

## **HENRY HEAVISIDES**

19<sup>th</sup> C Stockton Printer, Poet, Musician, Engraver, Historian and Reformer

Go out of the rear entrance of the Focus Gallery in the Green Dragon Studios (part of the former Green Dragon Museum) and you will notice this shop front at the side (seen below). The shop was No 4 Finkle Street in 19<sup>th</sup> C. Stockton (*photo courtesy of Steve Thompson*).



### **WHO WAS HENRY HEAVISIDES?**

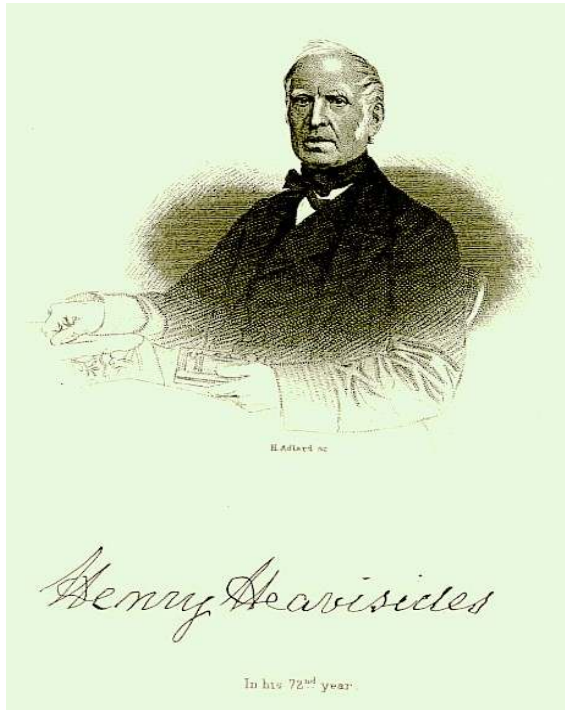
It is quite fitting to find this shop at the rear of the Green Dragon Studios for Henry Heavisides was an important figure in 19<sup>th</sup> C Stockton as a printer, poet, musician, engraver, historian, reformer and author of *The Pleasures of Home*, *The Minstrelsy of Britain*, *Courtship and Matrimony* and of course *The Annals of Stockton*.

He was born November 29th 1791 at Darlington where he received a 'tolerable education at the Grammar school there'. Having finished his apprenticeship with his father, a printer and bookseller in that town, he was left to make his way in the world. He first worked as a journeyman printer for **William Pratt** in Stokesley and whilst there, married **Jane Bradley**. He then worked on *The Hull Packet* published by **Mr Peck** and then to the *Leeds Mercury* Office where he worked for **Edward Baines**, the historian of Lancashire and then in Bradford before settling in Stockton on Tees where he was a foreman for Stockton printer **Jennett and Co**, later starting his own printing business at No 4 Finkle Street.

## PUBLICATIONS

In terms of his own publications, he contributed to many periodicals of the day but first published his *Pleasures of Home and other poems* in 1837 at the age of 45, with a second edition published in 1840 and a third in 1849. In 1860 he published a prose work entitled *The Minstrelsy of Britain* with the whole edition sold in three months and 1864 he produced another prose volume called *Courtship and Matrimony*. In 1865 Henry produced *The Annals of Stockton* - a local history following on from the earlier work of **John Brewster**. *The Annals of Stockton* is now available as a free pdf download from [Google books](#) [HERE](#) and makes a fascinating read which includes quite a bit of local poetry. **George Markham Tweddell** (the 19thC Stokesley Chartist, printer, publisher, poet and people's historian includes a chapter on Henry in *The Bards and Authors of Cleveland and South Durham 1875* (p303).

## A REFORMER AND HIS WIFE WITH A FIGHTING SPIRIT



Although Heavisides was honoured when the Mayor of Stockton, on the 29th March 1847, publicly presented him with an excellent portrait of himself painted in oil, in a superior style, by **James Hume Taylor** out of respect for his '*Literary genius and attainments*', it wasn't, as Tweddell points out, without it's dark side!

