BROSELEY
LOCAL HISTORY
SOCIETY

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EDITORIAL

Broseley Local History 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 beginning at 7.30 pm, at Broseley Social Club; and annual events include a spring walk, summer outing, and a winter dinner. Members receive a quarterly newsletter and an annual journal. The Society's collection of artefacts is at present in storage, with some items on display at Broseley Cemetery Chapel.

The Society has a web site which contains information about Broseley, copies of the newsletter and articles from previous journals. This can be found at *www.broseley.org.uk*

The Journal

The journal is published annually. The four articles in this issue represent the ongoing research of Society members and others, and we are grateful to individual contributors Our thanks also to Steve Dewhirst for design and typesetting.

Contributions for the next issue would be welcome and should be sent to the editor, Neil Clarke, Cranleigh, Little Wenlock, TF6 5BH.

James Clifford (1534-1613)

by Rose Hewlett

James Clifford was born (probably in Frampton on Severn, Gloucestershire) in 1534, the year that Henry VIII broke with Rome and founded the Church of England.[1]

The Clifford family can trace their ancestry in Frampton to 1086, with Walter de Clifford holding the manor during the middle part of the twelfth century.[2] The most famous of James Clifford's ancestors was Walter's daughter Jane, who became the favourite mistress of Henry II. The King named her Rosa Mundi; we remember her as the legendary 'Fair Rosamund'. James' line descends from William de Clifford, a freeholder noted in a commoning agreement of 1302, and his lands formed the nucleus of the Frampton Court estate which the Clifford family still own today, although much extended and once again inclusive of the manorial lands.[3]

In 1558, at the age of 24, James inherited his father Henry's estate which also included the manors of neighbouring Fretherne, Swindon (a small village north of Cheltenham), Boulsden (near Newent) and two thirds of the manor of Broseley in Shropshire.[4] His Broseley holding, together with the advowson of the church there, had been added to the Clifford's estate through James' grandfather, another James, who had married Ann Harewell, sister and heir to Thomas Harewell.[5] It seems likely that Ann, (who later married Nicholas Wykes), was influential in James' upbringing and in 1568 James was the main beneficiary and executor of her will.[6] His mother Mabel was the daughter of Sir John Walsh of Little Sodbury, Gloucestershire.

James Clifford's tenure as head of the family started the same year as the accession of Elizabeth I, and ended ten years after her death with his own in 1613. He was truly of the Elizabethan age, the golden age of hope, expectation, exploration and pioneers. James was the eldest of eight children, with brothers George, John, William, Thomas and Ferdinand and sisters Jane and Ann.[7] His distant cousins, the Earls of Cumberland, were clearly well known to him for he appointed the 4th and 5th Earls as overseers to his will, and it may have been through this connection that he was introduced to the court of Elizabeth I.[8]

James was an officer of the Queen's household, and is said to have built a very sumptuous house at Fretherne for her reception during one of her progresses. Some sources cite the Queen's progress to Bristol in 1574,

others give 1598, the date of one of the chimney pieces. What is known is that she never actually stayed there. With commanding views over the river Severn and a small park, Fretherne Lodge was described as a pleasant large stone house, with turrets, a noble staircase of freestone and two very fine chimney pieces carved in stone. Assessed for 14 hearths in 1672 it was largely demolished c. 1755.[9]

James appears to have divided his time between Shropshire, Gloucestershire and the court of Elizabeth I. His visits to London almost certainly included the Accession Day Tilts on 17 November which celebrated the anniversary of the Queen's accession and marked the beginning of the winter season. This was the time of year when all the leading figures of Elizabethan society were in town, no doubt James among them, and he must have been especially proud to see his cousin, George Clifford the 3rd Earl of Cumberland, wearing Elizabeth I's jewelled glove in his plumed hat as champion of the tilt.

The 3rd Earl of Cumberland was also a naval commander and adventurer and he commanded the royal ship, the Elizabeth Bonaventure, against the Spanish Armada in 1588 before personally carrying news of the English triumph to the Queen.[10] It therefore comes as no surprise that James Clifford contributed £25 towards the defence of the country against the threat of the Spanish Invasion.[11]

Perhaps through his grandmother's Shropshire connections, or maybe at the Elizabethan court, James came into contact with the Fox family of Ludlow who, following the Dissolution of the Monasteries, acquired considerable estates, most of which were lands of former monastic and religious institutions, paid for with their earnings as prominent lawyers at the courts of the Council in the Marches of Wales. In 1541, Charles Fox acquired the lease of Bromfield (just north of Ludlow) and its rectory, and converted the convent and part of the old priory church of St Mary into a house. The old chancel became his dining room with a bedroom above it. Part of his fireplace with his armorial bearings are still visible in the present-day chancel, and some of the ruins of his house can still be seen adjoining the church outside.[12] The nave remained the parish church, and it would have been here that James married Dorothy, the daughter of Charles Fox, on 6 November 1564.[13]

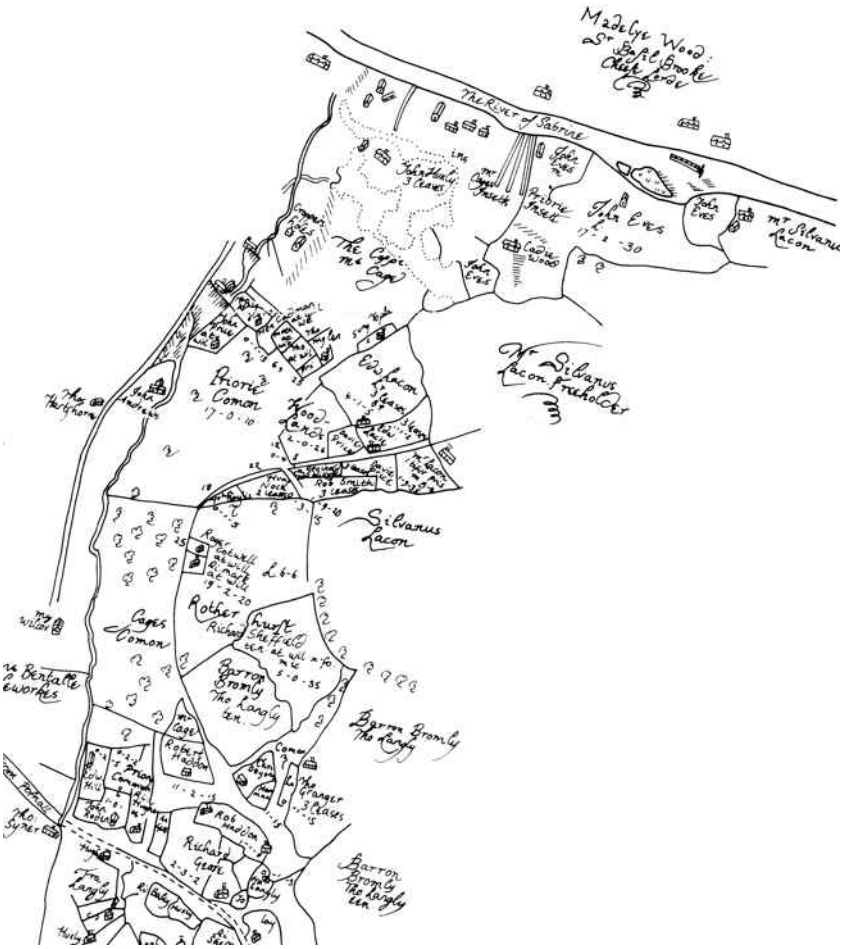
Initially James only held two thirds of the manor of Broseley, but sometime during the 1560s, he and Dorothy acquired the remaining third which had, until the Dissolution, been held by the Priory of Wenlock.[14] This purchase probably took place around the time of his marriage and may have been funded by his father-in-law, Charles Fox.

Coal mining in Broseley and its neighbourhood had been a small-scale, domestic affair since the Middle Ages, but with supplies of timber becoming increasingly low, the potential to exploit coal as an alternative form of fuel began to be realised at this time, notably by James Clifford who, having reunited the shares of the manor which had been separated since 1244, now had complete control of the manorial lands. Broseley lies on the southern edge of the East Shropshire coalfield and adits were dug directly into the coal seams from the hillside as well as shafts on the higher land where the Broseley fault brought the deposits close to the surface. Through the efforts of James Clifford and others the coming decades saw the market transform to become export-orientated.[15] With the Severn forming one of the parish boundaries, it was natural to use the river to transport the commodity out of the district and the earliest recorded cargo of coal landed at Worcester from the area was in 1570.[16] In the sixteenth century rivers were regarded as the main arteries of transport, much as motorways are used today, and for James, with land bordering the river at Broseley and Fretherne (a few miles south of Gloucester), the Severn and its trading ports would have been very familiar. Indeed, whenever possible, for ease and comfort James may have travelled between Gloucestershire and Shropshire on the river Severn, rather than by road.

Barges and the shallow, flat-bottomed trows transporting coal out of Broseley would often wait for a 'fresh', a rise in river levels, which followed rainfall in mid-Wales using their sails when winds were favourable. In order to navigate below Gloucester boats would wait, fully laden, to take advantage of the twice monthly sets of spring tides. Whilst it would take a minimum of a day to sail downriver from Broseley to Gloucester, the return journey was far longer and more arduous. The frequent south-westerly winds helped, but often the boats would have to be bow-hauled by teams of men, particularly against the fast flowing waters which reached their maximum speed as they passed through the Severn Gorge at Broseley.

