

The Formative Years of Robert Owen - as told through fictitious dialogue

Alistair had a long-standing interest in Robert Owen. In retirement he worked on a novel, possibly aimed at young people, about his life. Alistair's research was as diligent and extensive as much of his scientific work. Copious files and notes on the places, people and social history of Owen's time filled his office shelves alongside geomorphology.

The chapters are mainly written as imaginary conversations: Who did the young Robert Owen meet and how did those people shape his views and character? Likewise, what did he see around him - landscapes, forms of transport, machinery, social movements – and how did those scenes shape his beliefs and aims?

Alistair's father's family were in the cotton industry in Greater Manchester, which bottomed out in the 1930s. After active service in WW11 his father, Harold, retrained as a teacher. As head of a small primary school he used Owen's philosophy of education.

Thanks to Pete Kelley for choosing an excerpt to record. I apologise that the short audio excerpt is not spoken in a Welsh accent! I didn't want to brave such a feat.

Chapter Headings, March 2007

Act I

- | | | |
|---|---------------------|---|
| 1 | Glendower | Glendower
Father's role
Road repairs
Domestic textiles |
| 2 | Cook | School closure |
| 3 | Nature and religion | Meeting at the bridge
School day |
| 4 | Argument | departure |
| 5 | London | On the road
Arrival
First night |
| 6 | Grantford I | First Morning
Packman |
| 7 | Grantford II | Industrial regulation |

Act II

- 8 Oldknow and Arkwrights
 - Social stratification
- 9 Industrial revolution
 - Branching out
 - Flax credit
- 10 Lit&Phil
 - textiles
 - Fulton
 - Fulton and the Philosopher
- 11 Enlightenment and religion
 - Oldknow the squire
- 12 Argument
 - Recognition
 - First encounter
- 13 Peak District
- 14 Distribution
 - Liverpool

Act III

- 15 Shown mills
 - Rhyming Rabbie
 - Mills
 - Return to glasgow
- 16 Highlanders plight
- 17 Falls of Carron
- 18 Argument
- 19 Canals
 - Crinan
 - Meal
- 20 Buys NL
- 21 Wedding