

SGT. RICHARD HALL WILLIAMS

(1819 - 1910)

Richard Hall Williams was born to Richard and Elizabeth Williams, of Abbey Street, Bath, and baptised at Bath, St. James, on 17 October **1819**. His father was a tailor. **Richard Hall** enlisted in the 17th Lancers in London in November **1843**, aged 22 years. He served in Ireland during the Famine Riots (1846 - 1847) and advanced to the rank of Corporal in June **1848**, and then to Sergeant in September **1851**. He rode in the *Charge of the Light Brigade* at Balaclava, on 25 October **1854**, in addition to being present at Alma (20 Sept. **1854**), Inkermann (5 Nov. **1854**), and in the operations before Sebastopol (1854-55). During the charge, referred to above, he was suffering from a painful boil on his nose, a fact to which he later referred:

' ... My visage was so fearsome that the Russians even held their fire. But the pain was so great that on the following day I had to report to the Regimental Surgeon - a step not to be lightly taken then ... Two orderlies held me and I received a smart buffet on the nose, which dispersed the fluid ... '

Curiously, his name is not on the appropriate roll for the 'Balaclava' clasp, but research undertaken by E. J. Boys and A. Sewell confirms that *'from all the evidence ... there can be no doubt that he did ride'*, a view with which Lummis and Wynn entirely agree in *Honour the Light Brigade*. Williams gained promotion to Troop Sergeant-Major in February **1855**, embarked for India aboard the S.S. Great Britain in October **1857** and saw action in the Mutiny, albeit in the latter stages of the conflict between December 1858 and January 1859, when he was present at the engagements at Zeerapore and Baroda. He was subsequently awarded the Medal without a clasp.

Williams was discharged at Brighton in November **1867**, having been awarded his Army Long Service & Good Conduct Medals earlier in the same year. Afterwards, he became a Troop Sergeant-Major in the Worsley Troop of the Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry, and in **1870** he became sub-postmaster in Worsley. He retired from the Yeomanry in **1877**, having been given permission to carry on his duties for eight years beyond regulation time. He was presented with a sword of honour which is *inscribed "A token of esteem and respect for his uniform conduct as a soldier and a gentleman"*. He also taught drill to the school children on the Ellesmere estate until **1893**. He became a well respected member of the village community, and he and his wife Jane worshipped at the local church. In the Worsley Parish Church magazine of the time, there is a note that he often recited Tennyson's poem at tea parties and events with feeling and emotion. A keen mason, and a member of the Balaclava Commemoration Society from 1879, Williams signed the Loyal Address in **1887** and attended the Annual Dinners in 1892, 1894, 1895, 1899 and 1908. Awarded his Meritorious Silver Medal (M.S.M.) in April **1884**, he would have "forfeited" his original L.S. & G.C. Medals at that time, but just when he received his later impressed issue remains unknown.

Williams died at Eccles on 7 July **1910**, aged 91 years, and was buried in the churchyard at Worsley, where he had been a sides-man for over 20 years. There was a large presence of Freemason and military personnel and a wreath was received from T. H. Roberts. He left a widow and five children. Remarkably, as late as the 1970s, one of Williams' sons, Clement, was still living in Worsley. He died on 10 April **1974**, aged 100 years, and was buried in the same plot as his father.

[reproduced from **FORGOTTEN HEROES: The Charge of the Light Brigade** - by Roy Dutton
(eBook:books.google.co.uk) - with amendments]

His medals eventually went to auction:

Date of Auction: 29th September 2008

Sold for £12,000

Estimate: £6,000 - £7,000

Five: Troop Sergeant-Major R. Williams, Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry, late 17th Lancers, who rode in the famous charge with a painful boil on his nose and wore a scarf round his face for protection: nonetheless, his 'visage was so fearsome that the Russians even held their fire'

CRIMEA 1854-56, 4 clasps, Alma, Balaklava, Inkermann, Sebastopol (Troop Sgt.-Mjr., 17th Lancers), officially impressed naming; INDIAN MUTINY 1857-59, no clasp (Troop Sergt., 17th Lancers); ARMY L.S. & G.C., V.R., 3rd issue, small letter reverse (750 T. Serjt.-Maj., 17th Lancers), later officially impressed naming; ARMY MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL, V.R. (Tp. Sergt. Major, (Late) 17th Lancers), officially engraved naming; TURKISH CRIMEA 1855, Sardinian die, unnamed, *the first with several unofficial rivets and the fourth with minor official correction to rank, contact marks and edge bruising, generally about very fine and a rare group*
(5) £6000-7000

