

# WATKIN TIMES

## Children discover Watkin's World!

What a year it's been for the children of St Wilfrid's and Northenden Community schools!

To Manchester's Central Library, St Wilfrid's Church, Rose Hill House - the former home of the Amazing Watkins and one of England's great historic buildings - to Rose Hill Woods and back to school to tell the Watkin Story.

Absalom Watkin campaigned at Peterloo and fought to bring down the price of bread for starving families. Edward, his son, opened Manchester and Salford's first Parks for the People, helped to create Canada, started a Channel tunnel and an Eiffel Tower that became Wembley Stadium and built a great railway from Manchester to London. And what about his masterpiece, hidden at Rose Hill for a century then sold in New York for £4 million?

The Amazing Watkins? Judge for yourself!

After a great year working with the Friends of Rose Hill the children are the Watkin experts. We are all proud of the restored Woods. Safe paths, information lecterns and benches for visitors to enjoy the lovely surroundings. We've bashed the killer Himalayan Balsam weed and commissioned a census of the life of the woods.

The results? Prizes from Britain in Bloom and the City Council and nomination as a Site of Regional Biological Importance. Best of all, a community asset for us all to be proud of.

What a delight it's been catching the enthusiasm of the children. We know you are going to enjoy this selection of their work.



**St. Wilfrid's Church gets new banner and grave restorations**



**The King of the Railways returns to inspire children.**



**The Sharstone re-appears!**



**Pupils create Drama & Art extravaganza!**

**A tunnel too far? Will Edward's Channel tunnel ever be realised?**

**Forgotten masterpiece at Rose Hill House sells for millions.**

**Pupils explore history of Manchester's forgotten stars.**



**The magnificent woods attract a whole new generation.**

**BioBlitz at the Woods! Amazing diversity found.**

**3 new parks created for Manchester & Salford citizens to enjoy.**

**Edward Watkin unites Canada.**



# friends of Rose Hill

## The Watkin Story

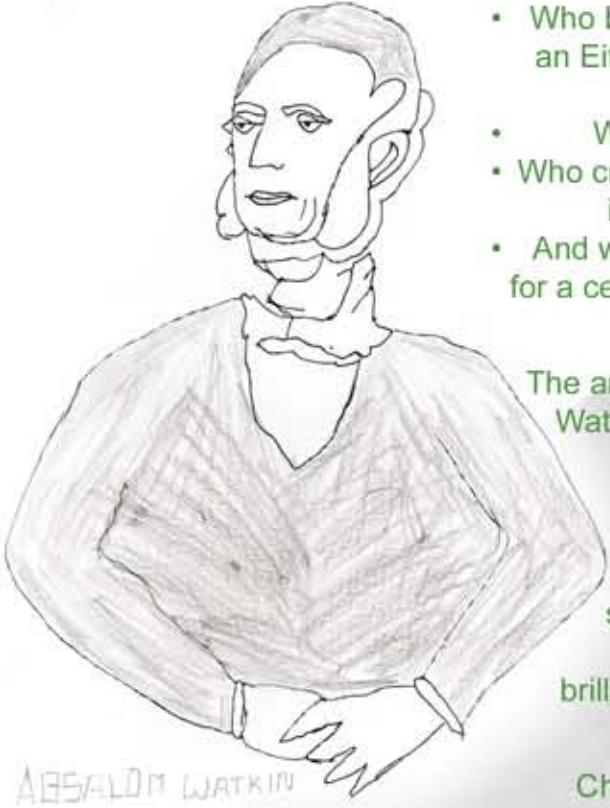
Since January 2018 children from the two Northenden primary schools have been researching these questions:

- Who broke the news of the Peterloo Massacre in Manchester?
- Who saved thousands from starvation by bringing down the price of bread?
- Who built a Channel Tunnel in 1880 and an Eiffel Tower that became Wembley Stadium?
- Who helped to create Canada?
- Who created the first Parks for the People in Manchester and Salford?
- And whose painting, hidden in Rose Hill for a century, was sold in New York for £4 million?

The answers are: Absalom and Edward Watkin, who lived and died in the family home, Rose Hill, just off Longley Lane.

Exploring the Watkin Story with the children and the staff of the schools has been a delight. I know you will enjoy one of the brilliant results, The Watkin Times.

Geoff Scargill  
Chair of the Friends of Rose Hill



ABSALOM WATKIN

Dear Editor,

We are writing this letter to let you know how much the children have enjoyed learning about Edward Watkin, because of his link with Northenden.

The Watkin project, as it came to be known at Northenden Community School and at St Wilfrid's, was a great opportunity for the school to develop a unit of history study which brought to life some of the key changes which took place prior to and during Victorian era, including the Peterloo Massacre, developments of the railways and the creation of public parks in Manchester.

