

The Bradshaw Legacy - George and Christopher Bradshaw

By John Rabbitt

1 Introduction

Of all the historical articles about Ellesmere Park circulated to the Residents' Association as part of the [Back in Time](#) series ^[1], none attracted more interest than [The Bradshaw Legacy](#) ^[2]. The fact that Christopher Bradshaw, one of the most well-known Victorian publishers lived in Ellesmere Park and that his life-long friend was Sir Henry Irving, the greatest Victorian actor, is amazing. I have felt for some time it was appropriate to dig a bit deeper to find what else I could uncover about this relationship. I obtained my initial information about Christopher Bradshaw from an unpublished document by a previous resident of Ellesmere Park, Kevin Conroy.

Further research has uncovered another important resident of Salford who was not only related to Christopher Bradshaw but also worked closely with Sir Henry Irving, the celebrated architect Alfred Darbyshire. It is astonishing that the lives of these three important Victorian gentlemen Christopher Bradshaw, Alfred Darbyshire and Sir Henry Irving would be linked with Salford and Eccles for the latter half of the 19th century. In addition to these gentlemen, I have also found a link to another Manchester family who had an even greater impact on the railways in the UK and throughout the world, that of Thomas Edmondson, the inventor of the railway ticket.

1.1 Acknowledgements

I would like to express my thanks at the start of this document so the reader can appreciate the help I have been given in preparing this script. Without the kind and generous help I have received from many people the information available to me would have been very scant.

In my original "Back in Time" document about Christopher Bradshaw I referred to the collection of books on the theatre Christopher donated to the Rylands Library. After we returned to a semblance of normality after the Covid-19 pandemic I made contact with the Rylands Library to see if the collection of books and documents on the theatre donated by Christopher Bradshaw did exist at the Rylands Library. I would like to acknowledge the extensive help and encouragement from Julie Ramwell, the Curator of Documents at The Rylands Library, and all the library staff who helped to locate and catalogue the Bradshaw Collection.

While investigating the life and work of Sir Henry Irving I found a request in Newsletter 81 of the [Irving Society](#) ^[3]. The request enquired if anyone had information regarding the young, impoverished actor, Henry Irving, and his association with Manchester. This led me to contact Ian Nickson from the University of Birmingham who has recently attained a PhD researching "Manchester – Shakespeare's Victorian Powerhouse". Our exchange of information has been mutually beneficial. Most importantly, it was Ian who gave me detailed information regarding the collaboration between Alfred Darbyshire and Sir Henry Irving which resulted in the Irving-Darbyshire safety plan for theatre design.

As I began to research the family of Alfred Darbyshire I made contact with Clare Olver from Stretton in Cheshire. Clare has painstakingly put together detailed family trees of the Darbyshire and Bradshaw families. Clare very kindly gave me full access to these family trees; for me this was a Howard Carter moment, the treasures therein were invaluable. I have since expanded these family trees to include other links to important families in Victorian Manchester.

Thank you to all of the above, and your colleagues, for the help given to me over the last few months.

The Bradshaw Family

1.2 George Bradshaw

Christopher Bradshaw's father George, the originator of the famous railway guides, was born in 1800 in Salford at New Windsor, at the western end of The Crescent, now the location of Salford Crescent Station. George Bradshaw's baptismal record [Certificates](#) #1 ⁽⁴⁾ shows the date of his Baptism, *1 June 1802*, his date of birth *29th July 1800*, his father and mother's names as *Thomas Bradshaw* and *Mary*, their abode *New Windsor* and profession *Weaver*. When the Bolton and Bury canal was constructed between 1791 and 1808 a bridge was built to carry the main highway between Manchester and Liverpool over the canal. The area previously called New Windsor then became known as 'Windsor Bridge'. It was in the 1830s that a railway to Bolton was built alongside the canal and the bridge was enlarged to traverse both the canal and the new railway track. It was not until 2000 that a station was built at Windsor Bridge.