The following information is from the *Eccles and District Masons* group:

It could be said that the Lodge had its beginnings by an order issued from the Colonel-in-Chief of the 17th Lancers stationed in India in 1867. Sgt. Major Williams, a Crimean war veteran and survivor of the 'Valley of Death' charge at Balaclava, requested to be discharged in that country with his family, but the Colonel insisted that his friend, the Earl of Ellesmere, required an experienced soldier as an instructor to take charge of the Duke of Lancaster's own yeomanry in Worsley.

Sgt. Major Williams, together with his family, duly took up residence at 61 Barton Road in Worsley Village, opposite the old limekiln, to drill the pupils of St. Mark's school and also became the Post Master, a position he held for thirty years.

Already a Freemason, Williams joined Bridgewater Lodge No. 1213, subsequently becoming Worshipful Master and eventually, together with Bro. William Bowden decided to form a new Lodge nearer home. The idea of having Lord Ellesmere as the first Worshipful Master, so giving the new Lodge a high status, was put into action and Williams approached the Vicar of Worsley, the Earl of Musgrave, Lord Ellesmere's brother-in-law, to make the request. His Lordship agreed, but there was a snag, he was not in the Craft but was subsequently Initiated into United Lodge No. 1629, a special Lodge in London for the gentry, where he served a brief spell as Warden and Master so qualifying him for the position as Worshipful Master of the New Lodge.

So, on 17th February 1880, a bitterly cold day of fog, frost and snow at the Court House in Worsley, the Lodge was consecrated. The ceremony was carried out by a relative of Lord Ellesmere, the Provincial Grand Master Bro. Colonel Le Gendre N. Starkie and the Earl was installed as Worshipful Master. Among the congratulations sent was a telegram from no less a person than the Prince of Wales.

W. Bro. Richard Hall Williams subsequently became the second Worshipful Master with William Bowden becoming the seventh. Two of Williams' sons G.C. Williams and C.H. Williams followed in their father's footsteps becoming the thirty-second and fortieth Worshipful Masters, an outstanding service given by one family to the Lodge. one family to the Lodge.

A tradition formed by Clem Williams in 1953, on his Golden Jubilee in the Craft, was the presentation of a silver-drinking goblet, which had been given to his father by his military comrades when he retired, to the Lodge. The goblet is used by the reigning

Master during his year in the Chair and is handsomely engraved and includes the skull and crossbones 'Death or Glory' motto of the 17th Lancers.

Meetings continued to be held at the Court House for some sixty-six years, an envied venue with a sprung floor and a huge fireplace, essential for the winters in those days. The hostelry across the road, nicknamed 'The Grapes', provided the Social Board up until 1903 when it was demolished to make way for a new gateway to the Earl's residence.

In 1946, however, the Lodge voted to leave the Court House along with Walkden Lodge, who by then had also taken up residence there, and move to Eccles Masonic Hall where we have been very comfortable to this day.

The foregoing is just a brief account of the early days of Worsley Lodge. For a full and very interesting history, there is a book by Bro. Harry W. Charlton, *'The First Hundred.'*

Richard Hall Williams, late Sgt. Major 17th Lancers, died on 7 July, **1910**, aged 91 years. A Crimean Balaclava & Indian Mutiny Veteran, he was buried in the churchyard on 11 July 1910 by the Rev. J. Charles Catlin, Curate (1907 - 1911).

He and his wife **Fanny Jane** had 9 children.

Laura F. c1858. Born Ireland.

Elizabeth Clarissa. Born 20 March 1861. Baptised Secunderabad, Madras, India. 3 April 1861.

Emma Marian. Born 9 September 1862. Baptised Secnderebad, Madras, India. 25 Sept 1862.

Charles Henry. c1865. Born India.

Harriett E. Born Aldershot. c1867.

Richard James. Baptised St. Mark's, 19 July 1868.

Florence Mabel. Baptised St. Mark's, 27 November 1870.

Maude Evelyn. Baptised St. Mark's, 17 November 1872.

George Clement. Baptised St. Mark's, 30 June 1874.



