

John Gilbert (1724-1795)
An Essay by John Aldred

JOHN GILBERT

A Biographical Essay

By John Aldred

A collection of views and opinions expressed over the last 250 years.

Every account of the Bridgewater Canal and its connected activities concentrates, quite rightly, on the contributions towards its inception and development made by three people. First and foremost comes the Duke of Bridgewater, without whom nothing would have been possible; then John Gilbert and James Brindley are also mentioned, but not necessarily in that order. Some commentators give pride of place to the practical man, James Brindley, but increasingly it is John Gilbert as planner and engineer who is regarded as the more important of the two. There is no doubt, however, that the canal could not have been built without the efforts of both men. The contribution made by John Gilbert towards the development of coalmining and canal transport in the Worsley area has been amply chronicled elsewhere, so this essay will mainly concentrate on those aspects of Gilbert's work that are not related to the canal, as well as his activities outside the Worsley area.

John Gilbert was the son of Mr Thomas Gilbert, "Gentleman", and was born in 1724, in Cotton, Staffordshire. His elder brother, also called Thomas, was well educated and became Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyne and Litchfield. John, however, went to the village school at Farley near his home and, at the age of 12 or 13, was bound apprentice to Mr Boulton, the father of Matthew Boulton, the industrialist who was famous for steam engines at the Soho Works in Birmingham. Matthew Boulton senior manufactured buckles in the Snow Hill area of Birmingham and it is likely that the experience gained by John in business matters was more important than the practical skills involved in button making. John's father died in 1742 and as his brother had not finished his legal studies in London, John returned to the family home at Cotton where he began to look after the family estates. In 1743, he married Lydia Bill who brought with her a marriage settlement of £300.

By about 1753, he was working for the Duke of Bridgewater but there is little evidence that they often met. Apart from his Parliamentary commitments, Thomas Gilbert was also the Duke's General Agent. He moved back to the family home at Cotton in 1757 so John moved to Worsley as manager of the estate, under the supervision of his brother Thomas. In about 1757, John began a survey of the Duke's mines in the Worsley area, which were not very profitable, and soon came into daily contact with the Duke. This was in fact the start of a life-long friendship. In 1759, he was appointed the Duke's Agent. Research by Mrs C. Elsie Mullineux has shown that the Duke spent most of his time during the most important of the canal-building years at his estate at Ashridge in Hertfordshire rather than at Worsley. During the years 1759 – 1762, he was only at Worsley ten times, usually for about two weeks or so at a stretch. The accounts record: "Paid expenses when his Grace was at Worsley 10 different times - £100". This emphasises the importance of John Gilbert who must have been responsible for most of the day-to-day decisions connected with the construction work on the canal. The fact that the Duke realised his worth is shown by the fact that Gilbert's salary for 1759 – 1762 was £200 per year, and that this had risen to £300 by 1766.