George went to a school in Overton Lancashire run by a Mr. Scott. George was not an academic, leaving school at fourteen years of age he was an apprentice to a Mr. Beal, an engraver of some repute based in Market Street, Manchester. In 1820 George went to Belfast with his parents to establish himself as an engraver and printer, it was not a particularly successful enterprise so they soon returned to settle in Manchester.

George was very skilled at engraving maps and started trading in Cope's Court, Manchester in 1830. One of his first maps George produced was of Lancashire, his home county.

In 1831 George employed a young man, William Thomas Blacklock (1817-1870), as an apprentice. He was so impressed with Blacklock he was made a partner in 1838, the company Messrs Bradshaw and Blacklock was then established. In 1839 the company moved to 27 Brown Street in Manchester; later the company offices were located in Ann's Square, Manchester.

George was particularly interested in maps of canal networks, the main industrial highways in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Following the success of the Bridgewater Canal many canals were constructed to connect the main industrial regions in the country. Manchester and the adjacent cotton towns had an extensive network of canals so there were plenty of business opportunities to provide maps for the canal haulage industry covering Lancashire and the surrounding counties. The maps of the canal and river systems were called "Bradshaw's maps of Inland Navigation – in three parts". The first part was dedicated to Thomas Telford, an astute marketing ploy on the part of George Bradshaw.

From the 1840s railways began to overtake the canals for the movement of goods and also the opportunity to provide cheap and fast transport for people. George Bradshaw was well placed to begin producing railway maps and train timetables. These were very popular given the large number of railway companies running a multitude of networks to every corner of the country. A Bradshaw timetable guide was the 'must have' booklet if you were to travel by train. At its peak, Bradshaw train timetables were published weekly. Alongside the publishing of timetables were the Bradshaw guides which gave details of the towns and villages the railways passed through. These were very successful and ensured the success of the Bradshaw & Blacklock publishing company. The Bradshaw family had a strong and lasting working association with Bradshaw & Blacklock Co Ltd, this association continued until Christopher Bradshaw's death in 1928.

George Bradshaw married Martha Darbyshire on 16th May 1835 in Nantwich. Martha came from the village of Stretton, south of Warrington in Lancashire. George and Martha had six children, two sons and four daughters, as shown in [Bradshaw family tree](#) ⁽⁵⁾.

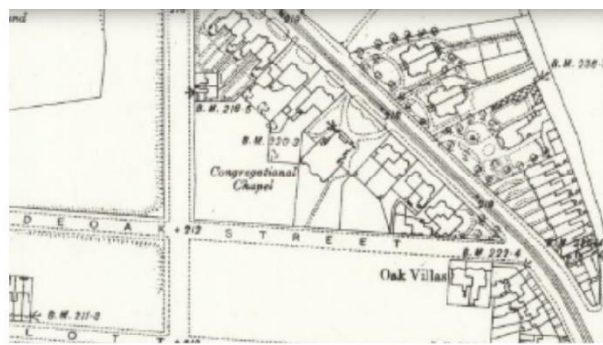
The census record of 1851, [Census Records](#) #1 ⁽⁶⁾ shows the Bradshaw family living at 6 Fern Acre Terrace, Cheetham Hill Road, Crumpsall, Manchester. George is listed with his two daughters, Hannah and Phoebe together with three house servants and a visitor, Mary Hancroft, who is married and listed as a house keeper. Three members of the family appear to be missing from this record, George's wife Martha and the two sons, Christopher and William, Lucy was yet to be born. On census day, Sunday 30th March in 1851 Martha was visiting her brother, Philip Darbyshire, at Stretton Mount farm with 5 year old William, [Census Records](#) #2 ⁽⁶⁾. It is highly likely that Christopher Bradshaw was resident at the Ackworth Quaker boarding school in Pontefract on the day of the census.