In loving memory of
RICHARD HALL WILLIAMS,
late Sergt. Major, 17th Lancers,
died July 7th 1910, aged 91 yrs,
Crimean, B a l a c l a v a & Indian Mutiny
Veteran
Also FANNY JANE wife of the above
who died December 27th 1912
aged 81 yrs
RICHARD JAMES
son of R.H. & F.J. WILLIAMS of Worsley
who died January 10th 1885 aged 16 yrs & 6 mths
Also, CHARLES H. WILLIAMS
son of above
born 19th May 1864
died 30th December 1951
Also, GEORGE CLEMENT WILLIAMS
son of R.H. and F.J. Williams
who died 10th April 1974
in his 100th year
Also, of MARIAN GREENE who died January
27th 1890 aged 80 yrs. (Z2360)

From the **Manchester Evening News - 21 October 2004**

The great-grandson of a survivor of the Charge of the Light Brigade attended a memorial service yesterday after a successful M.E.N. appeal to trace him.

The service, at St. Mark's Church, Worsley, celebrated the life of Troop Sgt. Major Richard Hall Williams.

*The infamous charge came during the **1854** Battle of Balaclava in the Crimean War.*

Immortalised in the poem by Lord Alfred Tennyson, 673 men rode into the Valley of Death. The manoeuvre resulted in 272 men killed or wounded.

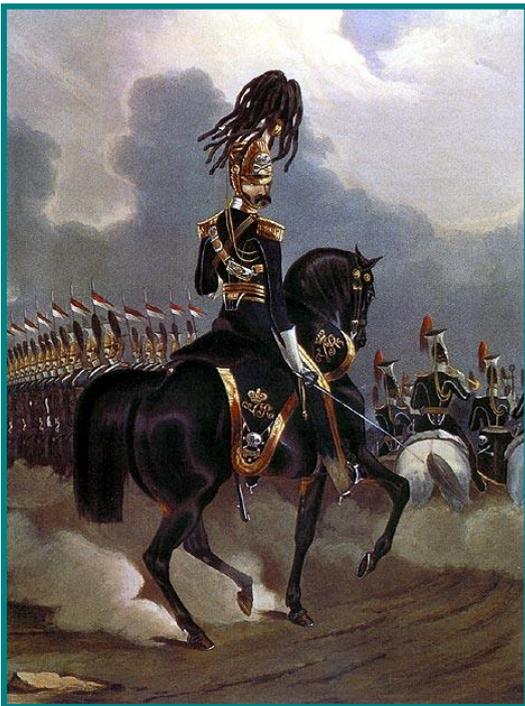
***Troop Sgt. Major Williams** went on to serve in India before moving to Worsley before taking up a post as drill sergeant in the Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry.*

*He was also postmaster at Worsley for 30 years and a sidesman at St. Mark's Church for 35 years. He died in **1910** aged 91, a respected and influential member of the community.*

Although his two sons went on to become leading members of Worsley Masonic Lodge, which he founded, the family moved away from the area some years ago....

Members of the 17th Lancers in 1850's uniform and representatives of the Duke of Lancaster's Yeomanry attended the service.

The church bell tolled in memory of all those who died and a trumpeter from the Greater Manchester Police band sounded the Last Post.



[Left: a 17th Lancer.

Below, the charge of the 17th lancers.]



Charge of a Mason

Richard Williams, a Lancashire Mason, took part in the famous Charge of the Light Brigade, as John Jackson discovered.

This year sees the 150th anniversary of one of the most famous incidents in the history of the British army - the Charge of the Light Brigade near Balaclava in the Crimea on 25th October 1854.

Immortalised in the poem by Alfred, Lord Tennyson, it is also seen as one of the most foolhardy ventures in British military history, that led to the Light Brigade wrongly charging the Russian guns.

One of those who took part in the Charge and lived to tell the tale was Troop Sergeant-Major **Richard Hall Williams** of the 17th Lancers, an ardent Freemason.

During the Charge Williams was suffering from a boil on his face, around which he had wound a muffler. He originated from Bath, where his father was the proprietor of a tailoring business providing finery for the gentry.

His Masonic beginnings have not been discovered, although it is known that he was initiated in Kent into a military Lodge, as was common practice among soldiers at the time.

However, Worsley Lodge No. 1814 in the Province of West Lancashire, of which the old soldier was a founder member, has recently discovered the whereabouts of his ceremonial sword.