From his youth Heavisides was '*a warm advocate for constitutional reform*' and was more than once in danger of '*loosing his situation*' because of his conscience. Tweddell tells us –

*"on one occasion, when he had been taking one of his daily walks into the country, he found a number of his fellow townsmen assembled in an open air meeting, who having been disappointed in the attendance of a political speaker, begged of him to*

*address them, when he advised them to subscribe their pence to rent a room and*

*purchase books, and form themselves into a society for mutual mental improvement (what would now be called a Mechanics Institute), for which (I am told) he was denounced in the newspapers of the borough-mongers as a 'black-advised man' and all sorts of uncharitable things said about him. But when the **Reform Bill of 1832** became the law of the land, and so happily saved this country from a bloody revolution, and the inhabitants of Stockton celebrated the important event with music, and banners, and peals on the church bells, and firing a cannon, and a grand public procession headed by the chief magistrate of the borough, and a dinner in the Green, of which more than seventeen hundred persons partook, and toasts and speeches were the order of the day; then some of the unprincipled paltrons who had opposed all reform all their lives, and most unrelentingly persecuted the poor poet for the part he had taken in helping to procure it, were loudest in their huzzas over the drink after dinner, and even had the unblushing fronts to speak to toasts, while **Henry Heavisides**, being a working man through and though he had taken a most active part in the Reform movement, was merely present with his clarionet to lead the orchestra!"*

Heavisides himself remarks in his Annals of Stockton-

*"I am reminded here of an occurrence which much annoyed me when I advocated parliamentary reform previous to the passing of the Reform Bill in 1832. One day my employer came to me, and, showing me a written paper, said, that he would be obliged to discharge me if I did not sign it." The following is a copy of the paper.*

*"I hereby acknowledge that I have acted very improperly in advocating political principles having a tendency to subvert the British constitution, and that in future I shall take no part whatever in the Reform Movement, provided my employer will retain me in my situation"*

Heavisides adds *"I was required not only to sign this precious document, but to consent, when signed, to its being published in all the newspapers in the district. Refusing to do this, my employer told me he was sorry, as he had the highest opinion of me as a man and a servant; but was necessitated to part with me to oblige some of his best customers who had taken umbrage at my political conduct. I had then a wife and eight children depending upon me for support; and yet I received fourteen days notice to quit my situation. I took the paper home and on reading it to my wife, she indignantly exclaimed, 'I tell you what Henry, I would rather we went a-begging than you disgraced yourself by signing so infamous a production' If ever I admired my wife more at one time than another, it was at that moment."*

Henry continued *"about ten days. .after this unpleasant event took place..the **Rev. Mr. Robson**" who had come to convince him that 'in advocating parliamentary reform, he was advocating what was dishonest" Henry replied "I am open to conviction and if you can prove what you say, I'll recant my opinions and sign the paper. After some discussion..he fairly acknowledged I had the best argument, and I was a different person altogether from what he took me to be, that I should retain my situation, and he would always be a friend to me. We shook hands and I never heard anymore of the disagreeable affair."*

## MUSICIAN, ARTIST, AUTHOR. POET

Heavisides was also a musician from an early age (and how appropriate that his shop is now situated next to the *Green Dragon Recording studios!*). He served five years as a performer in the band of *Darlington Volunteers*; then five years in the same capacity in the South Durham Local Militia. For 25 years he was leader of the amateur band at Stockton, where he gave 27 concerts, which were well patronized by the public between 1827 and 1845.

Also at an early age his gifted mother fostered his artistic side and he was induced to become an engraver on wood while in the employment of Jennett, the Stockton printer. The tools he used were invented by himself from old heckle-teeth and he engraved the whole of the wood cuts in the second edition of *Brewster's History of Stockton*. The remains of the old Cross at Eaglescliffe being sketched by him as well.

As an author and poet, Tweddell tells us '*his fame must depend more than all his other works*' on 1837 book **Pleasures of Home, and other poems**. Tweddell tells that Heavisides received compliments from poet **Allan Cunningham** who claimed that by focusing his poetry on the '*sweets of the domestic hearth*' rather than '*conquerors and despots*' as other poets have, he has proved 'that poetry humanizes and exalts the mind, and lifts it into the regions of purity and religion'. Tweddell also says that the '*high priest of Nature -William Wordsworth*' who was no stranger to Stockton High Street, expressed, personally to Henry Heavisides, when at Stockton, the pleasure he had derived from a perusal of the poem. Tweddell says of Henry's poem below 'it reminds us of **Goldsmith** and yet I see no plagiarism'

### READ MORE

Anyone wanting to read more about Henry Heavisides can

- Download FREE - **George Markham Tweddell's [Bards and Authors of Cleveland and South Durham](#)** and read from page 302 (which contains some of his poems and reviews of his other books.)
- And download FREE - **Henry Heavisides** history of Stockton - **The Annals of Stockton** from Google books [HERE](#)

The above two books were the main sources for this article but there is more for those interested.