

Sir Elkanah Armitage DL

6 September 1794 – 26 November 1876

The plaque on the South side of the Bridgewater Room was erected as a memorial to Sir Elkanah's son, Percy Bowers Armitage



The third of six sons of Elkanah Armitage, a farmer and linen weaver from Failsworth. He left school at the age of 8 and went to work in the cotton industry, along with two of his brothers, at George Nadin & Nephews and soon rose to become manager on account of his diligence and shrewdness in business.

In 1816 he married Mary Lomax Bowers. She died in 1836 having borne him eight children (Percy, who died aged eight months, is not in the list). They lived at Gore Hill, Pendleton Green until 1853 then at Hope Hall, Pendleton.

In the 1810s Armitage and his wife set up in business as drapers at 18 Chapel Street, Salford, then a weaving manufacture business. The business was so successful that he built a new factory at Pendleton and eventually employed 200 people making sailcloth, gingham and checks. By 1848 he was employing over 600. In 1867 Armitage took over Nassau Mills in Patricroft.





In 1838, he was elected as a Manchester Liberal councillor, becoming an alderman in 1841. He was Mayor of Manchester from 1846 to 1848. In 1849, he was created a Knight Bachelor by Queen Victoria. In 1857, Armitage stood for Parliament, unsuccessfully opposing William Nathaniel Massey for the seat of Salford and in 1866 he was appointed High Sheriff of Lancashire.

Armitage was a lifelong friend and supporter of John Bright and the Anti-Corn Law League. He shared Bright's Pacifist stance and spoke out against the war in the Crimea, in opposition to Prime Minister Palmerston.

He served for many years as Chairman of the Governors of Manchester Grammar School and as a Governor of Manchester Royal Infirmary. He was also a Salford Police Commissioner.

He died on 26 November 1876 at the age of 82 and is buried in the family vault at Weaste Cemetery. His funeral procession, of one hundred carriages, was half a mile long. His estate was valued at £200,000 (14 million pounds today).