The sword is on loan from the Salford Museum to the Museum of Lancashire in Preston. Salford Museum is holding an exhibition of the battle during the year.

The Masonic career of Richard Williams is largely tied up with Worsley Lodge, where he remained a member for 30 years, followed by both his sons to maintain a family connection of 144 years, including all three being Master.

Williams, who left the army on pension in 1867 after 24 years of service, had a colourful military career which saw him involved in many historical events.

He served in Ireland during the potato famine riots, was two years in the Crimea, seeing action at Alma, Inkerman, Sebastopol and Balaclava. He later went to India where he was involved in the Indian Mutiny.

On the long sea journey to India he had made a study of the Hindustani language from books he had purchased, and on arrival was appointed as quartermaster as a result.

When he was discharged, a silver goblet was presented to him by the non-commissioned officers of his regiment. The goblet inscription was later updated by his sons, who added a list of his Masonic achievements.

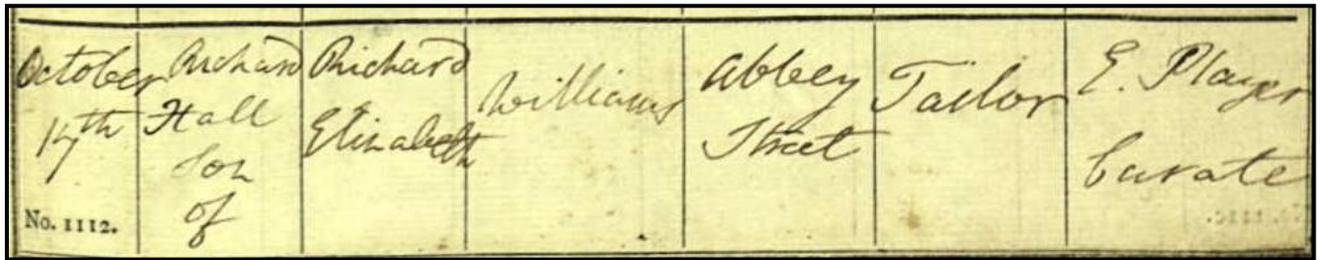
Sergeant-Major Williams wanted to be discharged in India as he wished to stay in that country, but this request was refused. However, his colonel, the Duke of Cambridge, recommended him to the Earl of Ellesmere for the job of instructor to the Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeoman Cavalry, which he commenced, taking up residence in Worsley in October 1867.

In doing so he took over from another army veteran, Sergeant-Major Will Adams, who had fought at the Battle of Waterloo.

Then Williams was offered another job in addition to instructor - that of Worsley postmaster, a role he was to undertake for 36 years, eventually handing over to his youngest son, George.

Retirement was not for Richard Williams, who initiated his youngest son George in December 1903, conducted his ceremony of passing in January 1904 and raised him to a Master Mason at the Installation meeting the following month.

[mqmagazine.co.uk - issue 8 January 2004]



Richard Hall Williams was baptised at St. James, Bath, on 17 October **1819**, the son of Richard Williams, a Tailor of Abbey Street, and Elizabeth.

1871 census: Post Office, Worsley.

Richard H. Williams	Head	M	49	Sgt. Major of Yeomanry (Outpensioner of Chelsea; Post Master)	
Fanny	Wife	M	36		b. Ireland
Laura F.	Daur.		13		b. Ireland
Emma M.	Daur.		8	Scholar	b. East India
Charles H.	Son		6	Scholar	b. East India
Richard J.	Son		2		b. Worsley
Florence E.	Daur.		5 mo.		b. Worsley

1881 census: Post Office, Worsley.

Richard H. Williams	Head	M	60	Sgt. Major of Yeomanry	b. Bath, Somerset
Fanny	Wife	M	46	Postmistress	b. Ireland
Emma	Daur.	Un.	18	Pupil Teacher	b. India
Charles H.	Son	Un.	16	Clerk at Coal Wharfe	b. India
Harriet E.	Daur.		15	Scholar	b. Aldershot
Richard	Son		12	Scholar	b. Worsley
Maude	Daur.		8	Scholar	b. Worsley
George C.	Son		6	Scholar	b. Worsley

1891 census: 61 Barton Road, Worsley.