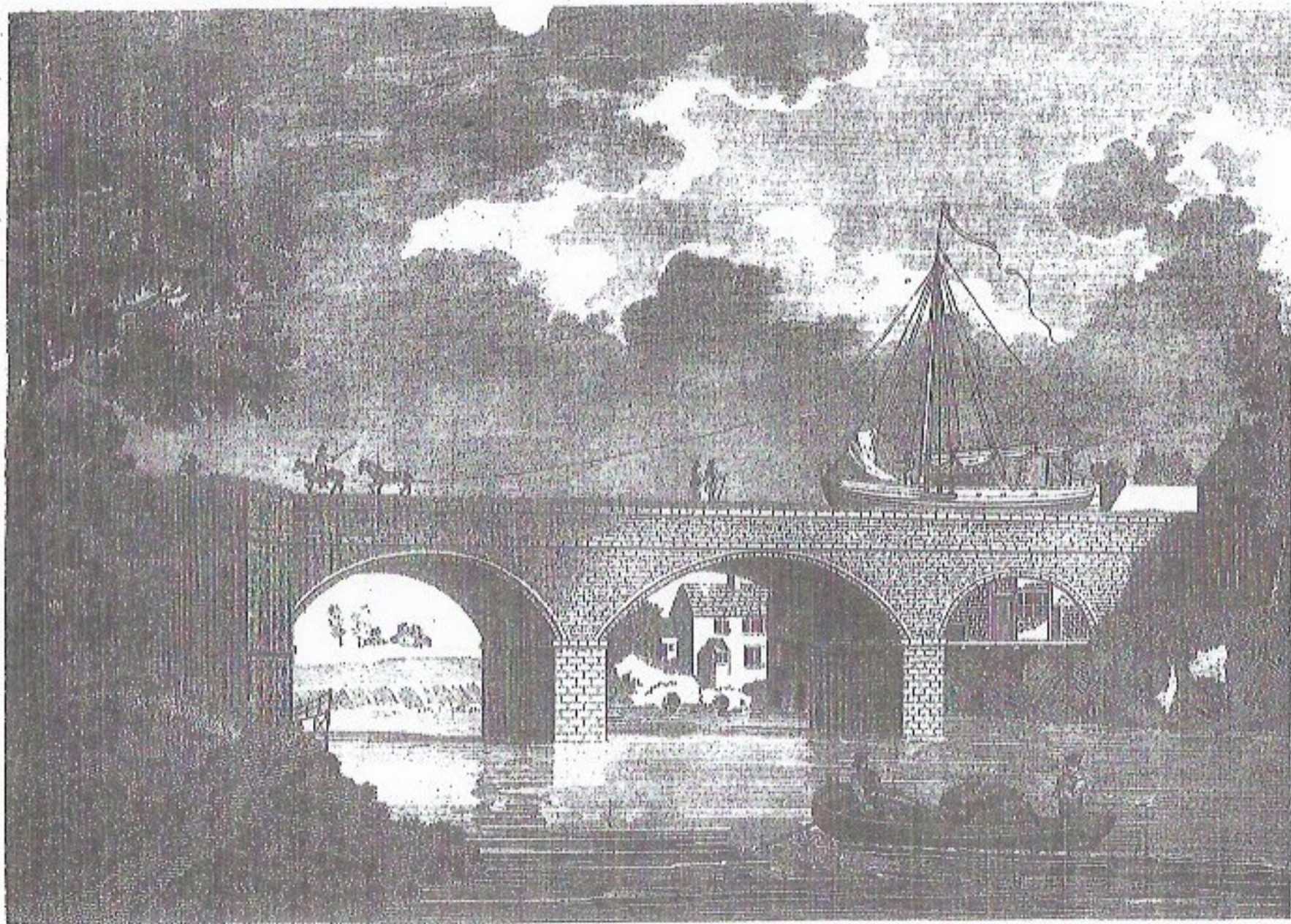
Gilbert talked to everyone who knew anything about the subject of coalmining and transport and then retired to the Bull Inn in Salford where he could consider the situation without interruption. He soon realised that the main problem with marketing Worsley coal was transport. There were about 40,000 people and a great deal of industry in the Manchester and Salford areas desperate for coal at a reasonable price. Unmade roads, however, deep in mud in winter and often rutted in summer, made transport by packhorse, each of which could carry only about 125 kilos, very difficult. Carts which carried about two or three tonnes each, were equally slow and expensive.

Just how long he stayed at the Bull is not known but eventually he came up with a plan. He realised that if tunnels large enough to carry boats laden with coal could be drilled into the rock northwards from Worsley Delph until they intersected the quite steeply dipping coal measures under Walkden Moor, coal could be taken direct from the workings to markets in Manchester via the main canal. This would make transport quicker and cheaper than ever before. In June 1757, John Gilbert moved his family to Worsley and immersed himself completely in the project. He soon convinced the Duke of the soundness of the scheme and preparatory work began.

In the eighteenth century, schemes such as this had to have the approval of Parliament. Around May 1759, John Gilbert introduced James Brindley to the Duke and for about the following three years, he worked on the development of the canal. John Gilbert was a trained engineer, an excellent land agent and accountant whereas James Brindley was an expert in water control and also a very experienced practical engineer.

The Duke, his Manchester agent, William Thompson, and John Gilbert presented the First Act to Parliament, but the Second Act was drawn up mainly by James Brindley. This act asked for permission to alter the original route so that a direct link to Manchester could be made, including a controversial crossing of the River Irwell by means of an aqueduct. He was a persuasive orator who used a number of visual aids to illustrate his ideas, including carving the shape of the proposed aqueduct from a large Cheshire cheese. He also illustrated how the bed of the canal would be waterproofed by means of a quantity of sand, clay and water being "puddled" together and then trodden into the floor of the canal. Despite this, it was John Gilbert who received a bonus of £150 for work connected with the application. The Bill went through after some amendments and received Royal Assent by 12th March 1760.

