

# **The SCOWCROFT DIARIES**

**Lancashire & Emigration Destinations**

**19<sup>th</sup> Century**

**Indexed by Arthur W. Critchley**

**Compiled and Edited by Bryan D. Cook**

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# Introduction

In the early 1990's, Arthur W. Critchley set out to transcribe and compile **Amalgamated Indexes** from several Diaries in the possession of himself and his Scowcroft relatives. The Diaries record life in east-central Lancashire throughout the 19th century from 1772 to 1910. The main region of geographic coverage is triangulated by Bury/Bolton, Preston and Burnley.



*Samuel Scowcroft (1838-1914) by Frederick Balshaw (1860-1936), courtesy of A.W. Critchley.*

Samuel Scowcroft (1838–1914) kept his detailed diary for almost 50 years from February 14, 1861 to June 28, 1910. He was a well-known figure around the districts of Harwood and Bradshaw. Being from a large, well-known local family, a local grocer, the Overseer for Harwood (from March 24 1882) and generally involved in local politics and the running of the district, he was ideally placed to know a lot of people and a lot of local facts which otherwise might not now be known.

His entries make reference to the evolution of the local cotton industry and farming with the repeals of laws protecting trade; the prices of corn and cotton goods; Port Sunlight; farm sales land transfers and auctions; strikes, workers' rights and shiftwork; industrial accidents and

associated amputations and deaths; canal and railway construction and operation; the working horse and the early days of the automobile and the airplane; births, marriages and deaths detailed more fulsomely than the standard BMD records; floods, snowstorms, earthquakes and comets; wars in Europe, South Africa, America, Russia and Japan; Fenians; murder, insanity and suicides by rope and knife; penal transportation, incarceration and hanging; the evolution of local governments, elections and royalty; the social importance of the Workhouse and Asylum; social events, flower shows, concerts and entertainment; hunting birds including seagulls; Temperance; church building, preachers, organs and offertories; local street lighting, sewers, housing construction and demolition; Lord Stanley and parliamentary representation; emigration and surprisingly extensive tourism particularly to Scotland, Ireland and internationally.

While the primary importance of the Diaries for genealogists is to help them find ancestors from over a thousand listed persons, searches by place, event, or topic will also yield valuable fruit to hang on many a family tree.

**1.1** The “**Black Diary**” covers the years 1772-1884, and was copied in 1899 by Edwin Scowcroft (1843–1931) from “a book kept by James Lee, commonly called ‘Jim O’Charles’, and afterwards by his brother, Thomas Lee, or ‘Tim O’Charles’. After the death of Thomas Lee the book passed into the possession of James Kirkman, commonly called ‘Willoughby’, and then to his son William Kirkman.” James and Thomas Lee lived in Brookfold Lane, Harwood, during the later portion of their lives; Edwin Scowcroft finished this fifty-four page copy on October 29, 1899 at 381 Church Lane, Harwood.

This “Black Diary” was probably given to Samuel Scowcroft by Edwin (or his heirs). They lived within a few doors of each other at 153 and 167 Longsight, Harwood, respectively, in their later years. As frequent companions, they had a common interest in their family ancestry.



*Edwin Scowcroft (1843-1931),  
courtesy of A.W. Critchley.*

The Diary includes another five pages of selections by Edwin in 1909 from a book in the possession of John Horrocks, son of Samuel Horrocks, Near Nab Gate, Harwood.

The Diary closes with a copy made by Edwin in 1904 of an epic letter sent by James Bolton of West Farms, New York, to his brother, Edmund Bolton, Nab Fold Farm, Harwood, on October 29, 1833. It details the challenges faced by an immigrant textile mill and dyeworks owner and is part of the additional material associated with this project (identified as the “**James Bolton Letter from New York 1833**”).\*

**1.2** The “**Samuel Scowcroft Diaries**” are copies of extracts made by Samuel Scowcroft of Harwood (1838–1914) from his own diaries. He made two copies in green ink in maroon, leather-bound, volumes of 172 pages during 1910, covering a period of nearly fifty years from February 11, 1861 to June 28, 1910. Other additions from 1791 to 1880 were included, copied by him from a book in the possession of James Lee (Jim o’Charles), of Brookfold Lane, Harwood. In the original versions, the notes from James Lee occupy the first eleven pages and were copied from a diary kept by James Lee (Jim o’Charles) and continued by his son, Thomas Lee, until the year 1880. That diary passed to James Kirkman (a friend of James Lee) and then to Arthur Kirkman.

