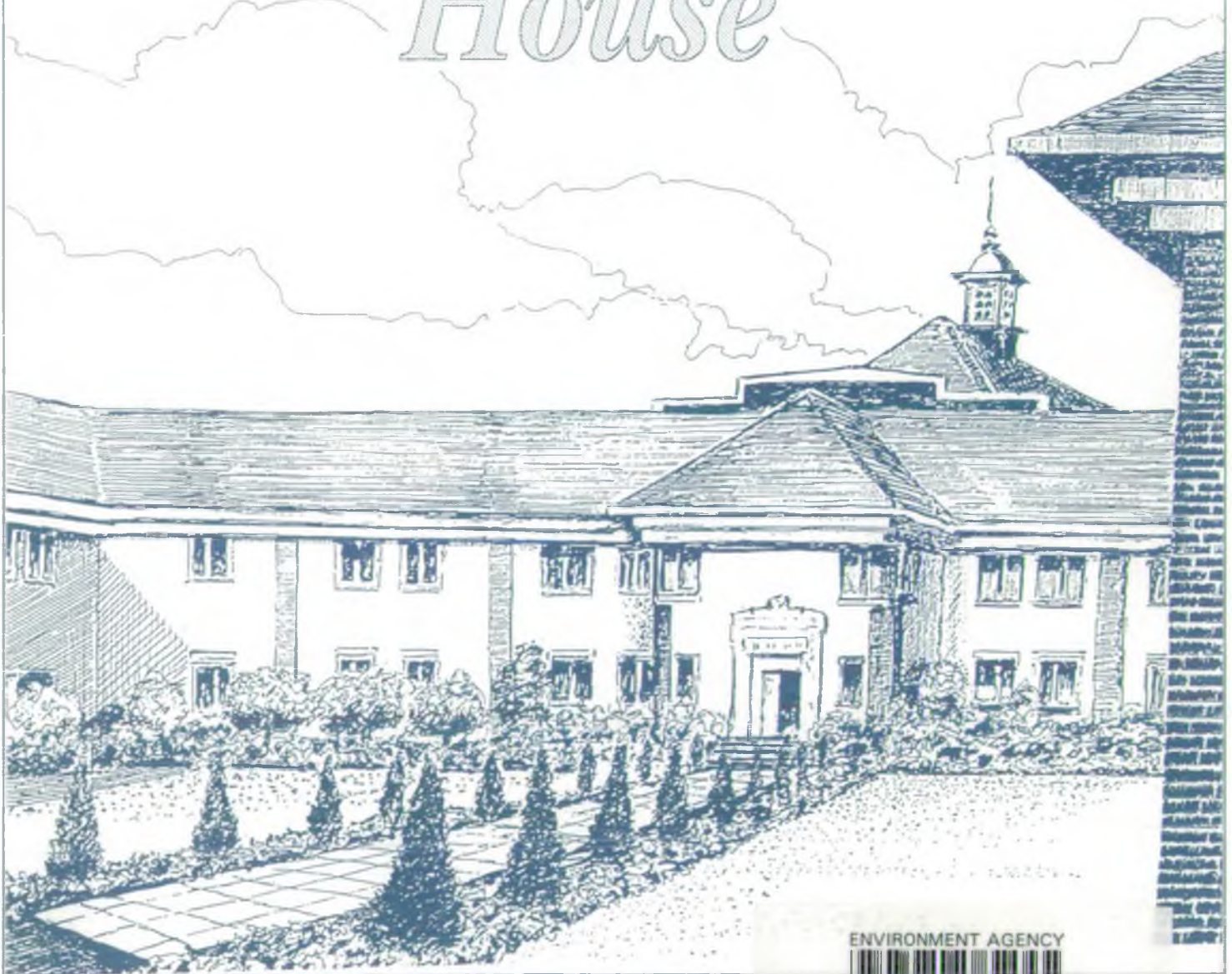


# Richard Fairclough House



ENVIRONMENT AGENCY



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# Introduction

**W**elcome to Richard Fairclough House the new and permanent base of the National Rivers Authority in the North West.

The move from our temporary accommodation at New Town House in the centre of Warrington has been long awaited, but I hope you will agree that the wait has been worthwhile.