The earliest record of James' coal mining activities in Broseley is 1575 when he was in trouble for dumping waste from his mines in the river Severn at The Tuckies, these days part of Jackfield, a small settlement which borders Broseley.[17] These were litigious times, and much of our knowledge of James comes from his dealings in the Star Chamber and other Courts.[18]

The parish of Broseley lies within the four-mile stretch of the Severn Gorge, today known as the Ironbridge Gorge. Its steep hillsides rise between three and four hundred feet above the river and transportation



Samuel Parsons 1621 map showing the insetts (mines) leading to the river at what is now called Ladywood. Priorie and Cages Commons were the areas settled by squatters.
(From fourth interim Nuffield Report Jackfield & Broseley, 1988.)

of the coal to the waiting boats was a difficult and dangerous process only possible when the pathways taken by the horses and oxen were passable. Either packhorses carrying two hundredweight each or fully laden wooden cartloads, which needed teams of horses or oxen to act as brakes, were used 'and many tymes their oxen horses or drawghte came to be spoyled in bad wayes and ill passage'. Gradually a system of wooden waggonways with inclined planes were built, and these may

Samuel Parsons 1621 map showing 'Priorie House' Clifford's Broseley home. The house has gone but the site is in a field just to the north of Dunge Farm. (From fourth interim Nuffield Report Jackfield & Broseley, 1988.)

have been the first of their kind in this country, the practice having been in operation in Germany since at least 1532. James' pioneering achievements in this field have, until recently, largely gone unnoticed as the earliest documented wooden waggonway in England, at Wollaton on the Nottingham coalfield, occurs in October 1604, when it appears as a new project, less than a year old. We first hear of James Clifford's waggonways in lawsuits concerning James and his rivals in the coal trade, Richard Willcox and William Wells, who have been sabotaging each other's lines in Broseley. These were heard in the Star Chamber in 1606 and 1608 and from the proceedings it is apparent that these waggonways in Broseley have been in existence from October 1605 and possibly some time before that, there appearing nothing novel in their existence.[19]

His opponents in this litigation also reveal that James brought to the district 'a nomber of lewd persons being the scummes and dregges of many countries from where they have bine banished and driven for their lewdness of life' and he allowed them to build cottages on irregular plots on his uninclosed commons and wastes at Broseley Wood, north of the ancient centre of the village. They worked in his mines, but were much disliked by the locals who resented the loss of their common rights and attacked the newcomers in riots in the years 1605-7.[20] The pathways dividing the settlement plots were known as jitties. Many of these survive and have recently been restored under a conservation programme. Today a sign commemorates James Clifford's efforts to encourage settlement of the original squatter community.

James himself lived in Priory House which he had built on land at the heart of the old medieval settlement of Broseley. A map of c. 1620 shows its position and that of its gardens. The house platform can still be identified in the field adjoining the present-day Dunge Farm.[21]

Meanwhile, James was also attending to his Gloucestershire estates and particularly his land bordering the Severn at Fretherne. This part of the estuary is notorious for shifting sandbanks and changes to the position of the deep water channel, causing land to be dramatically deposited or severely eroded on both banks of the river without notice. In c. 1579, in order to protect his newly gained warthlands which provided valuable grazing and were beginning to erode, James set about creating a great new sea defence which cost him a considerable amount of money.[22] Repairs and reinforcement of this breakwater (or crib as it was known locally) which was battered by the tides, were a constant drain on funds. Much of what we learn of it is through litigation during the 1630s when Charles I attempted unsuccessfully to claim ownership of new warths and the foreshore at Fretherne, Frampton and Saul, a parish which lay between the other two.[23]

James' manorial court for Fretherne may have also dealt with his Frampton estate and the actual proceedings are likely to have been held in Frampton where the Clifford's capital messuage was known from at least 1650 as Frampton Court.[24] Appearing to have been a medieval fortified house, the building lay on a moated site, which was garrisoned and damaged by Parliamentary troops during the Civil War.[25]This particular Frampton Court may well have been James' home prior to him building Fretherne Lodge, for his branch of the Clifford family have their main roots in Frampton. Nothing survives of this old building nor its successor of 1651; the current house dates to 1731.

The baptism of James and Dorothy's only child, their daughter Mary, has not been traced. As sole heir to James' estates she was potentially a wealthy woman, but whilst there is little evidence other than his fine house at Fretherne to suggest that James lived an extravagant lifestyle, his estates were not large and it is likely that he lived well beyond his means like so many of his contemporaries at the Elizabethan court. That, coupled with heavy investment in his coal-mining enterprise and his substantial outlay on sea defences at Fretherne, made him very short of ready cash, and the need arose to find a husband for Mary who could bring much needed money to ensure the security of the Shropshire and Gloucestershire estates.

By the mid 1590s James thought he had found the perfect match in a distant cousin of Mary's, Henry Clifford of Borscombe, head of the Wiltshire branch of the family, and from whom the Lords Clifford of Chudleigh are descended. On 20 January 1596 James executed an Indenture of Settlement by which all his property was secured to himself for life, then to Mary and her heirs, with reversion to James' brothers successively in tail male, and shortly afterwards the marriage between Henry and Mary took place.[26] James soon discovered that certain of his son-on-law's lands which he had been assured were included had, in fact, been excluded from the deed and, incensed at the deception, James appealed to the Court of Chancery to declare the transaction void. Subsequently an arrangement seems to have been arrived at and in 1603 a new indenture was executed. The marriage, however, did not last and in 1609 a decree of nullity was pronounced in the Ecclesiastical Court on the grounds of causata frigiditatis.[27]

Mary's second marriage to John Cage c. 1610 was to prove a greater success. Their meeting probably came about through James' connections at Court, Cage's maternal grandfather being Sir John Harte, a former Lord Mayor of London and one of the chief founders of the East India Company.[28] The Cage family were respected citizens and grocers of London, and John appears to have immediately understood the need for careful stewardship and management of James' estates which, by now, were in a very precarious position financially.

From 1608, James' coal-mining activities in Broseley appear to have been managed by John Huxley, son of the vicar of Broseley, who married James' niece, Mabel (the daughter of his brother Thomas) in 1609. The Huxleys became tenants of Priory House at this time.[29]

James' wife Dorothy appears to have died sometime after 7 April 1602 (when she was party to a deed) but her death and burial have not been traced.[30] Her brother, Sir Charles Fox, maintained close ties with James, and around 1610 an arrangement was made, by indenture, by which all the revenues of the estate were to be paid to Sir Charles and his son for a term of fifteen years with the object of paying off James' debts, assuring him of an income, and securing the inheritance of his heirs.[31]

On 28 October 1612, James Clifford of Fretherne 'being very aged' gathered his family around him and made his will. In 'good sound and perfect memory' he gave details of two bonds in the penal sums of £10,000 and £4,000 before listing various legacies totalling more than £890 to his Clifford relatives and his main servants after which, conscious of his debts, he wrote 'if my said goods and chattells will

extend so far, And if my goods will not extend so far as abovesaid, Then I wholly leave the same be disposed of to the parties abovesaid in such parts and portions as shall seem best to my said Executors or the most part of them'.[32]

On 1 June 1613, at the age of 79, the vicars of Frampton and Fretherne were called and in their presence James' will was confessed and allowed.[33] James was probably buried at Frampton alongside his wife Dorothy, but the parish registers do not survive for the period covering their deaths, and no memorial remains within the church which has undergone many internal alterations since that date.[34]

James financial affairs took many years and much litigation to unravel. Two of his executors, his kinsman Henry Clifford of Astwell, Northamptonshire, and William Morse, his 'servant' (who seems to have fulfilled the role of steward and who later married James' niece Rosamund), both resigned, leaving a nephew, James Clifford, who was conveniently identified as 'James Clifford preacher of the worde of God', to prove the will on 25 October 1613. As sole executor James, a puritan minister by then at Brockworth, near Gloucester, sought to recover the funeral expenses and the costs of a number of the legacies from Charles Fox in 1614 and a legal wrangle ensued. John and Mary Cage also presented complaints to the Court of Chancery against Sir Charles regarding his management of the estate revenues.[35] Other lengthy litigation followed involving several other parties.

James Clifford's place in history is of one who was prepared to risk his own money and that of others in pursuit of his endeavours to realise the potential of the coal deposits over which his land in Broseley lay. Through his leadership a system of transportation was devised to take coal from the face to the consumer via wooden waggonways in such quantity as to turn the small domestic market into an export-orientated one using the river Severn to full advantage. That others were prepared to provide substantial loans to James demonstrates their personal confidence in him at a time when the English coal-mining industry was developing at a rapid pace.

Like many entrepreneurs, he did not live to see large enough returns from his investments to pay off all his debts and, a few years after his death, it was necessary for his family to sell his estate and coal workings in Broseley to ensure the stability of his Gloucestershire holdings. Those that speculated in his Broseley land were to reap rich rewards, James having laid the foundations of a substantial and lucrative coal industry which fuelled the production of iron, pottery, china and tiles,

the raw materials of iron ore, limestone and clay all being found in Broseley and the surrounding towns and villages of the Severn Gorge. Today, within the Ironbridge area, James Clifford is deservedly recognised as having paved the way for the Industrial Revolution that was to start in Coalbrookdale in 1709, and which led to the social and economic transformation of Britain and its status within the world during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Notes and References

[1] The National Archives (TNA), C 142/118/59.

[2] C. R. Elrington and N. M. Herbert, eds., 'Frampton on Severn' in *A History of the County of Gloucestershire: volume X, Victoria County History* (London: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Historical Research, 1972), p. 143.

[3] Gloucestershire Archives (GA), D149/T100-170A (T113).

[4] TNA, C 142/118/59

[5] G. C. Baugh, ed., 'Broseley' in *A History of the County of Shropshire: volume X, Victoria County History* (London: Oxford University Press for the Institute of Historical Research, 1998), p. 267

[6] GA, 1568/1 (will of Ann Weekes of Fretherne).

[7] Pedigree of Clifford of Frampton copied from the Original of Robert Cooke, Clarenceux, 1567-92, Robert Glover, Somerset, 1571-88, and Edward Knight, Chester, 1574-92 'by mee (sic) Edmond Anguish' 1673, Frampton on Severn, Gloucestershire, held at Frampton Court, Frampton on Severn, Gloucestershire; GA, 1568/1.

[8] TNA, PROB 11/122/347.

[9] Sir Robert Atkyns, *The Ancient and Present State of Glostershire* (London: Bowyer, 1712, reprinted in facsimile Wakefield: E. P. Publishing Ltd. for Gloucestershire County Library, 1974), p. 444; Ralph Bigland, ed. by Brian Frith, *Historical, Monumental and Genealogical Collections Relative to the County of Gloucester, part 2* (Stroud, Glos: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd. for the Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, 1990), p. 625.

[10] Hugh Clifford, *The House of Clifford* (Chichester, Sussex: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 1987), p. 95

[11] GA, D149/F1.

[12] St Mary's, Bromfield, Guide Book; Local History/Fieldwork notes in kept in the church.

[13] Bromfield Parish Register in *Shropshire Parish Register Society, Diocese of Hereford, volume V, part I* (1903), p. 4.

[14] Baugh, pp. 267-68.

[15] Judith Alfrey and Catherine Clark, *The Landscape of Industry: Patterns of change in the Ironbridge Gorge* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 14.

[16] Barrie Trinder, *Barges & Bargemen: A Social History of the Upper Severn Navigation 1600-1900* (Chichester, Sussex: Phillimore & Co. Ltd., 2005), p. 73.

[17] Trinder, p. 29.

[18] Baugh, p. 274.

