religious Society meeting at the Gibraltar Street Lancasterian School list 2 doz. Bibles, 6 doz. Testaments, 1 doz. chapbooks, 2 doz. Reading Books, 1 doz. Admission books. The National School Room at Neepsend lost books worth £5. 10s. 1d.; that at Hillsborough claims £2, and the Church of England Church Depository £3. 10s. 10d.

There are four large claims, No 86 from Joseph Hill Appleton, chemist and stationer; No 5726 from John Shearwood Roberts, surgeon; No 5989 from Walter George Sykes, powder flask manufacturer; and No 6037 from Thomas Sutcliffe, fork maker and dealer in books. Appleton was born in Richmond and was first apprenticed to watchmakers, then lived in Jamaica for five years, where his chief work was the distillation of rum. He returned to Sheffield, where his father resided, and where he married successively the daughters of established chemists and

became further instructed in the trade (information from *Historical Notes on Old Sheffield Druggists*, John Austen, 1961). He had a circulating library, and one assumes that the claim for 3000 volumes destroyed by mud (£200), were not only for his personal enlightenment. Apart from items of stationery, crotchet patterns, valentines, and a few religious books, he lists a French/English Dictionary, Encyclopedia, Murray's *Grammar*. The books he thought would appeal to the public were 6 volumes of Cassell's *History of England* in numbers; 3 volumes (52 nos each) of Agnes; 10 copies *Ellen Percy*; 4 of *Edith the Captive*; 10 of *Edith Hecon(?)*; 2 of *Sophy's Daughter*; 2 of *Mary Price*; 2 of *Vice Hits Victim*, together with *Empress Eugenie*, *Dackin*, *Robin Hood*, *Wat Tyler*, *Quentin Malley* (about 500 in all); J Wilmot, *Wandering Jew*, 200 numbers *Mysteries*, 2000 or more numbers of various works viz. *Cottage Girl*, *Uncle Tom*, *White Flower*, *Rose Lambert*, *Loves of Harem*, *Scottish Chieftain*, *Paul Jones*, *Dick Turpin*. All these only add up to £56. 8s. 5d. 'When the water subsided the Shop and House was 12 inches deep in thick mud, the Counter was thrown over, with the mud a great quantity of numbers [of] Books &c were carried off through the Kitchen Window which was forced out.'

Roberts, a doctor of medicine and surgeon, claims £80 for 250 volumes of books, papers, magazines on medical, surgical and general subjects, 'particulars of which can be seen on application'. There are many other items such as amputating and transfusion cases, and a further £300 claim for damage to practice from drowning or removal of patients, deterioration of district, &c. Sykes, whose address is given as Rotherham, and about whom I have been able to find nothing, claims £430 for over 300 books, and £657 for stock in trade – game bags, powder flasks, shot charges, etc. It would be tedious to list all these books, but they include several large Bibles, one a 6-volume edition; books on astronomy, animal biography, geometry, history, law, philosophy, logic; works of Shakespeare, Byron, Milton, Gibbon, Burns, Cowper, Cobbett, Pope, Wordsworth; French and Italian dictionaries and grammars; Greek and Roman classics – 14 volumes of the *Classical Library*; 15 years'-worth of *Punch* and several encyclopaedias. All the works are in single copies, indicating a scholar/collector rather than a purveyor of books. His

listing is in alphabetical order, implying that he didn't lose his library catalogue! Sutcliffe is described as a fork-maker and dealer in books, though only single copies are listed: Family Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, Knight's *Pictorial Gallery of Arts* in 44 parts; Tomlinson's *Cyclopaedia of Arts* in 43 parts; Spencer Thompson's *Domestic Medicine* in 12 parts; Peter Nicholson's *Practical Mechanic; History and Topography of Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, Wiltshire, Westmoreland and Worcestershire*; Reynolds' *Household Book of Practical Recipes*, of *Recipes for the Million*, and of American recipes (are these also cookery books?); *Chemical Pocket Book*, *Shopkeeper's Guide*, and *The Shoe Maker*.

One printer was affected, Edward Taylor of 48 Green Lane, which I thought it interesting to transcribe. He claimed £48. 16s. 0d. and his claim was settled for £42.

Drawer of funeral cards 20/-
 2 lbs Dble Demy Bible 2/6
 1000 copies Club Rules 18/6
 1500 copies Howson's Pieces 50/-
 500 prices Commitments 20/-
 100 Rules & Books 10/-
 1000 Circulars 8/6
 800 Handbills 4/-
 1000 Razor Labels 2/6
 Mourning Notepaper & Funeral Cards 30/-
 Bronze various colours 40/-
 24 doz Glazed Boards 40/-
 Ream ruled foolscap for contribution, Notepaper, Books & envelopes 15/-
 Ream Yellow Dble Crown 13/-
 Various lots of ruled paper for Bill Heads 40/-
 2 doz Blue Boards 4/6
 Blot Paper 10/-
 Oddments of printing paper 50/-
 Steel pens & holders 10/-
 Type £10
 Ink Table & Press 20/-
 Children's Books 5/-
 150 Dble Crown large folio Bills 7/6
 6 Printing rollers 30/-
 6 Cheque Books 2/6
 Bible, Pocket Book, 3 Hymn Books, Dictionary 20/-

Apart from these, I have divided the claims into four categories: those who claim only for Bibles; for Bibles and other books; for loss and/or damage to books included with other items; and those specifying titles, which implies a relationship with their books. How victims of loss were able to remember exactly what they had lost is a puzzle – try doing it for your own possessions! A few claimants admit to not remembering, and I suppose it is easier to remember what you own when your possessions are few.

