

= Mortimer Grimshaw =

Mortimer Grimshaw ( 1824 or 1825 ? 22 December 1869 ) was an English political activist , strike leader and cotton weaver . He briefly attained national fame in the 1850s due to his part in the Preston strike of 1853 ? 54 . A large man whose face was marked by smallpox , he was renowned for his oratory , which earned him the nickname of the " Thunderer of Lancashire " .

The son of a radical public speaker and orator , Grimshaw 's early campaigns were centred on the improvement of working conditions for the mill @-@ workers in the village of Royton and enforcement of the Factory Acts . He was an outspoken critic of the Whig Party and an advocate of the Chartist movement , in particular of their anti @-@ Whig alliance with the Tory Party . Strikes among mill @-@ workers began to break out during the early 1850s and Grimshaw one of the leaders , along with George Cowell , of the strike in Preston in 1853 . The strikers were fruitless in their demands for a ten per cent wage increase , and Grimshaw found himself with no further role in the workers ' unions . He and his fellow conspirators were charged with conspiring to prevent people working in the mills , although the charges were later dropped .

Following the defeat in Preston , Grimshaw emigrated to the United States , where he became a supporter of the Confederacy . In 1861 , he and Cowell attempted to intervene in a strike in Clitheroe but were branded " notorious scoundrels " by the weavers there for their parts in the Preston strike . The following year he joined a small group of Lancashire men who unsuccessfully attempted to rally support for the Confederates in northern England . After a period as a freelance industrial mediator , selling his services to mill owners and working against the unions he had once aligned with , he returned to his job as a power @-@ loom weaver until his death from tuberculosis in 1869 . Grimshaw and his activities were the basis for two of the author Charles Dickens ' characters .

= = Early life and career = =

Grimshaw was born in or around Great Harwood , Lancashire , in 1824 or 1825 and was one of six children brought up in a working @-@ class family . His father , Thomas , had a reputation as a radical public speaker in the early part of the 19th century . Grimshaw initially worked as a cotton weaver before becoming a full @-@ time activist and agitator . He first came to prominence in the village of Royton , near Oldham , in 1852 as a campaigner for the improvement and enforcement of the Factory Acts , to improve the working conditions of those employed in the cotton mills . In the same year he became editor of the anti @-@ Whig broadsheet , the Royton Vindicator . He criticised the suppression of local political activists and supported the alliance of the Chartist movement with the Tories against the Whigs .

Mill workers in England became increasingly disenchanted with improper practices by factory owners , long working hours and unsatisfactory conditions . During the early 1850s workers throughout the country began to campaign for higher wages and strikes were held in several towns and cities ; brickmakers in Manchester struck in January while woollen mill operatives in the West Riding of Yorkshire went on strike two months later . Grimshaw himself was involved in a strike in Stockport , where workers were demanding a ten percent wage increase , in March 1853 .

= = The Preston strike of 1853 = =

When cotton weavers in Preston struck in September of that year , again demanding a wage increase of ten percent , he and fellow activist George Cowell became the most prominent leaders at the mass meetings of the workers . Grimshaw would often wear a white hat at meetings in the style of politicians Henry Hunt and William Cobbett . According to local journalist Charles Hardwick , he was a strong advocate of the liberation of oppressed " factory slaves " but it was noted that his judgement in arguments could often be overpowered by his enthusiasm and emotions . In the seven months that Grimshaw was involved with the Preston strike he travelled throughout Lancashire and Yorkshire , speaking at more than 60 public meetings .

At one meeting in October 1853 , he shared the platform with John B. Horsfall and Chartist leader Ernest Jones , whose Labour Parliament Grimshaw was involved in the following year as one of the two delegates from Preston , along with Wallace Beever . The Labour Parliament was partly a response to a lock @-@ out of around 20 @,@ 000 mill workers by the employers in Preston ; its aim was to organise a levy on wages to support operatives who went on strike or were locked out . Those paying the levy were to elect a committee to buy and look after land and factories and the Parliament would meet on a yearly basis . However , the plan did not gain support among all Chartists and the plans never materialised .

The Preston strike ended in defeat for Grimshaw , Cowell and the operatives and as a result there were no suitable jobs for him in the unions ; his characteristics would not have lent themselves to a secretarial role . On 10 August 1854 , the pair were indicted along with nine other men for conspiring to " prevent certain persons working in the mills in [ Preston ] " . Although the charges were dropped by the prosecution , the judge presiding implied he would otherwise have felt compelled to pass down a severe sentence and expressed his hope that none of the 11 would engage in such conspiracy again . Two years later , Grimshaw and Horsfall raised funds to enable them to emigrate and he subsequently spent some time living in the northern United States . Upon his return to England , Grimshaw , Cowell and two other weavers were involved in a dispute between mill @-@ owners and workers in Clitheroe , Lancashire , in 1861 . However , due to their lack of success in Preston the group were branded a " gang of notorious scoundrels " by strike leader John O 'Neil and were treated with hostility by the gathered crowds of weavers .

= = Later career = =

During his time in America , Grimshaw had developed pro @-@ Confederacy tendencies . In general , there was some support for the Confederacy among people who were affected by the shortage in cotton from America caused by the American Civil War , such as traders and mill @-@ owners . On a personal level , Grimshaw was opposed to the growth of capitalism in the United States and described the notions of American freedom and liberty as " farce and humbug " . In 1862 he became part of a small group of working @-@ class Lancashire men , all of whom had been involved in various strikes in the 1850s , assembled by Liverpool @-@ based tin plate merchant James Spence . The group held meetings with the intention of rallying support for the Confederates within northern England , particularly in Lancashire and Cheshire . However , when a vote regarding the support of British mediation in America was taken at one meeting in Blackburn , only 12 out of more than 4 @,@ 000 workers voted in favour of Grimshaw . The local Weavers ' Association consequently declared themselves in favour of Abraham Lincoln and his Union . Ultimately , the group 's efforts were handicapped by an inability to maintain activity throughout the duration of the Civil War ; by 1864 only two of the original company remained .

By the end of his career , Grimshaw had become a freelance political adventurer , industrial mediator and anti @-@ union agitator selling his services to mill @-@ owners and employers . In an 1864 letter to George Wilson , former president of the Anti @-@ Corn Law League during the 1840s , he described himself as " destitute and penniless [ sic ] " and begged the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway chairman for money or employment . This was the last public record of Grimshaw ; he returned to work as a power @-@ loom weaver until his death in Rishton from the lung disease tuberculosis on 22 December 1869 .

= = Legacy = =

Two of Charles Dickens ' characters , Gruffshaw in the article On Strike and Slackbridge , the " unscrupulous demagogue " from the novel Hard Times , were based on Grimshaw .