
I *The Starting Point – Henry Platt*

Saddleworth lies on the western side of the Pennines. The courses of the upper reaches of the River Tame and its early tributaries score the moorland to form an exceedingly hilly district. In the valleys are dotted the principal villages: Denshaw, Delph, Diggle, Dobcross, Uppermill and Greenfield. In the mid-eighteenth century Saddleworth was a part of the former West Riding of Yorkshire and perforce, came under the jurisdiction of remote Wakefield on the other side of the Pennines' highest and bleakest hills which separated Saddleworth from the rest of Riding. Its ready intercourse, therefore, had to be with the more accessible Lancashire, particularly the town of Oldham, some six miles distant, and Manchester where, more conveniently, it could trade much of its traditional woollen cloth. Ecclesiastically, Saddleworth had long been tied westwards: a chapel had been built in the district, early in the thirteenth century, of which St. Chad, Rochdale, was the mother church, and had been incorporated in the diocese of Chester in 1541 (The Manchester diocese was not divided out of Chester until 1848). Because of its circumstances Saddleworth had imbued its people with strong senses of independence and self-sufficiency; the Platts were of these people.

The Platts were of yeomen stock, traceable to 1334 – Robert de Platre connected with the Manor of Quick. Traditionally the yeomen in Saddleworth had gained a living from a combination of the tilling and grazing of their mediocre land with the manufacture of woollen cloth in and about their dwellings. By the mid-eighteenth century some were turning to farming their land in a more efficient way, in so much as the benefits of the Agrarian Revolution could be applied to their marginal type land, others were becoming engaged in the operation of small woollen mills which were replacing the traditional domestic cloth industry, others still, were serving the community as tradesmen in a variety of ways. The Platts had followed these trends. The nature of the Platt family's participation in the social life of the community is shown from entries in the Saddleworth Parish Vestry Books: Edmund Platt was a churchwarden in 1752, similarly James Platt in 1758 and Joshua and John Platt, respectively, in 1764 and 1767. (The early