

**THE
JOURNAL
OF THE
BROSELEY
LOCAL HISTORY
SOCIETY**



No. 20 1998

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Broseley Local History Society
Incorporating the Wilkinson Society

The Society was originally formed as the Wilkinson Society in 1972
and was renamed in 1997 to reflect its main purpose:

*‘ the research, preservation and promotion of Broseley’s unique
heritage.’*

Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month (7.30pm) at
Broseley Social Club, and annual events include a summer outing, an
autumn walk and a winter dinner.

The Society’s collection of artefacts is at present stored at the IGMT
Tile Museum at Jackfield.

Members receive a quarterly newsletter and an annual journal.

‘A Compendium of Broseley History’

(a selection of journal articles, 1973-97) is about to be published.

The Society has a web site at www.dewhirst.ndirect.co.uk which
contains information about Broseley and copies of the newsletter.

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EARLY MINING MAPS OF THE IRONBRIDGE GORGE

by Ivor J. Brown

A report was published in 1988 by Catherine Clark and Judith Alfrey for the Nuffield Archaeological Survey. The volume "Jackfield and Broseley" is in the Ironbridge Institute and most of the following has been extracted from this or from one of the two books by the report authors that are listed at the end.

The collieries of the Ironbridge Gorge were of national importance during the 1600s, important enough in fact to have been seized during the Civil War to prevent their produce getting into the hands of the Royalists. It now seems likely too that the coal mining maps produced at this time may be some of the earliest in Britain. The report by Clark and Aldrey gives some information on several of these early maps as detailed below. It is unlikely that any of the insetts (adits) will still be accessible, even if they survived later mining activity, since they would probably have been destroyed during construction of the Severn Valley Railway (see Fig.1).

a) "The Plott of Broseley by Samuel Parsons" (SRO 1224/1/32)

Four insetts (c. 1621) are shown beneath present-day Ladywood. Two insetts belonged to a Mr Cage, another called "Priory Insett" was occupied by John Eves and the fourth is not described. A "Priory Insett" was recorded in 1545 and may be the same, all of the insetts seem to have been in use since at least 1608. The map shows four single entries, each about 90yds long. The same map shows "Croppers Holes", i.e. Outcropper's diggings (?) which is perhaps the earliest map showing opencasting in Britain. It also shows "Mr Benthall's Coalworks" and "The Olde Cole Pitt on Fire" on Coalpit Hill (now called Fiery Fields).

b) "A map of those lands in Broseley through which the Several Insetts do pass, Anno Dom 1676, RH 1730"

A plan showing two long adits with branches and commencing close to the present Free Bridge. They were searched for but not located during recent excavations for the new bridge. "Williams Insett" is about 1,000yds long with 500yds of branches, "Reynolds Insett" is about 750yds long. The last dated workings on the plan are marked December 1676 but the title indicates that it was used after this date. It shows