[19] M. J. T. Lewis, *Early Wooden Railways* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1974), pp. 89-110. For further debate see John New, 'Wollaton or Broseley? - The Gap Narrows', in *Early Railways 5*, ed. by David Gwyn (Long Melford, Suffolk: Six Martlets Publishing, 2014), 1-11.

[20] Baugh, p. 260.

[21] Baugh, p. 270.

[22] Warth is an old or dialect word for a river bank or a flat meadow beside a river or estuary, and is especially used to describe such lands along the Severn estuary.

[23] Berkeley Castle Muniments D4462/6/1; Stuart A. Moore, *A History of the Foreshore and the Law Relating Thereto: With a Hitherto Unpublished Treatise by Lord Hale, Lord Hale's 'de Jure Maris', and Hall's Essay on the Rights of the Crown in the Seashore* (London: Stevens & Haynes, 1888; reprinted in facsimile Clark, New Jersey: The Lawbook Exchange Ltd., 2006), pp.285-90.

[24] GA, D149/T1038

[25] Russell Howes, 'The Garrison of Gloucester in the Civil War', *Gloucestershire History, 23* (2009), 24-31 (27).

[26] Tail male limits the succession of property or title to male descendants.

[27] George B. Michell, *Fretherne, A Severnside Parish* (privately published from Michell's manuscript, 1952 and privately reproduced, 1994), pp. 13-14.

[28] Henry Chitty and John Phillipot, ed. by Sir John Maclean and W. C. Heane, *The Visitation of the County of Gloucester, taken in the year 1623* (London: Harleian Society, 1885), p. 34.

[29] Baugh, p. 270.

[30] GA, D2957/337/1.

[31] Michell, p. 14.

[32] TNA, PROB 11/122/347.

[33] TNA, PROB 11/122/347.

[34] Neither do the Fretherne registers survive for this period. Fretherne church was completely rebuilt 1846-47.

[35] Michell, pp. 14-15.

The Iron Bridge at the time of John Wilkinson's involvement

by David de Haan

(The Annual Wilkinson Lecture, given on 1st March 2017)

Much of the story is already known, but in his current work writing a definitive history of the Iron Bridge the author has found previously unpublished material, some of which sheds light on Wilkinson's involvement. Broseley residents have known all along that without Wilkinson and the businessmen of Broseley there would have been no Iron Bridge, yet as the second largest shareholder he clearly lost interest and got out of the project very early on. As a result he made very little money from his investment.

We have been told it had started with a letter, a story that has often been repeated. In 1773 the Shropshire architect Thomas Farnolls Pritchard was "in communication" with John Wilkinson and "suggested the practicability of constructing wide iron arches", or so the engineer Thomas Tredgold wrote following a meeting he'd had with Pritchard's grandson in 1824, but that was over 50 years after the event.[1] So far, however, despite Frank Dawson's, Janet Butler's and my research, no further evidence has been discovered of an *actual* letter from Pritchard. Nevertheless, the idea of a cast iron bridge was taken seriously and seized upon by the Shropshire ironmasters John Wilkinson and Abraham Darby III, and particularly by the businessmen of Broseley. Wilkinson had owned a house in Broseley for over 16 years and he had no trouble galvanising the local industrialists into supporting the bridge project. In 1773 Darby was only 23; Wilkinson was 45 and Pritchard was 50. The portrait of Pritchard in the Museum of Iron signed by C Blackberd shows him around this time.

At the time the town of Broseley was an important centre of about 4,000 inhabitants with its industries based on the local resources of coal, iron ore and clay. The limit to further growth was seen in the Severn, a natural barrier a mile or so to the north, but here was a possible solution. Buried in the small print of the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* for Saturday 26th February 1774 was a brief report which said "We hear the Inhabitants of Broseley and Madely Wood, intend petitioning Parliament for leave to build a bridge across the Severn, near Colebrooke-Dale. If comply'd with, 'tis said it will be made in cast-iron, in one arch, one hundred and twenty feet; which will be of great use to the inhabitants in the neighbourhood, and the country in general." A further meeting was held on 16th January 1775 to decide "on the properst Place for that Purpose" and to raise subscriptions. The newspaper reported in early February that

this method "will not only be the most Durable, but the Cheapest that has hitherto been made use of for that Purpose, and will not impede the Navigation whilst the Bridge is erecting."

Things went slowly at first and it took until the autumn of 1775 to raise enough subscriptions to cover the cost of applying for an Act of Parliament, mandatory for any bridge that crossed a navigable waterway. Pritchard's well-known design for an iron bridge (Fig 1) is dated October 1775,[2] but clearly there must have been something similar presented to these earlier meetings in Broseley to generate enough interest. The first formal meeting of the subscribers had been advertised in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* on 26th August 1775 and was held at Abraham Cannadine's house in Broseley on 15th September. Wilkinson was not present.

The Minutes of the Bridge Proprietors show that 19 of the 60 supporters of the 1775 petition that preceded the Act of Parliament were Broseley men: Richard Beard, Edward Blakeway, William Yelverton Davenport, George Forester, Charles Guest, Rev Edward Harries, Thomas Harries, John Hartshorn, Lennard Jennings, John Littlehales, George Matthews, John Morris, Michael Stephens senior, Michael Stephens junior, Thomas Stephens, Serjeant Roden, Daniel Rose, John Thursfield, and John Wilkinson. Moreover, ten of the 16 at the first meeting of the Iron Bridge Trustees were from Broseley and once the Act was secured in March 1776 eight of the 13 original shareholders were Broseley men: Blakeway, Guest, Edward Harries, Hartshorn, Jennings, Morris, Roden and Thursfield.

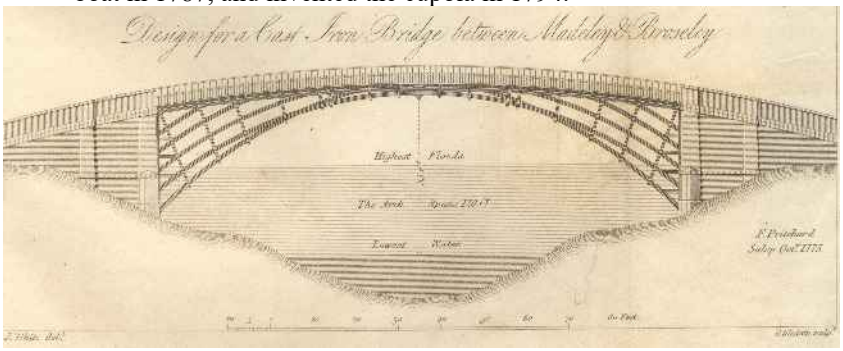
On 17th October 1775 Darby, then aged 25, agreed "to defray all the expenses of erecting the intended Bridge". In a comment made in July 1776 by Samuel More, Secretary to the Royal Society of Arts, it was clear Wilkinson had also made a related offer. Mr More recorded in his journal that if no one could tender for less than £2,000 "Mr Wilkinson has engaged to complete it for that sum."[3] But there were no applications to the advertisement seeking tenders, so Darby's offer was accepted.

In a cost estimate and list of subscribers of September 1775 Wilkinson is shown to have committed £630, equivalent to 12 shares at 50 guineas. The 64 shares at £50 (no longer guineas) were allotted on 20th October 1777 when he bought 12 shares, numbers 26-37, reducing his outlay to £600. He attended the day they were issued, but not again until nearly five years later on 7th June 1782 when his first dividend was paid – £2/7/6. He had sold two of his shares on 12th June 1780 to John Flint,

who controlled the stamps and post in Shrewsbury and had brought up Wilkinson's daughter Mary. He sold five more on 31st July 1781 to the barge owner Richard Beard, four on 12th June 1782 (two to Abiah Darby and two to Abraham Darby), and he sold his last share on 4th February 1808 to Edward Harper, an Attorney in Madeley. Five months later and a grand age of 80 Wilkinson died, possibly from diabetes. The early shares were sold for just a few pounds above their original value, but apart from the last one the prices of Wilkinson's sales are not recorded; he sold that one for £140.

Wilkinson wasn't alone in getting rid of his shares. In the short period between securing the Act of Parliament in 1776 and erecting the Bridge in 1779 13 of the 64 shares had already changed hands, with Leonard Jennings withdrawing from the project altogether in October 1778 and John Hartshorne in August 1781. Before the end of 1782 26 more shares would be sold. Some of the Trustees clearly had cold feet, while Darby sold 13 of his 15 shares to Richard Reynolds in July 1782 for reasons of his own worsening financial situation. Those that held on to their shares would see their investment pay handsomely.

The charismatic ironmaster had lost interest in the Iron Bridge very early on. Between October 1777 and June 1790 he only attend four out of the 35 meetings of the Bridge Proprietors, though at five other meetings between July 1785 and December 1807 he did send along a deputy (Cornelius Reynolds, his agent at Willey). His real interests were elsewhere and were clearly much more profitable. He was selling canon from 1774, supplying Boulton & Watt with steam engine cylinders from 1775-1795, engines and water pipes for the Paris water supply in 1779, involved in copper coinage throughout the 1780s, made the first iron boat in 1787, and invented the cupola in 1794.



Pritchard's design for a 120ft span cast iron bridge, 1775. There are few indications how it might be fixed together.

Pritchard must have built a model to excite the early Broseley meetings, which sadly does not survive. However, by 1777 it appears that he had revised the design which closely followed the proportions of his 1772 Bringewood Forge Bridge (Fig 2), built in stone some four miles west of Ludlow. He never saw the Iron Bridge built because he died on 23rd December 1777 aged 54, and though it had been reported in the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* his death was not mentioned in the Bridge Proprietors' Minutes. Nor was the decision recorded to abandon his original 120-foot span design and adopt the 100-foot span arrangement that was actually built, so he must have begun to redesign the structure before he died. His two shares were passed to his youngest brother Samuel, a hatter in Shrewsbury then aged 42, who never attended a meeting and who sold them in February 1779 to Samuel Thompson, assistant to the Secretary Thomas Addenbrooke, who in turn sold them to Joseph Rathbone in November 1781.

Pritchard's 50ft span bridge at Bringewood Forge, built 1772. Very similar to the shape used in the Iron Bridge.

