

19 William Gradwell, Mayor of Barrow d 6 Sept 1882



Painting of Gradwell by P. McMillan courtesy of Barrow BC

Where is the grave?

Due west of the North Chapel, next to the western perimeter path, and near Lesh and Ashburner graves.

Gradwell was a major influence on the development of Barrow, and responsible for a great deal of building in Furness. Bricks bearing his name can still be found, some of them on Askam beach. The *Barrow News Saturday 9 September 1882* lined its columns with thick black ink to denote his death while in office as Mayor of Barrow:

DEATH OF THE MAYOR OF BARROW

While for some days past the death of Alderman Gradwell, Mayor of this town, was expected, when the news reached Barrow on Wednesday morning that he had expired at half-past five, a feeling of the deepest regret and of the most heartfelt sympathy was present within the hearts of all who had known him throughout his life, as well as among those by whom his name and his actions were known by repute. Barrow has lost in Mr. Gradwell one of its best friends, and one of its most enterprising citizens.

He was born at the small village of Lowick, near Ulverston, on the 30th August 1820, and served his apprenticeship as a carpenter and wheelwright at Oxen Park. It was not until 1845, that the late Mayor came into this district. He then commenced business at Roose in the same house he occupied to the time of his death, a joiner's shop and other buildings being attached. Before the commencement of the Furness Railway, Mr. Gradwell worked at several farm houses and other places in the district: having at the time but two men and two apprentices in his employ. After the commencement of the railway, Mr. Gradwell erected the first wooden pier in the harbour for the shipment of iron ore. He obtained timber from Fleetwood, besides buying up cargoes of foreign timber with which he supplied builders in the district. From this small beginning he went on rapidly increasing his business and obtaining timber from Norway, Canada and the Baltic. In 1855 Mr. Gradwell transferred the sphere of his operations to Hindpool-road, Barrow, in what are now known as the Hindpool Saw Mills, but previous to this his chief depot for timber was on the pier opposite the old railway station where he kept ten pair of hand sawyers at work. He also practised brick-making at his new establishment, and the Hindpool-road works are now one of the largest contracting establishments in the north of Lancashire. About 1867, on account of the rapid growth of the town and the necessary increase of his business, Mr. Gradwell commenced large brick works between Dalton-road and the loop line, now the main line of the Furness Railway. The Dock Warehouses, the whole of Ramsden Square, the Duke of Edinburgh Hotel, and other important buildings in Barrow were erected by him. Mr. Gradwell's business prospered in his hands, and it can be said of him, as of many others, that whenever he succeeded in a work which he undertook, he made use of his profits for a further development of his trade, and a further extension of his operations. He was most enterprising in all his business, and even in times when trade was dull and property bad to realise, he was sufficiently far-seeing to speculate on the future in the erection of cottages or other buildings. By far the largest share of house property in Barrow was built by Mr. Gradwell, and he showed a pluck and courage in this direction at a time when others were reticent about making further extensions in house property. We do not think it too much to say that Mr. Gradwell was the owner of a larger extent of cottage property in this town than any other private individual. The great cry in Barrow for years past has been the insufficiency of house accommodation in the place. No one did more to satisfy that want than our late Mayor, and in this respect, as in many others, he proved himself to be a public benefactor. He was the very soul of geniality, and never gave evidence of forgetting

the class of persons from whose ranks he sprung. He was easy to approach, and ready at all times to extend a helping hand to those who needed his aid. He was liberal indeed to a fault, and always gave cheerfully of his means to all objects deserving of charity. In fact,

‘.... He bore without abuse
The grand old name of gentleman’¹

Mr. Gradwell was married twice, his first wife being Miss Hannah Simpson, of Peartree, Kirkby, and seven of the children of this marriage are living, the elder sons, Captain Gradwell and Mr. E. Gradwell, having taken an interest in their father’s business. His first wife was buried at Dalton, and his second wife, Miss Agnes Case, of Rampside, by whom he had four children, is buried at Rampside. When the town of Barrow was incorporated in 1867, Mr. Gradwell was nominated to the position of councillor by the Duke of Devonshire, by reason of the important position he occupied in connection with the town and its trade. It is needless to say that each succeeding term Mr. Gradwell was re-elected with little, if any, opposition. When it was found necessary in 1875 to extend the boundaries of the borough, to increase the numbers of councillors and aldermen, and to divide the town into eight wards, Mr. Gradwell was elected, as it was but right and proper he should be, along with Messrs. Townson, Park, and Fell, to the aldermanic bench. A very strong and almost unanimous opinion was expressed last November, not only by the members of the Council, but by the public outside, that Mr. Gradwell should be Mayor for the ensuing year, and having consented to accept the post, he was elected accordingly, much to the gratification of his numerous friends, who saw in his elevation to this dignified post, some reward for the great public services he had rendered to the town. It is well known how popular Mr. Gradwell was as Mayor of the borough. This was more than ever shown when the announcement was made a few weeks ago that he had been taken seriously ill at Shap Wells, the place which he visited at intervals for many years, when he felt it necessary to recruit his health, or to leave business engagements for rest and quiet, away from the noise and bustle of commercial life. The greatest possible sympathy has been shown to the family of our deceased Mayor, and ever since the announcement of his death flags have been hoisted half-mast high on our principal buildings, at tradesmen’s shops, and on shipping in the docks. The public bodies in the town have as far as possible suspended the transaction of business, and many tradesmen have had their blinds down at their establishments as a mark of respect to his memory.

The funeral is fixed to take place from Roose, today, at three o’clock, and it is anticipated a large number of mourners will follow the remains of the deceased to his final resting place at Dalton. The body was brought home of Thursday. The following circular has been issued from the Municipal Offices:

ORDER OF PROCESSION
Twelve Policemen – four abreast
Freemasons
Fire Brigade
Four Policemen
Hearse
Mourners
Aldermen
Councillors
Corporation Officials
Magistrates
Friends
Mr. Gradwell’s Workmen
Six Policemen

Note:- Gentlemen intending to join the procession are requested to be at Roose House at Two o’clock prompt. On arriving at the Cemetery the procession will halt, and the Corporation, Magistrates and Friends will alight and proceed on foot to the chapel. The procession will be marshalled by Mr. H. K. Baynes.

The *Barrow News Tuesday* 12 September 1882 gave an account of the funeral, together with a long list of mourners. In another column, it records a meeting of the Council to elect a new Mayor, Mr. Edward Wadham, for the remainder of the term.

<http://www.geni.com/people/William-Gradwell/6000000025605971489> - this website gives his birthdate as 6 September 1820, and death as June 29, 1882 in Westmorland, and gives a list of his offspring.

¹ Tennyson *In Memoriam*