By the mid-19th century, Manchester and the adjacent regions of Lancashire, Cheshire and West Yorkshire contained the largest concentration of steam boilers in the world, supplying steam power to textile mills and other industries. But an ever-increasing number of boiler explosions, many killing and injuring people, became a cause for major concern.

Against this background two important firms were established in Manchester to provide boiler inspections and insurance: the Vulcan Boiler & General Insurance Company (1859) and British Engine Insurance (1878). By the close of the century, heating experts like Walter Jones were able to analyse the causes of boiler explosions.

Information on Vulcan, British Engines and Walter Jones’ findings is given in the other sections of this Electronic Book.
The Disastrous effects of a Boiler Explosion, c.1896
“The Quest for Comfort,” Brian Roberts (CIBSE Centenary) 1997

After the Boiler Explosion at the Millfield Iron Works, Wolverhampton
*Illustrated London News*, April 1852
Boiler Explosion in Baltimore, date unknown (mdhs.org)

Colliery Boiler Explosion, Smithville, Texas, 1914 (texasescapes.com)
HISTORIC STEAM
BOILER
EXPLOSIONS

ALAN McEWEN

SLEDGEHAMMER ENGINEERING PRESS LTD

A specialist book on the subject, 2009
(CIBSE Heritage Group Collection)
Boiler explosions also took place in locomotives and ships.....

Locomotive Boiler Explosion in the USA
*Nature*, 23 February 1889

Twisted Superheater tubes after a Locomotive Boiler Explosion, USA, date unknown “Railroads in America,” Oliver Jensen, 1981
HMS Thunderer the Ironclad built in 1872

Aftermath of the explosion of one of the four Box boilers on 14th July 1876
This resulted in 45 deaths: Illustrated London News