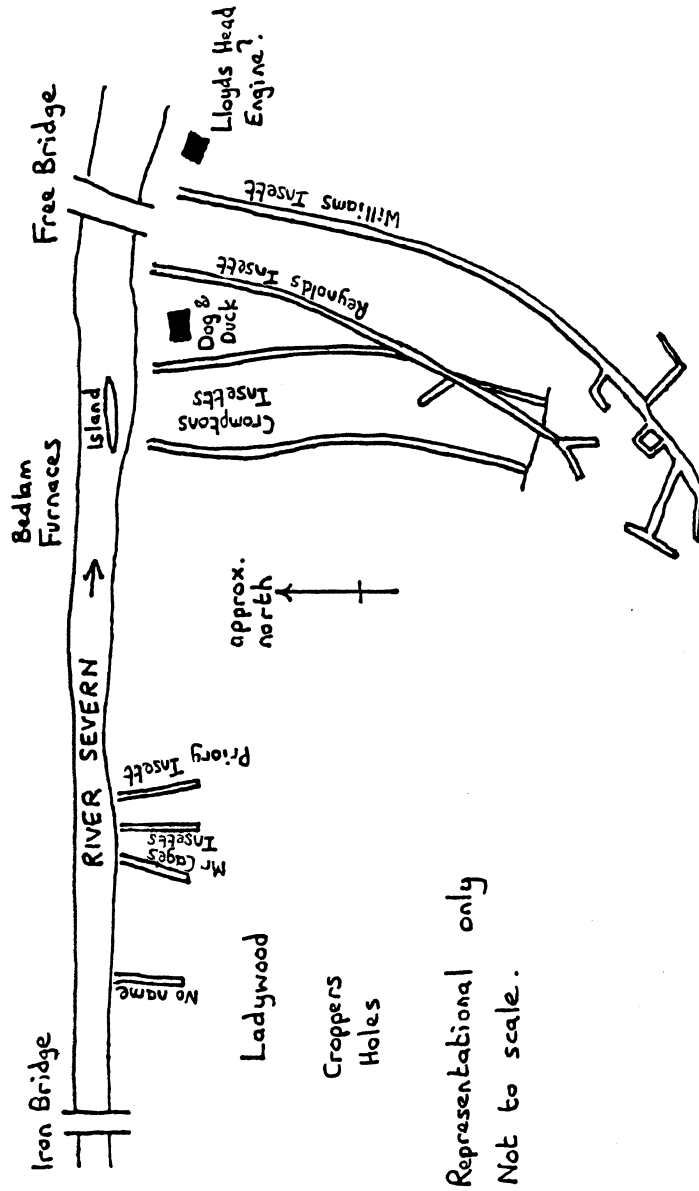


Fig. 1 - Mapped Insect Locations at Ironbridge Gorge in the 17th Century

several shafts including Calcutts Pit, which is recorded as early as 1588. It is known that working continued in the adits beyond 1679 (SRO 3703/10).

c) "A Description of ye Widdow Crompton's Insetts in Broseley taken Dec 6th 1675"

This is similar to the above map and is also signed "RH 1730". It shows two roughly parallel adits, each nearly 800yds long but varying in separation by 40-100yds (original measurements were in perches). At the mines end they seem to be connected by a 50yds long longwall face and there is also a fine drawing of a section along the adits showing the cover thickness to an undulating surface. This may be the first diagram of a longwall face and the first colliery section. These adits were situated on the upstream side of the Free Bridge. Until 1940, there was a pub here called the "Dog & Duck" which had an inscription "C - AM May 30 1634" reputedly recording Crompton-Adam and Margaret's marriage date. The house remained in this family for many years. Crompton's Insett appears to cross Reynolds Insett underground so it was likely that they were in different seams (SRO 3703/10). One of these insetts must have been (or been close to) the Ladywood Sough, still producing water, and described in SMC Journal 1973/74, p.19 as the Hairpin Bend Levels.

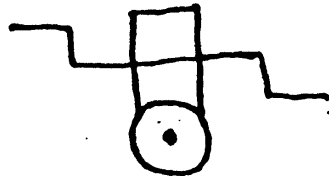
d) "A survey of several lands in the Lordship of Broseley, etc plotted by W C Anno Domini 1686" (SR01224/1/34)

This map does not show any underground workings but it is notable because it has a mine depicted by a form of hand winch on it (see Fig.2). The mine was situated between Benthall Brook and Cockshutt Lane, it is probably the earliest depiction of a Shropshire mine.

Notes

1. 17th century Shropshire terms for mine workings are very interesting, e.g. an adit can be a Footridd, Insett, Waggonwaye, Gatewaye, Comegate Waye or Windway. Surface routes are usually shown as Horseway, Wayboard or Railroad. Inclined planes were Tylling Rails and drainage levels were Soughs, Suphs or Sows. A mine would be shown as a Pit, Delph, Gin or Head.

2. From 1700 the maps became more sophisticated, that of 1728 mentioned in the report shows five workings, one at Woonhay being particularly complicated.



"A Cole Pitt & yards Shafte within Mr Welds Land"

Fig.2 - Probably the First Description of a Shropshire Mine - 1686.

3. The report also describes two late 18th century or early 19th century pumping houses now used as dwellings at Jackfield The Tuckies Hill enginehouse has been proved to be a pumping house but the Lloyds Head enginehouse, although it certainly looks like one, has yet to be proved.

The authors of the report have also produced two books which provide background detail for the above. These are

"The Landscape of Industry", 1993 Routledge

"English Heritage Book of the Ironbridge Gorge", 1993 Batsford.