The fact that a member of the Bradshaw family was visiting a relation on census day was not unusual. It is not uncommon to find a Bradshaw visiting a relative of Martha Darbyshire's family on a census day. For example, on census day 2nd April 1871, Lucy Bradshaw, with her sister Mary, were visiting their cousin, James Darbyshire at his farm at Morphany Hall Farm. [Census Records](#) #3 ⁽⁶⁾. This was just four weeks before Lucy died on 28th April 1871. On the same census day in 1871 Christopher Bradshaw was visiting his cousin, William Darbyshire at Morris Brook Farm, [Census Records](#) #4 ⁽⁶⁾.

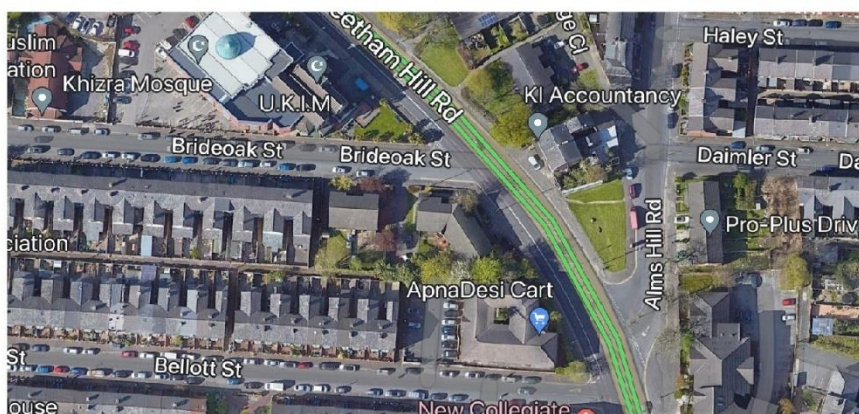
The houses at Fern Acre Terrace unfortunately no longer exist although the road layout at this part of Cheetham Hill Road has not changed as shown in Figure 1.



Fern Acre Terrace 1845



Fern Acre Terrace 1888



Site of Fern Acre Terrace 2022

Figure 1 – Fern Acre Terrace, Cheetham Hill Road

George Bradshaw tragically died of cholera while on a visit to Oslo on the 6th September 1853. Some accounts state his body was returned to England and buried in the Quaker cemetery at the junction of Jackson's Row and Deansgate in Manchester and later reburied in the Quaker cemetery at Ashton-upon-Mersey in Sale, Gt. Manchester. The consensus view is that George's body could not be repatriated to England and that he is interred in the Gamlebyen cemetery in Oslo.

The only painting that exists of [George Bradshaw](#) was bequeathed to the National Portrait Gallery by his son, Christopher Bradshaw, when he died in 1928.

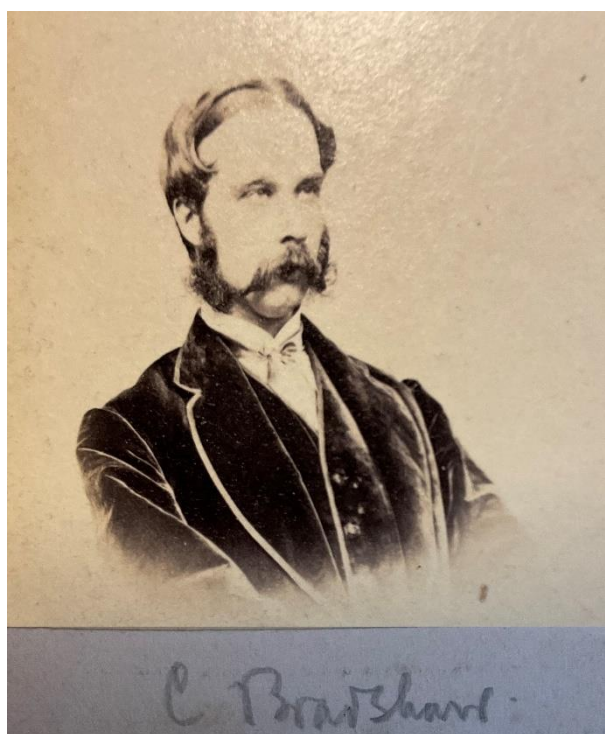
By 1861 Martha had moved from Fern Acre Terrace to a house on Eccles New Road which heralded the link of the Bradshaw family with Eccles and Ellesmere Park, [Census Records](#) #5 ⁽⁶⁾. The census record shows Martha, now a widow, living with her children: Christopher, Hannah, Mary, Phoebe and Lucy on Eccles New Road. There are two visitors, Hannah Payne, Martha's married sister, and Grace Darbyshire, Martha's widowed sister-in-law. There is also a nurse maid, house maid and a cook resident at the property. Martha's son William Bradshaw is not listed.