In June 1777 Darby had put workmen on to build the Benthall road under the supervision of George Parker, and apart from a short stint under Charles Hornblower from July to September 1778 Parker continued throughout the following year right up till December 1779, so he was involved in completing the footings, the abutments and also the erection of the Bridge. We know from Hornblower that men were paid 14 shillings a week for charging the blast furnaces at Coalbrookdale[4] so can assume this is a typical wage for similar physical labour at the Bridge site. Excavating the coffer dams was more likely done by experienced miners. Abraham Darby's cashbook shows that the

foremen like Parker and Hornblower were paid 21 shillings a week. On the south bank all went smoothly on the construction of the foundations, but when they stretched a chain across the river to check the dimensions they discovered the north footing had been started out of parallel with the one on the opposite bank (Fig 3), its downstream end being narrower by two feet three inches! There must have been some angry words and red faces and the foreman probably was dismissed. Assuming this was Hornblower it explains why his role ended in early October 1777 and Parker resumed his position managing the gangs. Rather than start again they laid the remaining seven courses of stone blocks on a new line. Structurally it was not a problem and most of the time it would be out of sight below the water line. This mistake would occasionally be revealed in very dry summers.

Apart from the imported timber planks from Gdansk for the coffer dams everything else had been sourced locally, including the lime for the mortar which probably came from Darby's limekiln on Lincoln Hill for the north bank and from the Bower Yard limekilns for the south bank. The sandstone used for the south footings and abutments was cut from a quarry in Ladywood about 100 yards downstream and 75 yards up the hillside above the building site. It came from the Little Flint Coal Measures and was also available on the north bank where the same strata outcropped, so this was used for the north footings, with no need to ferry stone blocks across the, as yet, un-bridged river. This stone is softer than Grinshill sandstone – Shropshire's best building stone which can be seen in John Gwynn's Atcham Bridge of 1776 – but it only had to carry the dead weight of the cast iron, not to withstand the thrust of the arch, and sandstone is especially suited to areas that come in contact with water. On the north bank the quarry was below Hodge Bower near the Crown Inn but has long been built over, Charles Hornblower living on the road above it. The one in Ladywood was re-discovered in early 2000 and is still accessible with difficulty, and in March that year stone was quarried from it for repairs to the north abutment. It will be used again in the 2017-18 restoration project.

The castings were made in 1778, not in 1779 as had previously been thought, confirmed by the *Shrewsbury Chronicle* on 19th September, which states "On Saturday last [i.e.12th September] was cast at Coalbrook-Dale, one half of the first rib of the iron bridge, before a great concourse of spectators, being 71 feet and upwards, and weighs above six tons." The second half will have followed soon after to ensure the pair fitted together well. All the major castings including the ribs and the base plates must have been cast by 23rd October 1778 when Darby's

The original footings of the Iron Bridge were started out of line in 1777, seen her in 1974 prior to being buried under concrete.

account recorded the provision ale. Local wisdom has always said that the castings were made in the Old Furnace at Coalbrookdale, supported by Abraham Darby's name and the date 1777 cast into the furnace beam. This is further 'proven' by the wording on the arch which says 'This bridge was cast at Coalbrook Dale and erected in the year 1779'. However, at that time the entire Gorge was known as Coalbrookdale and if we include Horsehay Darby owned six furnaces in the area. It has also been assumed from this wording that the Bridge was both cast and erected in 1779. We now know that thanks to a diary of a French visitor, François de la Rochefoucauld, who was doing some industrial espionage in March 1784, that the Bridge was in fact cast at Bedlam Furnaces. He wrote: "We went first to the foundry where the iron bridge was made. At this place the Severn runs through a deep gorge" [such a description could not be applied to either of the two Coalbrookdale furnaces]. The first man we'd spoken to is the one who worked first on the iron bridge; he had made a model of it in mahogany, which he showed us." This was the 45-year old Thomas Gregory who had completed the model that winter, and which is now on display in the

Museum of Iron. Convincingly, De Loutherbourg's famous painting of Beldam is titled 'A View of Coalbrook Dale by Night'.

There is evidence of an experiment on the physical properties of one of the ribs of the Bridge before it was erected. Abraham Darby II's grandson William Reynolds had written a letter to his brother-in-law William Rathbone, in which he described the effect of vibrations on "a piece of the Bridge 70 feet long, 9 by 6 In square".[5] So this must have been one of the recently-cast ribs in late 1778 or early 1779, before they were erected. William Reynolds was well connected in the world of polymath 'natural philosophers' of the Enlightenment. He had been walking up the Dale in the company of Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) and Richard Lovell Edgworth (1744-1817), both of them Lunar Society members and Fellows of the Royal Society – Darwin the doctor, inventor and poet (grandfather of Charles Darwin), and Edgworth a gentleman inventor who Reynolds described in the letter as "the famous mechanic". Edgworth suggested that a small but sustained vibration would grow to a dangerous strength, which he then demonstrated. The Bridge casting was supported on two bearers each about a third of the way in from the end – Reynolds included a diagram in his letter – and Edgworth placed his finger on the middle of the beam "pressing upon it so as to move it a very little" and then let go. He then continued to press repeatedly and what had been a slight bending at first gradually increased "to give a very considerable play to the whole piece. I am not certain how much but believe had he continued the vibrations, he would have broken it."

We do know that a scaffold was used to erect the ribs because the text below one of the contemporary engravings states "… a large scaffold having been previously erected, each part of the Rib was elevated to a proper height by strong ropes and chains, and then lowered till the ends met in the centre. All the principle parts were erected in three Months without any accident either to the work or workmen, or the least obstruction to the Navigation of the River".[6] They were clearly proud of this safety record, though in 1780 the Madeley printer John Edmunds had written "that not any *material* accident happen'd" (my italics), suggesting there had been at least some mishaps. A small watercolour of the scaffold was discovered in Stockholm in the 1990s by Swedish painter and engraver Elias Martin (1739-1818)[7], so far the only known view of the Bridge under construction. He had been in England since 1768, enrolling as a student at the Royal Academy of Arts the following year. He returned to Sweden in 1780 and in 1785 became professor of

Bridgwater Bridge of 1794 designed by Thomas Gregory, which survived until 1883. Many of the details are the same as the Iron Bridge.

landscape painting at the Konstakademien, the Swedish Royal Academy of Arts.

Architects were generally very sceptical about the use of cast iron for bridges and there was no rush for new orders from the Coalbrookdale foundry. However, on 14th April 1794 *Aris's Birmingham Gazette* confirmed that the Company was casting a bridge for the Marquis of Stafford for his Trentham estate, vestiges of which still survive in situ. He owned considerable mineral rights in the Shropshire Coalfield and was a shareholder in the Shropshire Canal, so was well aware of the Iron Bridge and the Darby family's ironworks. Discussion had begun on 1st July 1793 between the Marquis's agent Thomas Horwood and the Company, which resulted in quotations for three alternative estimates and designs of 90 feet span foot bridges of various widths. The general arrangement was similar to the scheme by Thomas Gregory of a bridge at Bridgwater, also designed in 1794. Darby had died in 1789 and as Gregory was the only member of the Coalbrookdale Works with iron bridge experience at that time, it is highly likely he designed the one for Trentham. Construction at Trentham began in the summer of 1794 and it was completed by December. The Coalbrookdale Company accounts show a bill of £69/4/3 for Thomas Thomas's expenses in erecting this bridge. It was a singe arch of 90 feet span and 6 feet wide crossing the

river Trent. The ironwork cost £610 and the total bill including transport came to £875/16/2½.

At the same time that the Trentham footbridge was being designed the Corporation of Bridgwater in Somerset were proposing a cast iron road bridge across the River Parrett. Apart from the Marquis of Stafford nobody else was taking the risk so early, but there were strong Quaker and family links with Coalbrookdale in Bridgwater, which must have influenced the decision. The engineer and later County Surveyor, Robert Anstice (1757-1845) had married Susanna Ball and her younger sister Hannah had married William Reynolds. The girl's father Joseph Ball (1729-1790) had run the London foundry that had previously belonged to Abraham Darby. The need was for a 75 feet span in the middle of the town. The necessary Act of Parliament had received royal approval on 23rd May 1793 and in 1794 Thomas Gregory visited the site. The ironwork was to be sent before the end of the year, but there were design changes and acrimonious negotiations between the Bridgwater committee and the Coalbrookdale Company, which delayed delivery until September 1795, the year it was cast. The opening did not take place until 1797 and was accompanied by an engraving published by Gregory on 6th July that year. Like its Shropshire predecessor it was 24 feet wide and also had five ribs and used the identical crown joint detail and railing finials as the Iron Bridge, confirming Gregory's contribution to the 1778 design (Fig 4). These were the last iron bridges that used the same construction techniques as the one over the Severn. The Iron Bridge had raised people's awareness to the potential of cast iron as a structural material, but its design methodology proved to be a dead end. Thomas Telford's Buildwas Bridge of 1796 was quite different and heralded the new approach.

At the Iron Bridge Trustees meeting of 6th December 1793 a dividend of four guineas a share was made. This brought the total paid out by this time to £53/15/6 a share, thus recouping the original £50 outlay per share in just 12 years. By this time, however, Wilkinson had sold 11 of his 12 shares so made very little out of his investment. By the time of his death in 1808 he had only earned £128/19/0 in dividends from his £600-worth of shares. But without him there would have been no Iron Bridge.

Notes and Refernces:

[1] Thomas Tredgold, 1824. *Practical essay on the strength of Cast-iron, and other materials* (2nd edition), footnote to pages 9-10.

[2] There is a paper frequently cited by Barrie Trinder and others titled 'On Cementitious

Architecture as applicable to the Construction of Bridges' by John White, published in 1832 in the *Philosophical Magazine*, Vol. XI, p183, No LXIII. However, this is actually about the new London Bridge. It was an earlier *Philosophical Magazine* paper by White in February that year that was about Pritchard and the use of iron in bridges – No LXII, paper X. It was titled 'Notice of Mr Pritchard's gradual Progress on the Application of Iron to the Erection of Bridges' and included an illustration of three designs dated respectively 1773, 1774 and 1775.

[3] Samuel More's Journal for 1776, private collection, cited in Dawson, *John Wilkinson, King of the Ironmasters*, 2012, p68.

[4] Hornblower's notebook, c1779, Derbyshire Records & Research L114/381; photocopy at IGMT Library, E2011.499.

[5] Rathbone Collection, Liverpool University, Letters from William Reynolds to William Rathbone and Mary Rathbone between 1777 and 1801. RP II.1.28-39.