(First published in Shropshire Caving and Mining Club Annual Journal, No. 3)



JOHN BYNG'S VISITS TO BROSELEY

by Neil Clarke

John Byng, later fifth Viscount Torrington, was one of the most enthusiastic of late 18th century travellers in this country. He was born in 1743 and made his career as an army officer. On his retirement as Lieutenant-Colonel he took up an undemanding post in the Inland Revenue at Somerset House which gave him the time to embark on long tours of England and Wales between the years 1781 and 1794. The accounts he wrote of these were unpublished for over a century until C. B. Andrews brought out his 4-volume work, *The Torrington Diaries*, between 1934 and 1938.

Byng visited the Ironbridge Gorge on his two tours of North Wales, on the return leg in 1784 and on the outward journey in 1793, and on both occasions he passed through Broseley. In his accounts of these visits, which are given below, he is clearly impressed with the industrial developments in the area and comments on their impact on the local population and the environment.

1784

Byng travelled from Shrewsbury on Tuesday, 20 July 1784, and first visited Buildwas Abbey, noting the '*noble remains.., which are more perfect than most I have seen.*' He then proceeded to the Ironbridge Gorge which he described as follows:

All this vale is a most sumptuous garden, so water'd, so wooded, and so studded with good houses. The village of Madeley, comprehending hundreds of detached houses, with the river, woods, rocks, shipping, &c., &c., reminded me of the drawings of a Chinese town, as the same indiscriminate jumble of beauties. But of the iron bridge over the Severn, which we cross'd and where we stop'd for half an hour, what shall I say? That it must be the admiration, as it is one of the wonders, of the world. It was cast in the year 1778; the arch is 100 feet wide, and 55 feet from the top of the water, and the whole length is 100 yards: the county agreed with the founder to finish it for 6000£; and have, meanly, made him suffer for his noble undertaking. After this survey, we entered Mr. Bank's iron furnace (on the hillside) and were, most civilly, shewe'd by him all the astonishing progress of such (hellish hot) manufactories: he employes about 700 workmen, & said there were 7 other neighbouring furnaces of the same size; judge then of the flourishing state of this branch of trade,

and how it must enrich this vicinage and the kingdom. Every cart belonging to this trade is made of iron, and even the ruts of the road are shod with iron.

Closely adjoining to these works is the town of Broseley, which bears all the marks of content, increase, and riches, not owing only to the iron business, but to a most flourishing pottery and porcelain manufactory. The whole hill is a mine of coals, and people do not go ten yards for their coals. The face of the country is charming and so it continues by the village of Linley to Bridgnorth.

Byng's account of the 'iron bridge over the Severn' is the only source to mention a link between the county authorities and the building of the bridge. It is probably inaccurate since the minute book of the proprietors of the bridge records no such connection.

'Mr. Bank's iron furnace' was at the Benthall Ironworks, situated in the valley of the Benthall Brook. The furnaces, in blast from the late 1770s, specialised in pig iron for castings, much of which was consumed in the works own foundry. The ironworks was operated by the partnership of Edward Harries, William Banks and John Onions. The '7 other neighbouring furnaces of the same size' would have included those at Calcutts, Coalbrookdale, Madeley Wood (Bedlam) and New Willey ironworks.

'The flourishing pottery and porcelain manufactory' is a reference to the Salopian Porcelain Manufactory founded at Caughley by Thomas Turner which came into production in 1775.

1793

Byng's second visit to the Ironbridge Gorge was on Saturday, 20 July 1793. In his words,

As soon as possible, 7 o'clock, hurrying from Wenlock [Swan and Falcon Inn]... I took the road to Broseley... Near to Broseley, where the potteries abound, I came upon the hill above the Severn; and descended, upon crack'd pitchers, amidst iron forges to the iron bridge - and now I saw my error, in not pushing forward yesterday evening to the Tontine Inn here, where I and my horses had been in luxury.

I breakfasted upon a nice hot roll, first time, and then seated myself upon the rivers bank, whose water is very low. It is now 9 years since I rode this way with Mr. T Palmer: And any tourist may observe, after 9 years absence, the diminution of the woods and timber and how yearly the

country becomes bare and woodless. There is an old inn at Buildwas, bad enough, but some degrees better than Wenlock. The old bridge of Buildwas is now rebuilding and the river is crossed by a temporary bridge.

