*Miles Ashworth*

*Transcription of letter to Rochdale Observer 2 September 1865*

A STRANGE AND EVENTFUL HISTORY

To the Editor of the Rochdale Observer

Sir, In your impression of the 19th inst. a friend of mine forwarded to you for publication some incidents of my career which he had often heard me repeat, and in consequence of this paragraph my acquaintances have asked me if the report in the Observer be correct; some say it is not, while others are of a contrary opinion. Now, sir, to set the matter at rest, I will give you a detailed account of my career, which I challenge any man to deny.

I was born in Rochdale parish, December 30th, 1791. On the 7th day of February 1809, I enlisted at Rochdale into the Royal Marines, Woolwich division; and on the 1st of the following April, and along with 120 others, embarked on board the St. Domingo, 74 guns, then lying in the river; we sailed with Admiral Sir Richard Strawn in the expedition to Flushing. Some time after I returned to Portsmouth, and joined the Rattler sloop of war, then laying at Spithead, January 1810, waiting to guard a large convoy of ships loaded with troops for Portugal, where we safely arrived in Lisbon. After the lapse of a few weeks we were ordered to sail for Cadiz in Spain, to enquire after the French fleets which had been seen of that coast. Some time after we returned to Portsmouth. Shortly after we sailed to Lisbon with another convoy of troops, returning afterwards to Portsmouth, and went into harbour to refit. In the early part of 1811 we collected a large number of merchant ships, and sailed to the Cove or Cork to await their arrival; afterwards we sailed with them to their destination in the West Indies. We sailed after this to the Island of Bermuda, and joined the North American Squadron under Admiral Soyer, and received orders from thence to sail to Quebec, and arrived in September of the same year, where I first saw that memorable comet. I was then one of the guards of honour to the Duke of Manchester, and sailed with him to St John’s, Newfoundland. We were then ordered for Halifax, Novia Scotia, and in the beginning of 1812 we sailed to the Bay of Fundy and made St John’s, New Brunswick, our Rendezvous. We cruised about until May 1813 when we engaged a large American privateer, run her ashore, and afterwards burnt her, the crew having escaped in their boats. In a few days after we joined the Shannon frigate, and sailed with her into Boston harbour, where we saw the Chesapeake ready for sea. We then turned round to sail out for sea, and parted company with the Shannon that night. In 1814 we joined the North American fleet, under Admiral Sir George Cockburn, and were ordered to the River Potomack to lay marks for the fleet. We from thence sailed to Bermuda, where we arrived, not having provisions for one meal on board. After being supplied we sailed to Halifax, Novia Scotia, and from there to England, where we arrived at Deptford in January 1815, after having been out four years. In the beginning of July, 1815, I joined the Northumberland, 74 guns, Admiral Sir George Cockburn, and joined the Bellapheron in Torbay on the 7th August. I was sentry over the Admiral’s cabin when Napoleon first came on board, and opened the cabin door for Napoleon to enter, and sailed with him to St. Helena, returning to England in the latter end of 1816. In November of this year I was in Woolwich, and was one of the Guard of Honour to present arms to King William IV, (then Duke of Clarence) who came to inspect the dock-yards. On the 7th February, 1817, I was discharged, receiving the thanks of General Lewis, then commandant of the marines, and I returned home. On the 16th August, 1819, there being a Reform meeting called to be held on St Peter’s Field, Manchester, where Mr. H. Hunt and others were to address the meeting, the Rochdale people formed themselves in a body at Guide Post, and proceeded to Manchester with a band of music; and I led them with the cap of liberty and two banners. We ascended the hustings, but had to flee for our lives when the cavalry made their charge. One of our flags was cut away, but the other and the cap of liberty was saved by a person named John Taylor, who gave the cap to me on our road home. To conclude the brief history of my proceedings, I may remark that I never, although being in the navy, smoked or chewed the least bit of tobacco.

August 29th, 1865 MILES ASHWORTH