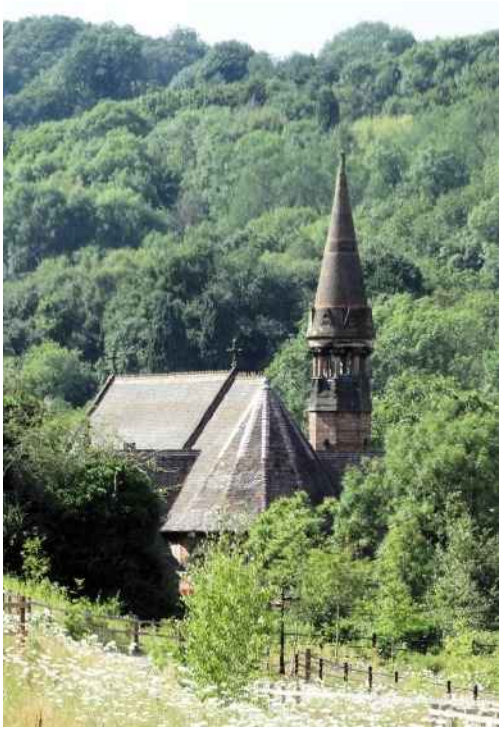
[6] 'The Iron Bridge cast at Coalbrookdale', engraving published by James Phillips, Lombard Street, London, 1782.

[7] The Masreliez Rooms, No 1 Salviigränd 1, Old Stockholm. Skandia Group. The watercolour is captioned 'Jern Bron vid Colbrook Dal, Schrop…', [Iron Bridge at Coalbrook Dale, Shropshire] 1779, by Elias Martin.

"For the Cure of Souls at Jackfield"

by Graham Hollox

The birth of St Mary's Church in Jackfield closely follows this death of one of Shropshire's most respected and loved citizens. George Pritchard. This extraordinary philanthropist, public servant, High Sheriff of Shropshire and the driving force bringing clean water to the district[1] contracted typhoid fever and died on Christmas Eve in 1861. In January 1862, a meeting chaired by the Mayor of Bridgnorth considered which of two subjects should be discussed first.[2] One was a petition to consider a memorial to George Pritchard; the other was a request following a letter from the Lord Mayor of London, to raise funds for a national memorial to the late Prince Albert. The overriding view from those present was that local matters were those in which interest was greater.



St Mary's Church, Jackfield (2017)

At that meeting, the Rev'd Dr Rowley from Willey said that Mr Pritchard had stated that it was his "*ardent desire and proudest wish to erect a Church in his native Parish*". Dr Rowley went on to say that "*he was sure that Bridgnorth, Broseley and Worfield would unite together with the object of erecting such a memorial to his deserving and much-lamented friend*". He had obviously well prepared the way for this discussion as he then stated that Mr Harries, the landowner (Broseley Estate) had agreed to give the site. Others at that meeting felt that the parishioners in Bridgnorth and Worfield would contribute to the required funds in view of the esteem in which Mr Pritchard was held.

It therefore appears that George Pritchard was the instigator of the scheme to erect a new church in Jackfield and Dr Rowley was the first person to propose this as a memorial for him, the church subsequently being named St Mary's. The concept of this memorial church rapidly became a very popular idea and replaced other suggestions which had included a memorial window in All Saints' Church, Broseley.[3]

By 19th February, a Committee of the Pritchard Testimonial had been formed.[4] At a Public meeting in Broseley, the Mayor stated that the Council would not entertain the question of a church in Jackfield unless Bridgnorth people were prepared to come forward with £1000, a proposal which their Town Council had firmly dismissed. However a few days later, presumably after some well-directed lobbying, this decision was reversed and Dr Rowley's proposal to call for subscribers was supported.

It is interesting to note also at that meeting, Mr George Maw also proposed that a separate fund be established "*to provide some other object to enable those who may have religious scruples against contributing to a church to unite in the memorial to Mr Pritchard*".

By this time George Pritchard's Will had become available. Dr Rowley quoted from this, stating "*I wish my brother, out of my property to apply such a sum as he may think fit in the better endowment of a church at Jackfield on condition that Jackfield be formed into a distinct district. The income shall not be less than £150 per annum..... appropriated in memory of our late father... .from his property*".

By February, the parish of Jackfield was created out of Broseley. While this is consistent with George Pritchard's wish, there is no doubt that this had been under consideration for some time. One earlier record in July 1859 reports that "*steps are being taken for the purpose of dividing the parish (of Broseley) so that Jackfield and Coalford may form separate districts. If this is effected, it is understood that funds will be forthcoming for the erection of a more commodious and conveniently situated church, the present being upon a hill far away from the population"*.[5] In Herefordshire Dioscesan Archives, the master drawing, approximately 2.1 m x 1m in size (approx 7ft x 3ft) of the "closes" or "tithe boundaries" to be included in Jackfield is dated 1861. This was presented to and approved by Queen Victoria at Osborn House on 5 February 1862.[6]

By the end of February, it was firmly concluded that "*that the Church at Jackfield should be built*" and "*that a memorial fountain be erected*

in Broseley to perpetuate the memory of the late George Pritchard Esq." [7]

By May, the funds devoted to the two objects in memory of Mr Pritchard had reached nearly £3000 and "*a design by Mr Blomfield had been selected for the Memorial Church in Jackfield*".[8] Arthur William Blomfield, son of the Bishop of London, was presumably well-known in the district through his involvement with restoration at Linley Church in 1858. One record shows that well over £3200 was eventually raised from over 150 private subscribers who gave amounts ranging from a guinea to hundreds of pounds. They came from all over Shropshire including Ludlow and Shrewsbury as well as more distant places including Aylesbury, Grantham, London, Tewkesbury and Wallingford.[9] It is difficult to judge how much £1 in 1863 is in today's money, but even the most conservative estimates suggest it is some £200.

Formalities regarding the erection of the Church had clearly been progressed beyond Broseley and Bridgnorth. On 19 July 1862, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners for England presented to Her Majesty Queen Victoria in Council at Osborn House, Isle of Wight, the ecclesiastically phrased "*scheme for making better provision for the cure of souls in certain parishes and districts*". This sought authorisation to provide capital sums for providing parsonage and living in certain benefices. Among the districts listed was Jackfield, which was apportioned a benefaction of £1000, a capital sum of £1000 and Annual payments of £66 13s. 4d.[10]

Things then moved forward rapidly. By the end of July, three tenders were received for erecting the Pritchard Memorial Church, namely from Mr Lovatt, Wolverhampton (£2484), Mr Exley, Broseley (£1850) and Messrs Nevett, Ironbridge,(£1677) and the latter had been accepted.[11]

On 16 October 1862, the Foundation Stone, containing a "time capsule" of coins of the realm and an inscription on parchment, was laid by Mrs John Pritchard.[12] At the time, George Pritchard's brother John was Member of Parliament for Bridgnorth.

Eddowes Journal summarises the day admirably[13]:
"*It may be in the recollection of the readers of the Journal that the generally expressed desire on the part of the admirers of the late George Pritchard, Esq. to erect some memorial in honour of that gentleman, culminated in a project which, from the papers of the deceased had left, was found to be in accordance with his own views, namely, that provision should be made for the spiritual destitution of*

Jackfield, or, at least, that a more suitable place of public worship should be provided than existed there at present. Very handsome donations for the purpose were at once offered with that view, and the erection of a church at Jackfield was agreed upon. The site fixed upon by the subscribers is one forming the very centre of a poverty-stricken neighbourhood, and where truly there is much need of some means by which the sympathies of the population can be reached, and enlisted on the side of truth, honesty and sobriety". It goes on to add that " The ground has been cleared for the building; from the excavations made an old pottery appears to have existed there; and the basement walls having been raised, the subscribers and friends of the undertaking met on Thursday last (16 October), in order to lay the foundation stone of the building. About 70 ladies and gentlemen assembled by invitation at the residence of John Pritchard, Esq M.P." prior to the ceremony.

It was a time for celebrations, not just for the families and friends of George Pritchard. Nevetts, the builders, treated their workmen to a substantial supper at the Ash Tree Inn to celebrate the laying of the foundation stone of the new Church.[14]

As building progressed, commentators recognised the design and colours of the church being pleasing and new in the neighbourhood. However, it was not without adverse comment from one journalist who stated that the only drawback he can find is that "*this site happens to be in the worst part of Jackfield*".[15] Jackfield was dominated by brick and tile works and a landscape of mining, waste and tips and factories. Around the sloping site were the scars of demolished houses and earthworks associated with the new GWR line, which also opened in 1862. To the north, the lively wharves lining the river bank had declined. The land immediately to the east had a history of subsidence. It is not difficult to imagine it as a desolate unattractive site, sandwiched between the railway lines and a track that is now Church Road.

One intriguing aspect of the records concerns the land transfer from Broseley Estate. The building started without the land having been formally transferred.[16] As early as 26 February 1862, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners had stated they were willing to accept a conveyance of land for the proposed new church subject to a satisfactory title being shown. Questions were raised that Mr Harries did not have the title, but this was overcome. On 10 April 1863 it was agreed that he could transfer his agreement to keep the old Jackfield church "*in repair and to find it with utensils and ornament*" to investing in the new church. In one letter of 4 July 1863, the language becomes undiplomatic with Harries writing to his solicitor that "*you had better get on with the*

Church site which must not be stopped however absurd some officials may be! Bosh!" On 21 July 1863, a letter from the authorities in London states that "*the description is unintelligible*" with errors in dimensions and asking for amendments to the drawing including that points of the compass were placed on it. They comment that "*we do not think you need have any fear about not being ready in time for consecration,*" a roundabout way of indicating their displeasure. On 31 July 1863, the Archdeacon of Hereford wrote to John Pritchard that the Deed of Conveyance had not yet been accepted and comments that "*I suppose everything is thoroughly understood and agreed to with regard to the ground on which the church is built, that no difficulty can be raised on the subject*". As late as 6 August 1863, the Church Commissioners issued a rather terse letter stating that the conveyance will be accepted "*as soon as the fees are paid*". The actual conveyance by Francis and Harriet Harries to the Church Commissioners, of the land on which the Church was to be built is dated 20th July 1863, rather late in the day, nine months after building commenced.[17]

There is even one cautionary letter from The Bishop's Office in Hereford dated 31 July 1863 stating "*...if the conveyance has arrived in due time, the Consecration can take place as agreed on Thursday the 20th August, which time the Bishop has proposed to Rev'd Lee. But we have found by experience what disappointments have occurred through times being fixed for such ceremonies until all preliminaries are settled as arranged.*" The Rev'd Henry Lee had been "licensed to the perpetual curacy of St Mary's Jackfield" on 15 July 1863.[18]

In the letters referred to above[19], there is an interesting recognition of the recent major change that had taken place in Jackfield. In connection with the consecration service, the Bishop writes "*that the hour of Service must depend on the arrival of a train at the nearest station in the Severn Valley railway and to allow one to return to Hereford upon it*". That letter also suggests that "*When Bradshaw's book for next month comes out, we must consult same to decide at what time of the service and arrange with Rev'd Lee accordingly*".