In this passage Byng displays the traveller's preoccupation with overnight accommodation and food. Of the three hostelries he visited in the area, he was particularly complimentary about the Tontine at Ironbridge, but critical of the inn at Buildwas (probably next to the bridge, now Bridge House) and damning of the Swan and Falcon Inn at Much Wenlock, where he had spent a most uncomfortable previous night. Byng mentions the potteries around Broseley and pottery waste he came across on the descent down Bridge Road to the Iron Bridge; no doubt references to the activities of the Thursfield family at Haybrook (Posenhall), Benthall and Pitch Yard. The iron forges were those at Benthall Ironworks, which he had admired so much on his previous visit. Complaints about the obstructions on Bridge Road caused by waste material from the pottery and iron works were common at the time. The repairs to Buildwas Bridge which Byng refers to were those carried out by Thomas Telford to the old medieval bridge shortly before it was swept away in the tremendous winter floods of 1794-95. Telford's new cast iron bridge was completed in 1796.

John Byng was one of many tourists drawn to the Ironbridge Gorge in the late 18th century. His remarks about the ironworks, coal mines, pottery and porcelain factories in and around Broseley at that time are of particular interest. Byng's last tour was in 1794; he retired from the civil service in 1799 and died in January 1813, only a few weeks after inheriting the Torrington title from his brother.

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF LIFE IN BROSELEY

No. 37 Church Street in the 1930s

by Betty Caswell

My paternal grandfather, John Edwards, kept a front room grocery shop in the premises of 37 Church Street, Broseley with his wife Elizabeth neé Chadwick). The building had formerly been The Crown Pub with the deeds going back to 1748. The shop remained a shop until 11th July 1987.

Grandfather had four sons, Percy, Cyril, Sydney my father, and Will. Percy, the eldest son, was killed in W.W.I. Will lived in London with his wife Elsie and his daughter Margaret. Cyril who was unmarried helped with the running of the shop until his untimely death in Broseley Cottage Hospital in 1937 with peritonitis.

At this juncture my grandparents decided to retire from the business and to live in the cottage adjoining the shop. (It was possible to move between the two properties by means of the attics.)

My father and his wife Ada decided to move from Kidderminster to manage the family business in Church Street. I was then six years of age and my brother Denys was then 6 months.

A change of lifestyle was inevitable for us. My father had been a qualified teacher of senior pupils and now, instead of living on a suburban estate in Kidderminster with the modern amenities of a flush toilet, a gas stove, a Triplex Range, refuse disposal and electric light, we suddenly moved back in time to my father's place of birth where little had changed over the years. However, he was a devoted son and he was keen to carry on the grocery business.

The amenities here in Broseley in the 1930s seemed primitive, particularly in the cold weather. There was a two-holer privy in the backyard with cut newspaper squares hanging on a string and there were chamber pots and 'candles to bed' upstairs. There was a sink and cold tap in the kitchen and a disused pump and a substantial well on the backyard.

In the living room we had some sort of open fire and side ovens. It was a rather cramped living space partitioned off from the shop area. The partition was made of wood and had a door at the far end of it with a convenient spy-hole in it. Grandma used the spy-hole frequently to sort out any customers good for a gossip. (She was a great conversationalist was my grandma.)

Also in the living room was a large clock high up on the wall together with an imposing picture of a person I always thought was God. Later I was to learn that it was a portrait of the Mona Lisa.

Leading off this room were stairs to a larger room at the back of the house called 'The Big Room' and rarely used. Another door from the living room when unlatched revealed a flight of the steepest stairs ever made for little legs to negotiate to bed.

But oh, the horrors that one encountered en route. There seemed a multitude of dark and dingy closed off rooms that spelt terror in the candlelight. I hated going to my bedroom, which had a horribly sloping floor with a wedge under the front legs of the bed to stop it sliding into the wall. To add to this, the cockerel in the fowl pen up the yard would be forever trying to wake me at an all too early hour.

That fowl pen was a constant source of enjoyment for me. We had a collie dog called Bobbie and whenever I got the opportunity I would secretly let him into the fowl pen to chase that noisy cockerel. Such are the naughty tricks that were played by six year olds in the 1930s.

Outside in that backyard the well was a constant source of worry to my mother. My brother had reached the crawling stage and was often poised over the well area and ready to peer inside whenever possible. The water from the well was constantly in use, particularly on Monday washday when Lizzie Chadwick (grandma's unmarried sister) would come in her sack apron to do the big wash in the brewhouse up the yard.

She would fill the copper at an early hour with water from the well and then heat it up for washing; and later used it for cleaning the floors in the house and for eventually swilling down the yard that sloped ominously down to the kitchen doorway.

Incidentally, the cellar under the house was often full of water and was yet another source of worry for parents with a small child to look after along with the shop.