It transpires that, apart from Phoebe, all of George Bradshaw's children lived in or near Ellesmere Park at some time in their lives.

1.3 Christopher Bradshaw

Christopher Bradshaw, the first child of George and Martha Bradshaw, was born on the 22nd February 1841 at Crumpsall, [Certificates](#) #2 ⁽⁴⁾. Unlike today, there was no hospital at Crumpsall so it is more than likely that Christopher was born at the family home, 6 Fern Acre Terrace, Cheetham Hill. Christopher's birth certificate of 1841 states the place of birth as *Crumpsall* as well as his father's occupation, *Engraver*.

According to Christopher's obituary, [Appendix 1](#), he went to the Ackworth Quaker School in Pontefract and completed his education at Lindlow Grove School, Alderley. After leaving school Christopher joined his late father's publishing business, Messrs. Bradshaw and Blacklock. Christopher was only 12 years old when his father died so it was some time after George Bradshaw's death that Christopher joined the company.



We do have a photograph of Christopher Bradshaw which is part of the Alfred Darbyshire Collection at the Rylands Library. Unfortunately the photograph is not dated but it is likely to be circa 1880-90.

Christopher married Annie Elizabeth Bradley on the 11th June 1873 in Alderley Cheshire. The marriage certificate, shows two of the witnesses as William Bradshaw, his brother and James Darbyshire, his cousin and future brother-in-law, [Certificates](#) #3 ⁽⁴⁾.

Annie was from Nether Alderley and her father was a surgeon. She was eight years older than Christopher, this is unusual for spouses in the Victorian era; sadly Christopher and Annie had no children.

Figure 2 - Christopher Bradshaw
From the Darbyshire Collection
courtesy of the Rylands library

According to the [Slater's Directory of Manchester and Salford of 1889](#) ⁽⁷⁾ there is a record of Christopher Bradshaw living at East Dene on Westminster Road in Ellesmere Park, Eccles. This house has survived the wholesale demolition of many Victorian houses in the 1960s and 70s. It would appear that Christopher did not live at East Dene for long. It is quite possible that he actually rented this house rather than owning it, renting was common in Ellesmere Park at that time. Despite the grandeur of this 'villa', by 1891 he moved to a less splendid residence, The Nook, a large semi-detached house on Victoria Road in Ellesmere Park which he owned, quite possibly from new.



Figure 3 – East Dene
Westminster Road, Ellesmere Park

The 1891 census shows Christopher and Annie living at The Nook in Victoria Road, Ellesmere Park [Census Records](#) #6 ⁽⁶⁾. This was a large semi-detached house on the corner of Victoria Road and Westminster Road. This site was featured in one of the original 'Back in Time' documents circulated to the Residents' Association in 2020, [33–Granville 10 Victoria Road](#) ⁽⁸⁾.



Figure 4 – Victoria Road, Ellesmere Park

When these houses were built no. 10 and 12 were called Elmhurst and The Nook respectively. The Nook was occupied by Christopher and Annie until they both died in April 1928. In the 1970s number 12, The Nook, was demolished and four new houses were built on half the site. Number 10 had a new gable wall built and was converted to a care home and renamed Granville.