This was done through an appreciation of the lives of Northenden men Absalom and Edward Watkin, including their successes and failures, and their association with the village of Northenden, including the family's move to Rose Hill in 1832. The additional funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund and expertise from the Friends of Rose Hill enabled the school to enhance the learning through visits, drama and art. The children very much enjoyed the opportunity to learn about two of the forgotten historical players and local heroes of Northenden in the 19th century

### Production Team

Editor: Jamie Rennie

Consultant: Geoff Scargill

St Wilfrids Editorial Team:

Ruby, Jasmine, Joe F., Bella, Nicholas, Ryley, Chloe, Joe T., Amber, Lexie

Special thanks to the children, staff and governors at St. Wilfrid's & Northenden Community Primary, Angela at Manchester Archives, Peter from Drama In Education, Vicky McAffer, Mary Monaghan and the Heritage Lottery Fund

Learning about the Watkin family has truly benefitted the children, where they have been able to undertake local geographical studies, take part in debates and create their own reports and art work based upon their own creative learning. One of the main points raised by the children, collectively, they felt sorry for Edward because he did so much, but that he has been forgotten about.

All the children involved gained so much from visiting Rose Hill Woods, with some taking their families at weekends so they could re-tell their learning and perform. At St Wilfrid's this is developing where the woods are also going to be used as part of their Forest Schools, outdoor learning for key Stage 2 children.

The opportunity to work with Jamie and Peter enhanced the children's learning, and really brought to life the story of Watkin, with lower key stage 2 using these ideas for their drama piece.

The staff and children have felt working with a variety of experienced personnel has certainly enhanced the creative approach and life-long learning.

Yours sincerely

*HJ Miller*

Mrs Helena Miller  
Head of School, St Wilfrid's  
CE Primary School

*I Beard*

Mr Ian Beard  
Headteacher,  
Northenden Primary  
School



NCS class presentation

Drama rehearsals with Peter



Working on the Watkin banner



A school trip to the woods

St Wilfrid's CE  
Primary School





Sir Edward Watkin

Who was the first Baronet?

Sir Edward Watkin.

Who established Wembely Park and we won't forget?

Sir Edward Watkin.

Who attempted to build the Channel Tunnel to France?

Sir Edward Watkin.

Who gave giving workers a rest a chance?

Sir Edward Watkin.

Who owned 'The Iceberg' a painting?

Sir Edward Watkin.

Who gave corn laws a good debating?

Sir Edward Watkin.

Who built the first public parks?

Sir Edward Watkin.

Who made a famous landmark?

Sir Edward Watkin.

A noble and famous and honoured man.

Sir Edward Watkin.

