

## A curious commemoration

Bob Hayes

During the spring and summer of 1878 East Lancashire was the scene of a major and protracted industrial dispute brought about by cotton masters imposing a ten per cent pay cut upon their workers. Although a largely peaceful – if bitter – dispute, major rioting broke out in Blackburn. Huge crowds assembled in the town and mills involved in the dispute, the police and factory masters' homes were all targets of their anger. However, the most concerted violence was directed at the home of the factory masters' chief negotiator, Colonel Robert Raynsford Jackson. A large crowd besieged Clayton Grange, at Salesbury, domestic staff were roughly handled, property was looted and the house burnt to the ground. The seriousness with which the authorities viewed this was evidenced by the prompt trial of the alleged ringleaders – presided over by the Lord Chief Justice – at Lancaster Castle.

Sometime after the riots Baxendales – a Blackburn firm – produced several items of commemorative pottery. Some have survived and a plate, mug and teapot are in the collection of the Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery. The items are of good quality, suggesting the price would be beyond the reach of those who participated in the riots and who might have wanted a 'souvenir'. The Blackburn Weavers' Association denounced the riots and claimed they were the work of 'outsiders'. Taking such a stance it seems unlikely their members would have bought these items. Although the cotton operatives were eventually forced to accept the pay reduction and return to work, the pottery can hardly be viewed as a commemoration of the employers' victory. Why then – and for whom – was this pottery produced? This remains a mystery. If you can shed any light upon this mystery please contact the Editor at [editor@workershistory.org](mailto:editor@workershistory.org).

I am grateful to Nick Harling of Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery for background information and assistance in photographing the pottery. The pottery can be seen at Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery, Museum Street, Blackburn BB1 7AJ, telephone 01254 667130. Opening hours: Tuesday–Saturday, 10am–4.45pm.



Commemorative mug. Police attempt to hold back rioters. Note the prominent role of women and that rioters appear to be dressed in their 'Sunday best'!  
(© Digital photo: Bob Hayes, courtesy Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery.)



Commemorative mug. On the opposite side police are entirely absent and Clayton Grange – Robert Raynsford Jackson's house – is ablaze.  
(© Digital photo: Bob Hayes, courtesy Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery.)



Commemorative teapot. Police guard the burnt out shell of Clayton Grange.  
(© Digital photo: Bob Hayes, courtesy Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery.)



Commemorative teapot. On the opposite side Robert Raynsford Jackson – the detested chairman of the employers' association. He was a colonel in the 5th Lancashire Volunteer Artillery. (© Digital photo: Bob Hayes, courtesy Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery.)