Richard Fairclough House is perfect for us not only as a building but also geographically with it being so convenient for the motorway network which gives such easy access to all of our region.

As Richard Fairclough School, the building has long been important to



## *A new home for the National Rivers Authority in the north west*

the people of Warrington who have always referred to it as 'Dickie Flourbags' a reference to the Fairclough family's involvement in milling. Continuing to honour Richard Fairclough was the least that we could do. It also ensures that we are seen to be playing our part in becoming part of the local community.

The name of Richard Taylor Fairclough may not mean much to you but without doubt, upon hearing the name of our new headquarters, you will have wondered just who the man was. In this booklet we provide you not only with an answer to that question but also a brief history of the building and its surrounding areas.

*C. Harpley*

DR. CHRIS HARPLEY  
REGIONAL GENERAL MANAGER  
NATIONAL RIVERS AUTHORITY  
NORTH WEST REGION



● *Views of Richard Fairclough House.*

# Richard Taylor Fairclough

**E**very generation provides us with a handful of people who can genuinely be said to have left their mark in a positive way. Richard Taylor Fairclough was one such man.

Born in 1844 in Earlestown, and educated at Winwick Grammar School before moving on to Liverpool College, he moved to Warrington in 1864 after spending five years in the tea trade in Manchester.

In Warrington he opened out a connection in Cheshire for the Mersey Flour Mills.

Throughout his long working life he showed superb business acumen which was proven by the continued success of the company his father, James Fairclough Senior, had set up in the early 1850's. On top of this he took an active part in the management of the Longford Wire Works of which he was a director for 20 years, and the Alliance Box Company where he was Chairman for a number of years.

**B**ut his success as a businessman is not the main reason for the people of Warrington remembering the name Richard Taylor Fairclough.

In 1889 he was elected to the council - a position he held until 1895. Meanwhile he had been appointed a representative of the corporation on the upper Mersey and Navigation Committee.

As well as this work he was also a Justice of the Peace for 37 years.

Richard Fairclough's greatest work, however, was as an educationalist. For 55 years he was treasurer of the Parochial School and in 1903 he was made a member of the newly formed Education Committee for the town. In addition to this he was chairman of the Sites and Building Committee and a representative manager of the Bolton Council School.

The many Saturdays he spent with



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spade and wheel barrow, raising with cinders the level of a plot of land next to the Parochial School so that the pupils could have a bigger playground, were a typical example of his dedication to education.

When the site for a new school in Latchford had been approved the Borough Education Committee took the opportunity to commemorate the work of Richard Fairclough by naming the school after him.

**A**lthough he was not present, due to ill health, at the opening of the school in 1934, he did send a message to the pupils which ended with the words: "Be good, not only good, but good for something."

Richard Fairclough died five months later and it is a testament to the good work carried out by the man that following the change of usage of the school to office accommodation that the National Rivers Authority should choose to continue honouring the man by adopting as the name for the new headquarters 'Richard Fairclough House.'

# *A school ahead of its time - Boy's Own stories and ghostly goings on*

**R**ichard Fairclough's was, without doubt, a school ahead of its time. Architects S. Wright and E. H. Hamlett designed the classrooms with an emphasis on light and airy conditions.

The school offered excellent facilities especially for subjects like domestic science, woodwork and chemistry but as the times dictated, there was strict segregation between the boys and girls schools, a fact which explains the outstanding symmetry of the original building. Indeed one of the main school rules was no fraternising with members of the opposite sex. Segregation even went as far as two portraits of Richard Fairclough, one for the girls and one for the boys!

**T**he first headmaster of the boys school, Robert Hunman, took his role very seriously indeed. He regularly stressed the importance of the training of teachers and demanded total commitment from his staff saying: "It is a tremendous responsibility that we have on our hands, the sacredness of human personality - never let us betray that trust."