The shop area was, I understand, the site of the bar in former days. This shop was a great challenge to my father. There were yet more hazards for young children here. There was the bacon slicer and sharp knives around for meats, butters and cheeses. They were lethal instruments that have no place these days in small grocery shops. Packaging removes so many of these problems. Sugar would arrive in great bags requiring weighing out into packets.

The sweets and chocolate of the shop were a great temptation to youngsters such as myself and to my great friend Margaret who lived next door but one up the street. Margaret, used to eat bread and lard

whilst sitting on the curb out on the roadside. I loved to sit with her near the standpipe there but when I asked for similar food at home I was greeted with an abrupt reply.

Immediately next door lived Jonty Powell, who was forever leaning over our wall to pass the time of day. He was a very old gent who constantly wore a battered panama hat and smoked an old clay pipe-a Broseley one, of course. He had a son looking slightly younger than himself called Jack. The Powell's house was situated on the end of a long row of derelict-looking houses, in fact that seems to be my general impression of Broseley in the 1930s.

As for further afield in Broseley itself, I have but little recollection. I remember attending the local school and that my class teacher was Miss Smallman. I was on one occasion allowed to ring the school bell before school began, a great honour indeed.

I also remember my godmother Lil, who lived at the top end of Broseley with her husband Dick Hudson the local barber. What a shop that was. The barbering seemed to be carried on under the premises itself down a long flight of steps into the bowels of the building. Young children pick up strange impressions of place, I feel.

However I shall always remember popping across the road to play with a boy called Raymond Molyneux. His Mother was called Trudy and his grandma was Mrs. Taylor.

Raymond was the apple of his grandmother's eye and seemed to be fairly indulged in judging by the enormous toy cupboard under the stairs full of the most wonderful toys. I loved to rummage in there until I found his large spinning top that hummed away when pumped up. Instone's the butchers, a little further up Church Street, seems to have featured quite vividly in my early days with its sawdust covered floor to kick about in whilst waiting for grandma to have her little chat.

This part of my early years seemed to come quite suddenly to an abrupt end when my parents announced that we were moving to Wiltshire for my father to take up a teaching post once again. Grandfather's other son Will and his family then took over the business and remained there for a considerable time. Later, of course, Margaret's charming French husband Jean Mazeau, whom many will remember with affection, took over the business.

My family had actually moved away when my grandfather Edwards died and we returned for the funeral. We had to sleep in the cottage overnight on mattresses on the floor in the living room. My grandfather was traditionally 'lying in state' in the bedroom next door. We were

encouraged to pay our respects before the lid was closed down and the beer was brought up from the Church for his last journey. Our curtains were discreetly drawn as they were in the other houses in Church Street, and black arm bands were the order of the day.

I can remember the piles of wreaths that were resting in the building in front of his cottage, most of them containing white chrysanthus. I have never been fond of them since.

And now after some 60 years, I was privileged to revisit 37 Church Street due to the kindness of Liz Mars who now lives there.

I was delighted to visit and to witness such a pleasing on-going restoration. I was charmed with it. The living room-kitchen area was now spacious and inviting. It had a relaxed country-kitchen feel to it. Gone was that match board partition and also the shop counter. Much boarding up of the large pub fireplace behind this counter had been removed. I had never even been aware of this fireplace.

The boxed-in staircase was now open and much less forbidding. And as for that bedroom that I had disliked sleeping in, I now found it to be larger than previously, due to the eradication of yet more boarding.

Stairs leading into the attics of the house were now revealed to expose a wealth of lovely beams and three bedroom areas. I loved the transformation of what was to me a quite frightening era of my childhood memories of life in Broseley.



No. 37 Church Street, Broseley (c 1930)
Edwards Grocery Shop

William Doughty

by Rex Key

Libby Key, secretary of the Friends of Ironbridge Gorge Museum, organised a treasure hunt in Broseley during last summer. While looking for suitable subjects about which to pose questions, she noticed a gravestone in Broseley Baptist Church graveyard recording that a William Doughty died in 1861 as the result of a gas explosion at the Bridgnorth Gas Works. The Wellington Journal for that time recorded Mr Doughty's sad demise thus:

BURSTING AND BLOW-UP OF THE NEW GASOMETER

On Tuesday evening, about nine o'clock, the upper town was alarmed by a violent and reverberating shock as of an earthquake, which affected many of the houses, and the cause was soon ascertained to be the explosion of the gasometer now in course of erection at the Works, near the Friars, and adjoining the Severn.

