

James Maden Holt Esq., M.A. J.P.

Lancashire Leaders, Social and Political by Ernest Gaskell approx 1907

The only son of the late John Holt, Esq., J.P., who married Judith, third daughter of James Maden, Esq. of Greens House, Bacup, Mr James Maden Holt comes from a very old English family, members of which in past generations, have been prominent in both the social and the political life of Lancashire. He was born at the family seat, Stubbylee, Bacup, near Manchester, on October 18th 1829 and was educated at Mr Scale's private school, Wellesley House, Firschley Road, London and at Christ Church College, Oxford. He was graduated from the University as a Bachelor of Arts in 1858, and obtained the Master's degree two years later.

The family of Holt of Stubbylee of which he is head is an offshoot of the Holts of Grizzlehurst. John Holt settled at Stubbylee about 1750. He was succeeded at his decease by his son, James Holt, whose first marriage took place on January 1st 1790, his wife being Jenny, daughter of Timothy Hoyle, gentleman of Lee. He married secondly in 1803 Anne daughter of John Heyworth Esq. of Greensnook, and was succeeded by his only child, the son of his second wife, John Holt Esq. who was father of the subject of this notice.

Mr James Maden Holt succeeded to the family estates on the 26th December 1856. Fourteen years subsequently he married Anna, second daughter of the Rev John Haworth, Incumbent of Penistone, Yorkshire. He qualified as a Justice of the Peace for the County of Lancaster on the 5th of April 1858. From 1863-68 he served on the Local Board of Health for the District of Bacup. At the General Election of 1863 he was returned to the House of Commons as an Independent Conservative, and sat for the North East Division of Lancashire for twelve years. On May 31st 1869 he moved the rejection of the Bill for the Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland on the third reading, and in 1874 introduced the Ecclesiastical Offences Bill and supported the Public Worship Regulation Bill. Notwithstanding the opposition of Mr Gladstone and the Sacerdotal party, he carried an amendment (subsequently struck out in the House of Lords) to limit the Bishops' veto. In 1876 he introduced the cruelty to Animals Bill to prohibit the practice of vivisection.

Mr Holt joined the Church Association in 1870 and was Chairman of the Council from 1883-85. He was Vice-Chairman of the National Club, Whitehall Gardens from 1871-76, when he was appointed Chairman, a position he filled with much acceptance for three years. Since 1877 he has been one of the trustees of the club, and since 1875 Treasurer of the Trinitarian Bible Society. Preferring to adhere to principles which do not vary, and not to follow leaders given to change, he feels with Wordsworth that

“Plain living and high thinking are no more,
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone,”

And is certainly not in sympathy with the present Conservative party. Whatever opinions one may hold, it must count that men should be willing to break the closet political ties rather than assent to a policy they hold to be mischievous, and that such politicians as Mr Holt should essay to fill their proper task of guiding opinion rather than follow the unthinking crowd.

His residence, Stubblelee was erected in 1808 and is a handsome stone-built mansion half a mile from the populous town of Bacup. Mr Holt is a member of the National and Conservative (Manchester) clubs.