

# Thomas Newbigging (1834 to 1914)

## Civil engineer & author

Thomas Newbigging was the son of John Newbigging, for some time the manager of the Birtwhistle Mills in Gatehouse. He became a leading authority on gas engineering whose advice was often sought by Parliamentary Committees. He also wrote poetry and other books including 'History of the Forest of Rossendale', 'Lancashire Characters and Places' and 'Lancashire Humour' and in 1911 published '**A Nook in Galloway**' about his childhood home in Gatehouse of Fleet.

### **Born in Glasgow, Lanarkshire c.1837**

Father John Gibson Newbigging (*ex Thomas' marriage certificate & obituary*)

Mother probably Elizabeth Bayldon (*ex 1841 Anwoth census & 1861 Manchester census*)

(*John Newbigging and Elizabeth Beldon married 24th June 1832 at Lanark - ex Ancestry*)



Thomas attended Bridgeton Public School in Glasgow, but the family must have moved to Gatehouse of Fleet between 1837 and 1841, where Thomas attended Girthon School.

**1841 Anwoth, Kirkcudbrightshire census**, at Rusko Street, (*now Dromore Road, possibly at Fleetbank*)

Thomas was 7, living with brothers John, 5, and William, 3. No relationships are given but presumably his father is John (30) who was manager of the cotton mill and wife Elizabeth (25). All the family born in Scotland, but not Kirkcudbrightshire.

As a result of financial difficulties the Birtwhistle Mills in Gatehouse were put up for sale in 1846, which may have prompted the Newbigging family move to Lancashire. Thomas started his apprenticeship as a mechanic at the age of 11, in Blackburn and in 1849 he continued his apprenticeship in Bury. He became manager of the Rossendale Union Gas Company in 1857. (*Wikipedia & obituary*)

We have found none of the family in the 1851 census.

### **1859 20th October - Marriage at Wilton, Lancaster**

Thomas Newbigging, aged 26, manager of a gas company (father John Newbigging, manager of a cotton mill) married Hannah Lomax, aged 25 (father Abraham Lomax, gentleman)

### **1861 Bacup, Lancashire Census**

Thomas & Hannah Newbigging were with their daughter Elizabeth B, aged 3 months.

By 1861 Thomas's parents John & Elizabeth Newbigging had moved to New Cross, Manchester. John was the manager of a cotton mill. Son John (25), mill wright, was with his parents. Elizabeth's mother Euphemia Bayldon also lived with them.

### **1871 census - family were in Brazil. (Daughter Helen born there c.1871)**

Thomas was employed by the Pernambuco Gasworks in Brazil (1870 - 1875). He was awarded the Brazilian Order of Knighthood for his work there.

The family returned home in 1875 when he, as a leading authority on gas engineering, became a consultant in Manchester. He often gave advice to Parliamentary Committees. (*Obituary*).

### **1881 Eccles, Lancashire Census**

Thomas (47, born Scotland), a civil engineer with wife Hannah (46) and children Elizabeth B (20), John (17), and William B (14) all born Bacup plus Hellen M (9) born Brazil, and Ernest L (5) born Eccles.

**1885** - Thomas unsuccessfully stood as the Liberal candidate for Rossendale in the Parliamentary Election.

### **1891 Pendleton, Salford, Lancashire Census**

Thomas (57, born Glasgow) with Hannah (56) and children Helen May (19, born Pernambuco, Brazil) & Ernest Lomax (15, born Eccles).

### **1901 Altringham, Cheshire Census**

Thomas (67) civil engineer & Hannah (66)

### **1911 Knutsford, Cheshire Census, at Woodgarth**

Thomas (aged 77, born Glasgow, a civil engineer, was a widower living with his daughter Helen May Tattersall, (38, born Brazil) and her husband Thomas Tattersall, cotton manufacturer.

**1914 1st June, death** of Thomas Newbigging at Woodgarth, Knutsford, Cheshire, aged 80.

Cremated at Manchester Crematorium

Probate granted to John Gibson Newbigging & William Newbigging, civil engineers (*his sons*) and T.F. Tattersall (*his son in law*). (Estate- £2,8903 14s)

Thomas Newbigging was a well respected civil engineer. He wrote a 'Gas Manager's Handbook' which was used as a reference book in the industry for many years. He was the President of the Manchester District Institute of Gas Engineers in 1879 and a founding member of the British Association of Gas Managers. The University of Leeds awarded him an honorary D.Sc. in 1912.

Thomas Newbigging  
by T.E. Mostyn in the  
Whitaker Art Gallery,  
Rossendale, Lancashire