By Olivia

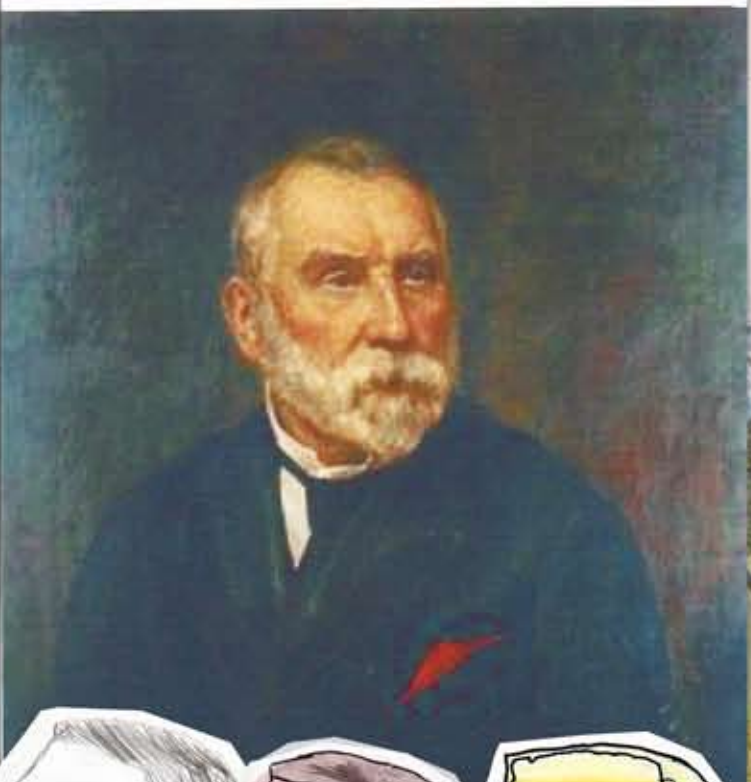


The King of the Railways

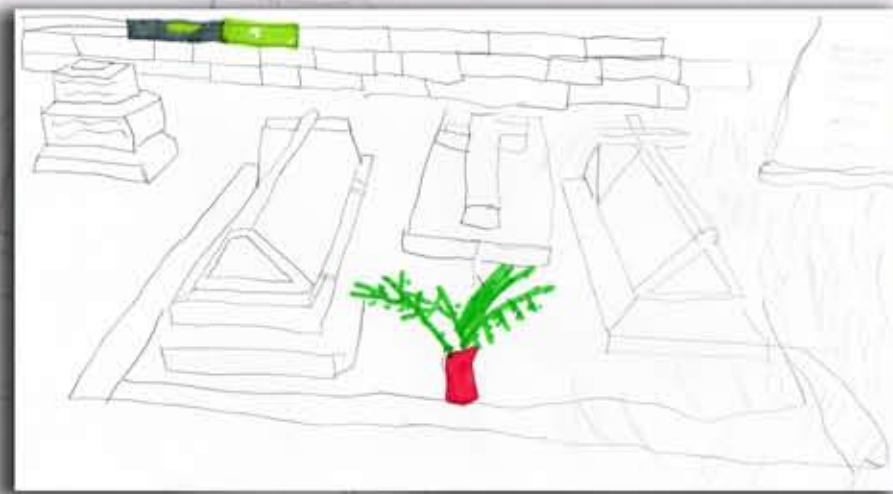


Edward Watkin was a very famous man who lived at Rose Hill in Northenden. His mother and father divorced when he was a young boy and he lived his life with his father who was called Absalom. He also was remembered for his work on railways so he was known as "The King Of The Railways". He tragically died in 1901 and is still remembered for all of his efforts. He built railways in Canada, Greece, Honduras and India.  
By Joe

Walking around Northenden knowing they were once here.  
Arched over in Rose hill woods paying attention to ten leaves.  
The tombstone is still standing so shouldn't they?  
King of the greatest failures.  
Interested in the lives of the corn law fighters.  
No one can beat their history.  
By Nell



Children at both schools created art linked to the Watkin's life and their graves with beautiful acrostic poetry, short essays and insights. The Friends Of Rose Hill worked with the Church to bring the graves of the Watkin family as close as possible to the original condition.



The restoration of Edward's grave with the tower of St. Wilfrid's Church rising in the background.



A before and after view of all the family graves.



Absalom & Elizabeth's grave restoration





# WATKIN'S Woods



## Watkins Woods

Outside Rose Hill Mansion, in the woods is Edward Watkins' dad's memorial stone. It was covered in ivy and moss and branches and has been like that for many many years.

In 2018 Special gardeners came and got rid of lots of the thick layers of ivy, moss and branches so people could see. They also put pathways in there. If you want to see it turn left and it will be there. It says 'Surely godness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.'  
-Amber



The Memorial Stone in 2015



## Rose Hill flowers

In Rose Hill woods there are lots of beautiful flowers. So I'd better tell you about them, there are lots of trees when you first come then when you get deeper there were lots of flowers there. CURE more than I could count.

There were blumbells, ferns, roses even yellow roses. Pink roses they were all so beautiful.  
By Chloe



The Watkin Memorial Stone in Rose Hill Woods

The stone so still  
The almighty trees  
The historic woods  
The history in the air  
The life of two men  
The home of a father and son  
The Crunch of the leaves  
The inspiration of the woods  
The happiness they brought  
The lives they saved  
The life they lived in the big rough world



Edward

## Rose Hill Woods



Leaves crunching under my feet,  
Who knows what I might meet?

In Rose Hill Woods.



Trees blowing in the wind,  
I wish I could keep this all tinned.

In Rose Hill Woods.



Birds tweeting in the trees,  
Fuzzing, buzzing, busy bees.

In Rose Hill Woods



Until I grow old and weary,  
I'll appreciate these woods so dearly.

These woods are  
Rose Hill Woods

Frankie



All the beautiful Rose Hill Woods, butterflies flutter and dance in the gentle breeze above your head, although you may not see them all the time, they're always there. Towering trees stand like soldiers, looking over their troops, while flowers sway in the wind. Singing birds take over the wood because of their majestic voices. Magpies chat and black birds hop, skip and jump on the path ways. Woodlice get ready for battle and place their armour on their hard back. They are amazing - polite and cool insects. Flies congregate to make plans for the day ahead of them. When you enter this wood you will be ecstatic and mindblown. All the animals have a secret to share with you, so go and discover and explore!

By Bella 2014



The stairs take you to the long path and the bench is a great place for a picnic! The pathways were installed as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund project.

The changing seasons bring life to the woods



# The King of the Railways

Company of CANADA



to a CANADA UNITED STATES



Rose Hill House

In Edward's portrait in the National Gallery there is a piece of paper in his hand. It has one word on it, "Canada".



On the 6th May 1994, Queen Elizabeth was the first ever person to ride on the channel tunnel. She was the first person to travel to France under the sea. However, this huge moment could have happened 100 years before. A man called Sir Edward Watkin first started the project in 1880, but 2 years later the government called the project to a halt. They were worried that we might not be friends with France and that we were creating a way for France to invade England. As soon as the queen got off the train, she made a speech saying that this was the world's greatest technological achievement.

by Lexie & Ruby

Yesterday the government ruled against the continuation of the controversial Channel tunnel. After weeks of controversy the government have made up their mind and now there is no turning back. We spoke to Edward Watkin who was distraught after the decision went against him. "It is an utter disgrace that the government think France could launch a full on attack in a tunnel." But other opinions state that Watkin is gullible, too open-minded and foolish. We also had an exclusive interview with William Ewart Gladstone who said that Watkin was crossing the line and his ideas were holy unacceptable. As the debate rages on will we ever have a Channel Tunnel?



The Icebergs was purchased by Watkin in 1864. It hung in Rose Hill and was eventually sold for \$2.5million in 1979 after being rediscovered. It now hangs in the Dallas Museum of Art.

