

Watsoc News April 2023

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

Spreading the news about Absalom and Edward Watkin

The New Year saw a burst of activity for the Society after the Christmas break. Our plans (all supported by the award of £10,000 from The National Heritage Lottery Fund) were set out in our last newsletter but here is an update on the progress we have made since then.

A link has been established with the Great Central Railway (gcrailway.co.uk), the thriving preserved section of Edward Watkin's mainline through the Midlands (the line that could have been reopened to provide the benefits of HS2 at a fraction of the cost!). It is hoped that working with Ian Wilson, the Education Lead of the GCR, the Society will explore the creation of schools material at secondary level, to interest older students in not only the amazing achievements of Watkin's career but in his fascinating character. The GCR is planning to open a Video Suite at one of its stations. Watkin will figure prominently in the permanent display. The railway also has a brilliant museum and archive that contains material which we will publicise in our digital library.

The Cleethorpes/Grimsby link is now firmly established. 'The **Watkin Group North East** Lincolnshire' is meeting regularly and had a stand at the recent Heritage Afternoon held in Grimsby and an interview on the local Clee TV network. The current Mayor, Cllr Stephen Beasant, is its patron and has said he does not intend to be just a figurehead. Several members have started their own Watkin research projects. The Society's Archivist. Angela Rawcliffe, and its Creative Consultant, Jamie Rennie. will be holding an 'Introduction to Research' training session' in Grimsby, Although this will have a Watkin slant, it will be open to the general public. The local members are planning to hold a Watkin Day on 22 July, the same date as the opening in 1889 by the future King **Edward VII of Watkin's Great** Union Dock, which marked the transformation of Grimsby from a small port into what eventually became the biggest fishing port in the world. On the same day the statue of Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's husband, was unveiled in the Grimsby Docks area (The cost of the statue was met by Watkin.)

Look out for the Watkin Day programme, which will be published in our next newsletter.

This year also marks significant anniversaries for three iconic buildings: Grimsby Town Station, opened in 1848. Cleethorpes Station (1863) and Cleethorpes Pier (1873). All three will be commemorated in the towns but we have been asked to provide Watkin material as part of an exhibition to be held from 8 September to the end of the year in the Muriel Barker Gallery of Grimsby's award-winning Fishing Heritage Centre.

Great news! An ambitious bid for lottery money put in by the **Heritage Lincolnshire group has** been approved. Its aim is to use the events in Watkin's life to encourage young people in the

area to discover for themselves iust what a great heritage **Grimsby and Cleethorpes** possess and what a fantastic part Watkin played in it. The Society is proud to have been asked to become an official consultancy partner in this exciting scheme.

Since we published our last newsletter the Manchester Watkin Group has been set up and is flourishing. They are planning to hold the first Watkin Week from 16 to 24 April (which is actually more than a week but Watkin Nine Days is not such a snappy title!)

The poster for The Watkin Week is below.



Thurs 20th April 2pm and 7.30pm, Northenden Players Theatre Company M22 4NN

'The Watkin Story'- dramatic presentations from the theatre company and local schools. Booking required (FREE).

Sat 22nd April 8.00pm, The Crown Inn Northenden M22 4WE Fun and informative Quiz Night.

Sun 23rd April 2.00-5.00pm, St. Wilfrid's Church Northenden M22 4WE Open Day featuring Watkin-themed tours, archives, and research workshops.

Mon 24th April 6.00pm, Performance Space, Manchester Central Library M2 5PD Public Lecture- 'The Amazing Watkins: Manchester's Forgotten Stars'



To find out more search "The Watkin Society"

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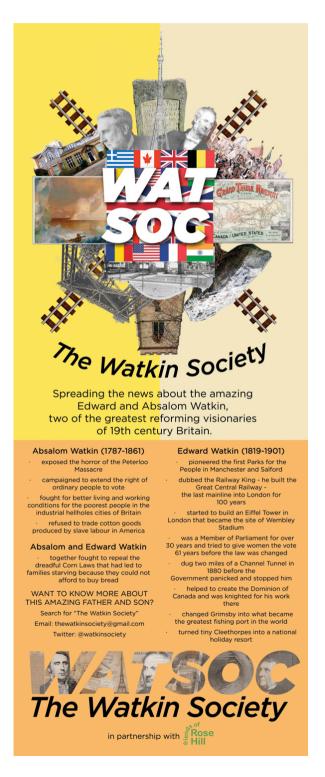
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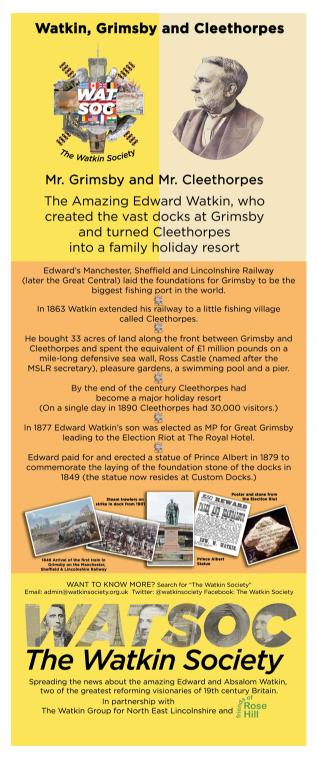
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We are delighted that this new enterprise will build on our partnerships with St Wilfrid's Church, the Crown Inn, the St Wilfrid's and Northenden Community Schools, and the Northenden Players. These are all working to build a stronger local community and The Watkin Society is proud to be playing its part.

The Society is extending its publicity material. A new edition of our popular Manchester Watkin Walk leaflet is about to be published. Our children's book about Edward Watkin, 'Jack's Story', is sold out and is being enlarged. Jamie has created two terrific roll-up banners to bang the Watkin Drum at any public meetings.





Finally, we have just had confirmation that the Franco-German TV production about towers built at the time of the Eiffel Tower in Paris has reached

the editing stage. It will be broadcast at the end of the year on the Arte Channel and will include an interview about Edward Watkin!

THE WATKIN SOCIETY'S NEW WEBSITE AND DIGITAL ARCHIVE

Our new website is up and running. There are further improvements to make and the Archive will be a work in progress for many moons to come as we update, collate and research the Watkin story in all its guises. We recently held archiving and research workshops at Manchester Central Library and started the research ball rolling for some of our volunteers and members. Hopefully they will find the time and energy to delve into their particular area of interest and return with some gems to include in the Watkin Archive.

If you do have an item, article or clip that relates to the Watkin story that you feel we should be included in the archive then use the simple submission form on the website under "Archive" (or link below) to start the process of inclusion. It can be as obtuse as you like, we will definitely consider it!

https://watkinsociety.org.uk/submit-to-archive.html

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 new website shared with Friends Of Rose Hill.

The Watkin Society page can be found at

https://watkinsociety.org.uk/

or you can follow our twitter feed

@WatkinRoseHill

All the best from the committee of the Watkin Society