The 1891 census records shows Christopher and Annie and a visitor, Mary E. Wood, with a relationship to Christopher as *Mother-in Law*. On their marriage certificate, Annie's father was named John Bradley so there is a question to be answered with Christopher's mother-in law being Mary Wood, a widow. Census records in 1861 and 1871 for Annie Elizabeth Bradley indicate that she was a music teacher although there is no mention of a Mary Wood in these records, [Census Records](#) #7 & #8 ⁽⁶⁾.

In Christopher Bradshaw's obituary, [Appendix 1](#), he was described as an avid collector of books and furniture. It stated that his library consisted of 6000 books on subjects ranging from Napoleon (1000 volumes) to the history of the theatre 200 titles held within over 350 volumes. The collection of the history of the theatre was donated to the Rylands library at the time of the death of his very good friend, Sir Henry Irving (1838-1905).

It is at this point that the story of Christopher Bradshaw and his friendship with Sir Henry Irving gets interesting. Sir Henry Irving was the most famous of all the Victorian actors. He was the first actor to be knighted for his services to the theatre (1895). On his death in 1905 his ashes were buried in Westminster Abbey, becoming the first person ever to be cremated before interment in the Abbey. There is a statue of Sir Henry Irving in the grounds of the National Portrait Gallery within which there are some 125 portraits of the actor. Amongst his many honorary positions, Sir Henry Irving was also the President of the Eccles Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Society, but more about that later.

In his obituary, [Appendix 1](#), reference is made to the long friendship between Christopher and Sir Henry Irving. It states that they first met at the Manchester Theatre Royal in 1864 [Christopher was 23 and Irving was 26]. The obituary actually states that Irving was earning £3/week at that time. A strange thing to put in someone's obituary unless this low wage was of concern to his wealthy friend and was a well-known fact by his family. Christopher Bradshaw was quite possibly a benefactor to the impoverished, Henry Irving, in his early years as an actor. These references to Sir Henry Irving begin to show the depth of their friendship. The obituary comments that Bradshaw was at all of Irving's first nights in London for over thirty years.

The 196 titles, held with 356 volumes, on the theatre donated by Christopher Bradshaw have been fully catalogued by the Rylands Library. They also have a letter from Bradshaw to Henry Guppy, head librarian of the Rylands Library from 1899 to 1948. In the letter Bradshaw refers to a list of the titles he wishes to donate to the library. It is interesting that the date of this letter, 9th September 1904, and is before Irving's death in October 1905. So it was not the sudden death of Irving that prompted Bradshaw to donate his collection of books on the theatre. However, when Irving died he may well have decided to link his donation with the death of his friend, the famous actor. The library does not have a record of the precise date of the acquisition of the collection. The first reference to the collection in the library archives is in 1909 so the acquisition could have been at any time between 1904 and 1909.

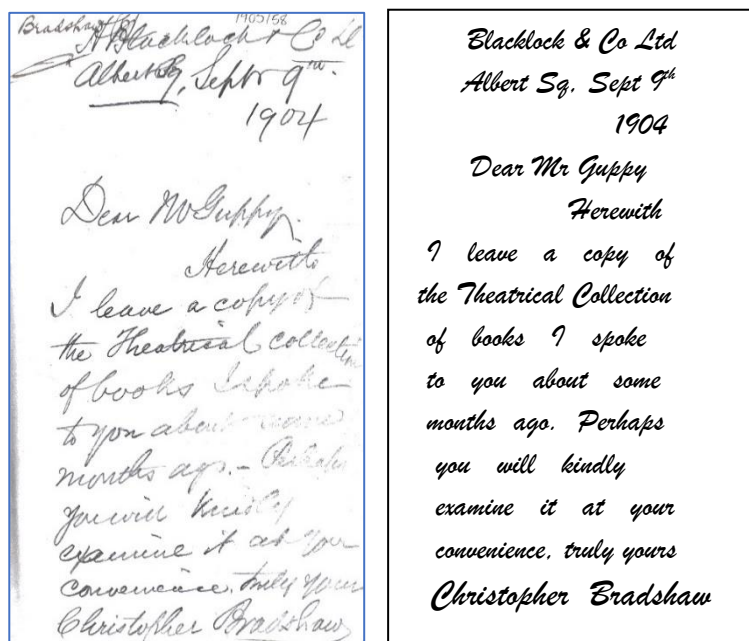


Figure 5 Letter from Christopher Bradshaw to Henry Guppy
Courtesy of the Rylands library

It is also interesting that Christopher Bradshaw wrote the letter from the company office in Albert Square in Manchester. The company name at that time was Blacklock & Co Ltd, not Bradshaw & Blacklock. In the letter, the name 'Bradshaw' in the top left corner appears to be added later.