The Duke had to resort to borrowing money from all and sundry to finance his operation. He often borrowed sums as small as £5 or £10 from his tenant farmers. He even borrowed £300 from Robert Lansdale, his cashier, despite the fact that his salary was only £100 per year. One day when John Gilbert was on his way to try to borrow money, on behalf of the Duke from some of his more remote tenants, he met a stranger on a superb horse, who was very keen to exchange it for the horse that John Gilbert was riding. Perhaps surprisingly, John agreed to the exchange which was obviously in his favour. Later, John called at an inn for refreshment where he was greeted by the landlord in a very familiar way. This surprised John as he had never visited the inn before. His surprise was deepened when the landlord asked him if his saddlebags were full. Gradually it dawned on John that he had changed horses with a famous highwayman who wished to exchange his well-known horse for a more anonymous animal; whether John Gilbert kept the horse is not known!



J. Sweetser del.

Pollard sculp.

View of Barton Aqueduct

Construction of the Bridgewater Canal began in 1759, probably in Worsley Delph, and by 1761, the aqueduct to take the canal over the river Irwell at Barton was nearly finished. The aqueduct was designed by John Gilbert but constructed by James Brindley. A test was carried out to see if the structure would hold water but immediately one of the arches began to buckle under the strain. Brindley had been drinking heavily for several weeks and this setback was the last straw. He had some sort of a breakdown and retired to bed at the Bishop Blaize tavern in Stretford. The cool-headed Gilbert came to the rescue, diagnosed the problem and provided a solution. He had the puddled clay lining removed and then replaced to give a better balance to the loading. This time the arch held and on 17th July 1761, the Duke entertained a number of guests to see the aqueduct fully filled with water allowing a "flat" (a flat-bottomed barge) towing boats, carrying about fifty tons of coal, to sail across. When the canal was opened to Castle Field in Manchester in 1765, John Gilbert became a partner in a firm of carriers known as Henshall and Gilbert. They owned their own barges and built the first warehouse at Castlefield, still in existence and known as the Grocers' Warehouse.

John Gilbert's experience in lime burning was of great use at Worsley. Lime was needed in large quantities on the estate, for mortar as well as for agriculture. Deposits of Sutton Lime were discovered on Worsley Moss but this type of lime was difficult to process. High temperatures were needed and Gilbert discovered that ground limestone mixed into briquettes with coal dust generated the right amount of heat for the process to take place. This was a great money saver for the estate. In 1791, there was a record of the fact that "223,000 measures of lime were burnt at John Gilbert's lime kiln near Stablefold". Although the size of a "measure" is not recorded, this was obviously a sizeable amount.

Apart from being second in command, to the Duke, of the whole day-to-day Worsley enterprise, John Gilbert was also an extremely busy industrial entrepreneur. From his father he had inherited a financial interest in Clough Head collieries and limestone quarries at Caldon Low, together with two smelting mills and some lead and copper mines, all in the parish of Alton, in Staffordshire, near the family home.

Perhaps the most interesting part of his undertakings was his involvement in the mining in the Borrowdale area of what is now Cumbria, of "black lead" or graphite for making black-lead pencils and powder for cleaning ovens and grates. As in most of his enterprises, he was careful to involve partners to share the financial risk and an unsuccessful attempt was made to interest Matthew Boulton. Mining for graphite in the Lake District appears to have begun some time in the 16th century when it was used in the casting of musket balls, but there is evidence of it being used for artistic purposes as early as the end of the 16th century when Flemish merchants were exporting it to the Michaelangelo School of Art in Italy. In about 1764, Thomas and John Gilbert seem to have begun to take an interest in the mining of graphite, or "wad" as it was known in the Lakes District. They were parties to a lease with the Earl of Egremont, who was to receive royalties on the amount mined. In the first year, over 60 tons were mined, with a royalty payment of £19 16s. In 1785, Gilbert had a lease on graphite deposits in Borrowdale. The Duke of Bridgewater also had an interest in the mines and in 1791, his contribution "to Christmas last" was the not-inconsiderable sum of £200.

The Bridgewater interest continued after John's death in 1795. On October 20th 1797, £56 4s was paid to Jas. Charlton for "superintending Black Lead mines in Cumberland

from 24th March to 18th October". John Gilbert also had an interest in a shipping company which carried goods along the coast from Cumberland.

Josiah Wedgwood, writing to a friend, reported that "Mr John Gilbert.....has promised to get me a doz. of good black lead pencils and a lump of the same for shading with, you are to share this valuable acquisition". By 1778, the Duke of Bridgewater is recorded as allowing the estate millwright and workshop "to make an engine for pounding the Black Lead for John Gilbert's works". There is no doubt that John Gilbert had a pencil factory, reputedly in a disused mill leased from the Duke, on or near the site of the present vicarage of St Mark's Church, Worsley. It was in full production by 1782, possibly earlier than the start of production at Keswick in Cumbria.