Richard H. Williams	Head	M	71	Post Master, retired Sgt. Major	
Fanny J.	Wife	M	55	Telegraphist	
Charles H.	Son	S	26	Clerk	
Harriet E.	Daur.	S	24	School-mistress	
Maude E.	Daur.	S	18	Assistant telegraphist	
George C.	Son		16	Railway Clerk	
Samuel Jackson	Boarder		15	Telegraph messenger	b. Winton

1901 census: Post Office, Worsley.

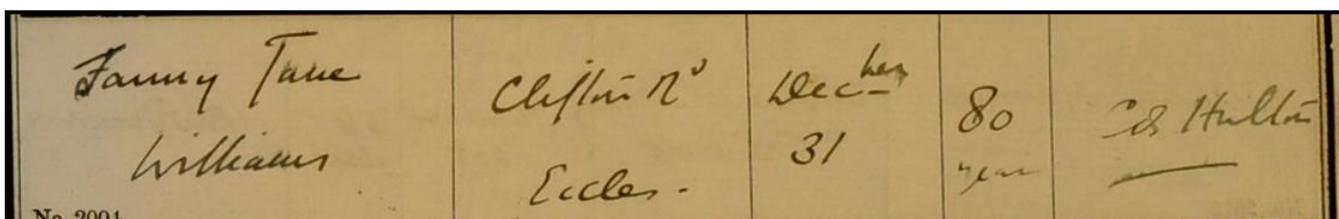
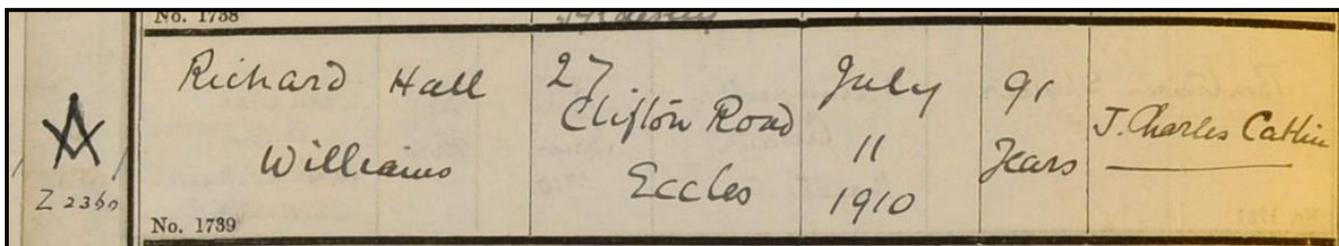
Richard Hall Williams	Head	M	81	Postmaster	
Fanny Jane Williams	Wife	M	67		
Charles Henry	Son	S	36	Commercial Clerk	
Florence Mabel	Daur.	S	31		
Maud Eveline	Daur.	S	27	Telegraphist	
George Clement	Son	S	26	Railway Clerk	
Harriet Edith Taylor	Daur.	M	35		
Richard. Chas. Taylor	G'son		5		

On Monday 13 August **1906**, the *Portsmouth Evening News* reported that Sergeant-Major Richard Hall Williams was "going to retire from the postmastership of Worsley, which he has held for several decades. He is 85 years of age, and probably the oldest Post Office official in Lancashire. Mr. Williams served throughout the Crimean campaign, and was in the famous Light Brigade".

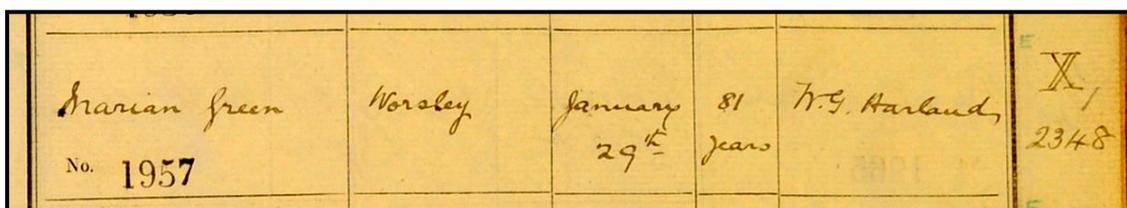
1911 census: 27 Clifton Road, Eccles.