There are about 17 claims for a Bible only, mainly Family Bibles: a bricklayer describes his as very valuable at £2. 10s. 0d, while a fork manufacturer mentions a splendidly bound copy of Adam Clarke's Bible at £7. 16s. 0d; a table-blade striker claims his is in 2 volumes, illustrated, and bound in roan; a private watchman follows his claim by listing ten pigs. The value goes down to 2s. 6d., claimed by a slater. Next come claims for the Bible (usually a Family Bible) together with other unspecified or religious books, such as Prayer Books, Hymn Books or *The Life of Christ*. Here we find Cassell's *Family Bible* in 40 parts, Virtue's *Bible* with plates and commentary, also in parts; Scott's *Bible*; another parts Bible printed by Thomas Kelly & Co, Paternoster Row; and what is called an *Imperial Bible* in 2 volumes at £7; Gaspey's *Devotions* and Doddridge's works. Commentaries and Orations on the Bible include Clarke's, Matthew Henry's and Poole's; and Hervey's *Meditations*. There are about 55 of these claims. About 115 of those which do not include a Bible give a value to their loss, anything from £18 to 2s.6d.

There are some curious entries: '4 large books £4'; '8 books of different kinds 8s.'; 'some good works'; a boot and shoe maker claims £3.7s.0d. on having to have his books rebound by Pawson & Brailsford. Trades range from lamplighter, cutler & pig killer, horse keeper, papermaker, bellows maker (large picture book), to bricklayers, gardeners, labourers, fellmongers, pen-blade and razor grinders, carters, and to a 'gentleman' who claims £7 for 79 volumes of Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, Beaumont & Fletcher's dramas, and 50 others; and a man 'out of business on account of age and infirmity'. Another 70 mainly state 'Loss or damage to books' among other household goods. There are a number of claims from women, mainly widows, but also sempstresses,

washerwomen, shopkeepers, grocers, milliners, dressmakers, and a mattress maker & dealer in feathers (the feather flower maker does not mention books).

So what did people read? Areas of particular interest seem to be History: 13 people claimed Histories of England (one 'perfect, printed in the reign of William & Mary'; another 'in 4 vols beautifully bound'); also the *History of France*, in one case 'under the Consulate'; of the Russian War (38 numbers at 1s.); and of the Holy War. Under self-improvement come the various volumes listed as Dictionaries (Walker's, Bird's, Barclay's (in parts), Illustrated European, Jonson's, Daily Wants, [Isaac] Watts' and World to Come); Encyclopaedias (Blackie & Sons', L. Hubert's, Chambers'); and such publications as the *Young Man's Companion*. There are biographies of Sir Robert Peel in 3 vols; Lives of Wellington, Napoleon, Shakespeare, Burns, Julius Caesar (Abbot's), and Rose Clarke; and 15 vols of an Imperial Dictionary of Universal Biography, valued at £5. 12s. 6d. by a sheet roller, who follows this by 'jellies, preserves, and pickles'. Four claims are for atlases and maps of England and Europe, and several for health-related books: a bookkeeper lists Dr Thompson's translation of the London, Edinburgh & Dublin Pharmacopoeia (also Dr Phillips' and Dr Collins' of the London volume), Dr Parenas' *Lectures on Chemistry*; collection of copies of Physician's Prescriptions and valuable chemical formulae purchased & otherwise obtained during the last 30 years (perhaps a hypochondriac). There are also treatises of medicine and surgery; a Herbalist; a work on Homeopathy; and mentions of Dr Buchan's well-known *Domestic Surgery* which went through many editions, and is said to have been written in the Hartshead during his residence in Sheffield. Technical books include a work on Phonography; Blackey's *Engineering* – 22 numbers at 2s. 6d. each; Nicholson's *Architecture, Illustrated Drawing, Decorator* and *County Court Practice* (?kept by a litigious shopkeeper).

There are a few claims for school books; three for Natural Histories (Cassell's in parts bought of Mr Proctor in Pitsmoor for £3); a complete Shakespeare in 40 volumes; and various part publications: Illustrated London News (a beerhouse keeper claims

£13 for 5 years' worth, among others); Cassell's *Illustrated England* and *Family Journal* (4 years bound, 3 unbound); Chambers' (5 years unbound). *Family Secrets* with plates (2 vols); *Sunday at Home* (15 vols); *Leisure Hours* (2 vols); Dr Kitto's *Pictorial Sunday Book* in parts; *Household Words*. Named light reading doesn't appear frequently: *Robinson Crusoe* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appear a couple of times; Mrs Haliburton's *Troubles* (could this be *Travels?*), apart from purveyors' stock. And of course there is *The Imitation of Christ*, *Life of Christ* (the most frequent) and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This raking through of the Sheffield Flood Claims Registers held by Sheffield Archives (CA7 1–11) has not produced information of much value, but has been fun.

Illustrations of the Sheffield flood from *The Illustrated London News*, 19 March 1864 [ed.]

Current value of old money

Research into the history of the book trade, or any other trade for that matter, often brings one up against the problem of trying to assess how much something 'really' cost in previous centuries. While economic historians continue to debate the various possible calculation methods, practical help is at hand with a website 'Current Value of Old Money' at www.ex.ac.uk/~RDavies/arian/current/howmuch.html. Compiled by Roy Davies, a librarian at Exeter University, the site contains a wealth (!) of useful information and links to many other sites about the value of money in various periods. It's well worth a look.

YOU WILL FIND ENCLOSED a postcard advertising the **Book History Research Network**. If you could make good use of a supply of these at a conference or other relevant gathering, we can supply them. Similarly, **BBTI bookmarks** are available on request.