An advertisement appeared in the Manchester Mercury on 16th July 1782, which gives a graphic impression of the problems involved in the manufacture and sale of the product:

BLACK-LEAD PENCIL Manufactory at WORSLEY

J.Gilbert and Co. respectfully acquaint the public, that they now make that valuable and useful article, and that they will use their utmost endeavours to retrieve the reputation of them, which has been so much injured by persons who have imposed on the public by selling Pencils of little or no value. This imposition has prevented much the sale of good lead, Which is a great disappointment to the public, and a great loss to the proprietors of the Lead Mine, of which J.Gilbert has a share, and has induced him to begin this Manufactory in which the public may be assured none but the best lead will be used. As the Manufactory is so far situated from the Metropolis J.Gilbert and Co have appointed them to be sold wholesale (only) by William Champante, no 4 , Minories, from whom they may be had on the same terms as from the Manufactory. They are to be had retail of most Stationers In London; also of T.Wood, Printer of Salop; and by all The Booksellers in Birmingham, Gloster, Bath, Bristol, Hereford; and most principal Towns throughout Great-Britain; to prevent Imposition they are marked on each Pencil I.G. Worsley.

The "Pencils of little or no value" referred to above used a much cheaper, but far less efficient, mixture of clay and graphite which crumbled easily and made a much less distinct mark than pencils manufactured from the pure material. Despite these protestations, as wad was very expensive it seems likely that John Gilbert also used the German method of pencil construction in which finely powdered black lead was mixed with other substances. In the most important of John Gilbert's mines in Borrowdale, an iron railway was built along the floor of "Gilbert's Day Level"; a tunnel opening to daylight. Over its south-east end, a building was constructed known as "Gilbert's Mine House" which had rooms for processing the wad. There were other rooms where workers could change their clothes and be searched to prevent the smuggling of this valuable substance. The building also included a smithy for sharpening tools and an accounts office.

The mining of graphite and the manufacture of pencils continued after John's death in 1795 and on 18th February 1815, the following advertisement appeared in the Staffordshire Advertiser:

To Clean and Polish Stoves, Ovens, Grates etc.

John Gilbert and Co., Worsley prepare Black Lead Powder for cleaning and polishing stoves, ovens, grates, etc which with very little trouble, gives a higher polish than anything yet offered for the purpose.

N.B. Thin Black Lead Pencils are made from the purest genuine Lead only and School Slates from the best materials.

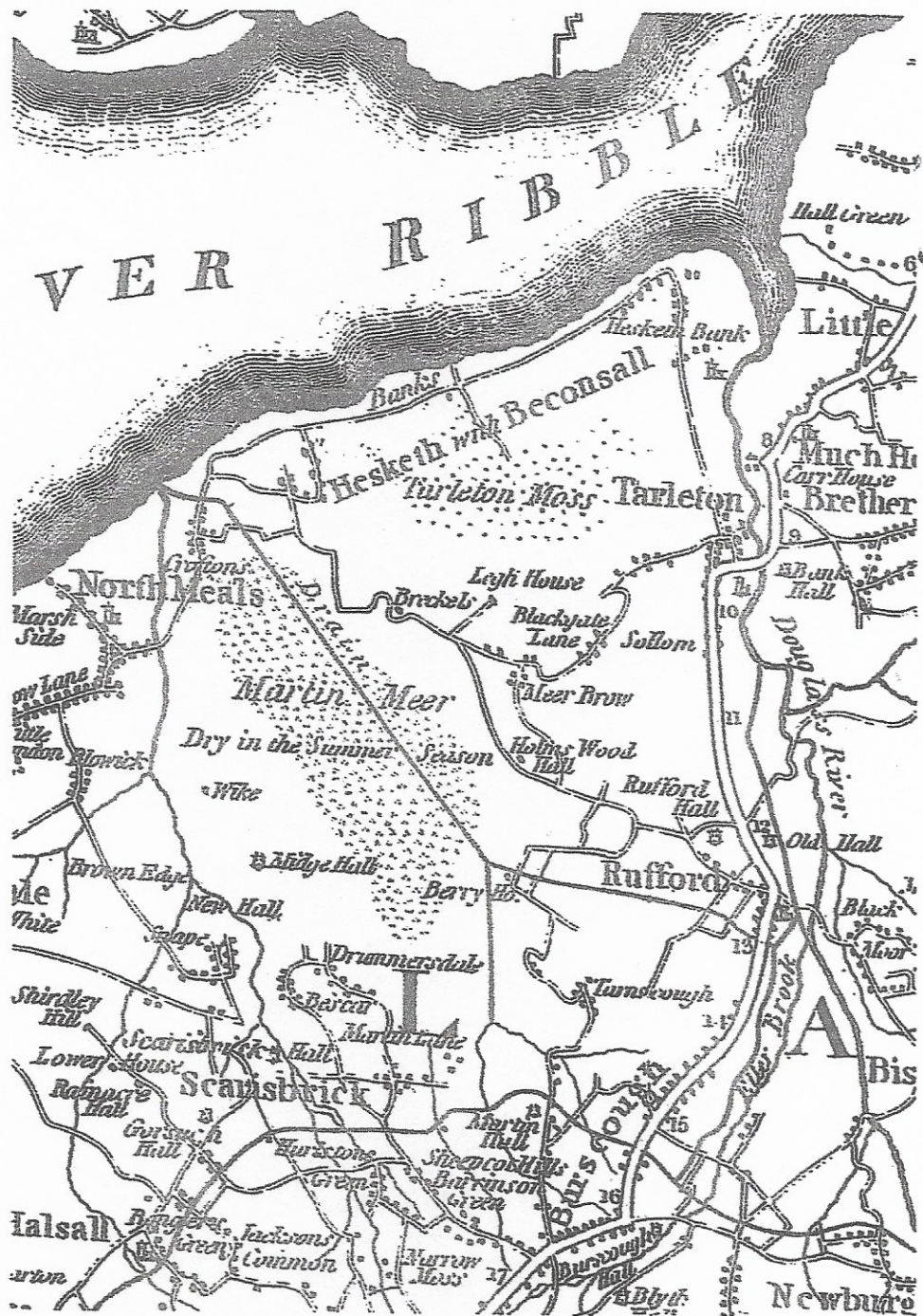
Sold by Mr Chester and Mrs Smith in Newcastle and in most other towns by STATIONERS, SILVERSMITHS etc. The powder in packets at 1s.3d. and 2s.6d. each.