A random selection of a few books from the Rylands Bradshaw Collection revealed an indication of the sincere friendship between Irving and Bradshaw. There are three volumes of **Henry Irving's Impressions of America** [Rylands Ref. R19006]. In Volume 1 of this set is a handwritten dedication from Henry Irving to Christopher Bradshaw.

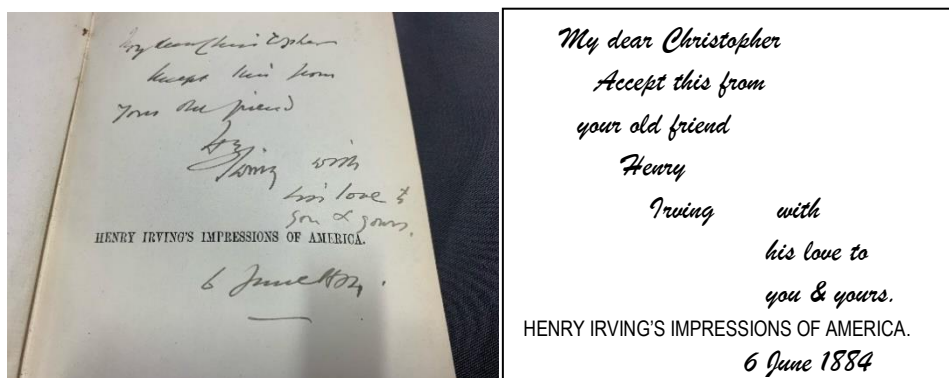


Figure 6 - Dedication from Irving to Bradshaw 1884
Courtesy of the Rylands library

Soon after Christopher Bradshaw's death in 1928 his very good friend, T. W. A. Lingard published **An Appreciation** of Christopher's life, dated 5th May 1928 ([Appendix 2](#)). Thomas William Arthur Lingard was born in Doncaster, 1863 so he was appreciably younger than Christopher. He was a railway clerk and lived in Chorlton on Medlock, Manchester. It is highly likely that Lingard and Bradshaw met through the publishing of the railway timetables and guides. From the gifts Bradshaw gave to Lingard relating to Henry Irving it is likely that Lingard was also a devotee of the theatre. This 'Appreciation' of Bradshaw consists mainly of references to Henry Irving and their friendship. The following quotes from Lingard's eulogy gives an indication of this friendship: "He [Bradshaw] was very closely associated with Irving from a very early period in his career"; "when the actor attained the pinnacle of his fame there was no one for whom he had greater admiration than his friend, Christopher Bradshaw"; "it was he [Bradshaw] and Mrs. O'Callaghan who decided the date of the marriage of her daughter, Florence, with Irving". [It is a well-known fact that Irving did not put his matrimonial duties before his career as an actor.]; "He [Bradshaw] was never more pleased or interested than when discussing the vicissitudes and early struggles of Irving to attain fame".

Lingard listed a number of “Irving relics” Christopher Bradshaw passed to him after Henry Irving’s death. These included autographed letters, an autograph etching of Irving in the character of Charles I, a large photographic portrait of Irving, possibly the last to be taken of the actor by W. Crooke of Edinburgh. A small print of [this photograph](#) ⁽⁹⁾ is in the National Portrait Gallery.

In Christopher Bradshaw’s extensive [Will](#) ⁽¹⁰⁾ there was also a bequest to Lingard: “*I bequeath to T. W. A. Lingard of 25 Harewood Avenue, London NW 1 the massive gold Zodiac ring with inscription given to me by the late Sir Henry Irving*”.

