

WATSOC

The Watkin Society

Watsoc News November 2022

Welcome to the eight edition of the newsletter of the Watkin Society

Spreading the news about Absalom and Edward Watkin

The time since we published our seventh newsletter in May has seen real progress in the Society's work. We have been granted £10,000 by the National Heritage Lottery Fund.

The money is to be used for two purposes:

- 1) To establish the Society's new digital library, which will give free access to everyone wanting to know more about the lives and amazing achievements of Absalom and Edward Watkin**
- 2) To support the Society's work in Cleethorpes and Grimsby, the first of our target areas nationally where EW had a lasting impact.**

THE WATKIN SOCIETY'S NEW WEBSITE **AND DIGITAL ARCHIVE**

We are working diligently to get our new website up and running and to also launch the Watkin Archive. This will replace the existing website co-developed with the Friends Of Rose Hill and be more focused on the Watkin story with a timeline, maps, lots of news about what the society does and of course lots of information about the Watkin story. See a sneak preview at the end of this section!

The highlight will be access to the Watkin Archive. A repository of all the images, documents and links to the story of Edward and Absalom Watkin and associated assets and ephemera. We are working to an end of year deadline and will launch the new website early in the new year.

An event will also be held to launch the Watkin Archive at Central Library in Manchester with some workshops prior to that for those that want to help add things to the Watkin Archive. We will teach participants how to add to the archive as well as help you to research stories through our links with the Archive+ team at the library. We can then take the Watkin Archive to anywhere in the world that the story has traction and let people contribute at their leisure. It will be invaluable for our school project work and we will also capture anything produced during those projects and add it to the Watkin

Archive. Look out for an update to this exciting project in the next newsletter with details of how to access the website and the launch and workshop dates.



HOME ARCHIVE THE WATKIN FAMILY ACTIVITIES ABOUT NEWS CONTACT



The Watkin Society

The Watkin Society celebrates the lives and achievements of two of the most remarkable men in the Victorian Age, Absalom and Edward Watkin.

Formed in 2019, the 200th anniversary year of the birth of Edward Watkin, The Watkin Society is campaigning to make their story widely known and not just in Manchester, where they lived and died.

[Find out more](#)

WATKIN IN NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE

Edward Watkin's work in North East Lincolnshire was nothing short of fantastic. He turned a small port into what became the biggest fishing port in the whole world. He transformed a little fishing village called Cleethorpes (the pier is pictured below) to become by the end of the nineteenth century one of Britain's most successful holiday resorts, so popular that it had the nickname of 'Sheffield-on-Sea'.



Now local residents, supported by the Society, have started a Grimsby/Cleethorpes Watkin Group with the aim of publicising the Watkin Story in the area and encouraging research into the many fascinating sides of his work. At a public meeting organised by the local Civic Society in Grimsby Town Hall (with an audience of over 80, including the Mayor of Grimsby) (NB There's a good photo on the website) the chair of the Society, Geoff Scargill, spoke about 'Mr Grimsby' and 'Mr Cleethorpes', aka Edward Watkin. A large number in the audience asked to be kept informed of the progress of the Group.



(Above; Watkin's statue for Prince Albert and the Freeman of Grimsby Plaque at the Town Hall)

A number of local residents experienced in community work are interested, including a Facilitator, who will pass to a wider audience the activities of the group, including a number of exciting research projects that have already been identified. Two Zoom meetings have been held and a Core group has met to plan future activities. A further meeting will be held on 5 December. One local history group has asked to set up a Watkin link.

An ambitious schools project in Lincolnshire is being based on a very successful pilot scheme in two local schools. This has generated considerable interest in the key part played by Edward in the heritage of their two towns. It has been accepted in principle by the Lottery and is now at the detailed second stage of application. It is for £250,00 and the Society will enter into a formal partnership with the Heritage Lincolnshire organisation as the parent group.

THE EIFFEL CONNECTION

Do you get French TV? The Paris media production company is well underway with its plans for a programme in 2023 about towers that were built in the same period as the Eiffel Tower. The contract has been signed. The producer is Savin Yeatman-Eiffel, a descendant of Gustav. Later in the month they are interviewing Geoff about Edward Watkin's Wembley tower. Let's hope there will be enough for inclusion in the programme, which will go out on the national Arte channel. If so, that will be the opportunity for us to approach the UK TV companies and ask why they are letting the French lead the way!



(A comparison diagram showing the proposed height the Wembley Tower was intended to reach!)

GREAT CENTRAL LINKS

A link is being established with the Great Central Railway, which is the 17 mile remaining stretch near Leicester of Edward Watkin's railway from Manchester to London and is run as a highly successful steam and diesel tourist railway.

We are exploring the possibility of the Watkin Society working with the GCR to publicise Watkin's unique part in the formation of the railway. One possible rich vein to dig away at is to work with local schoolchildren. One of the leading GCR members says local people think that the only great railway people in the nineteenth century were the Stephensons. He wants to replace them with Edward Watkin (We'd be glad to help!) The GCR has plans to open an Audio-Visual suite in the new-year at one of its stations. It will feature Watkin's life and his work for the railway.