Once the work at Worsley was well under way, John Gilbert began to expand his interests in a number of other projects. His reputation as an engineer, gained mainly at Worsley, made him greatly in demand in a number of areas in the north of England. As early as 1747 John and his elder brother Thomas were involved with copper and lead mines, which had to be sub-let when John was needed at Worsley and Thomas in Parliament. Not all his projects were successful. In 1771, he took shares with the Earl of Carlisle and others in a mining venture on Middle Fell between the rivers Nent and South Tyne in north-east England and drew up plans for two canals which were never built.

As early as 1759, despite the tremendous amount of work in Worsley, John Gilbert's underground canal-planning skills led to his involvement in the planning of a sough and an underground level at Ecton in Northamptonshire. James Brindley was also brought into the same scheme in 1759 – 1760. In 1766 John was a partner in a lead mine near Winstar in Cumbria, where a "boat level" (underground canal) was constructed and in 1767 he leased all the coalmines in Farley and Cotton from the Earl of Shrewsbury to supply fuel for lime kilns at Caldon Low. In 1768 John was to be found inspecting the drainage of collieries near Longton near Stoke-on-Trent. When inspecting his coalmine at Donnington Wood, he was almost killed in an explosion which occurred when he lit a candle too near the roof of one of the workings. Gas exploded and he escaped with a singed necktie and a scorched head only because a collier threw himself on top of him, sustaining serious burns in the process. John rewarded the miner handsomely for his efforts.

In 1760, he bought the Golden Hill estate in Staffordshire together with his brother Thomas and others, which proved an excellent investment as it was on the line of the soon to be built Trent and Mersey canal.

In 1774, John was asked by the Duke of Devonshire to design an underground canal, described as a "boat level", to make possible lead mining at a flooded mine at Castleton, in Derbyshire. After 11 years, mining was discontinued as uneconomic but the canal lives on as the Speedwell Mine, one of the most important tourist attractions in



Gilbert's successful scheme for draining Martin Mere 1786

Castleton. The canal is 800 metres long and has a loop for passing, very similar in principle to the Worsley feature at Waters Meet, on the underground canal. Gunpowder was used in the construction of the level, an innovation at the time.

The job of an agent at Worsley was also to superintend agricultural activities but, as John Gilbert had been brought up in an agricultural community, this presented few problems. Apart from all his other activities he farmed the demesne lands around the Brick Hall where he lived from 1764 and which he rented very cheaply from the Estate. The Brick Hall, which stood to the south of Worsley Old Hall and on the north side of Leigh Road, was demolished in 1840. A roughly written farm account dated in the 1770s shows that the demesne farmed by John Gilbert was predominantly a cattle farm which also grew hay (about £2,000 worth a year), "corn" (probably oats) and turnips, together with keeping poultry and pigs. The drainage of Worsley Moss, which was part of the larger Chat Moss, was supervised by John Gilbert. This was a major land-improvement scheme with the two-fold benefit of providing a dumping ground for colliery waste whilst also improving the sodden moss and readying it for agriculture. Waste material from canal digging and from the underground canals was carried by barges, travelling along a short section of specially built canal, into the heart of the moss where it was then spread to stabilise the surface. Through continued dumping, the land was eventually reclaimed for basic farming and the planting of Botany Bay Wood.