Reginald Maddock replaced Robert Hunman as head in 1957 and not only mirrored the high standards of his predecessor but introduced new and innovative ideas. He believed firmly in breaking down the barriers which existed between the school and the local people, pioneering commu-

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nity orientated education which became known as 'The Fairclough Tradition'. But it is as an author of boys adventure books that he is perhaps better known. The Corrigan series, which started with 'Corrigan and the White Cobra' in 1956, not only met with great success in this country, but was published in several different languages.

**N**o school would be complete without its ghost story, and Richard Faircloughs is no exception. Former caretaker Harold Fogg often talked of the time he spotted a mysterious lady looking at him from the staff room window when he knew there was nobody else in the building.

Add to that the stories of sounds and smells such as the shuffling of feet along one of the landings when nobody was about, the smell of cooking bacon and tobacco that appear from nowhere, and the famous room 20 where banging noises were heard and the water boiler came on with the help of no human hand and you have enough mystery and intrigue to ensure that late nights at the office are definitely not something to look forward to.

But think positively. At least you will never be lonely!

● *An ariel view of the old Richard Fairclough School.*



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● *Robert Hunman, first headmaster of the Boys School.*

# Early settlers

**T**HERE'S a certain irony in the fact that the new headquarters of the NRA should be situated at a point just yards away from an ancient ford across the River Mersey, which has been the focal point of human settlements in the Warrington area for over 3,000 years.

Although today the ford no longer exists - the course of the river was altered in the early 18th Century in an attempt to make the Mersey navigable as far as Manchester - its importance to the town of Warrington and the surrounding areas should



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● *Latchford Weir.*



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*One of the earliest known pictures depicting the River Mersey in Warrington, circa 1790.*

not be forgotten.

Being the lowest point at which the Mersey could be crossed by foot, Warrington, or to be more precise Latchford, became one of the focal points for Bronze Age traders who supplied tools and implements made in Ireland to both settlers in the area and travellers who converged on Latchford in their journeys north and south.

**W**arrington Museum displays several bronze tools and weapons, including a spearhead that was found at the weir in 1954 only to be broken by workmen who were using it to play darts with!

Warrington did not really develop as a town until the Romans arrived in 78 A.D. soon after the occupation of Chester when the area became an industrial hive of activity with the production of pottery, glass-making and ore smelting.

The name of Latchford, which means 'a ford at a boggy place' did not appear in writing until the reign of Richard I (1189-1199) when the 6th Earl of Chester granted one Hugh de Boydell the rights to charge a toll for use of the ford at Latchford. This concession led to a bitter feud between the Boydell family and the Boteler family who lived on the north side of the Mersey. The Boteler family erected a bridge across the Mersey and were granted pontage - the right to collect tolls, and the Boydells seemed to see this as encroaching on their income from the toll charged for crossing the ford.

**T**he feud reached such a pitch that an enquiry was held in front of a sworn jury, the Lieutenant of Chester and the Sheriff of Cheshire in 1354. Bitter feelings and resentment persisted even after the enquiry and when the bridge was reconstructed in 1364, Royal protection had to be given to all concerned - from Sir John

# Waterways and navigation - an essential part of Latchford's history

● The Swing Bridge at Latchford.



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Boteler himself down to the stonemasons and carpenters for fear of damage which may have been caused by "certain enemies".

The early part of the 19th century saw Latchford really start to grow in size. In 1801 the population was just 754, by 1831 that had increased to 2166 mainly due to the increase in cotton manufacturing.

Water was still playing a major part in the development of the area at that time with the Mersey now navigable right through to Manchester and the Old Quay Canal, known locally as the Black Bear Canal, which was constructed to rival the Bridgewater Canal which ran through Grappenhall.

The Old Quay Canal was largely responsible for the development of the tanning industry in Latchford and Howley.

*A full comprehensive history of Latchford is available from all good book shops.*

*'Latchford' by G. A. Carter maps the progress of the area from the earliest settlers through to modern times.*



Warrington Museum

● A selection of Bronze Age tools found at Latchford in 1954.



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