One further controversial matter during the building of the church concerns the bell. Late in July, "*a very numerous meeting of the inhabitants of Jackfield protested against taking down the old St Mary's or 'Red Church' which had stood for over 100 years, a feeling intensified by the removal of the bell and its quiet transference to the belfry of the Pritchard Memorial Church*."

The bell of Old St Mary's Church, now in Anglesey Abbey.

The persons present had the impression "*that the coal, ironstone and brick clay would eventually be got from under the church and graveyard and that this would most seriously desecrate the last resting place of their relations and friends*".[20] Their representations to the Bishop were met with the reply that the removal was not in compliance with his wish and instructions given to restore the bell to its original position, much to the satisfaction of the population.[21] It is difficult to understand fully the protest at that time because local people had recognised its state of decay and it seems that it had only been used intermittently for some years. There is still some mystery about the bell today. A request was made to Taylor's Bell Foundry in 1926 to install it in the Parish Church at Lode, Cambridgeshire but it was too large. It is now at the National Trust property of Anglesey Abbey in Cambridgeshire, having been bought by the owner in 1934.[22] There is a single bell in the new St Mary's, fixed rigid in a wooden trestle frame and this is rung by a clapper activated by a lever system and rope. It carries the inscription "G.MEARS & CO., FOUNDERS, LONDON, 1863,"so it is a product of this famous old Whitechapel foundry which closed last year after some 250 years of manufacturing on that site. The bell is 75cms diameter at the mouth and weighs approximately 250kg.

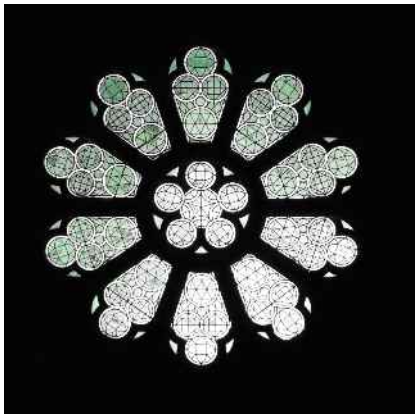
Despite all the problems, the consecration went ahead as planned. On 19 August 1863, a beautifully prepared ornate document on parchment, approximately 1000 x 600mm (3ft x 2ft) entitled "Petition to Consecrate St Mary's Church Jackfield" was formally sent to the Right Reverend Renn Dickson, Lord Bishop of Hereford.[23] This was signed by the Incumbent Henry Lee, the Churchwardens and twenty-one householders of Jackfield, representing a fascinating snapshot into Jackfield at the time. They represented the old and the new occupations and trades and included eight in brick and tile manufacturing, seven barge owners and watermen, including two who were publicans, three

more in the hostelry business, two in rope and sailmaking, a grocer and an annuitant from a family that had been involved in trade on the river before it declined. Many of the family names of those signing the petition will be recognised today in the district: Beard, Beddow, Boden, Burroughs, Culliss, Davis, Doughty, Harper, Harrington, Lloyd, Mapp, Miles, Oswell, Parker, Richards, Smith, Transom, and Williams.

The following day, an equally impressive and - to a layman - the strangely named formality of a "Sentence of Consecration" was presented by the Bishop, a document in similar style to that of the Petition.[24]

The Bishop's Register[25] for 20 August states that (without punctuation): "*The Right Revd Renn Dickson Lord Bishop of Hereford attended by his Chaplain and a numerous body of his Clergy his Secretary Deputy Registrar and Officers and many of the Principal Inhabitants of the District Chapelry of Jackfield in the County of Salop and Diocese of Hereford proceeded to the new church and at the principal entrance thereof the normal petition to the said Lord Bishop to Consecrate was presented to which the said Lord Bishop assented The said Lord Bishop and the congregation there assembled then proceeded from the west end of church towards the communion table the bishop and congregation repeating alternately verses of the 24th psalm after which the Bishop and Chaplain having placed themselves within the rails of the communion table the Bishop proceeded with the normal Service of Consecration which having concluded the Sentence of Consecration of the new church was read aloud and by the Lord Bishop and by him ordered to be registered*".

The newspaper reports of the event are detailed and the day was clearly a splendid occasion celebrated in great style, reporting the design of the church, the ceremony, the attendees and the subsequent celebrations. [26] In short:
"*The church which has been erected upon land the gift of F Harries Esq., upon his Jackfield Estate is a memorial to the late George Prichard Esq., the funds having been raised by the neighbouring gentry as a token of respect to their departed friend*". It then goes on to comment on detail of the design among which are that the columns of the tower are "*surmounted by beautifully carved Grinshill stone*", the Porch on the side having "*a very novel and striking appearance*", the arch being "*quite unique in character*", and the tracery on the wheel window being "*a very elaborate arrangement, believed to be quite new*".



Exterior and Interior view of the rose window at St Mary's Church

It also recognised gifts, among which were: "*the font, from the six godchildren of the late Mr George Pritchard; the oak lectern from Rev J Hammond; the oak altar table from R Thursfield Esq; the altar cloth of crimson velvet embroidered by Mrs Layton Lowndes from a design made expressly for the purpose by the architect Mr Blomfield*". The architect was complimented for adopting local materials and encouraging the manufacturers of the neighbourhood. The total cost was believed to be £2500.

After describing the service, the report goes to say record that some 300 persons were treated to a "*sumptuous lunch at Broseley Town Hall provided by the Lion Hotel*". Those attending clearly included the majority of influential people in the district but rather surprisingly, do not appear to include the architect although his Clerk of Works, Mr Henry Carter, was present.

The lunch included a number of appropriate toasts and speeches and several are worthy of special note:

The Lord Bishop responding to a toast "*expressed his gratitude to the Pritchard family and the Pritchard Testimonial Committee at the head of which was Mr Layton Lowndes*". In response Mr Lowndes commented that it had been a labour of love and congratulated Arthur Blomfield "*who has taken the greatest pains not only with the design but the minutest detail*", Messrs Nevitt of whom the Clerk of Works said "*that he had never met with builders so ready to carry out every suggestion he made*", and Mr Carter, the Clerk of Works who "*has seen*

every brick laid". He then proposed the health of the Rev'd Dr Rowley, who had first brought the desire of the church to public notice.

In his response to a toast, Mr John Pritchard stated that "*shortly after my brother's death, it was determined by his friends to perpetuate his memory and it was finally agreed that this should be done by the erection of a fountain for the supply of water to the poor of Broseley and of a church in the district and that as endowment was to be in memory of the father so the church should be to the memory of the son*".[27]

Clearly the Bishop did not get home by train that day as he and many of the clergy present attended a further service that evening. In his sermon, the Honourable and Rev'd O.W.W Forester commented that on this day the service had been removed to this excellent building from the schoolroom where he believed he had been the first to commence a service for the people of Jackfield some twenty years earlier.

From that date, St Mary's became the Parish Church of Jackfield. The first Sunday service was on 23rd August 1863 at which seven children were baptised, the first being Mary Fanny Lee, daughter of the curate and his wife, Henry and Mary Sophia Lee.[28] Three of the others were from the Boden, Beard and Harper families, signatories of the original petition to build the church. The original book of baptisms, containing some two thousand names, is still in use today.

The workers employed in building the church were treated to a celebration shortly after the consecration. In September 1863, John Pritchard entertained over fifty to a substantial supper in the Market Hall, Ironbridge.[29] It has only been as recently as August 2017 that a handwritten inscription on one of the beams in the bell tower gives a delightful personal record that "*John Garbett and John Humphreys stained (or framed) this church roof 1863. A supper was given to all the workers on Saturday 12 September by John Pritchard Esq. at the Armoury in Ironbridge*".

Before the end of 1863, though, two further important contributions had been made.

The first in October 1863 reports that Blomfield donated a stained glass window supplied by Heaton, Bath and Bayne of London, a company which produced stained glass from 1862 to 1953, so it is possible that this window is one of their earliest. The lower portion of the window includes the words "It is finished" which is entirely in keeping with its design of the crucifixion.[30] It is the centrepiece of the five windows

behind the altar and it appears that the other four are slightly later additions, as the first time all five are recorded is in February 1864.[31]

The second contribution is the result of a donation before the consecration by a local Bank Manager, Henry Dickenson, and is the dwarf wall separating the church from the road surmounted with iron railings, supplied from London.[32]

It is not the intention in this summary to delve much further into the later history as so few records appear to exist, but one is that the Church was declared a rectory on 10 November 1866

Today, St Mary's Church is Grade II listed by Heritage England. A major rescue of the Church was completed in 2014, led by Maureen Smith in which funding was raised to repair and retile the roof so that the fabric of the church could be protected. Coupled with the award winning land stabilisation project to the east of the church, the surroundings today put the church in a most favourable and attractive location than at any time in its history

What is totally clear, though is that St Mary's makes a much underrated contribution to the heritage of the Ironbridge gorge. It is a celebration of local manufacturing capabilities and inventiveness in the Victorian era. Most of the materials were donated by local manufacturers**.**

The spectacular coloured bricks in the nave of St Mary's Church.

The impressive floor to the eastern end is graced by the elaborate geometrical and figured patterns of Maw's tiles.

In more recent times, the church benefitted in 1960 from the gift of a hand-painted triptych which demonstrates the hand-painting skills at Craven Dunnill, originally produced in about 1870 for an exhibition in Paris

The use of coloured bricks, reputedly given by John Doughty must have been startling. While the external brickwork has become discoloured by the weather and pollution from industry, homes and trains, the internal walls, faced with the same coloured bricks of the main archway, show how spectacular the church must have looked.

Most of the credit for this goes to the designer, Arthur William Blomfield. The young architect was later knighted and became Sir Arthur William Blomfield (1829-1899). So, St Mary's Church is one of the earliest works by one of the most influential architects of the Victorian era, famed for his Gothic style on prestigious buildings including the Royal School of Music, many colleges and chapels in Oxford and Cambridge, the Chapel at Eton College, churches at home and abroad including the Falkland Isles Cathedral, rebuilding the nave of Southwark Cathedral, restoring the spire of Salisbury Cathedral.....and much more. Certainly the magnificent 75ft high tower and novel entrance porch and unusual rose window are all features unusual in a small community church.

There are some mysteries associated with it, one even being its name. Outside the building today is the name "St Mary the Virgin," yet there appears to be no formal record of any change or addition.