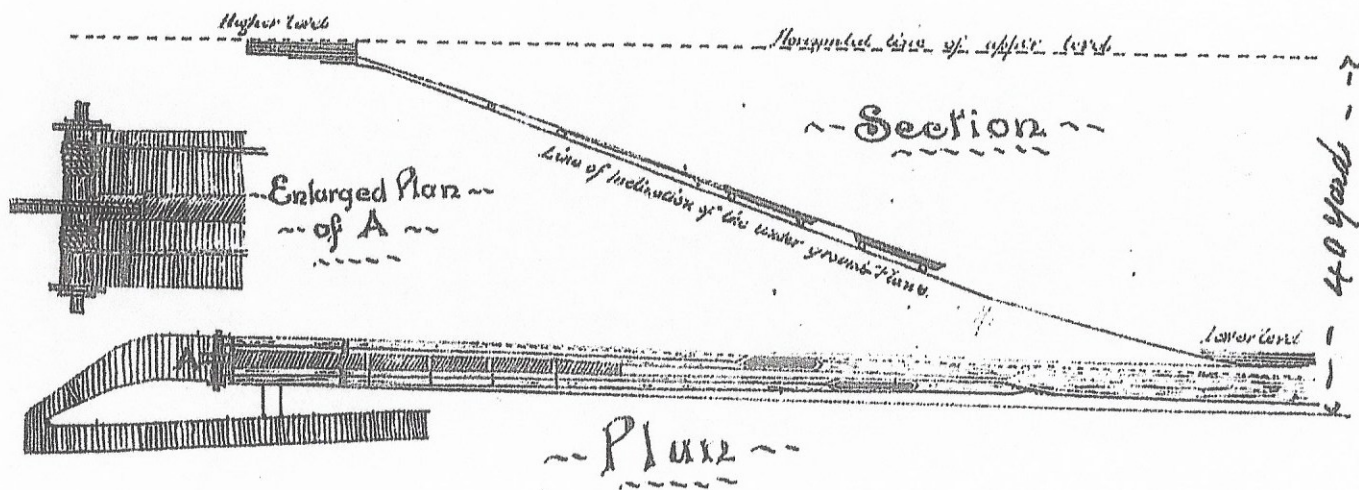
Gilbert's work in this area attracted considerable interest in Lancashire, especially from a landowner named Thomas Eccleston who was attempting finally to make the moss land known as Martin Mere, in West Lancashire, suitable for agriculture. Attempts to drain Martin Mere were begun in 1693 but failed as silt blocked the floodgates, which were designed to keep out high tides and allow land drainage at low water. In 1755 very high tides destroyed the floodgates altogether. These were rebuilt but the results were unsatisfactory and the land slowly returned to its former sodden state. In 1778, much of the moss-land area was bought by Thomas Eccleston. Mr Eccleston had heard of the works being carried out at Worsley and contacted John Gilbert to ask for help in finding a solution to the drainage problem. In a report that Thomas Eccleston made to the "Society for the Encouragement of Arts Manufacturing and Commerce", published in Vol.7 of their Transactions for 1789, he said: "I had recourse to Mr Gilbert of Worsley (who had judiciously planned and happily executed the astonishing works of his Grace the Duke of Bridgewater) .To his friendship and abilities I am indebted for the success of the drainage; for, after the most minute inspection, he gave me every encouragement and assisted me in directing the undertaking."

He goes on to say that Gilbert drew up plans for a series of flood gates which, when properly managed, remedied the problems of all previous schemes. "Thus, by the great skill and superior ingenuity of one man (Mr Gilbert) the great obstacle to the perfect drainage of Martin Meer (sic) is done away, which had baffled the many vain efforts of the proprietors for almost a century." As a direct result of John Gilbert's efforts, the Society awarded Thomas Eccleston its Gold Medal for land reclamation.

In 1780, Gilbert found a new, richer bed of rock salt near Northwich in Cheshire and is said to be the first person to suggest using gunpowder to mine the salt. He was also involved in the export of Cheshire salt via Runcorn.