Fanny Jane Williams	Head	W	78	(9 children born, 7 still alive)
Charles Henry	Son	S	46	Wages Clerk, Coal depot.
Maud Evelyn	Daur.	S	38	
George Clement	Son	S	36	Railway Clerk

The following two entries are taken from the Burial Records of St. Mark's Church, Worsley.



The names of 3 of his children also appear in the Registers. The identity of Marian Greene, buried 29 January 1890, aged 81, remains a mystery. Furthermore, why is her grave reference different? Is this a different lady?



WILLIAMS Richard Hall of 27 Clifton-road Eccles Lancashire died 7 July 1910 Probate **London** 4 August to John Heywood Washington Farran art master and Fred Taylor schoolmaster. Effects £445 14s. 10d.

SERGEANT-MAJOR RICHARD HALL WILLIAMS - R.I.P.

From the Eccles and Patricroft Journal: 15 July 1910

*The church yard at Worsley, one of the few villages in this part of Lancashire which has the distinction of occasional Royal visits and military displays, was a fitting scene for the final chapter in the history of so distinguished a servant of King and country as the late **Sgt-Major Richard Hall Williams**. He was laid to rest there on Monday afternoon in his coffin wrapped in the Union Jack in the presence of a large number of people who had been proud of his friendship, and with tokens on every side of the respect in which he was held in the community. One of his comrades-in-arms, in Balaclava's famous charge, in the person of Capt. Gribben, late of the 14th Hussars, represented deceased's old regiment, the 17th Lancers - known as the 'death or glory boys,' and he and another Crimean veteran in the person of ex-Staff-Sergeant Colley, of Peel Green, gave a distinction to the assembled mourners which is probably unique even for Worsley.*



A much fuller account of the funeral procession and interment appeared in another newspaper, though no name appears with the article, nor is there a date given. The article reads:

NOTABLE GATHERING AT WORSLEY

*The interment took place in Worsley Churchyard on Monday afternoon of the late **Sergt.-Major Richard Hall Williams**, the Crimean veteran, and ex-postmaster of Worsley, whose death occurred at Eccles on Thursday last week. Deceased was a prominent Freemason, and members of the craft were present in large numbers to witness the closing chapter in an exceptional career. The funeral was of a private character, and arrangements were carried out by*

Messrs, Coop and Son, who had embalmed the body, but in consideration of the deceased's long and meritorious military services the Army Authorities permitted the use of a gun carriage in place of a hearse, and on this the remains were conveyed from his house in Clifton Road, Eccles, to Worsley Church, by four horses accompanied by three artillery men from Hulme. The procession of gun carriage and some half a dozen mourning coaches containing the relatives was watched by crowds of people along the route, via Monton Road, Parrin Lane, and Worsley Road, and many drew their blinds as a mark of respect to the deceased veteran. At Worsley Court House the Freemasons headed the cortege, and were followed by the gun carriage, and the mourners as follows: [Dozens of names of mourners were listed at this point, but it can be stated that they fell into specific groups - family members, Freemasons, a number of personal friends, veterans of the Crimean campaign and other conflicts - Ed.] The Rev. the Marquess of Normanby would have taken the funeral service but for other engagements, and in his absence the Rev. J. C. Catlin, curate, officiated. There was no music, but the coffin was carried into the chancel covered with a Union Jack, and a number of beautiful wreaths were lowered with the remains into the grave. The many beautiful floral tributes placed in and on the grave included wreaths from his widow, Lord and Lady Ellesmere (whose tribute bore a card inscribed "In grateful remembrance"), Sir George and Lady Beatrice Kemp, the Marquess of Normanby, the Victoria Chapter ("With kindest memories from all the members"), the 17th Lancers (Capt. Paul Philimore), Military Depot, Woolwich (deceased's old regiment), Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry, Worsley Lodge Freemasons, to whose wreath was attached the following lines:- "We hope, and be our hope not in vain, That though we part we meet again. A brief farewell, then meet again for ever". Edna, Charlie, Alice and Will, Sergt.-Major and Mrs. Gray and family, Mr. and Mrs. W. B. Upjohn, members Worsley Reading Room, Eveline, Laura, Emma, Ed, Edith and his namesake Dick, Mr. and Mrs. J. Berry, and Worsley postmen, Mr. T. H. Roberts (editor "Illustrated Bits"). As the coffin was being borne into the church, one of the ladies from Worsley Hall brought another wreath of flowers, which was placed upon the coffin of the deceased.