(Loughborough Central on the Great Central Railway: Photo by Clive Hanley)

THE WATKIN WEEK

Another exciting idea under consideration is to hold a Watkin Week in Manchester in April 2023, the month of Edward's death. This could include a commemoration service at the beautiful St Wilfrid's Church in Northenden, where Absalom and Edward are buried. (The Rector of St Wilfrid's has a special interest since he is also the vice-chairman of the Watkin Society.) Other possible activities might include: a Watkin-themed walk in Northenden, further workshops on the Watkin Archive, a Watkin drama production, written by the Northenden Players Theatre Club, and contributions by local schools, who have over several years taken a keen interest in the Watkins.

Planning a Watkin Week could provide the focus for the formation of a Manchester Watkin Group, based on our experience with the new Cleethorpes/ Grimsby Group. We have written to the Manchester City Council to ask them to consider formally acknowledging the central part played by Absalom and Edward in the creation of Victorian Manchester and have been asked to meet the Deputy Leader of the Council, the Lead for Libraries, Galleries and Culture, and the three local councillors. Wouldn't it be wonderful to achieve this in time for the Watkin Week?

STATION SOUTH

For those of you who live near or in the Stockport area, you might be interested in a brilliant new café/bar opened on the A6 in Levenshulme. It is using the formerly derelict buildings of Levenshulme South Station, now beautifully restored. It's on Edward Watkin's 'Fallowfield Loop' and you can Google it under 'Station South'. It's really attractive for a meal or a drink and incorporates a cycle shop as well. The dream of the three people who thought up the idea was terrific and an act of faith. (One of their discoveries when they opened up the derelict building was a dead cow.) What is of special interest to the Watkin Society is their interest in the history of the station and its creator, Edward Watkin. We have already provided some Watkin material for an exhibition and may be able to hold a society meeting there in the new-year.



(The exterior when abandoned and the inside now)

CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Looking for a different gift for Christmas? How about these publications from the Watkin Society, which will not only make a special present but will support the Society? If you live in the Manchester area, delivery can be arranged. Otherwise Post and Packing can be added.

How about a signed copy, with any dedication you want added? No charge!

"Victoria's Railway King" - the fascinating story of one of the Victorian Era's most exciting characters. On sale at all good bookshops for £19.95 but on special offer to supporters of The Watkin Society at £16.

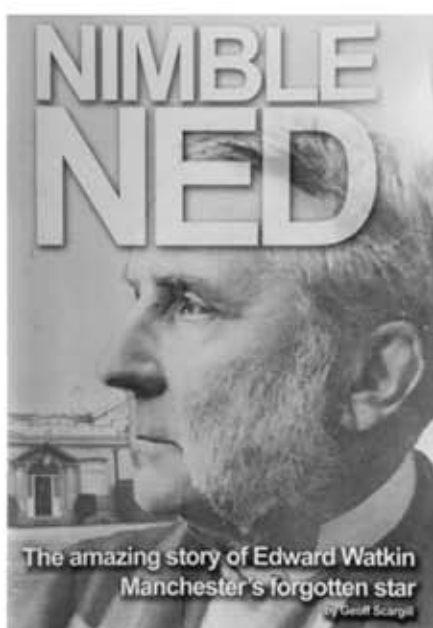
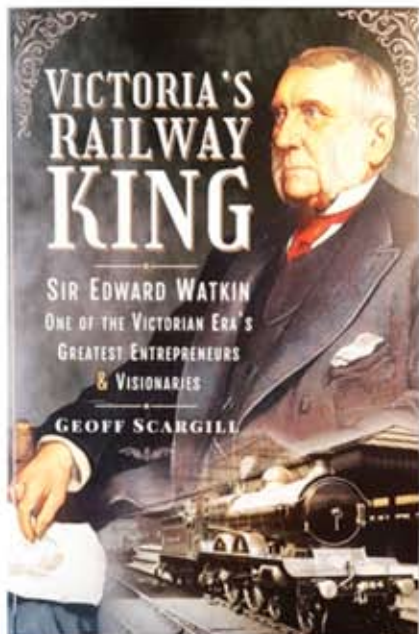
"Nimble Ned" - a shortened version of the book but still fully illustrated. £5

"Jack's Story" - a young person's version of the Watkin Story, specially written by a children's author and recommended for 8 to 12 year olds. £3.

Please contact Geoff at gscargill@gmail.com

Payment to 'The Watkin Society' account at the Co-operative Bank:

Sort code 08-92-99 Account number 67245455



WATKIN TALKS

Finally, there is considerable interest in the series of talks about the Watkins being given by Geoff in the North West. Seven were booked in the last twelve months and a further ten have already been booked in the coming 12 months - so far. Any offers?

We hope you have enjoyed this edition of the WatSoc newsletter. If you'd like to know more or would like to get involved with our plans to make the Watkins known not only locally but nationally and even abroad you will find us on our website shared with Friends Of Rose Hill.

The Watkin Society page can be found at

<http://friendsofrosehill.org/the-watkin-society-watsoc/>

or you can follow our twitter feed

[@WatkinRoseHill](https://twitter.com/WatkinRoseHill)

All the best from the committee of the Watkin Society for Christmas (whatever that means this year) and sincere good wishes for the New Year.