The body of a workman, named Doughty, was found lying dead, and much bruised and mangled, in an adjoining field, where part of the debris and the top of the gasometer had been blown by the force of the explosion. On Wednesday the inquest was held in the Council-chamber of the Guildhall, by Mr Batte, coroner, on view of the body of Wm. Doughty, aged 25, a stoker at the Gas Works.

The following gentlemen were sworn on the inquest viz. George Fisher, James Brown, Thos. Dowell, Edwin Nock, T.O. Burrows, H.T. Langford, George Young, T. M. Deighton, E.F Brown, Wm. Jehu, George Callant, Joseph Cobb, Wm. Pidduck, and John Lacey.

After the jury had been sworn they, with the coroner, proceeded to view the body, which had been removed to the old Friars' Inn, near the spot of the calamity, and returned to the Council-chamber, when the following witnesses were examined, viz: Robert Gill; I reside at the Gas Works, and am a fitter. I knew the deceased Wm. Doughty; he was 25, and was a stoker at the gas house. He had been a fireman at Mr Pugh's of Coalport, before he came here; he was a sober man; his duty was to charge the retorts and furnaces. I inspect the gas making, have been connected with it 15 years, but have only undertaken it down there since

the 1st of May last.

At twenty minutes to 9 the deceased came to me at my warehouse in Bank-street. The explosion occurred about nine o'clock. I immediately went down, and saw the deceased's body in the field adjoining the works, about two yards from the top of the gasometer; he was quite dead. I was only three minutes in getting down to the spot. It was a new gasometer, which had never been filled, and had been used for the first time on Saturday last. It contained 3,000 or 4,000 feet of gas and atmospheric air combined. Deceased was there for the purpose of letting the air out, which if it had been done, a permanent plug would afterwards have been put in. Deceased had spoken of getting the gasometer in use by next Saturday.

I found a piece of tobacco-pipe between his teeth after he was dead, and concluded that he had been smoking. He had matches upon him. Gas and common air will ignite more readily than gas itself. It might have been caused by his lighting a match to ignite his pipe.

He was looked upon as a very careful man; and the effect was purely accidental. It is not at all likely that he was trying an experiment (the scale was too large a one). He was strictly a sober man; and there was no danger in what he was going to do; provided there was no fire about.

William Penn: I am a gasfitter from Dawley Green and have been employed here six weeks in erecting the new gasometer. There was no faults whatever in the make or the strength of it, nor in the manner in which it was put up. Saw the deceased in the gas yard at eight o'clock at night when I left; he was quite sober. He had no occasion to do what he did, as I had previously let out the air myself before I left the work. A pipe could not have done it, though the light of a match would; he must have had a flame. I had cautioned him the same evening to take no light near it. I said, "William take care you bring no light near this vessel till we have got the foul air out." This was about four o'clock in the afternoon. The gasometer was 35 feet across and 8 feet deep. It would hold one hundred thousand gallons of water.

After an address from the coroner to the jury, who, during the investigation, made many scientific remarks; a unanimous verdict was returned of "Accidentally killed by the explosion of the gasometer".



William Doughty's Grave Stone in the Broseley Baptist Chapel Graveyard



22 HIGH STREET ²¹¹²
 BROSELEY, Salop

M ^{Aug. 1943} *R. Smith*
Joe Lane

Bought of
Exors. of FRED OAKLEY

COAL MERCHANT Terms: Net Cash

Take notice that you are to receive herewith of Coal.....tons.....cwt.....qrs.
 in.....sacks, each containing.....cwt.....

	T.	C.	Q.	Description	Rate	£	s.	d.
GROSS								
TAXE								
NETT	1-1-2			Best Nut	58/-	2	18	0

"When coal is delivered by means of a vehicle, the seller must deliver or send by post or otherwise, to the purchaser or his servant, before any part of the coal is unloaded, a ticket or note in this form.
 "Any seller of coal who delivers a less quantity than is stated on this note is liable to a fine.
 "Any person attending on a vehicle used for the delivery of coal who has received a ticket or note for the delivery to the purchaser, refuses or neglects to deliver it to the purchaser or his servant, is liable to a fine"—Weights and Measures Act, 1908.

Delivered by *H. Smith 1943*
 Received by *W. Lane*