"The Icebergs" by Frederic Church



The sharstone is a very special stone. It weighs two tons and is held by steel. It was found on one of Sir Edward Watkin's farms and was transported on a horse and carriage from Wigan to Manchester. It is currently at Rose Hill House in Northenden, so go and check it out.

By Bella Yr516

friends of Rose Hill  
The Sharstone

This glacial erratic boulder mounted on a metal simulated tree trunk was placed in front of Rose Hill House by Sir Edward Watkin MP who lived here from 1834 to 1901. It is believed to originate from the Lake District and was brought by Watkin from Woodhouse Lane Farm around 1802.

The Sharstone



Entrance to Rose Hill Woods



**Early Towers**

Edward Watkin wanted to build a tower but the person Eiggel refused to design one so Watkin did something else. Watkin held an exciting competition for people to design his towers. It attracted 68 entries!!!

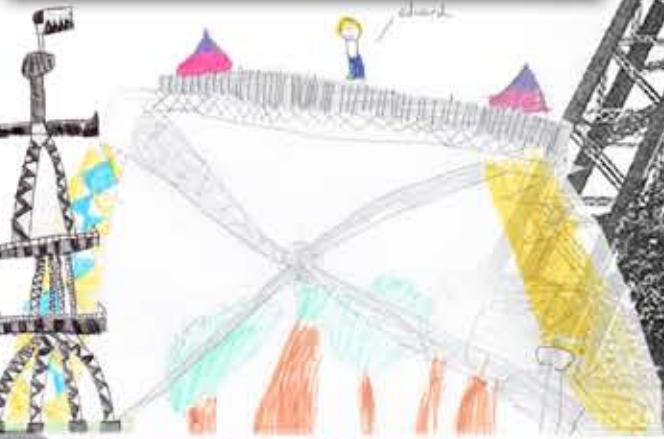
These are some of the designs!

Someone drew a Elm tower of Pisa, also of imaginary stuff. A Captive parachute that holds 4 people, wind and amazing! A tower with a spiral railway climbing its exterior. 1/2 scale model of the pyramid of Giza!!!

The winning entry was eight legged, had two observation decks with restaurants, theatres, dancing rooms and exhibitions, winter gardens, Turkish baths and a 90 bedroom hotel.

Edward Watkin didn't have enough money, so they couldn't complete the wonderful landmark, which had captivated Watkin's imagination.

By Nicholas



**Facts about Watkin**

- Edward died on the 13 of April 1911
- He was a member of parliament and lord mayor
- Watkin tower was made at 1894 and opened in 1896
- usually trying to become Chairman of nine different British railway companies

By Joseph



Wembley Tower

15/08/1846  
Dear Editor  
Today I went to Queens Park today and the first thing I did was to go to the refreshment room because I was a little bit hot in the middle of Manchester. One of the things I did was to go to the office I was all cleaned up I took a that minute to brush in the office. After 60 my destination in the park. My next destination was the bridge. My next I got a view of the park. It was beautiful scottish caught my eye. A Water tower it was AMAZING! It was even one for the morning.  
Spike



15th May  
Dear Editor  
I really enjoyed my day out at Queens Park today. I was writing to you to inform you of how much my children and wife have had fun. We have had an enjoyable time at the amusement area, as well as afterwards going to the refreshing refreshment rooms. My two children were immensely delighted at the magnificent stone bridge. The splashing water underneath was extremely pleasant. I therefore ask you to put my review in the Watkin Times. Thank you.  
Olivia

10th December 1846  
Dear Editor  
How it was to Phillips park today it was an arena I was able to come out and read the world I have been having fun. I have seen behind the door for all these years and now I have entered a new one down I live in a DELECTABLE, HORRIBLE AND CHARMING CELLAR. I want to live here as long as I can. I want to be in the most wonderful room ever to live in.  
My kids sometimes ask to stay overnight because they don't want to go home because they have nowhere to play or nowhere to relax or hang out with the grounds. It is broader in the town.  
Eve



1.12.1846  
Dear Editor  
My trip to Phillips park was very good and I had much fun at the duck pond and the garden. It was brilliant to get fresh air and to be in the winter garden. I loved the water and not dirty water. With all the trees, bushes, flowers and plants made me feel like I was in a dream land.  
Matthew



Dear Editor  
Phillips Park is truly the best. It puts me in my vast lungs to greatly breathe fresh air. But it puts me in my vast lungs to greatly breathe fresh air. But it puts me in my vast lungs to greatly breathe fresh air. But it puts me in my vast lungs to greatly breathe fresh air.  
Your sincerely,  
Ma.B. O

On 22 August 1846 Philips Park and Queen's Park in Manchester and Peel Park in Salford (named after Robert Peel) were opened to the public. The entry in Watkin's diary for the day shows just what his success meant to him:

"On Saturday we celebrated the opening of the Public Parks to the people. Although I desired to absent myself, Polly would hear of nothing but my going as she said it would be 'something to tell our son and for our children to be proud of'. I therefore went and was 'celebrating' from 10 in the morning to 10 at night. We had a glorious day in every way – fine weather – good procession – plenty of people and a fine spirit of enthusiasm. It was really cheering to see the people happy and rushing in in one never ending long stream on the opening of the gates. I felt proud at those moments and felt that I had done something for once. I have full newspaper reports of all and I shall keep them to refer to in times to come."  
(The underlining is Watkin's.)