Another one relates to an unexpected person. Throughout the time that St Mary's was being designed and built, there was a young apprentice in Blomfield's practice who later became one of this country's most admired authors, Thomas Hardy. In 1863 Hardy was awarded a Silver medal for an essay in a competition run by the Royal Institute of British Architects. That essay was entitled "The application of coloured bricks and terracotta in modern architecture". It seems inconceivable that he was not involved in St Mary's or at least influenced by it.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Steve Dewhirst for extracting a number of newspaper records 1861-1863, to Michael Pope for helpful discussion of the manuscript, to Maureen Smith for her enthusiastic encouragement to

delve into the history of St Mary's Church and to the very helpful staff in Shropshire and Herefordshire Archives.

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[1] Michael Pope "The Life and Times of George Pritchard" Broseley Local History Society Newsletter, August 2010.
Frederick Hartshorne, "The Pritchard Memorial and the supply of water in Broseley," Shropshire Archives, XMI2837.

[2] Shrewsbury Chronicle 4 January 1862.

[3] Michael Pope "The Life and Times of George Pritchard" Broseley Local History Society Newsletter, August 2010.

[4] Eddowes Journal, 19 February 1862.

[5] Eddowes Journal, 13 July 1859.

[6] Herefordshire Archives, Ref HD10/18.

[7] Shrewsbury Chronicle 28 February 1862.

[8] Birmingham Daily Post 29 May 1862.

[9] Julian Nicholas, Memoranda Book, Shropshire Archives XP44/V/2.

[10] Herefordshire Archives, Ref HD10/18.

[11] Wellington Journal 19 July 1862.

[12] Wellington Journal 18 October 1862.

[13] Eddowes Journal 22 October 1862.

[14] Wellington Journal, 25 October 1862.

[15] Eddowes Journal, 20 May 1863, Wellington Journal 28 May 1863.

[16] Shropshire Archives 1681/116/25-31.

[17] Op Cit.

[18] Herefordshire Archives, Ref HD10/19.

[19] Shropshire Archives 1681/116/25-31.

[20] Birmingham Post 30 July 1863, Wellington Journal 1 August 1863.

[21] Birmingham Daily Gazette 6 August 1863, Shrewsbury Chronicle 7 August 1863

[22] Chris Pickford and George Dawson, National Bell Register and Taylor Bell Museum, Loughborough.

[23] Herefordshire Archives, Ref HD10/19.

[24] Op Cit.

[25] Bishop's Register 1857-1869, Herefordshire Archives.

[26] Wellington Journal, 22 August 1863, Eddowes Journal, 26 August 1863.

[27] Eddowes Journal, 26 August 1863.

[28] Book of Baptisms, St Mary's Church.

[29] Wellington Journal 19 September 1863.

[30] Wellington Journal 10 October 1863.

[31] Wellington Journal 20 February 1864.

[32] Wellington Journal 10 October 1863.

40 Years a potter: Richard William Whitmore at Benthall Potteries

by Janet Doody

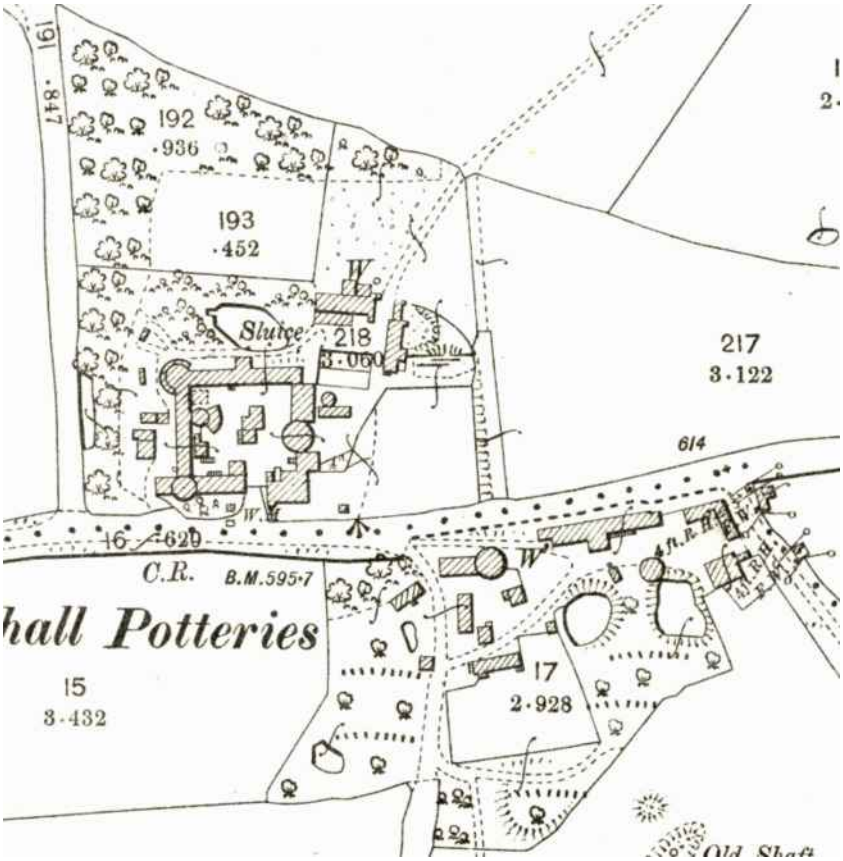
I discovered this rather wonderful photograph of Mr Whitmore in the Wellington Journal and Shrewsbury News dated 2nd February 1937 (hence its rather poor quality). He had been employed at the Benthall Potteries for over 50 years with 40 of those years working on the potters' wheel. Mr Whitmore, so the report stated, was due to "retire shortly but not until he had completed his work fashioning Coronation souvenirs".

Richard William Whitmore was not a native to Broseley or even Shropshire, but had been born on 28th October 1861 in Bilston to James and Jane. James worked as an iron puddler. In 1881, the family were living at 5 James Street, Bilston and Richard was described as a potter, specifically a teapot maker. On 25th December 1884, he married Marie Louise Benton at Dudley and later moved to Benthall, where their second son, also Richard, was born in 1891.

"THE OLDEST 'THROWER' at Benthall Pottery". Wellington Journal & Shrewsbury News 2nd February 1937.

For most of Mr Whitmore's working life the Benthall Pottery was operated by the Allen family; in fact, both in 1891 and 1901, the two families lived next door to each other and adjacent to the works. The 1911 census gives the address as 18 Benthall Lane: Richard and Marie, lived with three sons, Richard, age 22, James age 19 and George age 17; both James and George were pottery turner apprentices, whilst Richard was a baker.

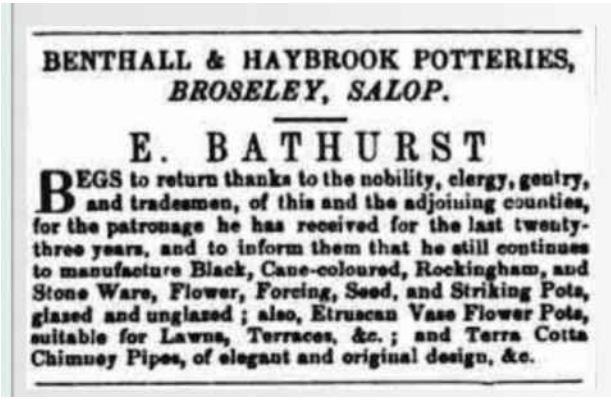
The site is at the junction of Benthall Lane and The Avenue (leading to Benthall Hall) and is now an



1882 25" OS map Shropshire LI.2 showing Benthall Potteries to the north of the Broseley to Wenlock Road and Haybrook to the south.

agricultural merchant. However, for over 200 years it had operated producing ceramic wares. Originally there had been two potteries on opposite sides of the road that operated independently. The Haybrook Pottery, on the south side of the road (in Posenhall parish), was probably the earliest, with some evidence suggesting it dated to 1624. However, John Randall dates it to 1729, calling it the Mughouse, not surprisingly perhaps producing drinking wares; for some time it was operated by the Thursfield family.

In 1815, a lease advertised in the Salopian Journal described the property as a pottery, having a cottage for workmen attached and a house for the resident partner, that was "in a complete state for making



BENTHALL & HAYBROOK POTTERIES,
BROSELEY, SALOP.

E. BATHURST

BEGS to return thanks to the nobility, clergy, gentry, and tradesmen, of this and the adjoining counties, for the patronage he has received for the last twenty-three years, and to inform them that he still continues to manufacture Black, Cane-coloured, Rockingham, and Stone Ware, Flower, Forcing, Seed, and Striking Pots, glazed and unglazed; also, Etruscan Vase Flower Pots, suitable for Lawns, Terraces, &c.; and Terra Cotta Chimney Pipes, of elegant and original design, &c.

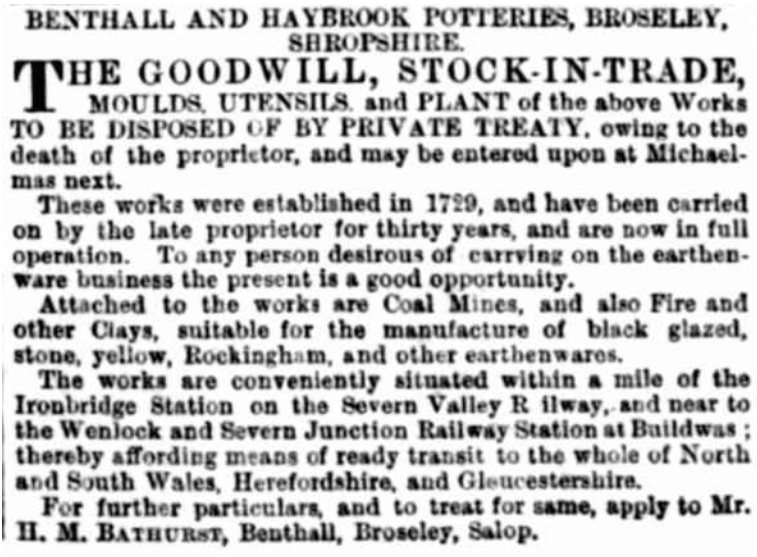
Eddowes's Journal 11th July 1855.

common earthen ware…well situated for land sale and the trade to Bristol and foreign exportation". During the early 19th century, the lease exchanged a number of times before the two potteries were united by Warren Taylor Jones and Edwin Bathurst.