\* Visit [www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca) (Research / Scowcroft Diaries) to access the full range of materials.

Arthur Critchley has reconciled minor differences between the volumes in deriving his indexes.

### 1.3 The **Amalgamated Indexes\*** include:

- A **Chronology Index\*** based on the “Samuel Scowcroft Diaries” with extra information from the ‘Black Diary (shown in **bold**);
- A **Surname Index\*** created by rearranging the Chronology alphabetically and bolding only the person names, of which there are 1113. **CAVEAT EMPTOR** Within the listing of a particular name there are often several persons (generational or unrelated) with the same name;
- A **Place Index\*** created by rearranging the Chronology alphabetically and bolding only the place names.

Additional material is included with collection. These include a letter from James Bolton; the Scowcroft Tree Name Index; and a list of books on the local Lancashire history.\*

### 1.4 Methodology

Arthur W. Critchley has standardized and clarified the indexed transcriptions as follows:

*“I have slightly altered the transcription in order to make it more legible. Additions by Samuel, Edwin and myself are italicized in parentheses, thus: (with initials SS, ES or L) reduced ‘aged’ to ‘age’ to improve legibility. All months are spelled with only the first three letters. Monetary amounts have been standardized with ‘/’ separators, a final ‘d’ and with farthings and half-pennies shown as fractions. I have spelled out in full all the abbreviations such as Jno., Wm., Wes., so that there is no misunderstanding of what they mean, and have expanded the initials in peoples’ names only where known. I have also added the approximate year born where possible. The original spelling is left as was, more or less, except that some of the more obvious errors such as in place names have been corrected. I have added my comments (thus, AWC) and have enlarged on some items to make the meanings clear (as I interpret them) as well as tidied up the grammar.”*

### 1.5 Acknowledgements

The **British Isles Family History Society of Greater Ottawa** is honoured to have been entrusted by **Arthur W. Critchley** to enable Internet availability for his scholarly indexing of the Scowcroft Diaries. The faded pages of the originals preserved by himself and his

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relatives are now available to genealogists worldwide, particularly those with ancestral interests in Lancashire of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Many thanks to Anne Moralejo for greatly enhancing the format and search capability for these Indexes. For those using Adobe Acrobat Reader, the standard search function will also help with discovery, particularly of multiple references of place, name or historical event.

Any error during preparation for publication is my (Bryan D.Cook) responsibility.

## 1.6 The Scowcroft Family Tree

**Mr. Critchley** has also compiled over many years an extensive family tree for the **Scowcrofts** of the Bury and Bolton areas of Lancashire. Bolton has about 45% of all Scowcrofts — judging by the entries in Somerset House records — and this tree contains perhaps a half of those! The **Scowcroft** family tree includes the **Critchley** and **Duckworth** trees, and spans 16 generations from about 1565 — some 430 years.

As the Scowcroft Tree was prepared in a more traditional manner without the aid of genealogical software, it has never been published and is unavailable on the Internet. An index to the 165 names in the **Scowcroft Tree** is part of the additional material associated with this project.\*

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## 1.7 Local History Books

In the process of editing the amalgamated indexes, due diligence required a review of whether this work has been previously published. This proved not to be the case, although copies of the diaries are located in the Bury and Bolton Libraries.

An exciting discovery was the paperback book “Samuel Scowcroft, a Bradshaw Man 1838-1914” compiled by Joan Francis (September 30, 2005, 80 pages, UK, ISBN-13: 9781904974260 and ISBN-10: 1904974260) published in the Turton ( Lancashire) Local History Society Series. It is an excellent adjunct to these amalgamated indexes, vividly portraying Samuel Scowcroft’s diaried life with 77 photographs.

\* Visit [www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca) (Research / Scowcroft Diaries) to access the full range of materials.

The Turton Society, established in 1974, has also produced some 36 other books on historical topics in the old Urban District of Turton, which includes the ancient Townships of Bradshaw, Edgworth, Entwistle, Harwood, Longworth, Quarlton and Turton. They are backed up with existing records held by Bolton Local Studies, Lancashire Record Office and others. These books are essential to genealogists wishing to put foliage their trees.

Contrary to popular opinion and internet misinformation, copies of these books, including Joan Francis' "Samuel Scowcroft" are still available at cost (including postage). A full list and contacts and is part of the additional material associated with this project (identified as "**Turton Local History Society Books**").\*

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\* Visit [www.bifhsgo.ca](http://www.bifhsgo.ca) (Research / Scowcroft Diaries) to access the full range of materials.