The three parks are to this day a monument to Watkin's vision and his legacy to the people of Manchester and Salford.

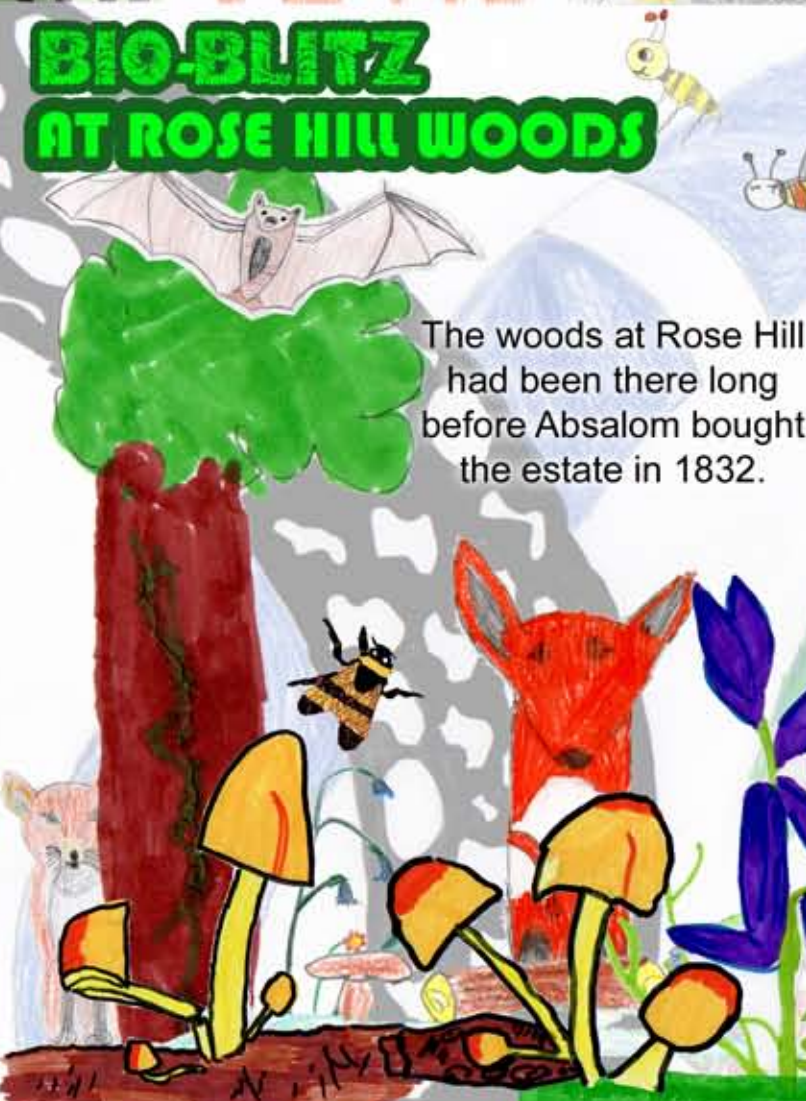
**BIO-BLITZ AT ROSE HILL WOODS**

**237 SPECIES**

The Greater Manchester Ecological Unit, the Friends Of Rose Hill and local volunteers organised a Bio-Blitz to discover what may live in this ancient woodland. The woodland is designated as a Site of Biological Importance (SBI) in Manchester. It might soon receive a Class A classification making it a regionally important woodland for bio-diversity.

The woods at Rose Hill had been there long before Absalom bought the estate in 1832.

including 4 species of Bat, Foxes, Hedgehogs, 33 bird species (a rare Great Spotted woodpecker too), 11 species of Fungi, Butterflies, Moths, Bees, Wasps, Hoverflies, Toads and a whole range of Plants, Flowers, Lichens, Mosses and Horsetails.



Angela from Manchester Archives+ visited St Wilfrid's and worked with the children to create letters to the editor of the Watkin Times. The pupils imagined a visit to one of Edward's parks in 1846.

Phillips Park







# St Wilfrid's CE Primary School



The pupils at St. Wilfrid's Primary School brought the stories of Edward Watkin and the family to life at a school assembly. Peter Kennedy from Drama In Education worked with the school in a series of workshops to hone their skills and prepare them for a performance. Teachers and staff continued their development and produced an entertaining and informative event.

We may have some future Oscar winners!

OUR REPORT IS ABOUT DRAMA  
Hi, our names are Ruby & Jasmin,  
And our report is about drama.  
When we do drama we always do something new. First we learnt about Sir Edward Watkin. We learnt about what Sir Edward Watkin's life was about and how he wanted to help his country. Then we started to perform about what Edward Watkin's life was about. It was fun! Here is a little bit about what we did.