All these schemes must have involved a great deal of travelling although he did employ assistants to handle the day-to-day business connected with his activities. Despite these

~ ~ ~ The Late Duke of Bridgewater's underground Plane ~ ~ ~
~ ~ ~ at ~ ~ ~
~ ~ ~ Walkden Moor. ~ ~ ~
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Inclined Plane under Walkden Moor – probably designed by Gilbert

calls upon his time, he never neglected his primary employment at Worsley and evidence of this is shown in that in 1762 his salary was raised by the Duke from £200 to £300. He also served as a Magistrate at Worsley.

His last important contribution to the success of the Worsley estates was his work on the design for an "inclined plane" to link the higher-level canal to the main level. This was situated north of the Fast Lancashire Road at Walkden. It was an elaborate structure, entirely underground, and consisted of two parallel locks at the top of an incline. A loaded barge sailed into one of the locks, which was then emptied of water. Next, the barge was fastened to a cradle and made a controlled descent to the lower level. At the bottom, it floated off on the main canal. As it went down it drew up an empty barge by means of a rope round a large wheel. Barges fifty feet (15.4 metres) long and with a beam of 4'6" (1.5 metres) carrying 12 tons (13.4 tonnes) of coal could be handled at the rate of four boats per hour. He did not live to see the completion of the work, which was supervised by the Duke himself who, in his later years, took an increasing interest in the day-to-day running of the estate.

•See
note
below

John Gilbert died, aged 70 years, some accounts say in the arms of the Duke, on 3rd August 1795, at the Brick Hall in Worsley, after nearly forty years in the Duke's service. The Duke was so fond of John that he gave permission for him, and later his wife, to be buried in the Egerton family vault in Eccles Parish Church, where he had served as a Church Warden. Excavations carried out by the Manchester University Archaeological Unit found this to be correct when, in 1994, they opened the vault and found the coffin of Lydia Gilbert, who died in 1797, on top of that of her husband John which, in turn, was on top of the coffin of John Egerton who died in 1700. A number of previous occupants appear to have been removed at that time to make way for John and Lydia Gilbert. John's coffin was found to be of 25mm-thick oak with an inner lead shell and a further wooden coffin inside that. The lid of the outer coffin had been covered in felt, which had been held in place by a decorative pattern of copper upholstery nails. It was also marked with a large, heart shaped metal shield bearing the details "John Gilbert, Died Aug. 3rd, 1795, aged 70 years."

Due to his multifarious activities, John's financial affairs were very difficult to sort out. The executors of his estate were his son John and Nathaniel Gould. Their main job was to keep his various enterprises ticking over so that the payments mentioned in the will could be met. He left all his household goods, £100 in cash and a yearly income of £400 to his widow Lydia who, with their son John, moved from the Hall to Barton House. She was also entitled to a further payment of £1000, payable on twelve months' notice. John senior's eldest son, Thomas, died before his father but the eldest surviving son, the Reverend Robert Gilbert, received a quarter share of his father's property at Stanton in Derbyshire, along with the graphite, copper and lead mines in Cumberland, Westmorland, Staffordshire and Derbyshire and the smelting mills in Cumberland. He was also to receive a cash payment of £4000 within three years of his father's death. Robert's daughter Alice was left £600 which would come to her on marrying or when she reached the age of twenty-four. No provision seems to have been made for his daughter Lydia or his younger son John. Robert seems to have sold many of these interests, some of them to his brother John. The residue and bulk of his estate, including Clough Hall went to John senior's son and executor who was also called John.

Note

Location of Inclined Plane was under Ashton Fields Colliery between Cleggs Lane and Grovensor Road, Little Hulton

Robert Lansdale and Thomas Kent, who were employed by the Duke but who spent much of their time working closely with John Gilbert, received bequests from him amounting to a total of £270.

It has been said that John Gilbert had little formal education, having been taught in the village school in Cotton. It is also generally held that he was not a good letter writer and that most of the day-to-day office work was carried out by his assistant, Robert Lansdale. This may be true, but letters to his brother Thomas seen by the author indicate that he could write in a fluent style using a wide vocabulary, including such words as "apprehend". His punctuation and spelling are somewhat inaccurate by modern standards but were probably at least average for that period at the end of the eighteenth century, and certainly far more accurate than those of James Brindley, who tended to spell phonetically. It may be true that John was not at his happiest when writing letters; he always considered himself a practical man. Robert Lansdale, who was in daily contact with John, summarised his character very well when he said: "he was by profession a Collier miner, Canal Navigator....a practical persevering and industrious outdoor man, (who) loved mines and underground works."