Thomas Lingard died on 16th November 1947 in Putney, leaving an estate of nearly £7000.

The only other item in Bradshaw’s Will of relevance to Sir Henry Irving was a marble bust: “*The marble bust of the late Sir Henry Irving in the library at The Nook aforesaid together with the stand to The National Portrait Gallery and in the event of the same being declined by that Institution then I bequeath the same to Dorothea Irving [née Baird] widow of the late H. B. Irving*.” Henry Brodribb Irving (1870-1919), was eldest son of Henry and Florence Irving. There does not appear to be a marble bust of Irving listed in The National Portrait Gallery catalogue so it must be assumed it went to Dorothea.

As part of the [Henry Irving Foundation Centenary Project](#) ⁽¹¹⁾ over 9300 letters relating to Sir Henry Irving have been catalogued. By searching for ‘Bradshaw’ in this catalogue a number of letters mentioning Bradshaw can be viewed. One of the letters refers to a visit to Christopher Bradshaw in Manchester by Mrs. O’Callaghan and her daughter Florence, Irving’s future wife. Extracts of the text from a few of these letters and the editor’s notes are listed in [Appendix 3](#). From these extracts it does seem highly likely that Christopher Bradshaw did have an influence on Sir Henry Irving’s financial affairs early in the actor’s career.

The Eccles Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Society (EADOS) was formed in 1895. Unfortunately there is not a comprehensive archive of minutes of meetings and accounts for the Society. Nevertheless, in 1947 Mr. Frederick Hartley, an original member of the Society, wrote a detailed account of the early days of EADOS and published a series of 41 articles in the [Eccles and Patricroft Journal \(EPJ\) in 1947](#) ⁽¹²⁾. In the first article published on 2nd May 1947 Hartley describes how the Society was formed and details of the first meeting held at the Liberal Club in Eccles on 26th March 1895. Given that Christopher Bradshaw was passionate about the theatre it is not surprising to see his name listed as an original member of EADOS. In this article the paragraph relating to the **Rules** of the Society Hartley states:

Sir Henry Irving was invited to and accepted the presidency of the Society which he retained until his death.

I think there can be absolutely no doubt that given the long friendship, some 30 years, Christopher Bradshaw had with Sir Henry Irving it was through Christopher that Henry Irving was invited to be first president of the Eccles Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Society.

In Hartley’s second article, EPJ 9th May 1947, he describes the first performance by EADOS, “Our Boys” by H. J. Byron, performed on December 20th 1895. In his description of the performance Hartley wrote:

*“By the way, the performance of “Our Boys” was prefaced by the reading of a message from the president, Sir Henry Irving, which I quote: “**Greetings to all friends**”. This cable was sent by Sir Henry Irving from New York where he was on tour. The society must have been flattered by and proud of this graceful and characteristic act of their distinguished and noble president.”*

In many respects for Sir Henry Irving, accepting the presidency of the Eccles Amateur Dramatic and Operatic Society was ‘pay back time’ to Christopher Bradshaw for the help he had received at the start of his acting career.

Christopher Bradshaw died on 27th April 1928 at The Nook in Ellesmere Park, just 13 days after his wife Annie died. Christopher left a detailed and comprehensive [Will](#) covering some 10 typed written pages. Apart from the bequests already mentioned in connection with Sir Henry Irving and the National Portrait Gallery there are countless bequests to relations. Most of the bequests are to the wider Darbyshire family although there are some to his late wife's Bradley family. The details of Christopher's and Annie's probate entries are shown in [Probate Records](#) ⁽¹³⁾ #1 & #2 respectively. Christopher Bradshaw's estate was valued at £47,539 14s 1d.

Christopher and Annie were buried at the Quaker Cemetery in Ashton-upon-Mersey in Sale, Gt Manchester.



Figure 7- Christopher and Annie's burial plaques at the Quaker Cemetery in Ashton-upon-Mersey

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