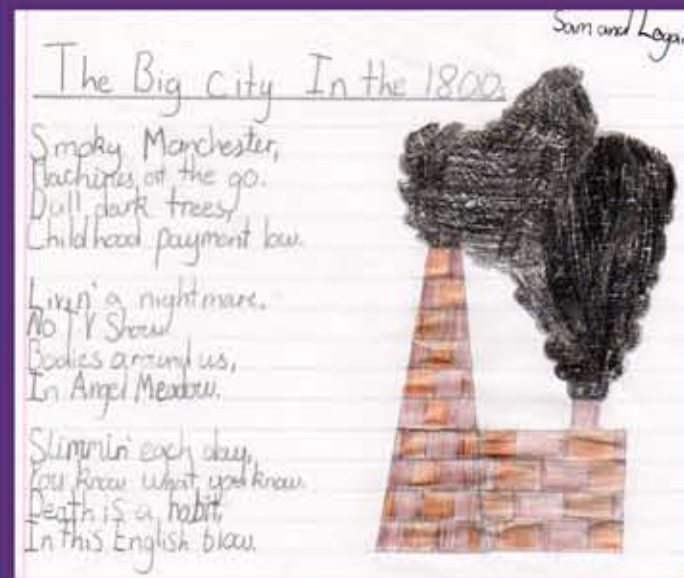
When we first did it we decided that Edward will come in and look at some plants but then Jack comes running in. After, Edward says "Hello, what are you doing in my garden". Then Jack would say "I just bought this loaf of bread." This is only a bit of what we did, there's more!



Rehearsing with Peter.



Pupils performing on the stage at St. Wilfrid's



The pupils at Northenden Community Primary worked with Peter and Vicky to create an Art & Drama Assembly.

Changing Manchester!  
Manchester was dull  
with smoke everywhere  
bread prices were high, houses were bare  
No parks no trees  
nowhere to play  
there was nothing to do  
for the children every day  
Edward Watkin fixed all that  
He was very smart  
and wore a top hat  
He helped young citizens  
by any means  
by building parks  
named Peel, Phillips and Queens  
His dad helped him out  
but it was Edward who led  
they lowered prices of things such as bread  
The Wabbins made a difference  
to the life we have today  
Helping us to live the right way  
by Millie

Peter encouraging the talents of NCS pupils.



The amazing artwork created with Vicky for the NCS assembly



Pupils telling their version of the Watkin story at NCS.

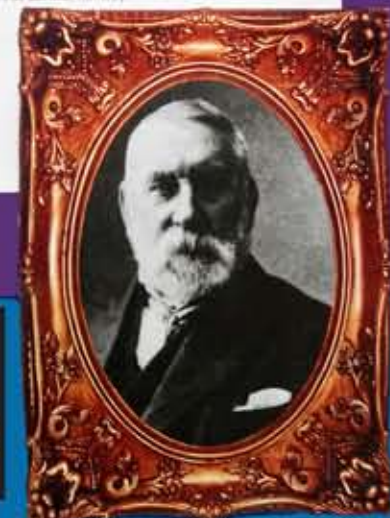
### Edward Watkin

We wanted to show the impact Edward Watkin had on people in the Manchester locality and beyond. Our charcoal drawings are in the style of Mancunian artist, Trevor Grimshaw. They depict the landscapes and polluted air of the industrial era.

While Edward Watkin pioneered the development of the railways, he also worked tirelessly to improve conditions for the workers.

The tower cottages represent the natural environment and provide a stark contrast to the industrial landscapes. Watkin labored hard to create parks (St Philip's Park, Queen's Park and Peel Park) for the workers to escape to when they occasionally had recreation time.

The children used techniques of drawing, painting, printing and collage to create their mixed-media artworks. If you look closely, you can see they worked on timetables and tickets from the Great Central Railway.



Peter Kennedy | drama in education |



# THE WATKIN BANNER



St. Wilfrid's Primary School pupils worked with Jamie from JME-DZYNZ to create a banner to hang in St. Wilfrid's Church. The church welcomed the idea as they already have the Watkin graves and windows dedicated to the Watkins inside.

Over four workshops children drew images from the Watkin story to be part of the banner. You may have also noticed they appear throughout this publication.