This is only one of the many tributes paid to John Gilbert by those with whom he worked during his 36 years at Worsley. Sir Joseph Banks, the famous botanist and explorer, visited Worsley in 1767, where he spent some time with John. As a result, he made the following statement when giving his reactions to what he had seen: "We must acknowledge ourselves indebted to its noble author, (the Duke of Bridgewater), and not a little to his chief (sic) executor, Mr Jno Gilbert, whose most indefatigable industry, himself overlooking every part, and trusting scarce the smallest thing to be done except under his own Eye, I myself have been witness of".

John did delegate; it would have helped as he was always in a hurry. However, where the canal enterprise was concerned, he was single minded in his attention to the myriad details necessary to ensure the sound working and profitability of the enterprise. He was a man who knew his position in life. James Brindley would go drinking with the workers while John remained somewhat aloof. He liked to stick to the letter of the law but his pleasant sense of humour was often mentioned. He was a man at his best in a crisis, as when the aqueducts at Barton and Stretford were in danger of collapse; a man who could be relied upon.

In conclusion it is probably fair to say that he was perhaps one of the first of the new breed of estate managers in the widest sense, without whom it is doubtful that the Industrial Revolution, and in particular the Bridgewater Estates, would have reached their fruition. His contribution has been belittled for too long.

Some idea of the respect in which John Gilbert was held locally may be gained from the following account which appeared in a local newspaper some years after his death:

"SHALL SO MUCH WORTH IN SILENCE PASS AWAY
AND NO RECORDING MUSE HIS WORTH DISPLAY"

* At Worsley Hall John Gilbert Esq., head steward of the Duke of Bridgewater died on August 3rd 1795 at an advanced age having been in his Grace's service for nearly forty years. He planned and executed the famous navigation from Worsley Mills to

Manchester and the extension to Liverpool, a work so wonderfully executed for duration and public utility that it astonished millions and became the admiration and imitation of all ranks and descriptions of men. Its fame was not only confined to this country but justly spread through foreign regions and attracted the notice of nobles and princes who visited this kingdom to see with their own eyes whether it was true. But his grand genius was not confined to the surface. He planned and executed rivers, navigable levels, for boats underground.

In his moral character he was affable to his inferiors, just and charitable. He would have listened to beggars with patience, would have pitied their estate and relieved their suffering.

"MOURN, WORSLEY, MOURN, THY WORTHY GILBERT'S GONE"

The Portrait

The artist Michael Sharp painted a portrait of John Gilbert in 1803. It is in oil on canvas and measures 635mm by 760mm. Its existence was discovered by Dr Hugh Malet and it was thought to have been in the possession of the descendents of Lydia Gilbert (nee Bill), John's wife. It came down through the Bill side of the family to Pamela Bill of Farley Hall in Staffordshire. She married Christopher Clifford and the picture was obtained from her son David. It was bought with the subscriptions of Salford people and given into the charge of a specially formed "John Gilbert Society". It was put on display at Buile Hill, then a mining museum, and when the building closed, it was presented to the Salford Museum and Art Gallery where it still hangs. The picture was cleaned and restored by Edwin Bowes of the North West Museums Service in March 1998. It forms the front cover of this essay.

In it John appears to be in middle age, with thinning hair, which has perhaps been tied back in the custom of the day. He is shown wearing a stock and dressed in a bright-patterned waistcoat with revers underneath a dark coat. It is dangerous to attempt to imagine the character of a sitter based upon a portrait but it is probably fair to say that the portrait does not produce any surprises. The subject appears to be a rather quiet, thoughtful person with slightly hooded eyes, looking at the artist confidently but showing little sign of the sense of humour that he was reputed to possess.

In short, he looks a man who could be relied on, the ideal man to run the tremendously complicated Bridgewater enterprise.

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Worsley 2009

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5. J.Gilbert, handwritten Farm Accounts for 1770s., Frank Mullineux Collection, City of Salford Archives.

6. "References to John Gilbert" Mrs C E Mullineux, papers in the possession of the author.

The John Gilbert Public House, Worsley

James Brindley had been recognised in the usual way by having a public house named after him in Walkden decades ago, but as late as the 1970s, there was still no similar memorial to John Gilbert. Worsley New Hall had been demolished by 1949 but one of its entrance lodges known as Church Lodge still survived. In 1997 it was bought for conversion to a public house. There was much discussion as to what it should be called and the public were asked to make suggestions. A prize was offered for the name which was finally accepted. Mrs C.Elsie Mullineux, the well-known Worsley historian and another member of the public suggested the name "The John Gilbert". After some research by Watling Street Inns, who owned the development, the name was accepted and the inn opened its doors on March 26th 1998. Honour was at last satisfied and a permanent memorial to the great man was created for all to see

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