Warren Taylor Jones was born in Broseley and baptised at St. Leonard's Church on 4th March 1821, the son of John and Rebecca. The family home was Coppice House, Benthall where in 1841 John Jones (senior), Warren and his brother John were potters. Living next door at the Haybrook Pottery itself were Edwin Bathurst and his family. By 1851, John senior had died and Warren was running the earthenware manufactory (called Posenhall Pottery in Bagshaw's directory of 1851) and employing six men, while Edwin was at the Benthall Pottery employing 31 men. In early 1861, Warren married Sarah Corser Haywood, a widow, and although they continued to live at Coppice House, Warren was now employed as the local Relieving Officer, a post held until his death on 24th March 1888.

Edwin Bathurst was born in Madeley and baptised at Madeley Parish Church on 17th October 1802 the son of John and Mary, and he married Sarah Lloyd on the 17th May 1823 at Madeley Church. The family lived in Madeley until at least 1832 when their son John was baptised at Madeley Church, and Edwin's occupation is then described as a china painter, presumably at the Coalport China Works. Soon after, Edwin moved his family to the Haybrook Pottery where, by the 1841 census, both he and his son William were described as potters. However, by 1851, Edwin had moved opposite and was occupying Benthall Potteries and employing 31 men, including his son John who was then 18 years old.

After the death of his wife Sarah in February 1854, Edwin married Eliza Milner at St. Julian's Church, Shrewsbury on 6th November 1855, and an announcement appeared in the Wellington Journal the following week on the 10th. This notice confirms the start of his producing



BENTHALL AND HAYBROOK POTTERIES, BROSELEY, SHROPSHIRE.

THE GOODWILL, STOCK-IN-TRADE, MOULDS, UTENSILS, and PLANT of the above Works TO BE DISPOSED OF BY PRIVATE TREATY, owing to the death of the proprietor, and may be entered upon at Michaelmas next.

These works were established in 1729, and have been carried on by the late proprietor for thirty years, and are now in full operation. To any person desirous of carrying on the earthenware business the present is a good opportunity.

Attached to the works are Coal Mines, and also Fire and other Clays, suitable for the manufacture of black glazed, stone, yellow, Rockingham, and other earthenwares.

The works are conveniently situated within a mile of the Ironbridge Station on the Severn Valley Railway, and near to the Wenlock and Severn Junction Railway Station at Buildwas; thereby affording means of ready transit to the whole of North and South Wales, Herefordshire, and Gloucestershire.

For further particulars, and to treat for same, apply to Mr. H. M. BATHURST, Benthall, Broseley, Salop.

Staffordshire Advertiser 17th May 1862.

earthenware in Benthall ("patronage received … for the last twenty three years") and the joining of the two potteries, together with a list of the items that were being produced.

On the 26th September 1855, the local newspaper reported that an employee of Benthall Potteries, Abel Ward, whilst digging clay for the use of the pottery, came upon a toad embedded in the clay. Such was the fame of this event that the following year, on 18th April, it was reported John Randall of Madeley gave a lecture at the Mechanics Institute, Shrewsbury entitled "On the Exhumed Toad of the Benthall Pottery", where "the toad was exhibited during the lecture". (*Where is that toad now*?)

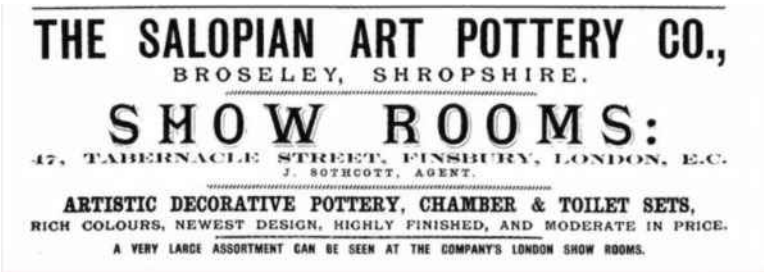
Sadly, production at the pottery under the Bathurst family was not to last, as Edwin died on 12th November 1861. His eldest son Henry Martyn Bathurst, Managing Director of Broseley Tiles, was his executor and, as it seems that his other sons William and John may have predeceased their father[1], Henry decided to sell the Benthall Pottery - as the notice illustrates. It was purchased by William Allen and, as the new proprietor of the Haybrook and Benthall Potteries, in March 1863 he gave his "men a treat on the occasion of the Prince of Wales marriage", and a triumphful arch was also erected across the road near to Mrs Bathurst's house.

William Allen senior.

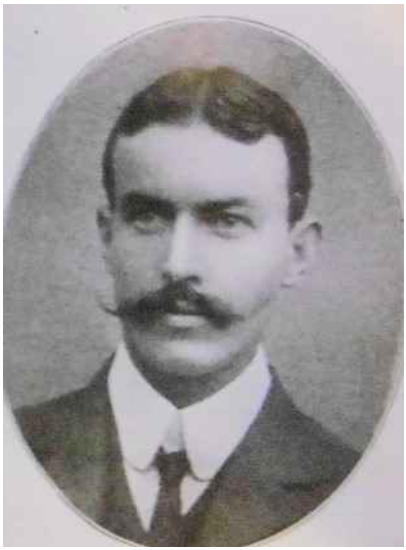
William Allen was baptised at Broseley Church on 17th August 1834, the son of Beriah and Susannah. Beriah stated his occupation as that of "china-man", but by the 1841 census the family were living at Bowyer Yard where he was a brick-maker. In 1851, he employed four men but by 1861 Beriah had moved to Wednesfield, still a brick-maker but now employing 12 men, 8 women and 4 boys. After the death of his wife, Beriah re-married and in retirement moved to Rhuddlan, where he died in 1895. In 1861, age 22 years, William is a brick-maker in his father's works. He married Julia Caroline Lopez (sometimes Lopes) in 1865 and moved to Benthall Potteries; it was employing 30 men, 11 women and 7 boys in 1871 and 35 men, 16 women and 4 boys in 1881.

Initially the pottery appears to have specialised in the local agricultural markets. Adverts in 1872 for fish-hatching troughs and a published letter by Thomas Thursfield (who was undoubtedly related to the prior owners of the pottery) extolled the virtues of an earthenware bee-feeder produced by company. However, William then attempted to extend both the type and quality of wares they produced; from the 1880s he introduced the name "Salopian Art Pottery" and began to add ornamental products of lustre and enamelled ware to the basic ranges.

He promoted his range of goods at local exhibitions, such as the Dawley Industrial Exhibition, held in April 1882; this was organised by the



The Pottery Gazette February-May 1885.



William Beriah Allen.

vicar of Dawley, the Rev. R. C. Wanstall, and held in the National School (and a large marquee). A newspaper report stated that Benthall Potteries had a large stand on which Mr Allen displayed "miscellaneous pottery wares from his works". Numerous other local manufacturers attended, including the Coalbrookdale Works and Southorn's Tobacco Pipes; as well as many individuals like Mr W. Lewis from Mossey Green, showing his collection of Zulu weapons, an elephants jaw and teeth, together with a boa constrictor's skin!

William Allen appears to have employed designers and artists from the South Kensington School of Art, as well as local artists from the Coalbrookdale School of Art. He promoted his products widely with illustrated advertisements in national newspapers and magazines. He employed agents and opened showrooms in London. In 1891, John Randall wrote an open letter championing Mr Allen in his transformation of the pottery and production of "a variety of choice articles much sought after by connoisseurs". He describes how Allen had overcome "insuperable difficulties" and at "considerable outlay" attracting "superior talent" from outside Shropshire. "How much better it would have been", Randall adds, had there been "technically trained artisans at their own doors"; a plan he had put forward himself some 25 years previously where talented schoolboys could be "cherry-picked" from school for further education in the "Arts".

William died on 22nd November 1907, and his son William Beriah Allen took over the pottery. William junior had been born on 21st December 1873; he was educated at St. Oswald's College, Ellesmere and Hertford College, Oxford University. He was particularly interested in natural history and botany, becoming a specialist in the study of fungi. He had a number of works on the subject published and was a founder member of the British Mycological Society.

William was also a keen sportsman, playing cricket for both Willey Wanderers and the firm's own Benthall Potteries, which included a

number of employees. The Potteries team was quite successful for a number of years during the late 1890's and ran both 1st and 2nd XI's. William it seems was a good all-rounder: in a match against Ironbridge in July 1898, the Wellington Journal reported that "*W.B.Allen was responsible for a well -played 25* (and) *Ironbridge could do very little with* (his) *bowling".*

William married Mary Joyce Allen on 24th May 1917 at St. Paul's Church, Cheltenham; she was the daughter of Joseph Theophilus Allen, a corn miller. I suspect that they may have been related but have been unable to confirm this. Sadly, married life was not to last as William died on 20th November 1922, aged just 48, and is buried in Benthall churchyard.

This brought to an end the Allen family's long connection with Benthall Pottery as his wife Mary sold it. It was bought by local businessman Donald Prestage who, after a short time, sold it on again to Jack (John) Raleigh. The manufacture of earthenware goods struggled on in his hands until around the late 1930s when the company was declared bankrupt. A business was later re-established, this time producing drainage and sanitary pipes, which continued to be produced on the site until the mid-1980s.

Despite the difficulties, throughout its life Benthall Potteries appears to have attracted a loyal and dedicated workforce, a number of whom were employed for many years, but perhaps that's another story.

Sources:

www.salopianartpottery.co.uk
www.ancestry.co.uk
www.findmypast.co.uk
Local newspapers

Notes and Refernces

[1] The Wellington Journal 15th September 1855 reported that John Bathurst, third son of Edwin Bathurst, had died earlirer in 1855 aged 23yrs in Ballarat, Australia.

WAR DAMAGE CONTRIBUTION

INSTALMENT DUE ON 1 JULY, 1944

Mrs Rd. Smith
12. Fox. Lane.
Bromfield.
Salop.

Application is hereby made for payment of the instalment of War Damage Contribution, due on 1 July, 1944.

Collector of Taxes, SHREWSBURY Collection,
1st FLOOR, CENTRAL HALL,
CASTLE GATES,
SHREWSBURY, SHROPSHIRE.

L. No.....

23 JUN 1944 .....Date

* Description and situation of property, if not as above :—

Hse & Gdn.† Hse & Shop. 12-13. Fox Lane

Parish and Assessment Numbers	Contributory Value: Amount on which Inst. payable at 2/- in the £		Contributory Value: Amount on which Inst. payable at 6d. in the £		Instalment payable		
	£	s.	£	s.	£	s.	d.
20 W.D. 1204/5	11	5	—	—	1	2	6
	7	10				15	—
	—	—					
Less.....							
TOTAL AMOUNT PAYABLE on 1 July, 1944.....					1	17	6

* Where the instalment applied for relates to more than one property, see details appended.

D.N.1 (W.D.C.)

SEE OVERLEAF