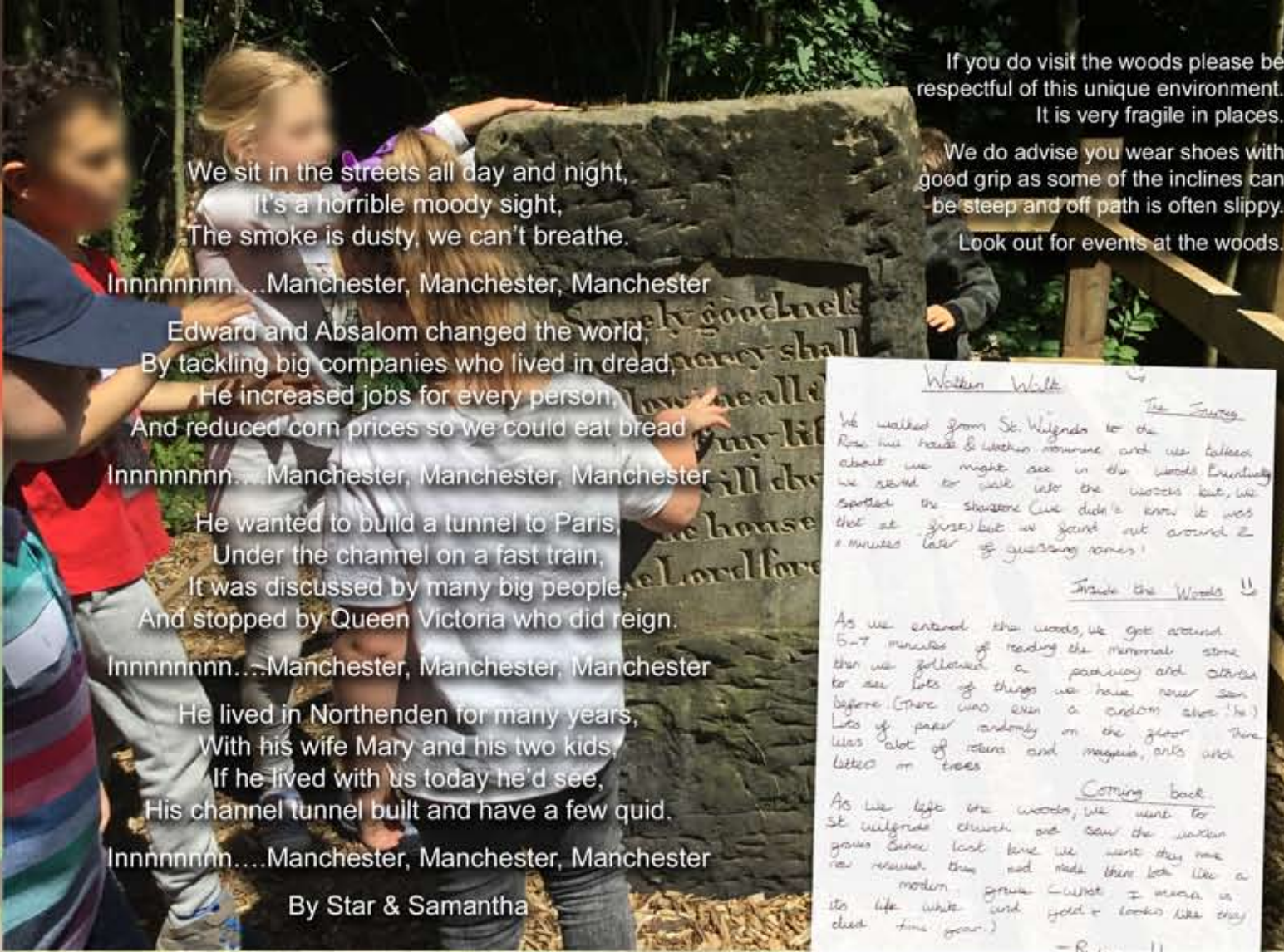
The pupils' designs were transferred to the banner in an Aerosol Art workshop.



INSPIRED BY & CREATED WITH THE PUPILS OF ST WILFRID'S SCHOOL



The banner in progress and the final banner to hang in St Wilfrid's Church. The Friends will also use the banner at special events.



We sit in the streets all day and night,  
It's a horrible moody sight,  
The smoke is dusty, we can't breathe.

Innnnnnn...Manchester, Manchester, Manchester  
Edward and Absalom changed the world,  
By tackling big companies who lived in dread,  
He increased jobs for every person,  
And reduced corn prices so we could eat bread

Innnnnnn...Manchester, Manchester, Manchester  
He wanted to build a tunnel to Paris  
Under the channel on a fast train,  
It was discussed by many big people,  
And stopped by Queen Victoria who did reign.

Innnnnnn...Manchester, Manchester, Manchester  
He lived in Northenden for many years,  
With his wife Mary and his two kids,  
If he lived with us today he'd see,  
His channel tunnel built and have a few quid.

Innnnnnn...Manchester, Manchester, Manchester  
By Star & Samantha

If you do visit the woods please be respectful of this unique environment. It is very fragile in places.

We do advise you wear shoes with good grip as some of the inclines can be steep and off path is often slippery.

Look out for events at the woods.

*Watkin Walk*  
The Sunday  
We walked from St Wilfrid's to the Rose Hill House & Watkin's monument and we talked about the things we might see in the woods. Eventually we started to walk into the woods but we spotted the stone we didn't know it was that at first but we found out around 2 minutes later of guessing some!

*Inside the Woods*  
As we entered the woods we got around 5-7 minutes of reading the memorial stone then we followed a path and started to see lots of things we have never seen before. (There was even a garden above!) Lots of paper and stuff on the floor. There was a lot of trees and bushes, ants and lichen on trees.

*Coming back*  
As we left the woods we went to St Wilfrid's church and saw the garden again. Since last time we went they were re-planted and made them look like a modern garden. (I wish I mean in its life white and gold - looks like they died 4 years ago.)  
- Riley

Friends of Rose Hill

## The Watkin Walk

**The amazing Watkins of Rose Hill House and their Woods**

LOTTERY FUNDED

**Welcome to the Watkin Walk!**

This Walk celebrates two former residents of Northenden, Manchester whose achievements have largely been forgotten by the modern age. Absalom Watkin and his son, Sir Edward, lived in Rose Hill House - a Grade II\* listed building, which can be found at the end of this walk.

Absalom Watkin (1787-1861) was a social and political reformer, who led campaigns for voting reform and an end to the infamous Corn Laws that brought many families to starvation.

Sir Edward Watkin, 1st Baronet (1819-1901) was a Member of Parliament and a leading railway entrepreneur of the Victorian age. He was an ambitious visionary and presided over large scale railway engineering projects in Britain, Canada and India. Among his most notable projects were the construction of the Great Central Main Line from Manchester to London, the creation of a pleasure gardens with a partially constructed 'Eiffel' tower at Wembley and in 1880 an attempt to dig a channel tunnel to link Manchester to Paris by rail. This was halted by the Government fearful that the French would invade through it!

The Watkin Walk commences at St Wilfrid's church, which contains memorials to Absalom and Edward and six stained-glass windows commissioned by Edward. Their graves can be found to the right of the church in front of the far wall.

Follow the Walk using the map overleaf and the Waymarkers until you reach Rose Hill House (private). Observe the Sharstone and then continue following the house railings to the entrance to Rose Hill Woods (to the right of the electric gates). Once inside the woods bear left and uphill to the unique Watkin memorial.

On your way back why not sit and enjoy the beauty of Absalom's woods or follow the stepped path to see more.

We'd love to hear from you and we hope that you enjoy this lovely historic corner of Northenden village.

**Who are the Friends of Rose Hill?**

We are a group of local people with two aims: to spread the word about the exciting story of Absalom and Edward Watkin and the lovely public open space, just off Longley Lane in Northenden, known as Rose Hill Woods.

We are all volunteers but our efforts have now been recognised by a generous grant from the National Heritage Lottery Fund.

Would you like to support us by becoming a member? There is no fee although donations would be very welcome. We could put you on our mailing list to keep you in the picture about our plans for the future and to invite your comments and suggestions.

We look forward to hearing from you and thanks for your interest in The Watkin Story.

[www.friendsofrosehill.org](http://www.friendsofrosehill.org)  
@watkinrosehill  
Friends Of Rose Hill

**How to find The Watkin Walk**



# The amazing Watkins of Rose Hill House and their Woods

- RED ROUTE
- BLUE ROUTE 
- TPT TRAIL 
- ROADS/LANES
- PATHS/ALLEYS

## KEY

TO NORTHENDEN  
PALATINE ROAD  
SHOPS, CAFES,  
AMENITIES,  
M60 & MCR

RIVER MERSEY

 NCR 62  
TRANS PENNINE TRAIL

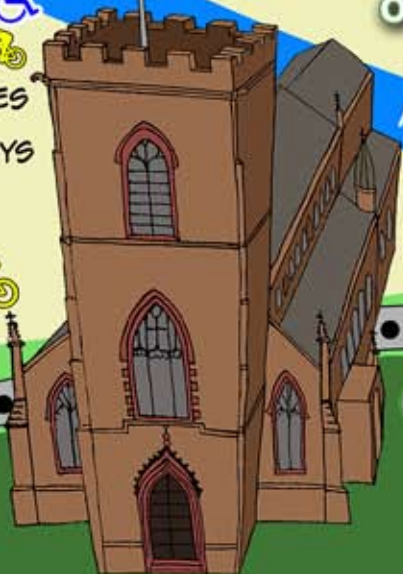
●●●●● FORD LANE

THE WATKIN GRAVES

CHURCH ROAD

ST. WILFRID'S  
PARISH ROOMS

BOAT LANE



ST. WILFRID'S  
CHURCH

NOT  
TO  
SCALE

THE  
GREEN  
PATH

MARYLON  
DRIVE


HOLLYWAY

# The Watkin Walk


friends of  
Rose  
Hill



LOTTERY FUNDED

 Friends Of Rose Hill

 friendsofrosehill.org

 @watkinrosehill

CEDARWOOD  
CLOSE

BRADGATE  
CLOSE

GREENWAY

BUCKLOW  
DRIVE

WEST VIEW ROAD

LONGLEY  
LANE

ROYLE GREEN ROAD

SHAWCROSS  
LANE

BAGNALL  
COURT

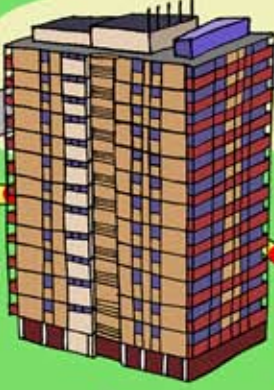
NORTH



TOPCROFT  
CLOSE

KERFOOT  
CLOSE

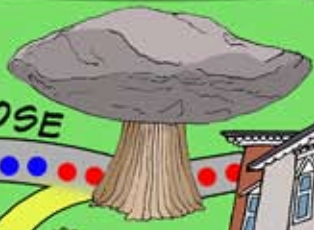
THE SHARSTONE



SHAWCROSS  
LANE

SHARSTON  
ROAD  
(TO M56  
JCT 2)

BRONINGTON CLOSE



HARPERS  
ROAD



ROSE HILL WOODS

ROSE HILL HOUSE &  
WATKIN MONUMENT